

Barbra Lica returns to Cultural Centre for its opening act in new home



Barbra Lica wowed the crowds when the Aurora Cultural Centre welcomed guests to their first in-person concert amid the Global Pandemic. Now, as the Centre prepares to return to its new and improved home at the Church Street School and Aurora Town Square, they're calling on Lica again to usher in their newest chapter.

Lica, along with supporting act Charlotte McAfee Brunner, will take the stage of Town Square's new performance hall on Saturday, September 27 at 7.30 p.m.

A Juno-Nominated singer-songwriter, she has amassed fans around the world with her unique blend of folk, jazz and country.

A vocalist and songwriter of exceptional talent, receiving accolades for her unique vocal ability that stresses subtlety, grace and expression combined with her genuine warmth and engaging stage presence, says the Cultural Centre describing Lica.

When she opened the last chapter of the Cultural Centre's story, Lica was in the midst of starting one of her own.

Since she last performed in Aurora, she's started a family, toured the world, collected accolades for her 2022 album *The Ghost of Me*, and has just launched her latest, entitled *Imposter Syndrome*, which she says "explores an identity still in flux."

"It was written at a time when I was just starting a family. I was pregnant while I was writing and producing it, then I had a newborn," Lica tells *The Auroran*. "I've always been a geek. I was president of the Avid Readers book club at Thornhill Secondary School and it was all these things I didn't feel you were allowed to be as a musician. As a musician, you don't really think of yourself as a family person. You really don't think of yourself as a dweeb. You're supposed to be someone cool and enigmatic.

"There's a specific image I always imagined you're supposed to project, and I think the Pandemic happening just freed me up to try some different things. What if I did have a family? What if that would be okay? Can you still be cool and be a mom? The answer is, yes you can!"

The creative process with *Imposter Syndrome* allowed Lica to explore these and other aspects of her identity. A song called *Girls Like Me*, she says, "is about what a big nerd I am" while *What Do You Say?* is about taking the "leap" towards marriage. *The Ghost of Me*, on the other hand, explores the feeling of giving up.

"I thought maybe it was too dark for me to actually put out into the world," she says. "I like to do humorous things or a bit tongue-in-cheek and I thought it was too much, but put it out there anyway and it was just crazy the response! The album got

nominated for the Canadian Folk Music Award and won Song of the Year at the Ontario Folk Music Awards. People are streaming it, writing in, telling about how much they related to it and it was really neat to figure out I could be really honest and really put even the ugly stuff out there and people would still react positively to it.?

Lica is now working on a new project which she describes as both ?sombre? and ?hopeful.?

As she looks ahead to the Aurora concert, Lica says it will be something of a homecoming. She might be a good luck charm for the Aurora Cultural Centre, but, as a York Region native, she says there's a ?family vibe? when she performs here as well.

?I vividly remember that [Pandemic] show, walking into it thinking, ?Can I do jokes? Can I still do this?' It was a minefield in my brain,? she says. ?It's a warm, intimate evening of songs and storytelling, just connecting on that human experience. We're going to capture all the highs and lows of life, but with a light heart.

?I want audiences to feel like they're old family or old friends and we're just hanging out in the living room and we're putting it all out there. I invite them to relate, I invite them to understand the stories behind it. There is something to that when you sing something that can be maybe a difficult subject, when people relate to it, that sense of catharsis makes you feel like you have a connection. There's a difference between being sad and struggling with something on your own and thinking, ?Everybody feels this.' I see that in shows where people are just looking at each other smiling, nodding, understanding, or smiling at me. There is just this connection of we're all humans going through this difficult human experience. It is warm and it is less lonely.?

For more information about Lica's upcoming show and other highlights of the Aurora Cultural Centre's 2024-2025 Performing Arts season, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir