

St. Petersburg lawyer Marcia Cohen hits note in Paris

By Pamela Griner Leavy, Times Correspondent
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Marcia Cohen, a labor and employment lawyer, joins Max Zanotti of the Italian fusion group Deasonika in singing at the Swan Bar in Paris, one gig of three. Music has become "another life" for Cohen.



[Photo courtesy of Marcia Cohen]

PARIS

Marcia Cohen's voice rings out in courtrooms from St. Petersburg to the U.S. Supreme Court. On Valentine's Day the labor and employment lawyer's voice rang out to a full house at the Swan Bar on Paris' famed Montparnasse Boulevard.

Cohen, who splits her time between St. Petersburg and the city of lights, took center stage at the Swan Bar with singer Max Zanotti of the Italian fusion group Deasonika. In tandem with Zanotti and

Floriano Bocchino, an Italian pianist and Zanotti's musical partner, Cohen hit her soprano notes, harmonizing in Italian on Zanotti's song *Non Dimentico Piu* (I Won't Forget Anymore).

Dressed in signature French black pants with a sparkly rhinestone sweater, Cohen sang lead vocals for *Between the Bars* from the *Good Will Hunting* sound track in English.

The Swan Bar served as Cohen's three-night centerpiece appearance in Paris. The threesome performed together for the first time, without a rehearsal, Friday night at a Montparnasse cafe and again on Sunday at a rock bar.

Cohen claimed no stage jitters at any of the venues.

"I was thrilled to sing with Max and I was primarily nervous a week before, but by the time Max and Flo arrived, my nervousness dissipated," she said.

The Paris engagement resulted from an Internet connection. An Italian friend of Cohen's sent her Deasonika's *Non Dimentico Piu* song by e-mail.

"It was so beautiful, I put it on my iPod, and every time I listened to it, I loved it and started to sing it, though I don't know Italian," Cohen said. She contacted Zanotti by e-mail, and the two decided to sing together in Paris.

Not everyone who has encountered Cohen welcomes her e-mails or phone calls. Human resource directors across the Tampa Bay area and Florida have been known to quake when a personal assistant announces that Cohen is on the phone, often meaning an employee grievance or labor problem.

In 2007, one of Cohen's most conspicuous cases received attention from the Pinellas County chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

She received the ACLU's Beckett award, an annual honor given in the name of Gardner Beckett, one of Cohen's professors at Stetson University College of Law and a mentor. Cohen had stood toe to toe with officials at Bayfront Medical Center and BayCare, the hospital conglomerate that acquired Bayfront.

Cohen continues to monitor international issues, including President Obama's recent lifting of "gag rules" on reproductive health care and his signing of the fair pay act.

While in Paris she serves her Pinellas County and Florida clients via e-mail, fax and a 727 area code telephone number from her "pied-a-terre," meaning "feet on the ground" apartment, in a nontouristy Paris neighborhood.

Meanwhile, singing in Paris and music have become what Cohen calls "another life," one that may cross over to St. Petersburg and beyond soon.

Crossover music defines Zanotti and his group, Deasonika. Songs are combined from other cultures and languages in genres from jazz to pop and rock, including such groups as Nine Inch Nails.

Over the Valentine's weekend in Paris, Cohen and Zanotti brainstormed bringing his sound to a U.S. tour where Zanotti would sing and Cohen would serve as manager, along with singing and collaborating on writing songs.



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