

Elise Witt brings her global handmade songs to Street Music on Paris Avenue, Saturday, May 17th as part of the Port Royal Performance Series: five free performances at 5:30pm, May-June in the heart of Old Town Port Royal ~ bring your chairs! Produced by ACBC, presented by the Town of Port Royal.



Imagine a cabaret starring Fats Waller and Edith Piaf. When Mick Kinney's wry humor and exquisite piano playing meet Elise Witt's nightingale voice and world music repertoire, just such an unlikely but perfect musical event is created. With songs from the sublimely romantic to the superbly ridiculous, Elise and Mick complement each other's compositions, singing soulful harmonies and engaging the audience with their hilarious antics. The duo's repertoire includes originals like "You Got Me" and "Bittersweet" (duets penned by Kinney and accompanied by his jazz piano), "Spiral" (Elise's swing theory) and her love song to science "Natural Phenomena" (with Elise's guitar and Mick's fiddle spanning Georgia old time, Greek sirtaki, and French gypsy). Add to this a bevy of songs in a variety of languages, and a few selections where the audience becomes the glorious back up chorus, and you have a portrait of an unforgettable evening with Mick & Elise. The Port Royal concert will also feature Don Erdman on clarinet, flute, and tenor saxophone.

"I believe that we are all born singing, but that about 80% of our western culture has lost that gift because someone somewhere told them they were unmusical, tone deaf, or some other such nonsense," exclaims Elise Witt, who has joyfully created a full-time career as a singer and teacher of song. Her "Singing For Fun" classes in Atlanta have become legendary, and she has taken her workshops on the road to such lively spots as the Swannanoa Gathering in Asheville, Virginia Tech University, The School for International Training in Vermont, Big Apple Circus Clown Care, Savannah Folk Music Society, the University of Biel Switzerland, Casa per la Pace in San Gimignano Italy, Centro de Cultur Popular in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, and aboard the Universe Explorer educational ship sailing around the Americas and through the Panama Canal.

Elise's background has prepared her for a career that blends her two greatest loves - music and language. She is fluent in French, Italian, Spanish, German, and English. Born in Switzerland to German parents, Elise learned English at age 3 when her family moved to the United States. In describing her fascination with languages, Elise explained, "Each language has unique expressions and sayings that are untranslatable. And each language has its own music, its own rhythms and cadences, and uses particular muscles of the face. If I am to truly understand another person and their culture, I want to learn the sounds they make and the way they describe their world and their beliefs."

Elise's recent travels took her to China where she and 12 other American singers joined a Chinese chorus and an international orchestra in a new work entitled "Ode to Peace"; to South Africa where she and a group of North American women sang and travelled with a group of Black South African women, whom they later hosted in the US; and to Italy where she performs her international repertoire, and teaches and narrates her performances in fluent Italian.

She will present her global, homemade songs to students at Whale Branch Middle School and St. Helena Elementary School on the Thursday and Friday before her Saturday concert on May 17 in Port Royal. Her inclusive teaching style is inspired by the great teachers with whom she has studied. From excellent public school music teachers in her formative years, to a 20 year stint with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus, to studies with vocal innovator Bobby

McFerrin and community song leader Dr. Ysaye Barnwell of Sweet Honey in the Rock, and her ongoing studies of Vocal Improvisation and Sound Healing with master vocal teacher Rhiannon, Elise continues to broaden her own musical style and range, which she then incorporates into her teaching and her performance. She plans to release a new CD (her 10th) this year. Elise's song "Open the Window," inspired by a Georgia Sea Islands Spiritual, is included in the new Unitarian Hymnal supplement, and has been translated into over ten languages. <http://www.elisewitt.com>

. Elise Witt's performance is funded in part by a grant from the Southern Arts Federation in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the South Carolina Arts Commission; also funded in part by Alternate Roots.

After Elise, there are three free performances left: May 31st: Cool John Ferguson; June 14th Delta Moon; June 28th with Havana Son. For more information, contact the Arts Council of Beaufort County at 379-2787 and www.beaufortcountyarts.com