

Mid-Winter Anniversary 20th Year Issue 2014

Monthly Berkshire Artzine

Since 1994

THE ARTEFUL MIND



OAKES and SMITH
MUSICAL DUO

Photography by Sabine Vollmer von Falken

THE ARTFUL MIND artzine

Midwinter Anniversary Issue

Pushing twenty years and still going strong!



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THE MUSIC STORE

What better way to begin a New Year than surrounded by music?! Celebrating our fourteenth year of doing business in Great Barrington, we at The Music Store continue our commitment to serve our community and beyond by offering marvelous musical instruments, accessories and gifts at competitive prices with personal and dedicated service.

For guitarists seeking unique handmade premium instruments, The Music Store offers guitars by American Luthier Dana Bourgeois and introducing Steel and classical guitars by Irish Luthier John Beckett.

For instrumentalists in search of the unusual, The Music Store offers the unique Dr. Easy's Sonic Boxes - cigar box guitars made from recycled ingredients and vintage cigar boxes, the Serenity Bamboo Flutes - cane and walking stick flutes which are handmade in Stockbridge, Fluke and Flea Ukuleles - handmade in Sheffield, Catania Thumb Pianos, Gourd Pianos, Fishtix and Catspaws - handmade in Pennsylvania, and a host of other varied and exciting instruments for musicians of all ages and abilities.

Acclaimed as one of the area's best music stores, The Music Store specializes in fine, folk and unusual musical instruments, accessories, supplies and music motif gifts. Music lovers and professional and amateur musicians alike will find an exciting array of both new and used name-brand and hand-made instruments, extraordinary folk instruments and one of the Northeast's finest selections of strings and reeds. Professional musicians seeking the finest or unusual strings or accessories are welcome to call in advance. We will make every effort to satisfy the need!

Music Store customers enjoy fine luthier handmade classical and steel string guitars as well as guitars from other fine lines including Alvarez, Avalon, Breedlove, Composite Acoustic, Fender, Loar, Luna, Rainsong, Recording King and Takamine. Acoustic and electric guitars from entry to professional level instruments are available. Famous named guitars and basses join less-well known brands which appeal to those seeking high quality but are on tight budgets, providing any guitarist a tempting cornucopia

of playing possibilities.

New and used student orchestral and band instruments are available, including violins from \$159 to \$3000. An extensive array of international strings and reeds provides choices for the newest student to the symphonic performer. Children's instruments, as well as a fine line of international percussion including middle eastern and hand made African instruments along with many choices of industry standard drum heads, stands, and sticks, as well as tuners, forks and metronomes can be found as well.

All new instruments are backed by The Music Store's lifetime warranty which provides free set-up and adjustments on any new instrument sold. For repair and restoration and maintenance of fine stringed instruments - guitars, banjos, mandolins and the like - The Music Store's repair shop offers expert luthiery at reasonable prices on instruments of all levels, as well as authorized repairs on Lowden and Takamine guitars.

Those in search of the perfect present for music lovers will find a treasure trove of gift favorites such as bumper stickers ("Driver Singing," "Go Home and Practice," Tune it or Die" and more), tee shirts, caps, scarves, miniature musical instruments and instrument magnets, music motif mugs, socks, totes and ties. Small bronze and metal musician statues and cuddly 'Music Lover' stuffed animals, lapel pins and earrings add additional possibilities to gift giving customers.

A proud server of the community for over eleven years, The Music Store's warm and friendly staff are available for help in tuning, stringing or instrument repair. Help in choosing tuners, capos, mutes shoulder rests and strings is as happily given as help in selecting instruments themselves. Our mission is to support and encourage our musical community, so consultation and advice are always free.

For capos to kazoos, guiros to congas, rainsticks to rosin, bows to bodhrans, mandolins to microphones, reeds to rods, Strats to stands, local artist's CDs and harmonicas to picture frames and music motif ornaments, instruments and more, The Music Store is the place to be. For a magical, musical experience, Visit The Music Store at 87 Railroad Street in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, open in October Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 to 6, and on Sundays from 12 to 5. Call 413-528-2460 or email us at musicstr@bcn.net. We at The Music Store wish you peace and harmony throughout 2012 and beyond.

Thank you Everyone...

For being a part of The Artful Mind artzine's 20 year journey.

What would life be like without the Arts?
I cannot even imagine. Keep on turning those creative wheels. The Artful Mind artzine is going to be supporting artists for another few hundred years!!!

With Love,

Harryet Candee

Publisher

2014

Happy Anniversary to The Artful Mind!

Martin's RESTAURANT

STAAX ALL-AMERICAN BURGERS

Breakfast Served All Day
Lunch from 11:30 a.m.

Martin Lewis Chef - Owner

49 Railroad St., Great Barrington, MA 413-528-5455



Photo: Sabine Vollmer von Falken

OAKES & SMITH

MUSICAL DUO

*Interview by Harryet Candee
photographs by Sabine Vollmer von Falken*

Harryet Candee: Well, congratulations! “First Flight” has taken flight—at long last... How long have the two of you been on the campaign trail?

Thank you, Harryet! We started working on First Flight during the summer of 2011. And now, we’re so excited to have released it on November 19, 2013. Since then, we’ve been promoting it online and we’ve done some local radio interviews. There was also an article in The Berkshire Eagle and Rural Intelligence.

I think you have taken an interesting and new approach in raising monetary funds for the album to get into production and out the door. What was the plan, and did you know it was sure to work?

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The project was funded in a couple different ways. To get started, we both worked some extra side jobs and squirreled the money away. We also saved some of the money we earned playing gigs. We cut back on some things we might have spent our money on and used it, instead, to pay for the initial tracking in summer 2011. That got us started, but to bring things to the finish line, we needed a boost. We decided, in the summer of 2012, to run a campaign on Kickstarter, a web-based fundraising platform that allows artists to engage directly with supporters. We made a case for our project through a written article and a video, offered a series of rewards, set a dollar amount goal and a deadline. We then spent about six weeks promoting the campaign, asking people to make a pledge. We were so moved to see how so many people mobilized in support of the project, making pledges and helping to spread the word. By the stroke of midnight on the last day of the campaign, we had reached our goal with the help of these sup-

porters. We never knew for sure it was going to work, but we felt a strong guiding intuition at the outset that we should give it a chance and take the leap.

Before all this, how did you coordinate the writing of the songs and Katherine’s artwork that illustrate each song? Did you work side by side? Or did you pass the music and art back and forth?

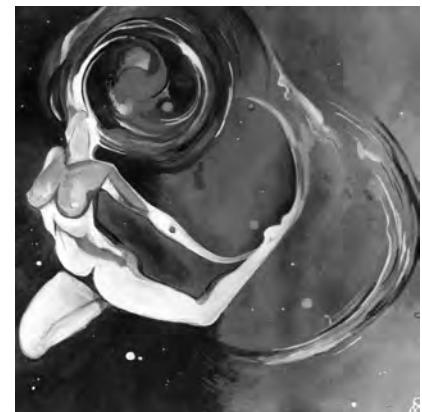
The songs were the starting point. They were already written when Kate set about creating the images that would accompany them. The idea was to paint or draw a single iconic image that would capture the essence of the tune, to express visually what the song was saying with music and words. In some cases, we would both talk about what the imagery could be before Kate sat down to draw or paint it. In other cases, Kate had a clear vision already in mind and just went for it. Actually, one of the images—the one for Factory Girl—was not originally created to accompany the song. That one comes from a series of four paintings that Kate did back in 2008, long before we even thought of making an album together. It just seemed to fit the spirit of the song so well that we decided to use it for the album, as well.

Tell us a little story about how you two met and found this interest in music and art and voice to share? How long ago was that?

We met in the summer of 2007. Kate was a student in the acting program at UCONN in Storrs, CT and decided to spend the summer here in the Berkshires, where Robert has lived since 2003. She discovered Robert’s music online and felt moved to write him to let him know how much she liked it. Robert was equally moved by the images and words that Kate had posted online and was completely blown away when he heard her sing. When Kate arrived in the Berkshires that summer, we decided to meet in person, and it wasn’t long before we were finding ways to collaborate. At the time, Robert was working on a solo album called ‘Heart Broken Open.’ Robert invited Kate to become involved in that project, singing on a few of the songs and creating album art. On one of our first meetings, actually, we were sitting at a table at the Red Lion Inn dreaming up ideas for a music video for one of the songs on the album. We’d talk about certain visuals and then Kate would start drawing them out on napkins, place-mats, then sketchbooks. We both felt such a spark of inspiration. It was so exciting to discover how compatible our creative sensibilities were. In time, Kate began singing on Robert’s songs. Then, we began writing songs together and creating music to celebrate and express this new union that was forming.

How does your music and art reflect with your steady careers? What kind of work do you do?

After moving to the Berkshires, Kate went back to school to finish her degree. She studied at Simon’s Rock and graduated in May 2013 with a degree in studio art. She’s been doing a number of different jobs to help support herself while finishing the degree and getting the music and art off the ground. Robert has done writing, editing and multimedia production for years, both here in the Berkshires and in his home state of New Jersey. He’s also worked as a guide for some of the local museums, such as the Bidwell House Museum in Monterey and The Mount in Lenox. We’ve managed to balance our jobs with our music and art, and they do feed one another. There are so many ways to be creative and to engage with people and make connection. We try to bring that presence to all of our work and to all the interactions we have with people.



Katherine Smith, Factory Girl



Working on new songs

Photo:
Sabine Vollmer von Falken

It must be nice to constantly teach one another and be able to recognize the innuendos of the music and art that lead to a working culmination. When does this show up as not a happening thing? What makes it work?

Honestly, it's a little mysterious. There are many different elements at play and everything has to align in order for something to work. Does a certain lyric choice get at the meaning without getting in the way? Does a certain key work for both our voices? Which of us should sing the melody, which the harmony? Should a tune be up-tempo? Slow and meditative? And with the imagery, does it reflect the mood and meaning of the song? And when is something finished? When does it need more work? We're guided a lot by intuition and feeling. When something feels right, we know it's true. We have had experiences of working and re-working things to try to get them to align. Sometimes, that leads to a discovery—an *a-ha!* moment—when we see what the piece is trying to be. Other times, no matter how much we work things, it just doesn't feel right, and those pieces tend to fall by the wayside. Sometimes, it's just that it's not the right time for that piece to come through. A number of the songs we now perform are tunes Robert wrote years ago. They may not have felt quite right back then, but now, because of this collaboration with Kate, they have found their moment to come shining through.

Robert, you say you like the piano, what instruments do you play?

I do like to bring different sounds into the music, or to try experimenting by writing on different instruments or using different recording tools. So, yes, I do play piano and guitar and also bass, percussion, and bamboo flute. I also like to work a bit with electronic music software, which is a tool I find helpful, not only for creating sounds and textures in recording but also for writing and arranging songs. Piano is an instrument that's very near to my heart. In the house I grew up in, there was an upright acoustic piano in the living room, and I spent many, many hours there writing songs. I love how big and resonant the sound can be, and I love how it feels to be enveloped by all that vibration. Also, something about how it's laid out feels good under my fingers.

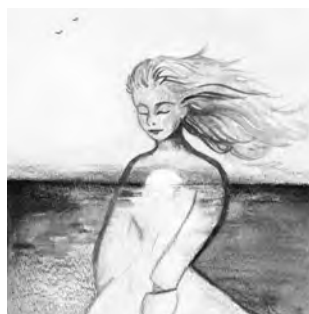
Katherine, have you formally studied art? Or, poetry, or?

I studied painting at Bard College at Simon's Rock and graduated with a degree in studio art. I also studied acting at the Connecticut Repertory Theater as part of the undergrad acting program at UCONN before moving to the Berkshires. Throughout high school, I was part of large choral groups—including chamber choir—that trained my ear and helped me develop an ability to

sing harmonies. I also studied voice privately during that time. Apart from English classes in school, I've never studied writing formally, but I've always enjoyed writing my own poetry and journaling.

How do you plan on celebrating this wonderful and successful collaboration? Where do you plan on taking it?

We are now doing several full-band shows to celebrate the release of the album and share it with our friends, families, fans and supporters. We did our first one here in the Berkshires in November at Shakespeare & Co. We'll do another one in January at The Pomfret School in Pomfret, CT, which is where Kate is from. And then, we will do another in New Jersey, where Robert comes from. Our plan is to continue to promote the album with the help of a publicist. We'll seek reviews in music magazines and blogs and to get it played on Internet and traditional radio, TV, etc. We will also focus on playing more shows and expanding our reach into new regions through touring.



Katherine Smith, *By the Ocean*

How have you made really creative use with your duo team? Teaching in schools? Workshops?

We are definitely interested in exploring all the ways we can engage with people through music and art. We traveled to Ohio in October to play at a festival that celebrated music, yoga and vegan food. While there, we were asked to provide live music for a "Yoga for Love" class, and it was such a beautiful experience, playing our songs for people who were deep in a meditative yoga practice with a focus on love and expanding the heart. We would love to do more of that sort of thing.

Along the way, you must have met a slew full of interesting artists. Perhaps there are a few people that you would like to mention that were in particular strong forces behind this album?

A number of other wonderful artists helped us make this album: pianist Zack Cross, guitarist and recording engineer Justin Hillman, bassist Dan Fabricatore, drummer Conor Meehan, drummer Stephen Chopek, cellists Melissa Hyman and Noah Hoffeld, violinist Eric Martin, guitarists Gregoire Pearce and Ken Rosser, vocalist Sarah St. Denis, producers Thom Soriano, Jason Loughlin and Jemal Wade Hines, engineers D. James Goodwin and Eli Walker, mixing engineer Oz Fritz and mastering engineer Garrett Haines.

HuDost! I heard them play, the first time – I was wowed. Were they linked in any way to your work?

We love HuDost! Jemal Wade Hines and Moksha Sommer have been good friends and strong supporters. As we have grown and developed our act, Jemal and Moksha have offered encouragement and guidance and have helped connect us with people like the fantastic engineer Oz Fritz, who mixed the album. We've also done shows with them and have performed on each other's music.

Robert and Katherine, where did you grow up? Describe a chapter of your life as a child to us.

You might say that Robert is the city mouse and Kate the country mouse. Robert comes from just outside of New York City, born and raised in the bustling suburbs of Northern New Jersey. Kate comes from rural Northeastern Connecticut, which is known as "The Quiet Corner."

Robert was an imaginative kid, always dreaming up ways to transform his environment of strip malls, row houses and highways into something more magical. Whenever he could, he would escape to the woods or the ocean to connect with the spirit of nature. He often made music with his brother, who is a drummer, and with his Dad, who was a singer and drummer.

Kate spent a lot of time playing outdoors, imagining. She would also draw along to music, inspired to make images by the sounds she heard. She had very creative siblings and they would "make believe" and go on many adventures together. Her parents fostered a creative environment in the home, encouraging the kids to play in an imaginative way, rather than passively sitting in front of the TV.

Do you have a favorite song on the album? Which one, and why? How do you feel about the artwork that goes with it?

It's really hard to pick a favorite song. It may sound trite, but we really do love them all for different reasons. Interestingly, we have gotten feedback from lots of people who let us know their favorite song. Each one is different, which is really wonderful to hear; different songs speak to different people.

Continued on next page...

Oakes & Smith *continued*



Portrait of Katherine and Robert by Sabine Vollmer von Falken

Any plans for traveling abroad to get your music listened to by people who speak in other languages? Maybe you will be translating music to some of these countries one day!

We would love to travel abroad and bring our music to other places in the world. We don't have anything planned, yet, but it's definitely something we want to do someday.

How do you decide on who gets to play the other instruments in a song? What qualities do you look for that make the blend jive? We look for players who are sensitive to the kind of music we're trying to create, players who love finding ways to use their instrument in support of the song and to help evoke the mood and meaning we're trying to convey. And of course, we look for good chemistry between the players. That means so much.

What is the most challenging part about creating words for a song you already have the tune for? Or, the other way around: Do you ever get writers or artist's block when under pressure to create music?

We don't feel a lot of pressure to write the songs. Mostly, it's happened pretty organically—an inspiration will start us down a certain path; a certain lyric or melody or chord pattern will come that will start a process of development and discovery. There have been times when Robert has had a piece of music with no words and Kate will have words with no music, and we'll find they work well together (this is how our song Being Broken, which is on the album, came about). Or times when Kate has had some unfinished words and a melody and Robert will pick it up and develop it and help finish it. There have even been times, believe it or not, when we were writing simultaneously in different places and then brought to each other what we were working on only to find that they blended seamlessly.

Probably the most important thing for us to remember when writing a song is to stay out of the way of the spirit that's looking to come through. We often feel like some kind of presence is trying to express itself through us, and the more we can put ourselves in harmony with it, the more pure and true the music is and the less difficulty we face while producing it.

How do you see you want to live your life? What kind of lifestyle do you wish for?

We want to be able to continue to make music and art and to share that with as many people as possible. We enjoy living in this quiet and beautiful place, but we also recognize that it can be easy where we live to be a little too cut off from the

larger world. It's important to have time apart to go within and develop our craft and our vision, but it's also vital to share that work with the world and receive what others have to give and teach. Ideally, we would have the ability to do both, to go within and also to venture out, to give and to receive. We hope, too, to see our work continue to grow so that we can truly build a life upon it and give it all of our love and attention.

Take some of your favorite song words and explain the story behind it, if you can. Something that is not obvious to anyone.



Wood cut for CD cover First Flight photo: Sabine Vollmer von Falken

Robert: The song Once, which starts the album, first came to me over a decade ago. And when it did, it was a very slow and sad song that lamented the loss of childlike innocence and wonder. I was remembering how, when I was young, I was fiercely creative, reimagining my life as I dreamed it could be and not yet troubled much by certain realities that threatened to shatter those beautiful visions. By the time I started writing that song, I had come to feel a lot of loss and disappointment, sad that those dreams never came true. The first version of Once really was a cry of grief. I never finished writing the song, then. I put it on the shelf, and it stayed there until, years later, while singing with Kate, I felt a new sense of possibility. I hadn't forgotten about those certain realities, but I came to see that just giving in to them was not the answer. I pulled Once back out and reworked it so that it became a kind of battle cry, a call not to give up on my dreams but instead to become smarter and work harder to make them real.

Katherine: Being Broken is one of the first songs that Robert and I collaborated on. I had a piece of poetry and Robert had a melody that fit the feeling of the words perfectly. When I wrote the poem, I had been reflecting on relationships and the breaking of emotional barriers. Oftentimes, when our guard is let down, we finally find the love and beauty that we were seeking all along.

Robert, have you ever illustrated? Katherine, have you ever played the guitar and sang? Role reversal? Anything come close?

Yes, we've both attempted to do what the other's strength is in. And we've found that we both have some ability in the other. This is probably what makes us able to work so well with one another. Inside Robert is a closeted visual artist and inside Kate is a budding instrumentalist and songwriter. Singing is certainly a common ground for us, but it's not the only way we overlap. As time goes on, perhaps we will continue to share roles and grow toward one another in this way.

How do you benefit from being artists by living in the Berkshires?

There are so many ways living here helps us to realize our potential as artists. There is a supportive community of people who share the creative impulse. There are many organizations meant to celebrate and support the arts. And there is a presence in the air here that seems to want us to grow our art as best we can. It is a very nurturing place for artists.

I am all out of questions, but please feel free to add...

One thing we'd like to add is that, if anyone would like to buy a copy of First Flight, they can find it at Crystal Essence, Tune Street and The Music Store in Great Barrington and at Woods Brothers in Pittsfield. They can also buy it at any of our shows. Also, it's available on iTunes and Amazon.com. And they can find out more about us at www.oakesand-smith.net



Katherine Smith, YBM

Robert and Katherine will be playing at the No. Six Depot in West Stockbridge on Friday, Feb 21 from 8-10pm'ish. Their web address is sixdepot.com