**TWO NEW CABARET CONCERTS**

**THIS WEEKEND AT THE FORT**

SALEM, NY — While four hundred diners and two hundred people in the support staff prepare for the Salem Courthouse Community Center annual *Al Fresco* dinner, Saturday, July 30, the folks at Fort Salem Theater have two unique performances bookending the courthouse’s celebration of food and friendship.

On Friday, July 29, at 8 PM, San Francisco born entertainer Katherine Skinner lights up the cabaret room with her act, “Happy Days Are Here Again.” On Sunday, July 31, at 2 PM, on the Mainstage, pianist Deborah Young-Weiler tells the story of her love affair with the piano, in “88 Keys and Me.”

Miss Skinner, entering her senior year in high school this fall, dropped into the theater two years ago while visiting her grandparents in West Hebron. She sang, played the piano, and got booked to play Mother Nature in the 2015 Fort Salem production of “Little Red Riding Hood.” She spent the previous fall as an American Idol contestant, auditioning in San Francisco and then traveling to Hollywood. She fascinated viewers by telling the judges that she auditioned on the advice of her psychic cat, Moustafa. Dressed in a coat she claimed that David Bowie gave her in the 1970’s, twenty-five years before she was born, she belted out a contemporary song and was on her way to the televised contest.

A review in *Bustle* online said: “The mature, gritty tone to her voice is that of a 40-year-old former rockstar, not a teenager balancing her singing career with school career. It's totally awesome, … unlike anything I've ever heard before … unexpected from such a young singer.” In her new act, Skinner takes that very current sound and applies it to standards from the Great American Songbook.

Katherine Skinner performs one time only, Friday, July 29, at 8 PM in the Cabaret at Fort Salem Theater. The $25 ticket includes dessert and coffee, and reservations are seriously suggested. More information is available on the website ([fortsalemtheater.com](http://fortsalemtheater.com)) or by calling the theater at (518) 854-9200.

Deborah Young-Weiler was born in the Tennessee mountains near the Kentucky border. She hadn’t reached her third birthday in her earliest memory, of playing the piano at her grandmother’s side. “I would sit at the piano and play thinking if I kept sitting, something would come out.  My Grandma sat with me playing her ragtime tunes. I would play along at the high end of the piano.” She was nine years old when the preacher at a local church asked her to accompany a prayer service.

Not until she went to college to study classical music did she hear a symphony orchestra. “Hearing all the colors of the different instruments together opened my musical heart to study composition.  I also studied art to see the way color was used for emotion and I used color and sound to compose.”

Armed with a Masters in Music from the University of Tennessee, she straddled two music worlds, performing classical concerts throughout the south, teaching performance and composition at the university level, and at the same time playing honky-tonk piano in local bars. She briefly flirted with an offer to tour with the Charlie Daniels Band, but chose, instead, to concentrate on the healing properties of music. “I started writing music to heal people's pain.  It was powerful to see my music help people in their personal struggles.”

After an intense thirty years in her two musical worlds, she and her family moved to Sandgate, Vermont.

“I needed a little healing myself,” she notes. Unable to stay away from music, she started accompanying the school choir in Arlington, Vermont. “When I heard those little voices singing, my heart was healed.”

In “88 Keys and Me,” Deborah Young-Weiler traces her musical life, with warmth, humor, and some classic, classical, rag, and original compositions, promising as unique an afternoon as her program itself.

Deborah Young-Weiler performs one time only, Sunday, July 31, at 2 PM, playing the Fort’s Steinway grand on the Mainstage at Fort Salem Theater. The $25 ticket includes dessert and coffee, and reservations are seriously suggested. More information is available on the website ([fortsalemtheater.com](http://fortsalemtheater.com)) or by calling the theater at (518) 854-9200.