



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



RICK KOGAN
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 talents.

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 for me."

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

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.tortoiseclub.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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"It may look glamorous, but it's a hard way to make a living."

— Mark Burnell

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 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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RODOLFO MARTINEZ PHOTO

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

there is a blues museum."

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.

"Think about Chicago, that great shaper of the

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