

Singer-songwriter McKay brings her to solo show to Genevieve's.

The new cabaret space at the Peace Center, Genevieve's, gets its first try-out next weekend with a performance by singer Nellie McKay. BRENDA ERNST / PROVIDED

New Spot, New Face

Nellie McKay opens Peace Center cabaret, Genevieve's

By Paul Hyde
Arts Writer
phyde@greenvilleonline.com

You've seen the Peace Center's 2,000-seat Concert Hall.

You're probably familiar also with the more intimate Gunter Theatre and the recently renovated outdoor TD Stage.

Now meet the newest member of the Peace Center family: Genevieve's.

The classy new lounge is ready for its close-up.

Genevieve's, adjacent to the Peace Center lobby and overlooking the Reedy River, will make its debut as a cabaret bar as singer-songwriter Nellie McKay brings her to witty solo show to the venue this Saturday.

"It'll just be me and my imaginary band," said McKay, speaking by phone while walking her dog Bessie on a windy day in New York.

McKay, a popular cabaret singer in New York, actually is a one-woman band, accompanying herself on piano or ukulele — when not performing with a larger ensemble.

She's released five critically acclaimed albums featuring musical styles that run the gamut from jazz to pop to rap and disco.

She's nothing if not eclectic in her tastes.

"I think most people listen to more than one kind of music, so why not make more than one kind of music?" she said. "It certainly means there's something for everyone."

Her show in Greenville will feature some standards,

See CABARET, Page 4D

YOU CAN GO

What: Cabaret singer-songwriter Nellie McKay
When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday
Where: Genevieve's at the Peace Center in downtown Greenville
Tickets: $50
Information: 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org

CABARET

Continued from Page 1D

jazz, pop tunes and maybe even a little reggae, she said.

A former standup comedienne, McKay often fields questions with a sweetly delivered zinger.

Asked about her predilection for performing in cabaret venues, she said: "Oh I love cabaret. I love the intimacy — and the booze."

Describing her recent show called "Silent Spring" about Rachel Carson, the pioneering environmentalist, McKay said, "It's very entertaining, a lighthearted look at pesticide poisoning."

McKay may offer a song or two from "Silent Spring" in Greenville, but most of her show will spotlight more traditional cabaret fare, she said.

McKay is known for injecting politics occasionally into her song lyrics but said there's a price to be paid.

"I think politics can hold you back in show business," she said. "You run the risk of alienating people, mostly the other musicians. The audience is usually very generous and open-minded."

Genevieve's has been available to the public for cocktails and small gourmet dishes before and after the shows at the Peace Center, but McKay's concert will mark the first time the lounge has been used as a performance space.

Peace Center president Megan Riegel said she hopes many other cabaret-style shows will follow McKay's concert.

In the meantime, Genevieve's has given Peace Center patrons a chance to rub shoulders with comedians like David Sedaris and the casts of the recent Broadway touring shows of "Million Dollar Quartet" and "Mary Poppins."

Performers often stop by Genevieve's for after-show drinks.

"It's a great way for people to meet the cast members," Riegel said. "It's wonderful."

Genevieve's was created as a part of the Peace Center's recent $21.5 million renovations that vastly expanded the lobby and extensively refurbished the TD Stage amphitheater next to the Reedy River.

Back in New York, McKay apologized. The shrieking wind was making an interview almost impossible and Bessie the dog clamored for attention.

"I have to walk her four times a day," McKay said. "She's a big dog. She's a rescue dog, so I don't know her glorious past. She's a mutt, probably mostly pit bull. They get a bad rap, you know."

■ For the latest in local arts news and reviews, follow Paul Hyde on Twitter — @PaulHyde7 — or on Facebook, or read his blog under "Entertainment" at greenvilleonline.com.