



Wed. Jun 23, 2010, 12:25pm

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Local musical artists mount concert to benefit Nashville musicians

Published: Wednesday, June 23, 2010

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Local musical artists performing in the Pennsylvania Helping Nashville Concert at Brownie's 23 on June 23 are organizers Debra Lee and Rick Denzien, performing as the Lyra Project.

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By Kelsey Ruane
Student Intern

Almost two months after severe flooding wreaked havoc on a city venerated for granting budding musicians access to their dream jobs, more than 21 songwriters, artists and bands will meet at Brownie's 23 East on June 27 to raise funds for stricken areas of Nashville, Tenn.

"This flood is the same caliber as what happened in New Orleans, and it didn't get the media attention that New Orleans did," said Debra Lee, Philadelphia-area coordinator of the Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of Nashville Songwriters Association International. "But the need in Nashville is ongoing and it's going to be the same as it is there [in New Orleans]."

The Pennsylvania Helping Nashville benefit concert in Ardmore is the second day of a two-day tour that begins in State College, Pa., on June 26.

"A drip from a leak in the ceiling drives you nuts, but can you imagine if the water came up from the bottom?" said Rick Denzien of Slot One Entertainment and Slot-1 Recording Studio, a sponsor of the Ardmore event.

Homes, music venues and landmarks were devastated by the flood, which killed at least 24 people in Tennessee, Kentucky and Mississippi. The famous Grand Ole Opry in Nashville endured flooding and damage to its symphony hall.

The concert, a daylong event from 2 to 9 p.m., will celebrate the country music style of Nashville but will also welcome artists of other genres, in the spirit of the city.

"Though it's associated mostly with country music, it really covers all genres," Lee said of Nashville. "There's a

much more laid-back, friendly vibe there.”

One of the Nashville artists performing in Ardmore is Craig Bickhardt, whose songs have been recorded by top names in the business, including Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson.

Local artists and songwriters include Ray Adkins, Skip Dennenberg, Suzanne Dee Gorman and Jonathan DeLise.

In addition to organizing the event, Denzien and Lee will perform together.

Writers’ rounds will make up an important part of the show. A tradition that originated at the Blue Bird Café in Nashville where many famous country stars got their start, writers’ rounds give songwriters, who don’t often see the spotlight as artists do, the chance to sit together and take turns singing their own songs.

One purpose of Lee’s organization, Nashville Songwriters Association International, is to represent songwriters on Capitol Hill, ensuring that they earn a fair percentage for their work.

Denzien called Nashville “a Mecca for the music industry.”

“Nashville’s different because it’s concentrated,” he said. “You can take a walk down Music Row and hit major publishers and studios within a few blocks of each other. It’s not like New York, where the music business is spread all over the city.”

Major music operations there are located in houses — not corporate office buildings, according to Denzien.

The proceeds from the concert will be donated to MusiCares Nashville Flood Relief Fund. MusiCares is an organization that assists people in the music industry facing unexpected crises.

“People really have just stepped up to be part of this event,” Lee said. She expressed her gratitude for everyone involved — songwriters, musicians, fans and the staff and management at Brownie’s.

The money sent to MusiCares from the concert in Ardmore will go to restoring people’s homes, music spaces and livelihood in Nashville, according to Lee.

“Country music is a little more stable [than the pop music genre],” Denzien said. “Some [country artists] stay popular for decades, and there are few in pop music who can make that kind of claim.”

The benefit concert is poised to prove that neither time nor flood waters can drown out Nashville’s enduring presence in the music industry.

“Nashville has always attracted people because of the typical myth that if you go to Nashville, you’ll have a chance to break into the industry,” Denzien said, confirming that it really came true for some people he knows.

The songwriters, artists, organizers and fans involved in Sunday’s concert are working to make sure that that myth is able to remain a true one.

Pennsylvania Helping

Nashville Concert

will take place at

Brownie’s 23 East,

23 E. Lancaster Ave.,

Ardmore, PA 19003,

Sunday, June 27, 2 – 9 p.m.

Ticketets: \$10, adults;

\$5, children.

Info: 215-643-1313 or

www.slot-1.com/flood.

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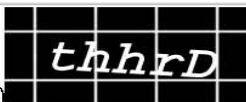


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