

A slammin' Slambovian Christmas show

12/12/14

The Grand Slambovians invade The Kate

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Asked what to expect from "A Very Slambovian Christmas Show" at The Kate this Sunday, Tink Lloyd of the Hudson Valley-based folk rock band The Grand Slambovians, didn't skip a beat.

"Christmas songs and carols with a Slambovian twist along with a sprinkling of new Slambovian holiday tunes," she said in a voice reminiscent of, yes, Tinker Bell, during a phone interview from her home in the misty hills of Sleepy Hollow, New York.

In other words, a holiday-spiked Slambovian Experience.

But first, a few words about the Grand Slambovians or, depending on the album, Gandalf Murphy or Gandalf Murphy and the Slambovian Circus of Dreams. The term Slambovian: a variation on the word "slammin'" invented in 1998 by Lloyd and husband Joziah Longo, members of the disbanded progressive rock group The Ancestors, to accomplish two purposes.

"It was just puzzling and awkward enough to alienate the major labels that had been pursuing us and at the same time sounded huge and implied enormous possibilities," said the frontwoman and multi-instrumentalist who sports a trademark fuzzy hat she found while on tour overseas.

Apparently it worked. 16 years later, the band variously described as "hill-billy Pink Floyd," "folk pop," "alt-country," "roots-rock" and "surreal Americana" has amassed a legion of intensely loyal followers on the east coast folk-rock circuit, with some travel-



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You never know what to expect from The Grand Slambovians — especially for a band that has a member who plays a theremin, an electronic box that the musician does not touch to create sound.

ing hundreds of miles to see them in concert.

A good number of their fans have gone further than that. According to Tink Lloyd, some helped defray the costs of making its three albums with unsolicited donations and provided living spaces and babysitting for her and Longo's twin sons. The band has been given three cars to ensure they make it to their next gig. (Abandoning a broken-down tour bus in a venue parking lot was not an unknown occurrence.)

Then there was the 2004 New York Times article about a family that cooked turquoise-colored pancakes for a crowd of 450 at the CD release party for their sophomore offering, "Flapjacks from the Sky," with a small army of supporters enlisting themselves for stage decorations, lighting, ticket sales and hospitality.

No wonder, really, given the bewhiskered lead singer Longo, a consummate storyteller with a voice, as The Big Issue, UK put it, "as soothing and bewitching as a snake oil tonic" and a mad-hatter top hat and long black hair

that would make Johnny Depp proud.

Add to the mix the diminutive Lloyd, the group's Swiss Army knife, who pulls out, among other instruments, cello, flute, piccolo, bagpipes, and theremin, an electronic box-like body with two antennae that distinguishes itself as the only musical instrument played without physical contact.

A classically trained keyboardist, she tired of transporting the bulky case to and from gigs and took up the accordion in her search for "an instrument I could throw over my back and walk in any room to play."

It's the accordion, said Lloyd, that gives the Slambovian's music its distinctive nonlinear quality. One is just as likely to hear the band launch into an original song about your cousin's anti-depressant-scrambled brain, a rousing arrangement of Bob Dylan's "Forever Young," or bygone-era selections from marching bands in Philadelphia's Mummers Parade.

Throw in the occasional licks of psychedelic rock in Sharkey McEwen's electric-

guitar solos and Eric Puente's sure-handed brushwork tracking and texturing the sound, and you begin to get a sense of the Slambovian world of free-thinking, free-flowing, music-inspired imagination.

Not to mention their propensity, at live shows, to live in the moment and carry fans with them to a Slambovian state of mind.

"We have a set list to guide us, but then something in the atmosphere of the room or the audience will change the plan, and we'll sidestep into other tune, maybe some tune we've never played before from Joziah's immense library which is a virtual jukebox of the 20th century," Lloyd said.

Including Christmas carols, no less, at The Kate this Sunday. With a shot of Slambovian whimsy, of course.

The Grand Slambovians will present A Very Slambovian Christmas at the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 14, 300 Main St., Old Saybrook. For tickets and information, visit katharinehepburntheater.org or call 877-503-1286.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL POLITO

In the Christmas spirit are from left Sharkey McEwen, Jozlah Longo, Tink Lloyd and Eric Puente.