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## Folk-pop star Karla Bonoff and Kenny Edwards to perform in the Spanos Theater

For singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff, the turning point in her music career came when versatile vocalist Linda Ronstadt agreed to cover one of her songs.

"At the time I was unsigned. She was really starting to crest in her career," Bonoff recalled.

Ronstadt featured three of Bonoff's songs on her 1976 album, "Hasten Down the Wind" — "Lose Again," "If He's Ever Near" and "Someone to Lay Down Beside Me."

"It just made me really confident that I was on the right track," Bonoff said. "It was very reassuring — like, 'OK, you don't have to go back and enroll in UCLA or anything.'"



The next year, Bonoff released her first album as a solo artist on Columbia Records.

More than three decades later, she's one of the most respected singersongwriters on the folk-pop scene. On Saturday, Bonoff performs alongside her longtime collaborator Kenny Edwards at the Spanos Theatre in San Luis Obispo.

## Starting out young

Born and raised in Southern California, Bonoff was 15 years old when she started setting her older sister Lisa's poems to music.

The siblings dubbed themselves The Daughters of Chester P, after their father, Dr. Chester Paul Bonoff, and started playing at venues throughout the Los Angeles area.

Edwards, a founding member of The Stone Poneys with Linda Ronstadt, first encountered the Bonoff sisters at a 1968 meditation retreat in Squaw Valley.

"Karla was quite the deft guitar player," he recalled.

Lisa Bonoff eventually returned to school to study history and religion, but Karla stuck with music.

"It was the only thing I really cared about," she said.

Bonoff encountered like-minded singer-songwriters — Edwards, Wendy Waldman and Andrew Gold — at the legendary Troubadour club and dinner parties held at Waldman's San Fernando Valley home. The folk-rock band Bryndle was born.

"We had a similar sensibility about music," Edwards recalled. "Wendy and I were very influenced by traditional blues, and Karla and Andrew were fascinated by contemporary pop, but we were all folkies."

In 1970, the band recorded an album for A&M Records. It was never released.

"It was a new frontier then for girl and guy groups," Bonoff recalled. "Looking back, we had great opportunities, but we were so naïve."

Bryndle split up soon afterward. Bonoff and Waldman embarked on solo careers while Gold and Edwards joined Linda Ronstadt's new band.

## **Steep learning curve**

"When you're 19 or 20, there's a pretty steep learning curve," recalled Bonoff, who applied herself to improving her songwriting skills.

She'd hand Edwards cassette tapes of her songs with the instructions, "Why don't you give this to Linda?" When Ronstadt heard the ballad "Lose Again," the story goes, she asked Bonoff for more.

Ronstadt featured a trio of Bonoff songs on her 1989 album with Aaron Neville, "Cry Like a Rainstorm, Howl Like the Wind." One track, "All My Life," won a Grammy Award.

Bluegrass icon Alison Krauss, county legend Wynonna Judd and blues maven Bonnie Raitt have also done Bonoff covers.

"They're such great artists," Bonoff. There's no way you can't appreciate having artists like that covering your songs."

Her own career has yielded such hits as "Personally," "Please Be the One" and "Somebody's Eyes," featured on the "Footloose" soundtrack. (Two more songs can be heard on the "8 Seconds" soundtrack.)

Bonoff's studio albums include "Restless Nights," "Wild Heart of the Young" and "New World." She released her first live album, recorded during gigs in Thousand Oaks, San Clemente and Santa Barbara, two years ago.

Bonoff said she did the live album for the benefit of fans who haven't heard her live.

"I listen to the studio albums and they're from such a different time," she said.

The last few decades have also brought on Bryndle reunions. The band released its self-titled debut album in 1995, followed by "House of Silence" and "Live from Russ and Julie's House Concert" in 2002. Both were produced by Edwards, who's produced most of Bonoff's albums.

Edwards, a talented singer and multi-instrumentalist, will open Saturday's concert with a set of his own music. Then he and percussionist Scotty Lund will join Bonoff on-stage for a set of her most beloved songs.

"She and I have been singing together for a long time, so our harmonies are pretty good," he said. "We do it effortlessly."

He praised his friend's musical clarity.

"As a singer-songwriter, she's special because her songs have uncommon directness and simplicity ...beautiful melodies that strike deep at the center of people's emotional experiences," he said.