

Janet Cormier —live and personable on art and comedy

Somerville artist Janet Cormier will be performing at the Somerville News Music and Poetry Series Sunday, Oct. 8 at the Tir na nOg with the music feature, Glenn Michael. You can also catch her hosting on Art at SCAT (Somerville Access Television) on Channel 3 Tuesday nights at 7 pm and at Cormier's Comedy Madness on the second Wednesday of the month Oct. 11 at the All Asia Café in Cambridge.

Meet Janet Cormier

Cormier said she has been writing all her life, "Before I could read or write I loved creating stories. Once I learned the alphabet there was no stopping me...well except for I cannot spell..." She said she started writing poetry in junior high school. "Our teacher brought in a stack of photos of paintings etc. She said to pick one and write a poem about the photo. In the last couple of years I have written poems about that experience and about writing poetry." She first started performing her poetry at readings hosted by Somerville poetry icon, Doug Holder.

Cormier began doing stand-up comedy in 1999, when she was laid off from a job as a Human Resources and Management Trainer. She said, "I knew I wanted to continue to train (write and facilitate). So I took a stand-up comedy class. My debut was at the Comedy Studio in Cambridge." Cormier then faded

out for a year or two because her mother was ill. She said, "The comedy helped me but it was more about giving me a perspective." She got back into performing in 2002/2003. On Mother's Day 2002, the show she hosts, Cormier's Comedy Madness ("Cormier's Comedy"), began at the All Asia.

Cormier's Comedy at The All Asia

Cormier said her comedy show began when she was getting stage time at Stash's Comedy Jam, which happened on Sunday nights at the All Asia. She said, "The All Asia owners approached me about starting my own show. Then, a comedian who was giving up his slot also asked me about the show. So I took the slot."

Cormier said "I wanted to create/provide a venue for subject matter and folks that aren't mainstream. I love political comedy and wanted to encourage it. Since 9/11 there has been too much fear and. People shying away from political stuff. I wanted to have a space for women, and comedians who are 30+ years old."

The All Asia owners subsequently suggested changing the format to include more than comedy, so Cormier started inviting poets and musicians to perform. She also encouraged comedians to try different mediums like reading poetry or prose in their acts.

Cormier said, "It's been a chal-



lenge to build an audience, but I enjoy the show. In the beginning I was nervous and wanted things to be right. Producing the show has been an exercise in inner growth — learning to let go, enjoy and be in the present."

Art at SCAT

Cormier also hosts an arts television show, Art at SCAT. She said, "It's great. I get to meet, talk to, interview and sometimes visit artist. I love to hear them talk about their work process, their growth and their dreams. At the end of each show I ask them to share words of encouragement to folks out there who are artists but haven't come out yet."

Cormier on Painting

Cormier said she started exhibiting in SOS (Somerville Open Studios) in 2000. She said, "It was a dream that became real. Initially I was just an exhibiter, but became a site co-

ordinator by default for about 4 years." Cormier continues to exhibit at the Somerville Windows Project. She said, "I love getting folks interested in the event. This past year I exhibited in the home of Somerville artist, Anne Barnard."

Cormier said "The relationship between my comedy, poetry and art is Attention Deficit Disorder ("ADD"). I didn't know I had ADD until while I was laid off in 1999, I started doing research and self-diagnosed. Later my diagnosis was confirmed." She said, "I move from one medium to another...An idea in poem can grow into comedy routine, or a painting or collage and visa versa. My poetry, art and comedy are also tied together by obsession with politic-social-economic conditions that impact our lives — war, politicians, race, gender etc."

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