

# Business Features- Cumberland

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## VocalEase: Creative Musical Fun For Everyone With Joanna Finch

Singing is becoming a more and more popular activity in the Comox Valley, as people discover the joy of making beautiful sound with others. Longtime valley singer and songwriter Joanna Finch has taken the experience a step further with her courses and workshops, which explore everyone's innate musicality and creativity.

Joanna says VocalEase is a "method of community music-making based on improvisational voice techniques- I learned the technique at Hollyhock on Cortes Island from Rhiannon, an internationally renowned jazz singer, and improvisational voice teacher, and through attending the Vancouver Creative Music Institute's Advanced Improvisation course."

Joanna explains- "Rhiannon took world roots music, and motifs from jazz and blues, like the work of Bobby McFerrin, plus sounds from languages. I've integrated my experience as a songwriter plus my aptitude for sound mimicry- throat music, trumpets, nature sounds and weird sounds "noise music" to add an element of soundscapes, the kinds of background sounds you hear in house and world music. I wanted my students to come away feeling invigorated and energized, like the feeling you get after a yoga class- my friend Vicky Catchpole calls it 'Yoga for the voice', so I've added movement to many of the exercises"

VocalEase classes consist of six one and a half hour workshops, in which people learn to relax, have fun, and share their vocal musicality with others. Joanna says- "There is no expectation of succeeding in a particular way. We create 'Sound Mandalas in Song' a term that I devised to give you a sense of the ephemeral nature of improvisational music. It's exciting and different. People leave their egos and expectations at the door, along with their fear of having a bad voice."

Sessions usually begin with "warming up exercises, toning, body warm ups. Then I introduce improvisational games like my 'Rhythm Wraps' - a body/ mouth music jam or 'Animalinga' where we explore language and vocalizations, sounds that are not sung. I use a lot of Rhiannon's



Joanna Finch (centre) with other improvisors at Hollyhock

(www.rhiannonmusic.com) games as well: 'Circle Song', which introduces people to soloing over a pattern, 'Three Face Front', where three people stand facing ahead, and, without looking at each other or having any idea what will come out, co-create an improvised song that has elements of harmony, rhythm, and soloing." More formal exercises include "Taking a jazz riff into a group of people. Someone will do a bass line, then another will join in harmony, with syncopation, and keep building parts. We all create, on-the-spot, something complex and interesting. It's an exploration set in a framework of vocal technique that accesses rhythm, harmony and language."

There are two levels to VocalEase. Level One introduces all the techniques- "You learn the language of voice music, experience voice for more than just singing, pay attention to where and how sounds are formed. Then get into toning and harmonizing, the qualities of voice- nasal, guttural, rich. We make rhythm, with the mouth, body-percussive sounds like snaps and pops, animal noises- birds, or mimicing musical instruments with our voices. Each session adds more games- circle songs, jamming

on a pattern, partner games, mirroring and with gestures. We will deconstruct a known song, break it into parts, jam on the emotion of a single word, use tonality and movement, do more impressionistic noise 'scapes. Plus dance and theatre improv techniques."

Joanna continues- "A lot of people in the class are not necessarily musically trained. We bring it down to the simple place of people holding parts. It's not the technical aspects of what we do- it's how it makes us feel. VocalEase helps people discover the pleasure of vibrations of their voice. Everybody can do it, who's open to play." Anyone can join Level One.

Level Two, which expands on the first level to create tighter, cleaner, more complex sound patterns and prepares for performance, is suggested for graduates of the first level, or people who have had some training in musical improvisation, or dance or theatre.

Joanna will also offer workshops and retreats for any group's needs- corporate or professional development events, womens' or mens' groups, schools, spiritual organizations, outdoor education centres or long term and palliative care centres.

This summer Joanna will be presenting at The Abbey in Cumberland, on Lasqueti Island, at Deer Heart Sanctuary on Hornby in August for couples and in September an Experiential Getaway at Ocean Resort in Black Creek

The next six-session starts on May 26, Tuesdays from 5:00-6:30 VocalEase Level One. Register NOW for May 26- June 30. Six classes, \$60.00

Call Joanna for details on Kidspin, adult and youth summer events at 250-336-2474 H or 792-3717 C. Or check out her website at [www.joannafinch.com](http://www.joannafinch.com) under VocalEase.

## Body Mod Artists in Cumberland

Tucked in between Everyday Esthetics Studio and Jean Cameron's amazing hair salon on Cumberland's main street is a new tattoo and body piercing parlour, where people can benefit from the highly trained skills of two true body mod artists.

Sean Bergstrom is originally from Quesnel, BC, where he owned and operated a tattoo shop for eleven years. "I have always been interested in all forms of art and creativity as a means of personal expression. There are countless ways to modify ourselves and our surroundings, but none so significant as the tattoo and its ability to permanently convey something profound about the wearer's travels or destinations in life."

Tattooing started off as a hobby, but when his skills became evident to others, it quickly took off- "I could barely keep up with the demands of a rapidly growing clientele, who are constantly testing the boundaries of my imagination and abilities."

Sean's work is based on "originality and customer service- my priority is the client's wishes."

Black and grey is an area of particular strength. Sean excels at realistic images and portraits- deep cultural significance can make for the best and most meaningful body art, reaching into ancestral roots and putting an individual's unique perception of themselves and our world, providing powerful graphic impact. Etched cleanly and properly, tattoos can provide long-lasting enjoyment and an absolutely one-of-a-kind individual expression. "I am known as a stickler for detail, but have a keen sense of balance, adopting a "less is more" ideology, to facilitate a clarity of vision, with the design and subject matter having their own space to breathe, without over-doing either."

All sorts of people are getting tattoos for all sorts of reasons. In our consumer-based culture, it is hard to find ourselves on the shelves. Tattoos offer a real experience in "living art", and transform the collector into something to talk about.

Of course there are a lot of different shops and artists to choose from, but they are as different as their clients. For your first and only piece or for the avid collector, a simple rule can be universal- "Get what you want from someone that can and will

provide it for you", in other words don't settle for the limitations of an artist.

Sometimes images are abstract- "People describe dreams, or past lives, favorite characters in mythologies."

Other popular themes are religious iconography, Native designs, family names and crests, script, tribal patterns, floral, organic, celestial, oriental, evil, positive or song lyrics- "Whatever has significance to a person. Tattoos are charged with power some people dig deep inside for something meaningful", and others are whimsical and of the now, both conveying a permanent reminder or a goal to be attained. Sean welcomes all themes and styles- the more imaginative the better.

Sean has won first place awards for his work, internationally and locally "our customers are our best advertising. When they show off their work wherever they are it prompts conversation about who, what, and why. Tattoos create an amazing rapport between collectors and enthusiasts- often a good ice-breaker and social lubricant. Most people have an opinion about them or have one, want one, know someone with one, and there are even a few who would never get one and would like to know "how could you"?"

Sean can also repair, touch up, cover up, or refresh pre existing tattoos from other times and places. It's all about the client and their needs.

Working alongside Sean is body piercing specialist Sheila Hennessy. Trained by FOGG in Vancouver's Next school of body piercing, five years ago, she received the highest marks in her class.

Piercing has become more commonplace recently but still



Sheila Hennessy

appeals to a daring segment of society. People can personalize their look with infinite options of placement of piercing and jewelry, and Sheila is capable of working closely with a client to obtain the optimal results every time- "Some People are nervous before hand, but can rest assured that they will be listened to, with an emphasis on a clean, fun, memorable experience with a caring gentle touch. It's one of the biggest rewards- working with people and helping them through it."

All piercings include a piece of jewelry available at the shop, or you can bring in your own- "We care about our clients- want them to be happy."

Cleanliness is paramount- "Everything is 100% sterilized before and after each use, needles are one-use only and disposed of. We adhere to health board regulations and go beyond. We also offer after-care as necessary."

Sheila adds- "It is a family place. We invite everyone to come visit."

She continues- "We make everybody relax. We watch the vitals, and work smoothly, cleanly and efficiently."

Vancouver Island Tattoo is located at 2701 Dunsmuir Avenue, Cumberland, upstairs middle door- 250-336-0255.

Open 12 noon. Work starts at 12:30 till around 6 pm Tuesday to Saturday.

Walk-ins are okay, but they prefer you to call before- "It's all about looking good and feeling good."