

Jazz singer Taetz brings holiday merriment to Cultural Centre on Saturday



Aurora Town Square will be a centre for festive merriment this Saturday as jazz singer Steven Taetz brings his 'exuberant' holiday show to the Davide De Simone Performance Hall.

The Aurora Cultural Centre will present Taetz on November 30 at 7.30 p.m., in a concert that dovetails perfectly with the first weekend of Aurora's annual Christmas Market, which will activate the majority of the Square throughout the complex.

'Steven Taetz brings it all to this exuberant holiday show to kick off the season' featuring a mix of familiar classics in the seasonal lineup, and songs from his newly-minted 2024 holiday album,' says the Centre. 'Taetz has a voice like none other. He's opened for Robert Plant and Allison Krauss at the Ottawa Bluesfest, appeared at the National Arts Centre, Calgary Folk, Rochester International Jazz Festival and crossed paths with artists from across musical genres throughout North America. Previous collaborations include Jill Barber, Jenn Grant, The Once and Connie Kaldor. He's the first to say that he loves to sing his heart out.'

He's also the first to say he loves the Holiday Season, telling The Auroran last week that, if it was his choice, the tree and all the decorations would be 'up all year long' squeezing in the Christmas classics like Elf and Miracle on 34th Street as soon as I can with movie-watching.'

Taetz first dipped his toe into recording holiday music with a 2017 EP that featured his personal takes on such favourites as Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas and Elvis' Blue Hawaii, but before long, he was 'really enjoying the writing process to put a new spin on some of the themes of Christmas.'

'I really love blurring some genres,' he says. 'On the album, you'll hear a lot of classic Motown, Mariah Carey and Michael Bublé' big pop sounds. I also wanted to include my jazz background and roots. I come from Alberta, so I wanted to blend in country roots on some of the tunes as well. My father passed away at Christmastime when I was young, so each year it's kind of bringing some of that childhood magic that was prior to that' bringing cheer to cheer myself up. The lead single, Magic for Me, speaks to that because, as an adult, I think we can move into Grinch territory or a little disillusioned of some of the childhood magic about that. I don't need to know all the background of why Santa can fly, but I can relive that childhood enthusiasm.'

On Saturday, Taetz will be accompanied by 'a really brilliant set of musicians', six pieces all together, which he says helps give the songs a pop band sound.

As a singer-songwriter, he says he finds inspiration all around him 'whether the snow is flying, whether the bells are jingling, or not. He says he looks at inspiration and situations through multiple lenses, including as a queer creator.

He's currently firmly in the holiday trenches, however, as he works on what he describes as a 'Broadway-type' Christmas musical, which he hopes to have ready for readings next year.

A non-Christmas album is also due in 2025, bringing him back to his roots and rock background, not unlike the music of Blue Rodeo.

'I have had to pinch myself a couple of times this year,' he says. 'This summer, I went back to Alberta and opened for Blue Rodeo. It was just down the street from where my great-great grandparents started their careers in farming. At the Badlands Amphitheatre, we had a sold-out crowd and I played for Blue Rodeo, who I idolize. I was nominated for a Canadian Folk Music Awards and also the Folk Music Ontario Award as the Best Roots Album of the Year nomination. I think some of those things coming about have solidified 'okay, keep going in this direction, it's resonating with folks maybe just a little bit more than before.'

'It is easy to gravitate towards the negative sometimes. With this album and the next project, I really want to focus on uplifting and also just performing live. The most important thing, I think when [playing to audiences is they] come away from it feeling like they are in a better place. Having fun is not a bad thing!'

For more on this week's concert, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir