

Folks:

This month I'd like to share with you a favorite group - Humphrey, Hartman and Cameron. Why these three? As a few of you know, I listen to lots of music, focusing primarily on small group acoustic jazz and folk. Since the 3RFS and our associated Tumbleweed Music Festival [TMF] are heavily focused on contemporary singer-song writers I had more than a fair chance to listen to such artists. With few exceptions, I found such groups to be good and easy to listen to, once or at most twice.

With the coupled talents of Humphrey and Hartman (...and Cameron) I often replayed their two albums, which sit near my CD player as especial favorites. To be honest, they don't replace the many replays of Bach's Brandenburg Concertos or MJQ's Blues on Bach and Hubert Laws Rites of Spring for my attention. Nevertheless, they're among my top 50 albums I keep returning to. When they play in the Tri-Cities, I always volunteer to help at their concerts. I will again enjoy their usual fine performance at this year's TMF.

Confession Time - I've shamelessly boosted a bit of what follows from both their web site and the May 2005 Victory Review Article by M Johnson. Enjoy what I've shared below and when the next opportunity arises, tune in to Humphrey, Hartman and Cameron.

And the Usual stuff...
If you need only a text copy of **eTALK** let me know and I'll send that to you directly inserted into an eMAIL message. Kendal Smith is working to ensure those who need a text copy of Folk Talk that information.

And for other information, you know you can always check us out at **http://www.3RFS.org**.

AND: signup for concert announcements at folkevent_3rfs on our website. Ed Lund, our announcements list keeper, will add you to the list, so you'll never need to miss a concert or coffee house again!

Remember #RFS does not SPAM. eMAIL me back if you want to be removed from our Folk Talk electronic list.

Harry {doc} Babad
eTalk Editor and List Keeper

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Humphrey, Hartman and Cameron
The acoustic group Humphrey and Hartman have been described as the harmonious equivalent of peanut butter and jelly: distinctly different (I prefer onion bagels and lox) and are perfectly complementary. Playing guitars, banjo, cello and resophonic guitar, their original songs and intricate harmonies have been entrancing audiences across the northwest. Tight vocal arrangement by our own Tri-Cities Divas, have been

called "ear candy" by reviewers. Their high-energy performances with resound crisp clear and easy to understand vocals. Such vocal clarity is a Humphrey and Hartman signature, although their accompaniments are great, they never challenge the vocals. Despite being hearing impaired, I was able to enjoy every word with no cheating by reading the lyrics in their album notes.

Mary and Janet have been writing and performing since the late seventies - reading the lyrics to their songs provides proof-perfect to both their musical and song writing skills. Mary's vocals, backed by her acoustic guitar and banjo, coupled with Janet's acoustic guitar, resophonic guitar, dulcimer, harmony vocals been given a new halo by the rich balanced and expert accompaniment of the cello, bass, percussion provided by Michelle Cameron. Playing primarily material they compose, Janet and Mary's writing styles are diverse, eclectic and original, resulting in lyrics that are gloriously unique. One reviewer, cited on the HH&C website called them *wrapped in silky harmony*. Cellist Michelle Cameron now adds a new dimension to the trio, bringing exceptional instrumental skills and a wry tongue in cheek musical wit to live performances.



In the Beginning

Eastern Washington's Humphrey and Hartman were a comfortable duo for 10 years and had developed a strong local following and regional recognition. Writing most of their own material, they were known for tight harmonies and quirky humor. Humphrey and Hartman songs have won awards at numerous festivals and are regularly featured on radio. One of Mary's songs "Zamboni" was selected by Garrison Keillor as one of the best Christmas songs of 1989. Classified as contemporary folk, their arrangements are tinged with blues, jazz and just a touch of country. We are likely to see this musical eclecticism grow because the richer musical sounds of the newly formed trio [2004] augment the seductive and high-energy vocal harmonies. Their original writing and harmonic style reflects the influences of Bach, Shawn Colvin, and Mississippi John Hurt.

And Along Came Michelle Cameron

"We weren't actually looking to add another member. Things were comfortable as they were," says Mary Hartman, who plays guitar and banjo. Janet Humphrey adds. "I don't think we realized that we had grown a little bored." Enter Michelle Cameron in the summer of 2003.

"I had just moved to the Tri-Cities from Colorado and I went to an art fair (e.g., the Allied Arts Sidewalks show) in the (Howard Amon) park in July. There I heard Janet and Mary perform. I loved it, and bought a CD (*On Solid Ground*, 2001). Afterward, I talked to them and asked if they ever wanted to jam with a cellist."

Guitar, banjo, and cello? Well why not?

Months went by, but eventually Humphrey called Cameron. "Michelle showed up with a bright red SKB cello case and just fit right in!" Humphrey recalls. "Mary and I had been doing some of our songs for 10 years, but Michelle made them sparkle again." After just two rehearsals, Cameron had learned 18 Humphrey and Hartman songs and was ready to join them at gigs.

Cameron is versatile on the cello, lyrical or rhythmic, sometimes slapping the strings like a bass. The cello often provides a third voice to Humphrey and Hartman's alto tones. When she's not playing with the band or working her day job as a nuclear chemist, Cameron plays in the Mid-Columbia Symphony. "We're pretty

sure they don't know that she consorts with folk musicians," laughs Humphrey.

A CD Race with a Photo Finish - What Turns You On? And More

Humphrey and Hartman had started working on their second CD *What Turns You On?* when Cameron came into the picture. "We were able to lay down cello tracks over the existing arrangements on a couple of songs, but we needed to adjust the arrangements on everything else," Humphrey explains. "My guitar playing definitely changed. I no longer emphasize the bass notes because the cello is there as a foundation. And of course we wanted to leave room for some cello solos. Our arranging process has changed immensely."

"We are now arranging for three voices instead of two." Cameron agrees. "The freedom I have as a musician, with the trio is wonderful. As a classically trained cellist, I usually played the dots on the page; here, there are no dots. I improvise the part until we find something that we like. This is a totally new experience.

"Road trips have changed as well, with the addition of Cameron's boundless energy and humor and a lot more gear to haul. Gary White, Janet's husband, frequently joins the trio at shows and runs the sound system. "We laugh a lot. I mean a lot!" says Hartman. "I feel sorry for Gary... Wait, no I don't! Gary doesn't cut us any slack!" White and Humphrey are owners of Precision Sound, a

Richland-based sound reinforcement company and recording studio.

In the summer of 2004, the trio was energetically trying to finish their CD when they received word that they had been accepted to perform as part of the evening concert at Richland's Tumbleweed Music Festival. Therefore, they put in long hours in the studio, in addition to keeping up their day jobs, to be able to finish the project by festival time. [Mary in addition to her music and volunteering is an almost-full-time hydrogeologist.]

Editor's note - For those of you've never attended a TMF, the evening concert participants are selected from the best of the best applicants to our festival. Being among the chosen four groups from a clan of about 135 applicants is no small mark of respect.]

White, in particular, was rarely out of the studio when he wasn't at work. He admits he has never listened to the CD after completing it. "After a couple hundred times, you really don't want to hear it again." Nevertheless, of course, Gary gets to hear them sing them again at every HH&C concert for which he provides sound.

Fellow eTalk Readers - You should both tune into their performance at TMF and in other local venues as well as saying Hello to them at 2005 TMF. All four (White included) also continue to volunteer at the festival. Humphrey and White run

sound for the largest and most acoustically challenging performance stages, aided by Cameron and others. Mary Hartman coordinates the information booth and the festival store.

The trio lives in the Tri-Cities in Eastern Washington with husbands, kids, cats and dogs and very demanding mainstream jobs. Yet the music continues to flow from them - I for one am awaiting their new CD; perhaps we'll hear a new song or two at the TMF.

Both CDs [What Turns You On? (HH&C 2004), On Solid Ground (H&H, 2001)] are available from the trio's website <<http://www.humphreyandhartman.com>> and at the TMF information booth.

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A Post Script from doc Babad

I know Janet and Mary know and on occasion have played many songs from the traditional folk music repertoire. - Songs created and often in the public domain, prior to and even after the great 60's folk revival. With their musicality, such materials would likely help revitalize a music 'tradition' now little known to the most of recent generations of folk musicians and singers. They never, or almost never, perform them.

As Janet recently told me when I was discussing this article with her, that's not what most audiences want to hear. Alas, as with Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, much folk tradition is dying and the great standards of yesteryear get no respect. Janet advised me that if I wanted traditional music to have

a wider audience, I should found a 'traditional' folk music society. [Folks, most of my vinyl collection and many of my 500 or so folk music books are rich in such music, some of it currently available at Rediscover Music <www.rediscovermusic.com>

For the purists among you, I subjectively define traditional folk songs, as antiques are defined, by their being more than about 25 years old and no longer being very actively performed. [E.g., from the Childe Ballads, though Ed McCurdy to the ballads that Joan Baez made her own and Paxton ballads now so central to our folk traditions.]

Oh, if wishes were horses, beggars would ride - As Tevya might if living today, note: if I were a rich man... I'd commission such an album from HH&C. I'm too old and spread too thin to create a society for preserving traditional folk music, but if someone takes the first step I'll surely join in.