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Singer brings cabaret show to the first place she experienced live theatre

By Sharon K. Sobotta



Laurie Roldan Photo provided

When Laurie Roldan, a singer and mom approaching her late 50s, prepared to become an empty nester as her daughters headed off to college, she took stock on what her next chapter should look like and what kind of legacy she'd like to leave behind in the world. "I've always been passionate about singing. I've been doing that for 30 years. When I was thinking about my life and what I should do next as my daughters auditioned for colleges, my voice instructor suggested that I think about doing a cabaret (a one woman show)," Roldan says.

Several years later, after lots of soul searching, reflecting, writing and curating life experiences to the tune of Karen Carpenter's music, Roldan is ready to bring her cabaret, "Laurie Sings A Song For You" to the Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette. Roldan's show will run Sept. 9, 10, 15 and 16 at 2 p.m. and will have a special opening night complete with champagne and conversation at 7 p.m.

As the daughter of a musician father who played the clarinet, Roldan grew up to the tunes of Peter, Paul and Mary, the Mamas and the Papas and a host of other folk musicians, but she says no one inspired her quite as much as Karen Carpenter. "I grew up in Moraga and I

used to lay by the speakers and listen to Karen Carpenter's music and sing along with that," Roldan says.

As Roldan reflected back on her own life and the kind of stories she wanted to tell in her cabaret, the music of Karen Carpenter was the soundtrack to so many of her memories. "After a lot of write-throughs and revisions, I decided ultimately that I would be doing a show about my life and my story through the music of Karen Carpenter."

Roldan says the Town Hall Theatre has always held a special place in her heart. She remembers watching "A Christmas Carol" there in the mid-1970s, which was her first theatre show ever. "I remember the building, the bar area where I went to meet the actors after the show and it had a real impact on me."

And Roldan says, it's only fitting that her show should be in that same special place, where people have been living out versions or aspects of their dreams for years. "I want people to leave my show knowing that it's never too late to live out our dreams." Although Roldan's show may be inspired by her lived experience, she promises that along with the specificity is relatability. "We've all struggled with something or been affected by anxiety and all had to grieve at some point, and many of us have struggled with big things like motherhood," Rolden says. "I want people to know that no matter what, we should never stop dreaming."

Dennis Markham, the managing director of Town Hall, says it's an important homecoming for Laurie Roldan's show. "Coming together and celebrating our community and the individuals in it has been something that has been baked into this building even before it was a theatre. As much as we want to honor new stories, it's important for us to uplift the stories that are already here."

Markham is excited to see Roldan's full show in the very same building where she saw her first show some five decades earlier. "There's a nice symmetry to that. And, anyone who comes to see Laurie Roldan's show, can both celebrate her story and think about the stories they may have to tell - whether it's a musical, a short play or another form of storytelling."

To purchase tickets for "Laurie Sings a Song for You," or learn about the forthcoming offerings of Town Hall Theatre, visit www.townhalltheatre.com

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