

MUSICAL TRADITIONS

Dream Café

By Stewart Hendrickson

I was in Bellingham last April to give a concert at the Roeder Home. We stayed around the next day and met a friend for lunch at the *Old Town Café*. It's a cozy café, open for breakfast and lunch until 3 pm, with good food, a friendly community focus, and a place where musicians are always welcome. Arriving at about 11:30, all the tables were occupied, so I signed the list and waited a few minutes until a table was available.

After ordering a breakfast omelet I opened my fiddle case, went over to an area designated for musicians (with a tip jar) and started to play a few tunes. The acoustics were nice, and people seemed to enjoy it, so I played until my order came. After I finished eating, I played for another half hour or so. When the waiter came with the bill, I discovered that my meal was free, a nice appreciation for my playing, and I also had a few dollars in the tip jar. What a nice concept!

Greg Brown has a song called *The Dream Café*, but it's more about a mysterious woman than a café. My *Dream Café* is about music and musicians. The *Old Town Café* is one example of a musician-friendly place. There are a few other examples I could cite.

Several years ago we were driving from Inverness down to Edinburgh in Scotland. Midway, we stopped at Dunkeld and decided to spend the night there. Dunkeld is the home of Scottish singer-songwriter Dougie MacLean. There he has restored an old pub on the River Tay called the *Taybank*. It's also called the "Music Pub" or "Scotland's Musical Meeting Place." It consists of a small pub with a piano in one corner, a fiddle and guitar hanging on the wall, a larger concert room upstairs, and a few overnight guest rooms.

We went to the pub for dinner, hoping to find a session later in the evening. There was no scheduled session that night, but I was encouraged to get out my fiddle and play a few tunes. They kindly turned off one of Dougie's CDs, and I played for almost an hour. They have a policy of encouraging visiting musicians to stop and play, and they also have sessions, music workshops, and concerts most every night. Dougie has since sold the pub to musicians Nigel and Beverley Large who continue to operate it in the same way. That's another *Dream Café*. Why can't we have something like that here in Seattle?

In Edinburgh we stopped for lunch at a small bakery café called *On The Mound*, just off the upper end of the Royal Mile. This was another one of Dougie's inspirations, owned by a friend of his. Like the *Taybank* it had a piano and a house fiddle and guitar nearby. Again I was welcomed to pick up the fiddle and play a few tunes, which I did for about half an hour. Unfortunately the café no longer exists, it was closed down for some political reasons.

Here in Seattle I thought we had the beginnings of a *Dream Café*. It's a small, but cozy little coffeehouse on the corner of Winona, Linden and N 73rd St. It used to be the *Greenlake Espresso*, but then became, under a new owner, the *Kaffé Shachor*, now renamed *Round The Corner Café*. Jonah Charney, the owner, said he wanted to promote music and a community focus.

We started a monthly 2nd Friday Coffeehouse Concert Series for the Pacific Northwest Folklore Society (pnwfolklore.org) at his *Round The Corner Café*. The first concert was in March with myself, my wife Betty, Bob Nelson, and Jillian & Jim Graham. April featured Isla Ross & Alan Kausal, and Jim Portillo.

Morgan & Graves, and Chris Roe were booked to play there on May 9th, but were bumped by a later double booking of Atomic Bride, a self-described "sexy, sleazy, twangy punk band." I couldn't convince them that it was good to be opened by a punk band and then to start playing at 9:30 or 10 pm. They said "NO WAY!" But that seems more like the music the Café wants to promote. It's never nice to cancel a gig that has already been well-publicized and promoted, but we had to cancel.

The day after we pulled out of the *Round The Corner Café* I booked *The Library Café* on Crown Hill (850 NW 85th St) for the May 9th concert. While not open for dinner, the Café agreed to open for music on a Friday evening with a full menu of beverages and deserts. It's a much nicer venue, a bit larger, and a nice acoustic space, which needs no sound system. And a cozy room with three fireplaces.

The next 2nd Friday Coffeehouse Concert at *The Library Café* will be on June 13 at 8:00 pm. Local songwriters will sing their three best original songs. It will be hosted by Mike Pryor and include Brian Booth, Rebecca Cohen, Timothy Ross, Karla Oman, and perhaps others to be announced later.

If these concerts at *The Library Café* (soon to be renamed *The Crown Hill Bistro*) prove successful, we hope to continue our coffeehouse concerts there.

In the meantime I'll continue to dream about my *Dream Café*.

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