

Community

Amy and Audubon: It must be January

by Nancy Thompson

The holidays are over. The Final Four is weeks away. Cabin fever, if not seasonal affective disorder, is setting in.

Okay, folks. It's time to crawl out of that comfortable cave and drive to the CT Audubon Center

to hear some great music.

This is the 15th season for the center's concert series, which started with a few "open mike" nights

in 1993.

"We were doing it by the seat of our pants," said Judy Harper, the center's long-time director. She and others reinstated the series, which had a less-than-successful run when the center opened in 1982.

The open-mike nights, at which performers paid \$5 for 10 minutes of performance time, tended to attract "pretty amateur local folks," Mrs. Harper said. That changed the night Amy Gallatin signed up.

"She walked in and people were saying, 'Oh, my God. It's Amy Gallatin,'" she recalled. "I had no clue."

Ms. Gallatin and friends performed last and were a huge hit with their informal, friendly style and their musical expertise. "It was like doing Christmas carols in your parlor with your best friend," Mrs. Harper said. "Then Amy invited everyone up to jam with them."

Before long, the late Bill Domler, a well known folk music entrepreneur, offered to take charge of bookings for the concert series. Instead of hosting amateurs and open-mike nights, the center became known for its high standards and professional performers.

Today, a committee is in charge of bookings, with each committee member choosing an act. Not surprisingly, Ms. Gallatin is Mrs. Harper's choice each year.

"Some perform every year, some come every other year," Mrs. Harper said, adding that she encourages the committee to bring in new acts from time to time.

The center sponsors a fiddle contest each year in September before starting the concert series in October. The concerts raise money for the center's programs, with a typical contract offering one-third of the proceeds to the center and two-thirds to the performer.

The concerts' popularity has surprised even Mrs. Harper. She recalled an appearance by singer-songwriter Harvey Reid, who drove down from his home in Maine in a driving ice- and snowstorm. Activities through the state were being canceled, but the concert went on and fans came from five states to hear him perform.

In addition to Amy Gallatin and Stillwaters, this concert season features a trio of up-and-coming fiddlers who have taken prizes in the center's fiddle contest; Crossover, which includes Portland resident Warren Charette; Gordon Bok; and Wild Notes, which features Peter Delaney of South Windsor, Don Hocott of Southington and Marlborough resident Kasha Breau, one of the center's educators. **GL**



Amy Gallatin will appear at the CT Audubon Center January 12.

Photo by Larry Bilansky

Neighbors

Glastonbury LIFE JAN 08 15

Amy Gallatin: Glastonbury's hometown troubadour

by Nancy Thompson

She was born in Alabama and raised in Idaho and Montana, but Amy Gallatin is very much at home in Glastonbury.

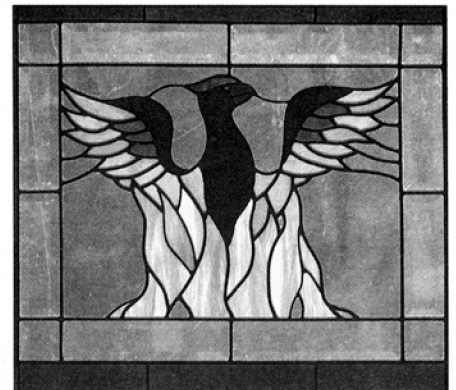
A resident since 1993, Ms. Gallatin gave up organizing horseback riding programs and entertaining guests at what used to be called "dude ranches" to pursue her career as a musician. It's turned out to be a very good move.

She has created several albums, including "Northern Girl" in 1993, "Sweet Gatherings" in 1995, "The Long Way Home" in 1998, and, with the band Stillwaters, "Live in Europe" in 2001.

She released "Something 'Bout You" in November featuring country-style duets with her partner, Roger Williams, and will be releasing another, entitled "Phoenix," with Stillwaters this month. The release is timed to coincide with her annual appearance at the Connecticut Audubon Center Jan. 12.

"Phoenix" was scheduled to be released last June, several months before "Something 'Bout You," but production issues delayed the album's debut until this month.

Unlike Ms. Gallatin's other albums, which feature photographs of her and, on "Something 'Bout You," of her with Mr. Williams, "Phoenix" has a photo-



This window panel from Susan Campbell's home depicts the mythological phoenix rising from the ashes and is the cover art on Amy Gallatin's new CD.

graph of a stained glass window showing a phoenix, a mythological bird that is said to die in flames and later rise from the ashes.

Amy Gallatin / 15

The window panel is part of the home of Hartford Courant columnist Susan Campbell, whose house burned several years ago and was later rebuilt. The two women have never met, but Susan Forbes Hansen, a mutual friend and folk music presenter for radio stations WFCR (88.5) and WHUS (91.7), thought of Ms. Campbell's window as soon as she heard the name of the new album.

"I went to a Stillwaters concert at the Middletown library in the spring, and Amy mentioned the two recording projects that were coming up," said Ms. Hansen, who has called Ms. Gallatin "a performer who's always looking to expand her knowledge,

improve her skills and enlarge her repertoire. And she really connects with her audience."

By coincidence — Ms. Gallatin likes to call it "synchronicity" — Ms. Hansen not only knew Ms. Campbell but also is an expert photographer whose photographs have appeared on the cover of several musicians' albums.

"Afterwards, for no particular reason, I asked what the CD was going to be called," Ms. Hansen said. "She said 'Phoenix,' I said, 'Hey, Susan Campbell has a

stained glass panel of a phoenix, maybe she'd let me photograph it.' Susan did allow it, Amy loved the image, and we went from there."

"It's a stylized phoenix, it's, like, perfect," Ms. Gallatin said. "My other albums have been me and the guitar. This one is like art. The colors just pop, the blue, black and red. It's just awesome."

The album features Ms. Gallatin with Mr. Williams on resophonic guitar, as well as bassist/harmony vocalist John Urbanik, Ben Pearce on mandolin and 18-year-old

"She's a performer who's always looking to expand her knowledge, improve her skills, and enlarge her repertoire. And she really connects with her audience."—Folk music radio presenter Susan Forbes Hansen

fiddler Mike Barnett.

The mid-January concert has become a tradition. Ms. Gallatin has returned every year. "She's just great," Mrs. Harper said. "She just pops in once in a while."

The two have become friends, and Ms. Harper chuckled as she recalled a recent Apple Harvest Festival where Ms. Gallatin performed and mentioned the Audubon Center concert series. Mrs. Harper thanked her by waving, much to the amazement of a nearby audience member who looked at her and said, "Wow. You know her?"

The admiration is mutual.

Ms. Gallatin described Mrs. Harper as "articulate and passionate about what she does. In fact here's how organized she is — she whips out the contract for the following year as we're packing up from the show."

The Audubon Center concert on the 12th is a debut for the new album and also a birthday celebration, one day early.

The next evening, Ms. Hansen, who also has a Jan. 13 birthday, is planning a live on-air birthday party during her Sunday Night Folk Festival from 7 to 10 p.m. on WHUS. Ms. Gallatin and several other folk musicians are expected to participate in the show, which can also be heard on WHUS.org. **GL**