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THEATER NEWS

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Rumer's at the Café Carlyle: Willis Debuts with Elegance and an Alluring Edge

Steve Schonberg

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The actress dishes about her new cabaret show at the Café Carlyle.

The following story was written by Steve Schonberg, editor-in-chief of Center on the Aisle.



This week, New York's Café Carlyle will play host to actress and singer, and ABC's *Dancing with the Stars* (DWTS) champ, **Rumer Willis**. This is the same iconic spot where **Woody Allen** transforms from filmmaker to jazz man, playing his clarinet on Monday nights. It's also where the late Elaine Stritch held court, singing songs and telling tales of old Hollywood and the Golden Age of Broadway in her iconic, acerbic style. Stories like this seem to pour endlessly out of the doors of this classic New York institution. But, this week's engagement, with such a contemporary talent, is not much of a surprise as it is more a sign of promising growth for both the place and the performer.

This hallowed venue has also played host recently to Broadway star and glam rocker, **Lena Hall**, and booked similar engagements with the likes of singer-songwriter, [Alexa Ray Joel](#), and former Barenaked Ladies frontman, **Steven Page**. It showcases evolution for Willis too, who has enjoyed a blockbuster year since winning ABC's hit show last May. She's used that momentum to her benefit with an energy that seems fitting for this new chapter at the Café Carlyle—classic elegance with an alluring edge.

"I'm really excited. I feel like it's going to be a really fun show and I'm doing a lot of new material. I think it's got a really cool vibe," the 27-year-old told Center On The



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Aisle's (#COTA) editor-in-chief, Steve Schonberg, yesterday by phone. "I've worked a lot with my musical director... [I've] put together a set list that really flows and tells a story, so I think it's going to be a great show."

Part of Willis' allure, naturally, comes from her pedigree. More comes from her appearance: she's grown up in the public eye, and during that has become a beautiful and stylish young woman. But, the lion's share is direct from her talent. Willis did well in films (*Hostage*, *Sorority Row*) and with guest roles on TV (*90210*, *CSI: NY*) but DTWS has seemed to ignite a new, and potent, creative channel for the star.

"I think it was in a certain way less a decision on my part and more just taking opportunities that kind of came in front of me," Willis said about the recent turn of events, which has led to a starring role on Broadway in the hit musical *Chicago*, headlining several cabaret shows, and advancing work on her solo album with music legend, Linda Perry. She's also filming *Hello Again*, an adaptation of a musical by Michael John LaChiusa. Willis joins an all-star line-up in the film, including six-time Tony winner **Audra McDonald**, **Martha Plimpton**, and **Cheyenne Jackson**, among others.