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Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute

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J.E. Broyhill Civic Center Presents An Evening with Ronnie Milsap and His Piano.

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute's J.E. Broyhill Civic Center will present An Evening with Ronnie Milsap and His Piano on Saturday, March 25 at 7:30 p.m.

Ronnie Milsap, an American country music singer and musician, was one of the most popular and influential artists in the 1970s and 1980s. He became country music's first blind superstar. He was also one of the most successful country crossover singers of his time, appealing to both country and pop markets. Milsap's biggest crossover hits include "It Was Almost Like a Song," "Smoky Mountain Rain," "(There's) No Gettin' Over Me," "I Wouldn't Have Missed It for the World," "Any Day Now," and "Stranger in My House," among others. He is credited with 40 number one hits in country music, third to George Strait and Conway Twitty.

Ronnie Milsap spent the first six years of his life in a small rural town in the Great Smoky Mountains hamlet of Robbinsville, North Carolina before moving to Raleigh to attend a school for the blind -- where he began studying violin and piano, studies he'd continue for the next 12 years. Music's lure proved powerful for the young Milsap, and while he'd pursued his studies diligently in order to make the grade at law school, a chance meeting with Ray Charles prompted him to take another path that was about to open to him.

"I went to a Ray Charles show while I was in college and somehow they let us backstage," he recalls. "I was introduced to Ray Charles and I said, "Mr. Ray Charles, you're my hero. You're the man I look up to. I emulate your music, but I'm faced with a dilemma. I'd love to be in the music business, but all my advisors tell me I have to have an academic life. So I'm going on to study law and become a lawyer." And there was a piano in the dressing room, and Ray said, "Well, play me something." So I played him three songs, and Charles said, "Well, son, you can be a lawyer if you want to, but there's a lot of music in your heart. If I were you, I'd follow what my heart tells me to do."

Milsap did just that, recording a handful of singles in Atlanta before moving to Memphis, where he joined forces with super-producer Chips Moman and, by 1969, with Elvis Presley -- for whom he played piano on hits like "Kentucky Rain" and "Don't Cry Daddy." Although he was making a name for himself as a versatile studio musician, Milsap was set on being at center-stage, rather than in the supporting cast, a goal he'd achieve by 1974, when he scored his first number-one country single, "Pure Love."

He'd go on to top the country chart more than a dozen times in the '70s, with such enduring hits as "Let My Love Be Your Pillow" and "What a Difference You've Made in My Life" -- the latter of which is reprised on *Then Sings My Soul* with an all-new recording and arrangement.

His peers responded just as strongly as the public, awarding Milsap six Grammys and a dozen CMA Awards, including four turns as Male Vocalist of the Year. The success he achieved in the country arena would soon spill over into the pop and adult contemporary realms as well, thanks to universally accessible songs like "I Wouldn't Have Missed It for the World" and "Any Day Now."

Even with 40 #1 chart-toppers under his belt -- not to mention avidly-received live shows across the world, Ronnie Milsap is still growing and surprising long-time fans.

This show is sure to be a memorable one. Don't miss An Evening with Ronnie Milsap and His Piano at the J.E. Broyhill Civic Center on Saturday, March 25 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for the show are \$27 for adults and \$15 for students/children. For more information or for tickets, call the Civic Center Box Office at 726-2407 or visit www.broyhillcenter.com.

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