



May 31, 2006

## **New Solo Show**

by William Henderson

They are the Stephen's Sondheim, Schwartz, Flaherty, and Foster; the Steve's Schalchlin, Winwood and Sweeting; the Stevie Wonder; the Cat Stevens - musical geniuses each of them, and each fodder for Will McMillan's new solo show *Will Loves Steve*.

There's also Fischer, who you'd be hard pressed to find on any recording, for he's the Stephen that first captured McMillan's heart and life 14 years ago and has yet to let it loose.

“The title has an extra resonance for my family and friends,” said McMillan during a recent interview just a few blocks away from his day job as the Cambridge Center for Adult Education (CCAЕ) assistant director. “There is also that phrase that some anti-gay protesters use: ‘Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve.’ [This] is a way to comment obliquely on that, too.”

McMillan made his solo debut at Scullers in 2000 and has since returned thrice as part of the *At the Movies* vocal group, twice as part of Sophia Bilides' Cabaret Festival, and four times with singer Bobbi Carrey.

“It's become my second musical home, and this year I wanted to do something to honor LGBT Pride,” said McMillan. “When I was performing in the '90s with Abe

Rybeck in *Adult Children of Heterosexuals* and then in a band called *Q-Set*, we did a lot of overtly queer material. I miss that.”

At the time of this interview, McMillan still had six weeks to pull together his show and final set list. With so many songs from which to choose, it has been difficult for him and his pianist, Doug Hammer, he said.

What started, essentially, as a catalog of all songs written by anyone named Steve was first whittled to a selection of between 30 and 40, before McMillan was tasked with deciding how best to focus the show. Schwartz and Sondheim songs were definite, since McMillan has been a fan since his parents bought the *Godspell* and *Company* cast albums when he was a child and auditioning for commercials and Broadway shows. He was a standby in the Broadway run of *Pippin*, though he never got on stage. He was there, though, every night, studying and learning and taking in the lessons that would become his personal North Star.

And then there are the Stephens — such as Flaherty, Georgiou (the birth name of who would become Cat Stevens) Sweeting, and Schalchlin — McMillan expects will be less familiar to the audience, which is part of why he loves cabaret. Surprise them at every turn, he said. Leave them wanting more. That's how to keep your audience interested and willing to wait six years between solo shows, though McMillan hopes the stretch of time before his next one is shorter.

At the end of the day, when he's home with his personal Stephen, Fischer, he thinks what he loves best about cabaret is how it can touch each member of an audience in a slightly different way - whether that be in reminding them of the first time they heard a particular song or in introducing them to something they have never before heard.

“When it's done well, cabaret is all about authenticity,” said McMillan. “I'm interested in what's real, and while I love collaboration, it's really great to go into a show that's solely yours and do it without compromise.”

McMillan debuts *Will Loves Steve* at Scullers Jazz Club, Double Tree Guest Suites Hotel, 400 Soldiers Field Road, Boston, on Wednesday, June 7 at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$18, or \$16 for BACA members, and can be purchased by calling 617-562-4111.

© Copyright Innewsweekly