

Heit to perform benefit show for Guthrie Center

Film and stage actress mixes philosophical points with family humor and ongoing wisecracks about age in "Before I Forget...A Memoir with Music"

By Allison Sheardy

GREAT BARRINGTON -- How does, in the words of Sally-Jean Heit, "a Jewish girl from Brooklyn with a Southern hyphenated name," find herself giving a benefit performance in the Berkshires?

On Saturday June 18 at 8 pm, Heit will offer "Before I Forget...A memoir with music" at the Guthrie Center.

The show runs about an hour and ten minutes – which is a cut back from what it was originally. "Can you imagine having a mouth this big and not using it?" Heit, who wrote and edited the show, quipped.

Heit has an extensive resume, ranging from Broadway productions to her successful one-woman show "Only When I Laugh." Her film and television credits include "The Paper," "Tatoo," "Guiding Light," and "N.Y.P.D. Blue."

Heit's reasons for doing the benefit are tri-fold. First and foremost, she explained, "It's time to give back." Additionally, she noted that the Guthrie Center is a "great, lovely, glorious space." Finally, Arlo Guthrie's mother was Heit's first dance teacher in New York and she is eager to acknowledge that connection.

Heit grew up in New York City. There, her fight for attention among her seven siblings led to the discovery of her natural talents for acting, dance, and song.

The songs that are interspersed throughout the dialogue are a highlight of the show. Many are original, while others will be more familiar to the audience.

Besides Heit, the only other person on stage is Uel Wade, the musical director and pianist for the show. The pair originally met many years ago doing cabaret in New York City, and by a strange twist of fate they re-met after they had both relocated to the Berkshires.

"Okay, let's play!" commented Heit on the happy coincidence that eventually led to the production of her latest show.

Heit is able to personify a number of different characters throughout the performance. She easily and humorously brings to life her mother, sister, and several long-time friends. Her knack for accents and characters in conjunction with her strong voice and witty charm make for an enjoyable and memorable piece.



Lynnette NajimySa

Sally-Jane Heit rehearsing for her show, "Before I Forget...a memoir with music."

She is a warm and inviting person. She calls everyone she meets "honey-bun" and approaches everything – from life in show business to the latest bizarre New England weather – with a strong sense of humor. Throughout the show, she mixes philosophical points in with the poignant family humor and ongoing wisecracks about age.

The doors will open at 7, and light fare and beverages will be available for purchase. For those that purchase a ticket, drinks and dessert will be provided at the reception after the show, along with the opportunity to mingle with Heit and Wade.

Most shows at the Guthrie Center include dinner with the show, with doors opening at 6. Heit decided against that, joking, "You never know when they're [the audience] going to throw food at you."

The Guthrie Center is known for hosting the Troubadour Series weekend evenings. Heit was pleased that they were willing to take a break from the series in order to present her show. She observed that in many ways, she is similar to medieval troubadours.

"They told stories," she said. "And that's what I do. I wouldn't mind being called a



Lynnette NajimySa

troubadour."

Tickets to "Before I Forget...A memoir with music" are \$25 for Guthrie Center members at \$30 for non-members. For more information, contact the Guthrie Center at 413-528-1955.

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