

SPEAKEASY

By Jane Taylor and Reccia Mandelcorn

Georgian Bay is the evocative name of the band fronted by Kelly Lefaire and Joëlle Westman. This month's Speakeasy featured a conversation with Joëlle in advance of their upcoming holiday concert, Songs for a Winter's Night, at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Thursday, December 13.

The duo met in 2008 while studying jazz performance at the University of Toronto. Kelly, originally from Marseille, France, moved with her family as a child to a community near Penetanguishene. Frequent collaborations during university led them to create their band, Georgian Bay. For those familiar with the Penetang area, there is a lively Franco-Ontarian community, and this cultural dichotomy has wound its way into their music which is delivered in both English and French. They often will switch between the two languages in the same song; as Joëlle explained, their true freedom of expression allows them to draw upon the richness of both languages to express what it is that they want to say. Beyond francophone influences, Joëlle was equally inspired by the likes of Billie Holiday, Erykah Badu and even the works of Vivaldi.

Getting together with Kelly's family in the heart of Franco-Ontarian culture has created not only a refuge to write, but an inspiring backdrop for recording their four albums. Their delight in being recognized as a Polaris Prize finalist in 2016 was topped only by hearing their work lauded and played on Laurie Brown's former CBC Radio show The Signal. Songs for a Winter's Night promises an evening of seasonal favourites and shimmering originals to ring in the holidays.

Gaming has evolved into a sophisticated platform for storytelling, incorporating technology and blending art into interaction between gamers and systems. Kelvin Lam, Digital Literacy Assistant at Aurora Public Library, dropped by the studio to talk about gaming culture, and why public libraries offer an ideal meeting place for gamers to gather, learn and share their experiences.

Before coming to APL, Kelvin worked in game development, creating indie and mobile games. He's now enjoying teaching others by letting them play and experience emerging technologies. Kelvin is creating all kinds of exciting new opportunities for library visitors, including the introduction of immersive technology, like the virtual reality Oculus Go headsets that blur the line between physical and digitally simulated worlds. Monthly video game meetups are already creating a buzz, providing an afternoon where the community can play, relax and chat about games with others.

Aurora Public Library is undergoing a renovation that includes building a Creative Space. Although hesitant to reveal too much before the big launch, Kelvin hinted at some of the technologies he plans to incorporate including APL's popular 3D printers, a Cricket Explore printer that takes printing functionality to extremes, and experimentation with Augmented Reality (AR) software. With the addition of this technology to an already vibrant library space, Kelvin looks forward to offering these kinds of tech experiences to a wider community so that everyone has the opportunity to drop in and create.

Jane Taylor is Events & Communications Manager at the Aurora Cultural Centre, and Reccia Mandelcorn is Manager of Community Collaboration at Aurora Public Library. They co-host The Speakeasy on the first Wednesday of each month on 102.7 CHOP-FM.