

SHE'S GOT ENTERTAINING IN HER BLOOD

I LOVE LUCIE



PHOTO BY DAVID BRAVO

Her mother's daughter. She loves performing live and says she throws herself into 'crazy situations.'

Lucie Arnaz brings her high-wire act to The Kate Friday, July 29

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OLD SAYBROOK » Asked what the audience at The Kate could expect from "An Intimate Evening with Lucie" on Friday, July 29, the irrepressible actress-vocalist Lucie Arnaz wryly promised to relate the story of "what I named my daughter and why."

Even with just that teasing shred of information, one thing is for certain: her zeal for performing on stage.

"It's LIVE," said the 55-year-old mother of five in an email interview from New York City where she was in rehearsal with long-time musical director Ron Abel. "The interaction with the audience. The high-wire act. I can practice all I

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need to, but then it's all up to me out there. No one can come in and edit to make it look good."

Of course, given the rich trove of material of the woman who veteran producer Barry Weissler has called "talented, idiosyncratic, with all the goods," we can still attempt to predict what's in store.

There may be inside stories about a childhood gilded in Old Hollywood fame and fortune as the daughter of America's most beloved TV couple in the 1950s; of her parents' tempestuous relationship ("I think they invented that word," the Palm Springs resident once told Larry King); of her father's quick wit and her mother's improvisational brilliance.

The Palm Springs resident

might recount her start on television at 12 with bit parts on "The Lucy Show"; the experience, as a 21-year-old, of playing a teenager in her mother's sitcom; and how she managed to avoid coasting on her lineage to forge a path as a talent to be reckoned with in theater, television, film, and on the concert stage over a career that has lasted five decades and is still going strong.

Part of the reason for her longevity: a determination to do it her own way and on her own terms. "I know what's behind those doors, Dorothy," the Golden Globe nominee for "The Jazz Singer" told the Washington Post in 2014. "Same life, better shoes."

Whatever her footwear, it's safe to assume a few Broadway standards from her classic roles as Sally Bowles in "Cabaret" and Annie Oakley in Irving Berlin's "Annie Get Your Gun." Or Sonia Wolsk in the Neil Simon-Marvin Hamlisch musical "They're Playing Our Song," for which she earned The Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award, among other honors. It's also possible she'll reincarnate Berthe, the daredevil, trapeze-swinging grandma in "Pippin," for which she was named Broadway.com DC's Best Supporting Actress in a Musical in 2014.

"I like to challenge myself," she told the Vancouver Sun in 2013. "I don't know what that's about, probably proving that I'm not just Lucille Ball's daughter. I like to throw myself into crazy situations."

Not that she shies away from her entertainment bloodlines. Take her "Latin Roots" show and CD, an homage and living legacy to her father, Desi Arnaz Sr., the trailblazing Cuban

bandleader who, as she put it, brought "his music and culture to America and didn't try to pretend he wasn't Cuban."

Hence, her dedication to "bringing his gold standards back to audiences," she said—for years, his music was available only on vinyl—by ensuring the Library of Congress house his complete arrangements backlist. Maybe she'll further that mission by pulling out of her hat one of her father's signature songs, "Babalu," with an extended conga solo and choreographed dance she most recently performed at the 92 Street Y. Or, alternatively, infuse songs like "The Lady in Red" and "Dancing Cheek to Cheek" with Latin rhythm, spunk and sizzle.

Or perhaps she'll hand-pick a show-stopping tune like "Hey, Look Me Over" or "You Are There" from her critically acclaimed nightclub act that she's toured throughout the United States and Europe, making stops at Feinstein's, the Cafe Carlyle and the Birdland Jazz Club. In the end, it seems, it's all part of the high-wire act in which Arnaz revels.

As for the name of her daughter, a Google search indicates it's Katharine—curiously enough, the same spelling of none other than Saybrook's own Katharine Hepburn.

Of course, just why she selected that name will remain a mystery until Friday night.

"An Intimate Evening with Lucie Arnaz" will be presented at the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center at 8 p.m. on Friday, July 29, 300 Main Street, Old Saybrook. For tickets and information, visit www.katharinehepburntheater.org or call 877-503-1286.



PHOTO BY AUGUSTUS BUTERA

Lucie Arnaz has a dazzling show business bloodline with Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz Sr.