

Nancy Mroczek



On stage, Nancy Mroczek is possessed. She slumps to the ground and pretends to be clicking a remote before jumping up to jog in place. Her spontaneous movements spread into the bar, forcing people out of their seats to dance. Mroczek is uninhibited, and it's contagious.

"I could be wrong, but I think music was in me when I was born. Who knows - the chicken or the egg?" She says about her performing career.

By day, Nancy Mroczek is a psychologist, neuropsychologist and behavior consultant. At night, she performs in bars where Bud is \$1.50 and a brawl is inevitable. It's the kind of double life Robert Stack talks about *Unsolved Mysteries*. But it suits Mroczek. Both sides are avenues for her philosophy.

People who seek the advice of a psychologist are already unhappy. Performing becomes Mroczek's brand of preventative medicine.

Take, for example, a lyric from one of her songs:

Let the animals out of the laboratories / If you want something to research use yourself / Put yourself on the table and say 'I'm doing this for science.'

"When you see these things really pressing up against you, you're almost up against the wall [and] there's nothing else you can say, you're so boxed in that you haven't got any place else to move. I want to get out there and get people to listen to what I'm saying. Not necessarily agree with it, but just listen."

Mroczek's self-confidence and candid audacity on stage is an epidemic. She spins and yodels. She crawls on her hands and knees before lying flat against the stage floor. She strives for the attention of the audience.

"Things are more commercial now, and the passionately held ideas people will be holding will come from whoever has the microphone. So battles are being fought in a much less intellectual way. The human mind is not really being used to its capacity whatsoever. That's the media stage we're in right now."

Psychology first came into her life at Boston University, where she graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts.

"When I first read a psychology text - which I did not prior to entering college - my interest was piqued. My eyeballs literally fell out of their sockets onto the page, because I couldn't believe what I was reading. It is a perspective or insight about the human condition, such as it is."

Hooked on psychology, she left Massachusetts to attend the University of Miami, where she received her Masters in Psychology. More studying and more time yielded a Ph.D in Psychology from University of Minnesota. As a Doctor of Behavior Psychology Mroczek returned to Massachusetts, established her practice, and began post-doctoral work in Neuropsychology in Boston.

"Most, but not all, psychologists are historical about humanitarian objectives, and so they're about this secularism people have objected to a lot," she says about her profession. "People get the assumption that we're after truth, but we're after what is good for people and we're after what is the best way to perceive and we're into figuring out 'should we just be involved in selfish pursuits or should we be involved in pursuits that take into account the whole world and all the people in it?', etc. Those basic kinds of questions are at the foundation of these branches of intellectual discourse."

After setting up her psychology and behavior consultant practice in Boston, Mroczek started writing song lyrics.

"I generated more songs than I would ever have anything to do with so I kind of stopped. What's the point of perfecting songs and so on if you're not out there doing them?"

Frustrated because her lyrics had no outlet, Mroczek contacted Berklee School of Music students and alumni. She brought her lyrics and asked them to put the tunes in her head onto paper. In May of 1998 she decided to schedule a gig at the Boston Hard Rock Cafe. Performing ceased to be a side hobby. It became a professional focus.

"In May of '98 I decided to seriously start going after gigs. I say seriously because prior to that I'd gone and sung over the years, but never in a determined and methodical way."



Images / courtesy Nancy Mroczek

Mroczek, with no formal music education, leads a band called Kolers. She commands from the stage, involving herself in every part of the performance.

"Over the years, by being in association with musicians, I learned things about music that you can't help but learn."

Mroczek's philosophies are her motor and her performing and her practice are her vehicles. Though performing and psychology are permanent parts of her life, she objects to people categorizing her as 'the singing psychologist.'

"I hope people won't misunderstand that I'm not in that role. I'm not playing psychologist on stage. Some people think that when you're off-duty, you're still on-duty," she laughs. "I don't believe in a person being defined by a career. A person is whoever a person is. A person is many things."

Despite her belief in not scheduling every second of her life, Mroczek performs, books gigs and runs her psychology practice. She hosts a cable access show, Wednesdays at 8 p.m. on Channel 23 Boston Cable. She released an album in 1999 called *Live at the Linwood* (available at Tower Records) and an experimental video film called *Vietnam*.

"I don't believe in busy lives. I kind of preach against it. I've followed a path of not getting crazy, and I gave up a lot of opportunities on that basis. I started to create my life to be able to take on more kinds of things. I'm still going at a pace that is comfortable to me. I've engineered a kind of existence that doesn't have a lot of the trappings that will hinder people - I'm not married and I don't have children. I have some family, but I'm not burdened by it. I believe in not packing too much into one minute or one hour or one mind."

Mroczek's cable access show and her gigs have built a stable following. People mimic her unique movements and sing along to her songs. They yell requests when she comes on stage.

"If I didn't hear people doing any of this it would probably make me less enthusiastic in effect, without me realizing it. When you get somebody talking back to you it motivates you to keep going."

Even offstage, Nancy Mroczek stands out. She wears no makeup and her frizzy, short, wild hair shakes slightly with her movements. She dances like she's on *Laugh-In* and her singing is something like Yoko Ono's. Mroczek isn't for everyone.

"All I say is maybe true or all of what I say may be untrue for someone else. By the same token, it can be the case that anything that you or anybody else thinks is all a bunch of nonsense and there's nothing to anything. All that ambiguity and contradiction and possibility gets into the mix and hones and refines where you're coming from."

For more information about Dr. Nancy Mroczek's performance schedule, CDs, cable access show or video lecture series check out her web site at <http://home.att.net/~aavideo/mroczek>. For questions or a consultation with Dr. Mroczek, Behavior Consultant and Neuropsychologist, call her office at (617) 266.9268

By Becki Maisch

Nancy will be performing Saturday, August 5, at O'Brien's and at the Kirkland Saturday, August 19