



On Aug. 20, Jennifer Provenza will perform a dozen songs in a cabaret environment, with wine, dessert and twinkling string lights, as a fundraiser for the Yolo Crisis Nursery. Provenza, who graduated from Davis High School, is a professional actor and adjunct music professor in Sacramento. Courtesy photo

Columns

Yolo Crisis Nursery: Come to the ‘Cabaret’ in support of nursery’s mission

By **Karen Adams** From page A8 | June 26, 2016

Mention the word “cabaret” and people of a certain age instantly recall Liza Minnelli belting out a song of the same name:

“What good is sitting alone in your room? Come hear the music play. ...”

The Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery invite the public to hear the music at “Cabaret for a Cause” on Saturday, Aug. 20, at Davis Community Church’s Fellowship Hall, 421 D St. Jennifer Provenza, a singer, actor and theater arts professor in Sacramento, has put together a one-women cabaret show that she’ll perform as a benefit for the nursery. Tickets are \$25; purchase them at www.yolocrisisnursery.org.

The song “Cabaret,” interestingly, is not part of the program. Provenza’s show has a special twist: All the songs were written by women — or at least the lyrics were — and cover 100 years of American music history.

“Several years ago, I attended a cabaret show in New York that was comprised of all songs that were written by women,” Provenza says. “Most were from the 1930s and ’40s, though,

and I started wondering how many songs from other time periods had also been written by women.”

As a professor, naturally she began researching the topic, then decided it would be fun to assemble a show with at least one song by a woman from each of the past 10 decades. Eventually she settled on a dozen, with some decades having two songs.

“From the earlier decades, it was hard to find songs which had both the music and lyrics written by a woman, although there were lots of male/female songwriting duos,” Provenza says. “The 1910s were tough also because a great deal of the music I was finding had racist and/or sexist lyrics.”

One exception: “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” published in 1910 with music by Leo Friedman and lyrics by Beth Slater Whitson. It will lead off Provenza’s show.

“As I went forward through the decades into the age of the female singer-songwriter, I found a plethora of material,” Provenza says. “I had a hard time narrowing down which songs I was interested in doing, eventually settling on whatever really spoke to me personally and musically.”

The song choices, then, will tell us something about Provenza. So does the fact that she’s giving the show as a benefit for the nursery.

“One of my primary interests as an actor, and something I minored in when I was in college, is in doing theater for change,” Provenza says. “It’s theater that benefits the community in some way. Because of the nature of this show, I thought it would be great to raise funds for a nonprofit group that is of particular benefit to women.”

Provenza says her father, Yolo County Supervisor Jim Provenza, played an indirect role in her decision to offer the event to the Crisis Nursery.

“My dad had talked a lot about the nursery over the years and what incredible work it was doing to help women and children in Yolo County,” she says. “As a mom to very young kids myself, I really think the nursery provides an invaluable service. It is an organization that I would love to be able to contribute to in some way.”

The nursery’s volunteer fundraising team embraced Jennifer Provenza’s offer. Nancy Storm, co-president of the Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery, went into full-on event-planning mode. The Davis Community Church agreed to allow use of its large multipurpose space, saying the nursery’s mission of preventing child abuse and strengthening families aligns with the church’s values.

Storm intends to create an elegant ambiance for the evening, with twinkling string lights, dark tablecloths and votive candles. From 7:30 to 8 p.m., guests can mingle and enjoy a glass of wine (included in the cost of admission), then sit down for the hourlong program.

“We met with Jennifer to talk about her idea, and she’s just a delightful young woman,” Storm says. “We’re thrilled and honored that she chose the nursery as the beneficiary of her talents.”

Provenza grew up in Davis and graduated from Davis High School in 2001. She has a bachelor’s degree from New York University and a master of fine arts from Brooklyn College. During the school year, she teaches theater arts in the Los Rios Community College District. Her professional profile at www.jenniferprovenza.com includes the fun notation that she does an “Alvin and the Chipmunks” impression.

Don’t expect any Chipmunk crooning at the Aug. 20 show, though. Just anticipate a lovely evening of song while helping support a good cause. Remember:

*“Life is a cabaret, old chum.
Come to the cabaret.”*

Tickets go on sale today at www.yolocrisisnursery.org.

Thank you to Sergio Saenz and the staff at Tres Hermanas for hosting a nursery benefit at the restaurant last week. Saenz promised the Friends of the Yolo Crisis Nursery a percentage of Thursday evening’s sales, and a nice breeze brought out many patio diners. We don’t yet know how much the nursery earned, but we’ll post the total soon on Facebook

Many people don’t know the nursery provides families with customized care packages filled with such items as diapers, children’s clothing, and formula and baby food. At the moment, we are in dire need of new or gently used summer clothing for newborns as well as sizes 2T to 5T. If you have some to donate, please call the nursery at 530-756-6680 for drop-off information. Thank you, as always.

— Karen Adams is a member of the Yolo Crisis Nursery board of directors. Her column is published monthly.