

 Jan Spencer will perform a Valentine's concert on Saturday, February 16th as part of the new Lowcountry Parlor Jazz Series hosted by CreateWhole Wellness Services.

A well-known area jazz vocalist, Jan took a few years off recently to pursue a PhD in organizational leadership. "I was interested in developing ways to connect artistic/creative thinking and processes with workplace groups as they seek to keep pace with the challenges of the technological and cultural changes of our times," she says. "I can now add to my tool box of talents the background knowledge and credentialing I needed to facilitate workshops that use arts activities to help people develop concrete representations of their thinking and to help groups think together toward a given goal. It's been exciting to watch eyes light up at they realize something new and wonderful about themselves or a person they thought they already knew everything about."

As much as she enjoyed her studies, Jan is excited to be returning to musical performance, and she's got a few new (old) tricks up her sleeve. "I've finally returned to playing piano for myself as I sing," she told us. "That's been exciting and challenging. It's one thing to have the freedom of movement and sometimes dispersed focus to sing to music others are playing. Singing and playing simultaneously is a whole different animal. I tried to get away from the piano but find that I've really missed it and love playing for myself again. Seems it's just that time. And since I'm playing piano again, I'm working on developing my jazz piano chops... again, no small task. But I love it! I love it when I can finally get my fingers to do some unrehearsed thing my mind is thinking. My voice is really good at that. My fingers are playing catch-up."

The first Lowcountry Parlor Jazz Session was held back in early December, and according to Jan, nobody knew quite what to expect. "We knew there would be great music and great food in a fabulous location ♦ CreateWhole Wellness Services. What we didn't know was how people would react to this unique entertainment idea. I am happy to say that it was a wonderful experience that far surpassed our expectations. And happily, the hosts decided that we should do it again... as a Valentine's weekend celebration."

Viewed from the outside, the performance space is a simple three-story structure. Inside, it is a beautiful contemporary space tastefully decorated with African art and handsome antique furniture. The three-story structure has an elevator for anyone who'd rather not climb the impressive spiral staircase centered in the house.

"The evening begins with a pre-concert reception on the first floor," Jan says. "A fabulous surprise during the first session was the impromptu performances that happened during the reception. Audience members sat down at the beautiful baby grand piano and played and sang and laughed and told jokes together as they enjoyed the reception refreshments. This got the evening off to a great start. And since we all thought it was such an important part of the first session, we are purposely inviting people to bring instruments, poems and songs to share during the pre-concert reception."

In phase two of the evening, the audience is welcomed to the second floor theater-style seating to prepare for the concert.

"I will sing original music from my newest CD 'Home Again,' from my first CD, 'Tribute,' and my arrangements of popular songs such as 'Time After Time' and maybe a bit of blues... we'll see. A new element I've added to my performance practice is audience participation. I used to be afraid of losing control of a performance if I invited audience members to participate. But because of what I've learned from my doctoral studies in group interaction, I no longer feel that way. I'm much more relaxed now and include in my performances experiences in which we, the audience and I, interact with each other: We laugh, we sing, we dance together and, for me, it completely changes the nature of our experience. Judging from the exuberant reaction of the

folks who attended our first session, I'd say everybody had a totally fun time!"

Phase three of the evening: Food! "Joyce and Veronica (CreateWhole Wellness owners) lay out an impressive and oh-so-delicious spread of victuals that top the evening off perfectly," says Jan. "People mingle as they feed the appetite they worked up doing all that participating. I sell and sign my CDs. Someone may feel the urge to return to the piano downstairs and play. Someone may dance to the piano music. It's an evening of entertainment unlike any other I've been a part of here in the Lowcountry."

CreateWhole Wellness is a private wellness company that provides inspirational supportive psychotherapeutic consultations, education, guidance and lifestyle coaching to individuals and groups. Their mission is to teach people about the power of food as nourishment and to provide them with tools to achieve well-being and a balanced, revitalized way of living.

Jan Spencer will perform at CreateWhole Wellness beginning at 5 pm on Saturday, February 16th. A \$25 donation at the door includes delicious light fare. Seating is limited, so please RSVP to [verojoy@createwhole.com](mailto:verojoy@createwhole.com) to reserve your seats. CreateWhole Wellness is located at 974 Sams Point Road in Beaufort.

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