

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2017

Berkner to headline first children's concert at balloon festival

RUSS MENSCH

QUICKCHEK NEW JERSEY FESTIVAL OF BALLOONING

Recognized as the "queen of children's music" by People magazine, best-selling children's recording artist and preschool television favorite Laurie Berkner will headline the first concert for children at this summer's 35th annual QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning in Association with PNC Bank.

The singer-songwriter, who grew up in Princeton and has released 11 best-selling albums, will perform on the Festival's opening day, Friday, July 28, at 1:30 p.m.

Tickets are now on sale at www.balloonfestival.com.

"We are thrilled to begin celebrating our 35th anniversary with our first-ever concert geared for our youngest balloonatics," said Festival Executive Producer Howard Freeman. "While we have added the top rising Disney teen sensations into our concert series over the past few years for teens and tweens, Laurie Berkner will be our first Kids' Concert for children ages 2 to 8."

The three-day event at Solberg Airport in Readington is the largest summertime hot air balloon and music festival in North America. The Festival features twice a day mass ascensions of 100 sport and special shaped hot air balloons from around the world, a live concert series, fireworks, a nighttime hot air balloon glow, children's amusement rides and family entertainment and attractions.

"We feel this is also a great opportunity for summer camps throughout the region to offer kids an entirely new and different experience," added Freeman.

Berkner was the first recording artist to perform in music videos on Nick Jr. and appeared regularly on the network's "Jack's Big Music Show," the second-highest-rated original program on Noggin, a commercial-free cable station. Her music has graced the short-form animated series "Sing It, Laurie!" on the 24-hour preschool television channel Sprout and she has been a frequent guest on Sprout's "Sunny Side Up" morning show.

What sets the Rutgers graduate apart? Her music speaks to kids without talking down to them, charming youngsters without boring grown-ups.

"I want to create songs for children," said Berkner, who notes she finds inspiration in her audience. "I was singing once and saw a 4-year-old girl shut her eyes and start swaying to the music. I thought, 'That's the reason I got into music.' It keeps me wanting to do more."

She has written music and lyrics for two off-Broadway children's musicals produced by New York City's Children's Theater: "Wanda's Monster" (2013) and "The Amazing Adventures of Harvey and the Princess" (2014). She is currently writing songs for her third NYCCT musical, "Interstellar Cinderella," which will debut off-Broadway in November 2017.

Berkner has also authored four books based on her songs including two Barnes & Noble NOOK Kids e-books. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers will soon publish three picture books with Laurie. "We Are the Dinosaurs" will release in Spring 2017. "Pillowland" is due out in Fall 2017 and "Monster Boogie" is scheduled for Summer 2018.

To learn more about the 35th annual QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning in Association with PNC Bank including tickets and concert information, visit www.balloonfestival.com.



COURTESY OF QUICKCHEK NEW JERSEY FESTIVAL OF BALLOONING
Laurie Berkner has written music and lyrics for two off-Broadway children's shows.