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Versatile singer, songwriter Christine Lavin to perform rescheduled shows



By Bob Workmon
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Christine Lavin may be the greatest baton-twirling, backstage-knitting singer-songwriter you've never heard before. Or perhaps you are one of the fortunate souls familiar with

this curious singing sage. Either way, Cape Fear residents will have four opportunities to enjoy her wit, wisdom and welcoming presence this weekend at Thalian Hall.

Want to go?

Who: Singer-songwriter Christine Lavin

When: 8:30 p.m. Friday, May 7; 7:30 & 9:30 p.m. Saturday, May 8; 2:30 p.m. Sunday, May 9

Where: Thalian Hall, Rainbow Room, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington

Tickets: \$25, 10-percent discount for Thalian Hall members. Seating is limited.

Details: (910) 632-2285 or (800) 523-2820 and at www.thalianhall.org

More Information:

- [Find out what other bands are playing Wilmington this weekend at the Cape Fear Music blog:](#)

Lavin was originally scheduled to play Thalian's "Rainbow Room" in mid-April. But a severe case of bronchitis took hold. Ordered to rest and told to refrain from air travel, Lavin switched weekends with her pal Glenn Singer, aka El Glenno Grande.

As one of nine siblings growing up in Peekskill, N.Y., Lavin found a lot to write about.

"I wrote my first song when I was 13," she said over the phone from a Connecticut hotel room. Lavin's mother encouraged her children to learn to play a musical instrument, and perhaps it was fate that a guitar was Lavin's choice.

Music and writing was always subordinate to whatever job Lavin needed to survive. She started waiting tables, cooking and singing occasionally at Cafe Lena in Saratoga Springs after a short stint at college. One night in 1976, she performed at the cafe and was heard by singer-songwriter Dave Van Ronk, friend and mentor to legendary musicians including Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell. Van Ronk encouraged Lavin to go to New York City.

Within a month, Lavin made the New York pilgrimage, wrote songs, took guitar lessons, worked briefly as a strolling musician in a Mexican restaurant and full-time at Bellevue Hospital. Then came a moment, she said, when she realized that she had to choose between paycheck and passion, so she declared her self a professional musician and hit the road.

"I went from making \$25,000 (a year) to \$6,000," she said with a laugh. "I've made my living as a singer-songwriter since 1985, so this is my 25th year."

She's marking the anniversary with a tour and soon-to-be published book, "Cold Pizza for Breakfast: A Mem-Wha?" The book offers reflections on the road, with the focus on the musicians she admires and who helped her along the way.

A generous spirit, Lavin said that one of the goals for her memoir was to help audiences and musicians alike.

"I wanted to include good and worthy musicians in this book because the recording industry has changed so much, it's hard to know and find really good music," she said. "I'm consciously not bad-mouthing anyone!"

Lavin's songs cover a remarkable range of subjects, from poignant observations about affairs of the heart in "The Kind of Love You Never Recover From" and gentle mocking of cultural trends in "Sensitive New Age Guys," to history in "The Wild Blue," inspired by a documentary about Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War II, and science in "Planet X," the lyrics of which have been included in astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson's book "The Pluto Files: The Rise and Fall of America's Favorite Planet."

In short, Christine Lavin's curiosity has as much or more to do with her gift for story telling as her facility with words and music. And the listener learns, in the instant that Lavin voices her discoveries, about one more thing, or two or three, and even that some things, like love, remain mysterious.

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