

# KELLY'S CORNER

by Jan Kelly

Of all our summer pleasures: sun, salt water, many good friends for company, fishing and fresh fish dinners, swimming, outdoor tennis, a myriad of galleries open to view art, long sunny days, sweet balmy nights, boating and dune-shacking, the one which is making our lives even more pleasant and more cosmopolitan, is live music. Even though we have moved from vinyl to CDs, live music is always more enjoyable, a true force happening to our ears and minds as the musician is working on it—not bottled or canned, not captured but living its brief life right before you. Live music involves you. It won't let you pass by as you would a speaker or another machine.

The warm wood or shiny metal of instruments is a living form, attractive to your human form. Bows and strings and reeds can bring the human tie even closer. Our quality of life gets a boost from live music and if all the settings of summer were made more pleasant by live music, I hope we hear more music through all the seasons. It's available. In addition to concerts and recitals, there are individuals who prefer to make their living by their musical talent more than by other skills and they want to play at your party, in your restaurant or at any celebration you can imagine—your art opening, tea party, poetry reading or wine tasting. Enhance most any celebration with live music.

One such musician is Diane Fisher. Diane has lived in Provincetown for ten years and I have followed her career through this time. Upon questioning, I found much humor and dedication from this musical sprite.

Diane began her musical career in the third grade where, along with all the other third graders, she was handed a flutaphone, a plastic recorder, and was taught to read music. The itinerant music teacher did not know what she had started but she was soon to find out during Diane's fourth grade escapades. Diane took up clarinet; the teacher was adamant that she, like all girls, play the flute. But Diane clung to her clarinet and outplayed the sixth graders very quickly. She even achieved the spotlight for a small solo. At the end of the band concert, the director asked the soloists to stand up one by one. Diane stood up, heard her personal applause and beamed. She sat down, but promptly stood up again; yup, more applause, so she decided to sit and stand a few more times. The audience was delighted and needless to say, a performer discovered herself.

In the sixth grade, Diane espied her first oboe and was mesmerized. She and a friend discovered it in the band room closet. It was appropriated to the friend's brother. When they moved out of town, Diane talked her friend into giving her the oboe within quick chatty minutes on the school bus. The music teacher intervened, saying the oboe was going to someone else. Countless phone calls and regular pulling from the class room by a fuming,

irate music teacher demanding the oboe were of little result. Little Diane defiantly repeated, "NO!" and laconically stated, "I want to play the oboe!"

Diane's first oboe lessons were with Raymond Taubman of the Boston Ballet. Mastering the air pressure in oboe playing is more difficult than other wind instruments. Oboe players must expel carbon dioxide before they inhale again. The light headedness that ensued had Diane spending part of each lesson on a near-by day bed.

By the eleventh grade, Diane auditioned for the Massachusetts Youth Ensemble. She was accepted, and through corporate and government funding, the orchestra toured England and Scotland. They were designated by the State House as good will ambassadors. Custom agents were a bit leery of the razor sharp reed knives until they understood that necessary and delicate practice.

College years were spent at Ithaca College and Cornell University. Diane took a semester of almost every instrument and—wouldn't you know it—when petite Diane took up the tuba, the elevator between the fourth floor tuba storage room and the basement practice rooms, was broken. The stair struggle must have been video material.

After graduation, Diane went to NYC and above all the other work, her fondest memories are of playing with a cellist and a violinist on the Staten Island Ferry. They called themselves the *Oreos*, made good money and competed with a band of Hispanic men for performance space. Their gig was cardboard box drums and Beatle renditions.

The oboe has been a fair and lasting companion for Diane Fisher,

yet the oboe is an instrument most of us know very little about, except for its mellow, haunting tone which can switch your mood quickly and without your permission, and we don't know the work it entails.

Diane explained how she spends hours making her reeds. "First, I tie the cane into a tube, much like tying a fishing lure. Then I carve millimeters of cane to perfect its flexibility, tone and A440 pitch. I'm talking (about) idiosyncratic and highly perishable reeds which are always changing with the temperature and humidity. Then the oboe itself has about 20 fine tuning screws which have to be checked and adjusted. Tested by the 'pull' of



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dinner



cigarette paper under the pads. The oboe takes a lot of self-discipline and much like a weight lifter, one doesn't 'just do it.' You exercise and warm up the proper muscles for proper control. Actually, I don't know why they call it 'play', when it really is a lot of work."

One of Diane's concerns has always been not to disturb people with her practicing. "Back when I lived at 65 Commercial Street, a couple of 20 year old males lived in the apartment below me. I was so touched when they told me that when they hear me playing, they turn everything off, light candles and open a bottle of wine and enjoy it. They were disco fans on their own."

Diane Fisher has played in several groups: *Two Flutes and An Oboe* for one, and with many individual artists. That is what seems to work best and keeps the logistics tame enough not to be distracting. Tor Hansen, Robin Hendrich, Susie Seligson, Fred Eggers, Dowel Muelter, Denya Levine, John Thomas and Karen Rosenblatt have all had successful gigs and performances with Diane.

Since 1992, Diane has been performing with Karen Harding. Karen took her first degree in psychology, moved on to study painting at San Francisco Art Institute, Columbia University and the Instituto de Allende at San Miguel de Allende, in Mexico, the Massachusetts College of Art and the Provincetown Whiteline Workshop with Ferol Sibley Warthen. A myriad of non-glamorous jobs punctuated the travel and artistic career of Karen Harding: lobster shucker, sales clerk, grape picker, waitressing, Jell-O tester and freelance trucking and moving, dovetailed with the Peace Corps teaching of English in Thailand, horticulture, antique appraiser & restoration, and guest house manager-owner.

All the while Karen worked at her art and her music studies at Blue Bear Waltzes School of Genuine Music in San Francisco and the Juilliard School and private lessons to extend her expertise at acoustic and electric bass, alto and tenor saxophone, clarinet

and bass clarinet, piano and guitar. She has played duo, trio and quartet settings and in a 300 member marching band, an off-Broadway pit band, wind ensembles, community bands, dance bands, street harmonica in Europe and in the pit bands for musical shows in Provincetown.

Karen also played with two local groups in town, *Take 5* which we all loved and miss and now with *The Hot Flashes*, great fun. Her skillful white line prints, the other remarkable art form she has mastered, surfaces regularly on the wave of notes—a dual artist happily at work.

After so much musical experience, how did Karen Harding settle on the string bass? "It's unplugged, not electric. I can play it in the dunes, in the woods, on the beach—anywhere. It can be plucked and

bowed. There's more variety of tone and range. It's great for both classical and jazz. I especially like the low tones; it's a supportive role of the other instruments in ensembles. My bass travels well in the passenger seat of my car, under the seat belt."

So now the oboe and the string bass travel together as they have since 1992 when they began an instantly successful career playing live music in restaurants enhancing the ambiance that they strive for in so many ways. This musical exposure resulted in lots of jobs for Karen and Diane: including weddings, garden parties, memorials and unique celebrations. Outdoors battling wind, rain, mosquitoes and sun, the music goes on sweetly, no one noticing that they can't swat the mosquitoes or are anchoring their music stands with their feet against the wind.

Karen and Diane are always looking for musicians who can read music. They envision a small Provincetown Chamber Orchestra. "We are also ever ready for new opportunities to perform. We hope that more restaurant owners will soon recognize classical music as a boon to business and a step towards broadening the cultural aesthetics of Provincetown." After all, wouldn't you like to share your next restaurant experience with Diane Fisher and Karen Harding and treat your ears and your soul as well as your stomach and palate? Get them hired.

If you want an audition, please be present at the courtyard of Wohlfarth Gallery and Venezia Gallery at 234 Commercial Street on Friday, October 16, from 5-7 pm. You'll hear for yourself what an asset live music is to our lives.

AND...if you missed Diane Fisher, Karen Harding and Tor Hansen playing Fisher's original piece, "Whale Song" at John Thomas' "Works In Progress" at the U.U. Church on October 3, hire them for your own program of this wonderful piece of local music, locally inspired.