

## United Colours of Canada brings country together through comedy



A lot has happened in this world since Martha Chaves first played the Aurora Cultural Centre in the organization's first comedy show, hosted to mark International Women's Day in 2024.

There's a new Prime Minister, there's a new President of the United States, but one thing remains the same for Chavez: comedy as a form of protest.

Another thing that remains the same? The title of the upcoming show, which was set last summer: The United Colours of Comedy.

Hosted by Chavez, the United Colours of Comedy features a variety of comics from across Canada ? Ali Hassan, Danish Anwar, Fiona O'Brien, George Westerholm, Leonard Chan, and Daphne Joseph ? and will play the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall on April 26 at 7.30 p.m.

?Don't miss the comedy show that celebrates all the shades of Canadian humor. Prepare to be in stitches, while stitching the Canadian Flag together! says the Centre. ?Prominent nationally from her appearances on CBC Radio's Because News, The Debaters and Laugh Out Loud, Chavez teaches at Humber College and Toronto Metropolitan University inspiring the next generation of stand-up comedians.?

While Chavez says the title of the show was chosen by chance, the recent trade aggressions from the United States have, says Chavez, only served to underscore its importance.

?This whole aggression from the United States and certain groups is not new. One of the things I love about Canada is that it has been so accepting of things that in my own country I wouldn't be accepted for ? like being a part of the gay community. I have always seen Canada as a truer country with its problems, but it has been a heaven for anyone who wants to thrive. I want to celebrate that and continue to celebrate that before the people who don't like us permeate the scenes.

?There are some people who don't want to talk about [current events] because they think it is too easy. I have been told, ?making fun of politics is very easy,' but that all depends on your point of view. Making fun of anything is easy, but it all depends on your own originality.?

Before she came to Canada from Nicaragua, she lived through revolution. She recalls she and her sister wanting to have a ?normal life because everything was overwhelming. They found an outlet through protest songs ? until Chavez found her funny bone.

?For me, my comedy is a form of protest ? it's political, but it is also silly because people don't want to be sad when you there,? she says. ?Comedy, per se, is an act of defiance. It's an act of revolution because we should be sad, but joy is subversive and joy lifts your spirits.?

Coming to Aurora to help lift spirits will be the Dublin-born O'Brien, Anwar who grew up in Russia and Belgium, Hassan of Pakistani descent, Joseph, Quebec francophone, Leonard Chan of Chinese heritage, and George Westerhorn, who is of Dutch heritage.

?I know there are a lot more colours in Canada, but we only have an hour-and-a-half,? says Chaves with a laugh. ?The comedy community is like a microcosm of Toronto. I started doing comedy in 1995 and not until 2005 did I start seeing other ethnic comics. You always saw Black comics, but no ethnic people, no people with accents ? now there's a big variety and it's beautiful.?

**By Brock Weir**