Fundraiser featuring Matt Wilson, August 7, 2010

NOTE: You or reporter is always welcome to cover any of our regular season shows.

Please make an advance reservation, however.

Matt Wilson's Music: It's not a choice - its love

by Vicki Wolf

Matt Wilson started learning to play the piano not long after he learned to walk and talk. Now music is his life. Finding his way to a career in music took a few turns, but it didn't take long before Matt knew. His love for music is so strong, he says he really never had a choice.

In the beginning it was about attracting "chicks." Matt's father was the pastor for Mesquite Calvary Church in Mesquite, Texas. Matt played the drums and a little bit of piano at church. In the summers, he attended church camp. "At camp, my oldest cousin, Scott, would start playing the piano and singing, and the little girls would flock over, and I said, 'I can do that.'"

Matt graduated from the School of Journalism at the University of Texas, in Austin in 1996. He worked as an intern in public relations at the T3 marketing firm and thought he might have a career in public relations. “Then I saw an ad for a new piano bar. I auditioned and they offered me the job.” They wanted him to sign a contract, but Matt didn’t want to do that. A month later, as Matt was finishing his degree, he received a call from the piano bar owners saying they were opening a new place in Disney World and asked him to come and play there. “Dad told me to sign the contract and give it a shot,” Matt says. “I started playing five nights a week making far more money than I would have with any other job just out of college.”

Matt had intended to take the LSAT and begin graduate school to become a lawyer. He went in to take the test but didn’t finish it. “I went back to Orlando and was talking to a friend from T3 and he says, ‘Hey Matt, maybe you don’t want to be a lawyer; maybe you want to be a musician.’”

After that, Matt never looked back. His talent and love for music has guided him and opened doors for his career to unfold. Matt has had the support of his family all along the way. His mother was fan of Jerry Lee Lewis and the Beatles.

Matt, his mom and his sister were all big fans of Billy Joel. In December 2000, they attended a Billy Joel concert in Dallas. “I’d seen him many times,” Matt says. “I found a way to get really close to the stage. Then I found a way back stage and found out where they were hanging out after the show.”

As destiny would have it, Matt’s mother brought his CD to the concert, and he took it with him to the hotel bar. Matt struck up a conversation with Crystal, the band’s percussionist and back-up vocalist. “She listened to it and liked it,” Matt recalls. They traded information, became friends and started doing some work together.

When it was time to audition for Billy Joel’s Broadway musical, “Movin’ Out,” Matt was there. After auditions in Houston and New York, Matt got the lead role in the national tour of the show.

“I was on the road non-stop for two years,” Matt says. He met his wife during that time. She was

a dancer in the show. “Those years probably shaped my life more than anything else.”

Matt says that most of the time he is a working musician and rarely has time to listen to music for pure enjoyment. But when he does settle into the joy that music brings, he may stay up all night in his studio listening. “I really do love music,” he says. “I was jogging the other day and listening to my IPod. All of a sudden I was dancing instead of jogging.”

Matt and his band, WILSON, will be playing lots of favorites from a variety of artists, as well as some of his own songs at the Spicewood Arts Society concert on September 12. “We are going to do songs that have influenced my life from gospel and Billy Joel to country, rock’n roll and some of my original music,” Matt says.

The event starts at 7 pm, Saturday, September 12 at Spicewood Vineyards Event Center, 1419 CR 409, Spicewood, Texas, and includes a “Meet the Artist” reception with hors d’oeuvres.

Artist lovers are invited to attend a pre-performance dinner at Barton Creek Country Club Lakeside. Call 830-693-07581 for reservations.

To order tickets for the Matt Wilson Concert, visit www.SpicewoodArts.org or call 512-264-2820