

ARTS | CONNECTICUT

Finding Her Voice, and Her Way in the World

By TAMMY LA GORCE

Published: December 31, 2009

THE fiddle-playing singer-songwriter Carrie Rodriguez knows audiences in Connecticut are used to performers belting out the familiar songs of well-loved artists rather than their own original material. So when she plays two dates here this month, she plans a when-in-Rome approach.

Enlarge This Image



Sarah Wilson

ROOTS Carrie Rodriguez cites Lucinda Williams as one of her influences.

“It’s not like I’m going to do bar-band stuff like [Creedence Clearwater Revival](#) covers,” Ms. Rodriguez, 31, said recently. “But I do have a [Lucinda Williams](#) cover, a [Townes Van Zandt](#) cover, a cover of a song from an old band called [Little Village](#) that had John Hiatt and [Ry Cooder](#) in it.”

Ms. Rodriguez, who cites Ms. Williams, Mr. Van Zandt and [Lyle Lovett](#) as influences, selects her material based on how fully she feels it — something she said she hoped the audiences would sense on Jan. 21 and 22, when she will share the bill with Ben Sollee, a pop cellist, first at [Infinity Hall](#) in Norfolk and then at [Fairfield Theater Company Stage One](#).

Related

Times Topics: [Connecticut Arts](#) | [Connecticut Arts Listings](#)

“I like simple songs and simple stories, songs that help me take stock of where I fit in in the world,” said Ms. Rodriguez, who grew up in Austin, Tex., with an opera-loving mother and a folk-singing father.

Lately, her reasons for wanting to get to the bottom of that particular conundrum stretch beyond metaphor.

“I’ve never actually been quite this homeless before,” she said. “Not that I’m homeless, it’s just that I’m really mobile — I’m on a never-ending tour. I kept a place in Brooklyn for years, but I gave that up and now I’m back here in Austin. I’m renting a room from a friend. Right now there’s a lot of messy guitar strings everywhere, and my Christmas presents are sort of nestled in between everything.”

Messy and in-between may not be a bad way of assessing Ms. Rodriguez’s current position on the trajectory to music stardom. There have been impressive highs, like when she was chosen to open for Ms. Williams on her 2007 tour after the songwriter [Chip Taylor](#), who discovered her at a 2001 music festival, sent Ms. Williams a copy of Ms. Rodriguez’s 2006 debut album, “Seven Angels on a Bicycle” (Narada).

Those have been matched by sizable kinks of self-doubt.

For example, “singing was never my thing,” said Ms. Rodriguez, who was classically trained on the violin before discovering, while at Oberlin College in Ohio, that she would rather be “listening to Hank Williams instead of studying [Tchaikovsky](#).”

When Mr. Taylor, the writer behind classics like “Wild Thing” and [Janis Joplin](#)’s “Try (Just a Little Bit Harder),” hired her to play fiddle with his band in 2002, he asked her to sing

[More Articles in New York Region »](#)

Travel Deals E-mail newsletter

Sign up for travel deals and discounts on airfare, hotels, transportation and more!


 Sign Up

[See Sample](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED VIEWED

1. [Aging Gracefully, the French Way](#)
2. [Paul Krugman: Redo That Voodoo](#)
3. [Recipes for Health: Spicy Quinoa, Cucumber and Tomato Salad](#)
4. [David Brooks: The Gospel of Mel Gibson](#)
5. [A Picture on the Wall? Why Not Do the Whole Wall?](#)
6. [Op-Ed Contributor: The Diaspora Need Not Apply](#)
7. [Vatican Revises Abuse Process, but Causes Stir](#)
8. [Art Review: Matisse at MoMA: Carving With Color](#)
9. [The Language Divide, Writ Small, in Belgian Town](#)
10. [When the Bride Takes a Bride, Businesses Respond](#)

[Go to Complete List »](#)

harmony. "I had never sung a note," she said. But soon she was joining Mr. Taylor in full-fledged duets. She has since recorded three acclaimed duo albums with him.

Ms. Rodriguez also characterizes her songwriting skills as shaky, even though she co-wrote songs with country-folk luminaries like [Mary Gauthier](#) and [Gary Louris](#) of the Jayhawks for her 2008 sophomore CD, "She Ain't Me" (Manhattan Records).

"I just feel very green as a songwriter," she said. "It's the newest thing I've done."

Perhaps because of that, she has lately returned to the comfort of covers, including the ones she plans to perform in Connecticut.

They are among a clutch of songs she recorded for her all-covers third studio album, "Love and Circumstances" (Opus Records), to be released in April. The record includes a little-known song written by her father, David Rodriguez, who, Ms. Rodriguez said, "went on tour in Holland 15 years ago and never came back — he still lives there and speaks fluent Dutch." She also covers a Spanish song by her great-aunt, Ava Garza, a Mexican-American singer/songwriter who was signed to Columbia Records in the 1940s.

"A lot of them are songs written by people close to me, that I feel really comfortable with," she said. "That helps because I try to be really honest and in the moment when I'm performing — like I'm living the song right that second."

Listeners in Connecticut may appreciate that level of sincerity even more than audiences in cities where fiddles are a more natural part of the landscape, she said.

"I think audiences in general in that part of the country are very open-minded," she said about the Northeast. "They're not just folk fans or country fans, they're music fans. And I love playing for that kind of crowd because I might play a barnburner on the fiddle in the middle of a set along with a pretty ballad. It's nice to feel able to do that comfortably."

Carrie Rodriguez will play Infinity Music Hall, 20 Greenwoods Road West, Norfolk, at 8 p.m. Jan. 21. Tickets are \$20 and \$25. Information: [infinityhall.com](#) or (860) 542-5531. She will perform at the Fairfield Theater Company, 70 Stanford St., Fairfield, on Jan. 22. Doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$22 and \$17. Information: [fairfieldtheatre.com](#) or (203) 259-1036.

A version of this article appeared in print on January 3, 2010, on page CT11 of the New York edition.

[More Articles in New York Region »](#)

Times Reader 2.0: Daily delivery of The Times - straight to your computer. Subscribe for just \$4.62 a week.

Past Coverage

- [PLAYLIST; From Kingston's Streets to the Wide-Open Spaces](#) (September 14, 2008)
- [MUSIC; He Still Makes Everything . . . Groovy](#) (December 21, 2003)

Related Searches

- [Rodriguez, Carrie](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Folk Music](#)
- [Connecticut](#)

- [+ Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [+ Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [+ Get E-Mail Alerts](#)
- [+ Get E-Mail Alerts](#)

RECOMMEND

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT

REPRINTS

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

TRAVEL »



36 Hours in Nantucket

MOVIES »



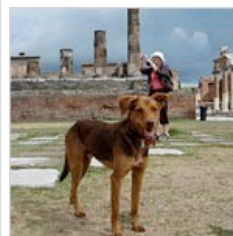
Decoding the Mind in 'Inception'

OPINION »

Op-Ed: Art for Whose Sake?

Dani Shapiro on the Larry Rivers controversy and the rights of artists' children.

WORLD »



Love Among Pompeii's Ruins Extends to Dogs

OPINION »



Room for Debate: Who Won in the Financial Bill?

THEATER »



Tragedy and Comedy, Starring Pac-Man

