

# Hilary Ann Feldman is still teaching, anxious to get out to sing and plan nonprofit events again

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Marianne Murphy Orland (left to right), Hilary Ann Feldman, and Caryn Caffarelli all perform with Acts Of Kindness Cabaret which will probably postpone its upcoming benefit because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Hilary Ann Feldman spent fifteen months working with three other coordinators planning Chicago Cabaret Week, which was supposed to run

from March 20 to 30, showcasing dozens of Chicago's cabaret artists. The week was cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

That was only one of several disappointments for the Wheeling resident who, in addition to being a celebrated cabaret artist and highly-respected teacher, is the founder and artistic director of Acts Of Kindness Cabaret (AOK Cabaret), which has raised over \$350,000 for other nonprofits.

As with the majority of Chicago's professional performers, the many postponements and cancellations have impacted Feldman both professionally and financially.

"I make my living in three ways," Feldman said, "teaching students, performing, and being the artistic director of AOK Cabaret. All performing life has ceased entirely. I had senior center gigs that are cancelled; library gigs that are cancelled. I teach private students so, with precautions I'm still proceeding with those students, but already my teaching is down by half."

The annual Acts Of Kindness Cabaret benefit will probably be postponed, which is a disappointment for (left to right) Cynthia Clarey, Caryn Caffarelli, and Hilary Ann Feldman, performers with this nonprofit organization which has raised over \$350,000 for other nonprofits.



For students who do venture to Feldman's studio, they will find a meticulous environment. Feldman disinfects everything a student may touch down to doorbells and music stands before and after each student. When students enter, they are required to wash their hands. Feldman stays six feet away from them and is spacing lessons so that students don't come into contact with each other.

In terms of AOK Cabaret, "We serve the nonprofit community so they're all cancelling their events, which is what we do for them," Feldman reported. "And our biggest fundraiser of this half of the fiscal year is supposed to be next month. It will probably have to get cancelled or at least postponed and that's going to present a bit of a cash shortage for us. We're a tiny organization with a tiny budget so every little bit of interruption in our cash flow hurts." Despite the fact that it's a small organization, in its 15-year history AOK Cabaret has raised over \$350,000 for Chicago-area nonprofits.

"I am certainly not as bad off as a lot of my musician friends who make 100 percent of their income from performing," Feldman noted. "With the shutdown of the restaurants and bars, they're out of work and musicians are not people who have cushions for the most part."

Feldman reported that she has been able to save for a few months, which should help her situation.

She added that because she is not married to her partner, "We don't mingle our money. He's a doctor in solo practice, and his patients are cancelling right now, too. I'm not worried that I'm going to be homeless, but things are going to get really, really tight really fast around here."

Feldman is hoping that some of her private students will want to move to an online format. She already teaches an online class twice a year for five weeks about the business of cabaret, which is supposed to start next month.

So far, no one has registered for this generally popular class. “I think artists are holding onto their shekels right now,” Feldman suggested.

During this unplanned time off, Feldman plans to work on bookings for the fall and continue developing a new show for AOK Cabaret. “And I’ll also be working on that list of projects that are always sitting on the backburner,” Feldman said.

“It’s hard out there,” she declared. “I know a lot of people who are already really suffering, so I feel a little bit blessed that I’m not at that place.”

**How you can help:**

Contribute to Acts Of Kindness Cabaret at [aokcabaret.org](http://aokcabaret.org).

Buy a Hilary Ann Feldman CD at [hilaryannfeldman.com](http://hilaryannfeldman.com).

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