



The Brooklyn Papers/Chris Meyer

Heights goes live!

Musicians' gigs are broadcast from cafe

By Jotham Soderstrom
for The Brooklyn Papers

Dozens of Brooklyn musicians marched down Montague Street last Wednesday evening, strumming guitars and fiddling violins while evoking the days when Bob Dylan roamed the Block and nightlife in Downtown Brooklyn was something to speak of.

It's been 30 years since Dylan sang of the street's lively cafes and air of revolution in "Tangled Up in Blue," but if local DJ Stuart Metrick and restaurateur Bruce Mendes have their say, Montague Street will once again be a destination spot for live music.

The reasons for revvit, however, have changed since Dylan's heyday.

"We want to hear music on Montague Street," said Metrick. "Not just loud, blasting, top-40 music. We want to hear the local artists — and that's the bottom line."

Metrick, a Heights resident since 1980, has been cybercasting local musicians on www.Heightsradio.com since May. Last week, he scored another point for the local scene when he began broadcasting live music from Mendes' Cafe Mezzo, a French-Italian bistro at 136 Montague St. between Clinton and Henry streets.

Metrick will cybercast Mezzo's open-mic nights on Wednesdays and one-act shows on Fridays. (Last week featured Ron & John, a veteran folk duo.) Mendes, however, hopes to add a rhythm and blues night on Saturdays. For now, listeners can munch on fried brie or steamed mussels while listening to artists such as the Friedman Brothers, this Friday's guest.

"There hasn't been live music on Montague Street for such a long time," he said. "But, espe-



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Local talents (Top left) Violinist Jeff Young and (above) vocalist Klara Leopold both got their time in the spotlight at the kickoff Cafe Mezzo's acoustic music series on July 30.

music. As far as Austria and Bolivia, it's probably family-oriented. Someone is probably listening to their grandson in Brooklyn."

Cafe Mezzo, which opened four years ago as The Tin Room then La Bouchée, has always featured live music, but since being granted a liquor license in May, Mendes has ushered local musicians to the forefront of his 60-seat venue. At first, he said, Brazilian and chamber music were typical, but these days no genre is ruled out. Musicians as varied as Williamson Vedder, 40, a folk and blues guitarist from Cobble Hill, shared the stage last week with Jeff Young, an 18-year-old violinist from Fort Greene.

"I like rock, folk and bluegrass," said Mendes. "I play guitar, so I really wanted to bring that to my place."

Among more than 20 musicians spotlighted at Cafe Mezzo last Wednesday was Young, a virtuoso as likely to play rock 'n' roll on his Martin Nobel as he is to jam. A regular at the Boudoir Bar's open-mic night on Thursdays, Young played solo before joining musicians on piano and guitar.

During the march, he accompanied Vedder in a guitar and violin rendition of Dylan's "Knocking on Heaven's Door."

"I've played the violin so long that it's become part of my consciousness," said Young, who will attend the Oberlin

Conservatory this fall. "It's part of who I am."

The musicians may not have been marching last week to end war, famine or animal cruelty, but their aim to bring live music to the area seems almost as lofty. But Cafe Mezzo's entertainment may ease the ire of residents looking for peace and quiet.

Since 1997, two separate venues at nearby 41 Clark St. have succumbed to a string of noise complaints by Heights residents. Judy Stanton, executive director of the Brooklyn Heights Association, predicted that an upsurge in live music on Montague Street would not go over well.

"Since Montague Street is a residential street with a commercial overlay, I think live music, regardless of the genre, would present noise problems," said Stanton, who noted that the association had not been approached by anyone with plans to open a new bar or club in the neighborhood.

For his part, Mendes says he hasn't received any noise complaints. And Vedder says Cafe Mezzo is a boon to local artists, and he welcomes new listeners, from Brooklyn, or elsewhere via the Web.

"I have something to say, and hopefully, if I'm touching on something universal, then it's relevant for everyone," said Vedder. "It's not just the words, but the melody and the emotion that you're putting behind it."

MUSIC

Acoustic Cafe at Cafe Mezzo (136 Montague St. between Clinton and Henry streets in Brooklyn Heights) includes open mic nights Wednesdays at 9 pm, and scheduled acts on Fridays at 10 pm. Next up: on Aug. 8, The Friedman Brothers; Aug. 15, Jacob White; Aug. 22, Larry Iric and Aug. 29, Kelly Mills. There is no cover charge. Shows will be broadcast live on www.Heightsradio.com. For more information, call 718/522-2202.

cially in the summer, I think it's a great idea. It will help the Montague Street economy."

Since last week's march down Montague, Metrick says his Web site has counted more than 270 new listeners, as far-flung as Bolivia and Austria. In the meantime, he said, musicians are getting more of the attention they deserve.

"It's kind of amazing," said Metrick. "How it has happened is either someone's family is currently on the radio station. Or in a place like Japan, they're very curious about American