**FORT SALEM THEATER HOSTS**

**MAINSTAGE PIANO CONCERT**

SALEM, NY — Fort Salem Theater rolls its seven-foot Steinway Concert Grand piano centerstage on Sunday afternoon, June 4, when piano virtuoso Deborah Young-Weiler returns to the Fort for an afternoon of piano music designed to touch the souls of its audience.

Mrs. Young-Weiler was born in the Tennessee mountains near the Kentucky border. She hadn’t even reached her third birthday in her earliest memory of playing piano. “There I was at Grandma’s side,” she recently said. “She sat with me, playing her ragtime tunes. I’d play along at the high end of the piano. Later, I would sit alone and play, thinking that if I kept on sitting there, something good would eventually come out.”

She was nine years old when the preacher at a local church asked her to accompany a prayer service. Playing in church became a regular gig during her teen years.

Not until Deborah went to college to study classical music did she hear a symphony orchestra. “We didn’t have any of those orchestras in the mountains,” she notes with understated humor. “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 expressed emotion, and I used color and sound to compose.”

Armed with a Masters in Music from the University of Tennessee, Young-Weiler 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.” Unable to stay away from music, she started accompanying the school choir in Arlington, Vermont. “When I heard those little voices singing, my heart began to be healed.”

“In last year’s concert, Jay made me play some classical music,” Deborah notes, referring to Fort Salem’s artistic director, Jay Kerr. “This year I’m only playing what I love. Music comes attached to memories, and I’m going to stick to the good ones — which do not include my years attached to all those classical concerts. And I’m going to create new feelings and new memories with some brand new compositions.”

“I don’t go to the theater the weeks before a show to practice,” she confesses. “I can practice at home. I go to make friends with the piano. I really love that piano they have there. It inspires me.”

“Deborah plays with her entire body. She becomes one with the piano,” says Kerr, a pianist by trade. “It’s not a woman sitting at a stationary instrument. For the length of a piece, they are an inseparable force. She’s a tiny person, but while she plays, she and the piano are one big giant.”

A musical afternoon with Deborah Young-Weiler includes commentary peppered with an infectious warmth and humor, accompanying classic rags and gospel tunes and her original compositions.

Deborah Young-Weiler performs at Fort Salem Theater one time only, Sunday, June 4, at 2 PM, playing the Steinway Grand on the Fort’s Mainstage. The $20 ticket includes complimentary coffee. 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.