**FORT SALEM THEATER HOSTS**

**PATRIOTIC PIANO CONCERT**

SALEM, NY — Fort Salem Theater rolls its seven-foot Steinway Concert Grand piano centerstage on Sunday afternoon, July 1, when piano virtuoso Deborah Weiler returns to the Fort for an afternoon of piano music celebrating Independence Day and American Music. *Deborah Weiler's America* rocks Fort Salem's Mainstage in a 2 P.M. concert.

Mrs. 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.”

Evidently it did. 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, 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.”

The musical selections for Deborah's Salem concerts have ranged in genre from classical to original rags. "This year I gave Deborah a title," says Jay Kerr, the Fort's artistic director. "'Here it is,' I said: '*Deborah Weiler's America.* Go!'"

She already had a repertoire of some patriotic songs, some patriotic medleys, and some patriotic hymns, including an arrangement of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." She has prepared new arrangements of regional folk tunes, and will introduce some new music that she wrote a game developed by her video-designer son, Michael. A musical afternoon with Deborah Weiler includes commentary peppered with an infectious warmth and humor.

 “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 great big giant.”

*Deboroah Weiler's America* plays at Fort Salem Theater one time only, Sunday, July 1, at 2 PM, on the Steinway Grand on the Fort’s Mainstage. Tickets are $20; 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.