

Ariko brings holiday 'joie de vivre' to Aurora with Cultural Centre family show

Music brings families together at home during the holiday season, but in the countdown to Christmas, music is taking the Lafontaine family on the road to Aurora.

The Lafontaine's band, Ariko, comprising of mom, dad, and their three daughters, will be in Aurora this Saturday, December 16, at 10 a.m., with a lively show hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre at the historic Aurora Armoury. It's a program that melds their vocal harmonies and fiery fiddles with the Franco-Ontarian tradition in which they were raised.

'We were really encouraged to play music from a very young age when we were growing up,' says Kelly, a member of the Lafontaine's younger generation. 'We began with an interest in singing and playing the fiddle, and we began performing in the community. As things evolved, we decided to officially form a band with Ariko.'

'A lot of the stuff we do is based in that tradition of Franco-Ontarian music and we're hoping to keep that tradition alive and well, sharing it with others, especially the kids.'

The family behind Ariko has done just that across Ontario and in many other venues.

Kelly describes some of the hallmarks of true Franco-Ontarian music as being 'rooted in a participatory style' - the song forms have a lot of call and response and repetition.'

'For family shows, we do try to make it fun for the kids who attend and give them a chance for them to learn a little bit about our culture. We do speak about our culture for people to learn about, but the other element is we do try to incorporate a few key fun things that the kids can try. We bring some wooden spoons with us for kids to try and also something called a Bonhomme gigueur - it is basically a little dancing puppet on a little piece of wood and these are just traditional elements that exist in our music, in our French-Canadian style and the kids really have a hoot with that.'

'When we bring this to young audiences and audiences of every age, be they Anglophone or Francophone, we try to convey that kind of fun and participatory aspect to it. We try to get people to sing for us even if they don't understand the full content of the lyrics - it is super-important to us that people have that experience of being in the music and the fun of the music. It is about fun, being together and being in community. The other part that is important, maybe more so for our band, in the Franco-Ontarian tradition is the fiddle element. My two sisters and myself all play the fiddle in the band, so there are a lot of dance and upbeat and fiery sounds that come from the fiddle that people usually gravitate towards and people get up and dance to the music. And that's what we love as well! It's all about the experience of moving together, singing together, and just having fun as a community.'

For more information about the upcoming show, including ticketing, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir
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