



JIM YOUNG/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Singer Anne Pringle, shown at the Skokie Theatre in February, will be featured in concert with husband/pianist Mark Burnell at the Chicago Cabaret Convention next month.

# Cabaret here to stay

### Couple managed to navigate ever-changing music scene with grit and style

"It may look

glamorous, but

it's a hard way

- Mark Burnell

to make a living."



Sidewalks

The music-making couple have been married for more than 20 years but a few days ago Anne Pringle, the singer/wife, was compelled to take a trip back some 30 years to a club that no longer exists. Mark Burnell, the pianist/husband, listened as she said, "I don't regret a thing."

The place was Yvette, a ritzy restaurant nightclub on State Street a bit north of Division Street, now long gone, like so many other nightspots. Yvette was then the site of a talent contest being held over four Sundays. I was a judge along with pianist Al Blatter, once a fixture on the local music scene. Over the weeks we had seen a lengthy parade of modest or paltry

Blatter and I were talking about what it is that compels people to make fools of themselves onstage, when one of Yvette's

waitresses got up and sang.
After a couple of minutes Blatter looked at me and said, "She wins. No contest."

Employees were not eligible to win the contest, but we told this waitress how wonderful she was and when we did she asked, "Should I quit my job and try to make a go as

a singer?" "Yes," we said, without really thinking about the consequences. "Do it."

"I will," she said. "Watch

And so we did and we have been watching and listening ever since as she has carved a fine career and met her musical

She met Burnell a few years after her bold Yvette decision and after he had moved here from Pittsburgh; she's from

Michigan. They met when both were performing on one of those cocktail/dinner cruise ships that park at Navy Pier. She sang, he listened and on their first date, they went to hear the late, great Buddy

Charles play the piano and sing. On their second date they took a bicycle ride. It's been quite a ride ever since.

"This is a crazy business," says Mark. "It may look glamorous, but it's a hard way to make a living. You have to learn to wear a lot of different hats.'

Says Anne: "We've had to be willing to morph as the scene has changed."

That they have done. Together they could rattle off the names of dozens of clubs that have closed, of performers who have come and gone. But neither has any regrets about the way they have chosen the live their lives.

"It is impossible for any jazz musician to play or sing a song the same way twice,"

says Mark. "We grow and we change."

Mark, who also sings and arranges, has long taught vocal lessons, plays all over town, hosts open mics and has had a very steady gig for the past four years, performing with a trio on Saturday nights downtown at the Tortoise Club (www.tortoise supperclub.com).

In addition to singing, Anne also has been a fitness instructor for almost as long as she has been married. She spent five years assisting those staying at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago and currently works for other institutions and also teaches kickboxing, Tae Bo and Pilates. She finds this work "very rewarding."

When they can, they perform together, as they did at a recent Skokie Theatre concert-tribute to singer Julie London (www.markburnell.com).

"There is an increasing need for people to get out - get away from the television," she says. "I saw it happen right after 9/11 and it continues. People need a human

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### Shirin Neshat talks faith, life and art

By MICHAEL Workman Chicago Tribune

On Wednesday, Iranian-American artist Shirin Neshat returns to give a talk for "Dialogue 8," a series on contemporary art and artists at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. We sat down with the artist to discuss her views on resurgent American anti-Muslim sentiment, Islamophobia and her shifting artistic perspectives on women, faith, violence and ideology. This is an edited transcript of that conversation.

Chicago Tribune: Is this the first time you've been back to Chicago since your 1999 premiere at the Art Institute?

Shirin Neshat: Yes, I

think that's right, actually. It's been a very long time.

Q: I think one of the big questions I'm curious to hear your opinion on, as an artist who acknowledges the political exigencies of your work, is what you think of the Muslim travel ban.

A: It's a very complicated subject, of course. I think the reason for political events in the U.S. is of concern for people like myself, particularly because I've had a lot of problems with my own government and its hardliners; and to see that kind of thing happening in this country is not very encouraging because I always felt very secure and at home in the United States, and now I'm feeling a little bit more

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Shirin Neshat will speak Wednesday at MCA Chicago.

### Blues museum finds Loop home

Chicago Blues Experience on track for 2019 opening, organizers say

By Steve Johnson Chicago Tribune

The Chicago Blues Experience, a proposed 50,000-square-foot museum that had been hoping for a sweet home on Navy Pier, will instead be setting

up shop in the Loop. Aiming for a spring 2019 opening at 25 E. Washington St., a block west of the Cultural Center and two blocks west of Millennium Park, the private, for-profit institution aims to satisfy "the unfulfilled promise, culturally, of Chicago," said Terry Stewart, the former Rock & Roll Hall of Fame leader who will run the museum. "Anybody you talk to already assumes

In addition to an "immersive" museum that includes the story of how Chicago became the home of the blues and presents live music throughout the day, Chicago Blues Experience will have a 150-seat lounge offering performances nightly. Plans call for a street-level entrance on Washington, across from the southeast entrance of Macy's State Street store, and three floors underground built out in what used to be a health club and, before that, the Marshall Field's men's store.

there is a blues museum."

"Think about Chicago, that great shaper of the

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A rendering of the proposed Chicago Blues Experience at 25 E. Washington St.

# Blues a Chicago story

Museum, from Page 1

music of the world," said Mark Kelly, the city's cultural commissioner. "And yet we've never been centered in the city with a location that celebrates that. Now, with the Blues Experience, with the professional team they're bringing in, I'm confident we're going to have this incredible, living experience."

"We're pretty confident that things are just the way they're supposed to be," said Lincoln "Chicago Beau" Beauchamp, the blues musician and Chicago Blues Experience co-founder credited with getting the idea off the ground. "I thought, 'This has to be recognized as more than just something that happens in bars. It has to be recognized as something that has deep political and social roots and cultural roots."

Getting the museum to this point has been a journey. In late 2015, the museum announced plans to locate on Navy Pier and said it had \$40 million in investor funding committed to the project. Last April, however, pier officials pulled the plug on negotiations, saying that instead a hotel project would occupy the space planned for the museum, according to Sona Wang, the local venture capitalist who is managing director and co-founder of the blues museum.

"Obviously that was hugely disappointing," she said.

"We picked ourselves back up" and found the new location.

She said the museum expects to execute a lease on the Washington Street space Monday or Tuesday. And with that in hand, she said, "we are beginning the process of refreshing old (financial) commitments and talking to new investors.'

She is confident she will be able to raise the \$30 million the project needs. What her backers have in common, she said, is financial sophistication and "a deep caring for the city."

Wang is a blues fan whose first date with her now-husband was at a Lincoln Park blues club, she said, but "I came to this with financial investor discipline and seeing a gaping hole in the marketplace. Here we have an internationally recognized brand": Chicago blues.

People come here with the expectation of having some memorable, impactful experience with the blues. Today, there are limited options of how you get that. It just kind of strikes you in the face."

There are multiple blues clubs, yes, but those don't serve the family audience, and they are episodic rather than encyclopedic. They let you experience blues music, but

not necessarily the story of the music.

While Cleveland had to convince the rest of the nation that it was the right place for the rock hall of fame, Chicago will have no such problem, said Stewart, who ran the Cleveland facility for 14 years.

'I first want it to be the must-see cultural attraction of Chicago, which is a very bold statement," he said. St. Louis has the National Blues Museum, but Chicago Blues Experience officials are confident music tourism isn't an either/or proposition.

The team here includes some of the founders of the rock hall, including, as an adviser, Bob Santelli, who was blues adviser to the Cleveland museum and has since helped start the Experience Music Project in Seattle and the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles.

"We're actually bringing the old band back together," Wang said.

BRC Imagination Arts, of Los Angeles, will handle design of a museum that will include artifacts and a way for visitors to put themselves in, for instance, the Chess Records studio where Muddy Waters recorded, officials said. BRC's credits include Springfield's Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum & Library, the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tenn., and the Heineken Experience in Amsterdam.

Indeed, said Wang, it was the Heineken concept of giving visitors a taste of beer at the end that led to the proposal to include tastings of live music at Chicago Blues Experience, something unique among American music museums.

A rough outline of the museum plan includes, said Stewart, "the passage from Africa, the migration north, the electrification of the music in Chicago and the impact and influence it has on modern music and today's culture."

Said Beauchamp: "You're going to have not just a high-tech experience, buttons to push, but you're going to be able to immerse yourself in the blues experience and in all the offshoots of the blues. It's going to be a journey."

While some may contend that the more fitting location for such a museum would be in the city's African-American neighborhoods, Beauchamp said having it downtown is proper.

"The South Side or the West Side are definitely the rootland," he said.

"That's where it happened. But you want the place to be centrally located, absolutely. The blues is so central to Chicago culture."

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JIM YOUNG/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Anne Pringle and Mark Burnell have been playing the Chicago area for years.

## A collaborative couple

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and Tom Michael.

connection."

These married music makers are part of very active if somewhat under-appreciated (unless you read the work of my tireless colleague Howard Reich) live music scene here and one that will be celebrated in a couple of weeks at the fourth Chicago Cabaret Convention (www.mabel mercer.org/the-mabel-mercer -foundation-events).

It kicks off April 19 at the glorious Empire Room in the Palmer House Hilton and carries on April 20-21 at the Park West. Nearly 30 performers are on the schedule. Many come from other climes, but the majority do their thing in these parts and include such talents as Pringle and Burnell, Shelley MacArthur, KT McCammond, Tammy McCann, Joan Curto, David Edelfelt, Marianne Murphy Orland, Karen Mason, Spider Saloff, and Beckie Menzie

These gatherings represent a tuneful taste of Chicago, a wonderful way to experience the variety of styles to be found all over the city.

The many performers appearing at the concerts come from various backgrounds, lead different lives, have different loves but they are tied together by music.

Menzie and Michael have, for instance, been performing together for nearly two decades. They are happily in relationships with other people but will be together when they perform 8 p.m. Saturdays in April at Davenports (www.davenports pianobar.com) with their new show, "The Highs and Lows of Musical Duos," exploring in song and story the relationships of such pairs as Simon & Garfunkel, Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme, and others.

Anne and Mark Burnell are not among the couples featured in the show and though I don't know for sure, it's likely that they will be in the audience for one of the performances.

"The music scene here is very supportive," says Anne as Mark nods in agreement.

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### WATCH THIS: TUESDAY

The Abyss (PG-13,'89) ★★★ Ed Harris. ©



♦ (6:12) Pixels ('15) ★

David Boreanaz and Emily Deschanel

"Bones" (8:01 p.m., FOX): One of Fox's longest-lasting series bids farewell as "The Final Chapter: The End in the End" - directed by series co-star David Boreanaz - really does mark the end of this show. The rest of the team must seek elusive, lethal Mark Kovac (guest star Gerard Celasco) without Brennan (Emily Deschanel), but she eventually rejoins Booth (Boreanaz) for what's destined to be the final show-

"New Girl" (7 p.m., FOX): Jess and her father (Zooey Deschanel, guest star Rob Reiner) find each other to be excellent counsel for the other's love life while they're together in the new episode "San Diego." Aly (Nasim Pedrad) resists advising Nick (Jake Johnson) on his romance with Reagan (guest star Megan Fox). Schmidt (Max Greenfield) faces a quandary involving his name. Donna Pescow ("Saturday Night Fever") also guest stars. Lamorne Morris also stars.

"Bull" (8 p.m., CBS): Bull's (Michael Weatherly) investment in a case is quite literal in the new episode "Name Game," as he funds a class-action suit against a bank with questionable practices. The catch? If he doesn't win the resulting trial, he may have to close his business. Benny (Freddy Rodriguez) doesn't help matters by falling for a client. Laura Breckenridge and Kurt Fuller guest star. Geneva Carr, Jaime Lee Kirchner and Christopher Jackson also star.

"Trial & Error" (8 p.m., NBC): The case becomes more of a family affair in the new episode "Right-Hand Man," as Larry's (John Lithgow) unpredictable brotherin-law emerges as a suspect in the murder case. Josh (Nicholas D'Agosto) investigates the man, and another surprise involves the discovery of a severed arm. Sherri Shepherd, Jayma Mays, Steven Boyer and Krysta Rodriguez also star.

**"Switched at Birth"** (8:01 p.m., FREE): Scrambling for cash to pay their electric bill, Bay and Daphne (Vanessa Marano, Katie Leclerc) throw together a party at their apartment above the Cracked Mug, but the mood turns sour when Toby (Lucas Grabeel) overhears two students making tasteless disability jokes in the new episode "Left in Charge."

"Chicago Fire" (9 p.m., NBC): Several car accidents may not be "accidents" in the new episode "Babies and Fools," prompting Dawson (Monica Raymund) to take an active role in the consequent investigation. Severide (Taylor Kinney) tries to help Anna (guest star Charlotte Sullivan, "Rookie Blue") settle in. Herrmann (David Eigenberg) and others want Molly's to be part of the annual pub crawl.

#### **TALK SHOWS**

"Conan" (10 p.m. 11:30 p.m., TBS): Actor Joe Manganiello; actor Judy Greer.\*

"The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" (10:34 p.m., NBC): Actor Jason Segel; comic Lilly Singh; comic Brian Regan.

"The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" (10:35 p.m., CBS): Actor Hank Azaria; actress Kate Walsh; performance from Circus 1903.

"Jimmy Kimmel Live" (10:35 p.m., ABC): Actor Alec Baldwin; actor Luke Evans; Tuxedo performs.\*

\* Subject to change



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