

Calypso is a sunny start for Cultural Centre's spring performances

The unique sounds of Trinidad will bring a sense of sun and warmth to the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall this March when Danny Michel, supported by Drew Gonsalves, opens up a springtime set of performances for the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Michel will open a busy spring season for the Centre as he takes the stage on March 22 at 7.30 p.m., supported by Drew Gonsalves.

A creative spark plug that turns a phrase into an anthem, Danny Michel is a songwriter's songwriter. He also supports the Ocean Academy School in Belize, recorded with the Garifuna Collective and has had David Suzuki playlist his Feather, Fur & Fin animal rights appeal, says the Centre, of the artist who is known for work that blends rock, pop, folk and world music.

Gonsalves' act will feature vocals from the frontman of Juno Award-winning world music combo Kobo Town.

Drew crams words into rapid-fire song essays that make the head spin, says the Centre. Drawing on his Masters thesis on the history of Calypso, Drew is at the forefront of reshaping Trinidad's original music artform.

World music will give way to homegrown music styles on March 29 at 7 p.m., when Genticorum, a leading voice in Quebecois traditional music, takes over the Performance Hall.

For over 20 years, the trio has earned a place of privilege on world, traditional, folk and Celtic music stages, says the Centre. The trio has won over audiences at such prestigious events as Celtic Connections in Scotland, the Tønder Folk Festival in Denmark, the National Folk Festival in Australia, the Independent Music Festival in Alexandria, Egypt, the Rain Forest Festival in Malaysia, as well as countless venues across North America.

Weaving intricate fiddle, flute and accordion lines, subtle guitar textures and exhilarating foot percussion, the pleasure that these three musicians have creating and playing together is palpable.

April showers may provide a fitting backdrop for the first of April's concerts when the blues sets in with Genius + Soul: The Music of Ray Charles, presented by musical director Lance Anderson, with a all-star Canadian cast of award-winning roots and blues musicians.

Set for a 7.30 show start, artists set to grace the stage will be Kenny Blues Boss Wayne, gospel singer Quisha Wint, saxophonist Gene Hardy and percussionist Keavn McKenzie.

Don't miss the powerhouse lineup of hits, including What I'd Say, Hit the Road Jack, The Nighttime is Right Time, and Hallelujah, I Love Her So.

Family Fare returns to the Performing Arts Hall on April 12, with an afternoon family show starring Karima Essa, part of the Centre's Up Close & Joyful Family Package.

Blending Bollywood dance with body positive messaging, this BC South Asian dancer and choreographer entertains and educates simultaneously with swirling colour and movement, says the Centre.

An additional performance from the Up Close & Joyful series will take place in Brevik Hall on May 10 at 2 p.m. as Russel Sprout plays the stage.

If you haven't met Russell Sprout yet you are in for a fun surprise! says the Centre. You'll find him on stage with all sorts of cool instruments and props, often wearing the strangest things. He loves music of all sorts. Enjoy a family-friendly concert mashup of many musical styles from folk, to rock, to beat boxing electronica to you never know!

Russell Sprout is an Ontario-based musician and educator. His second record was produced by Grammy nominee and Juno recipient Ken Whiteley, who has worked with many great musicians such as Fred Penner and Raffi.

Comedy returns to Aurora with Martha Chaves' United Colours of Canada, Chaves' second of two appearances in the Aurora Cultural Centre's 2024-2025 Performing Arts Season. Showtime is 7.30 p.m., with additional comedians on the bill yet to be announced.

The Great Artist Music Series returns to the Performance Hall on May 3 with Cheng² Duo a brother-sister act that has ranked on CBC Music's 30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30.

They have gained worldwide recognition after winning major international competitions and receiving a 2024 JUNO nomination for Classical Album of the Year; Small Ensemble," says the Centre. Captivating audiences and critics alike with their unique and refreshing programs, cellist Bryan Cheng and pianist Sylvie Cheng share an undeniable chemistry, and demonstrate a rare balance of infectious exuberance and mature and profound interpretations. Their recitals are in high demand in major concert halls throughout North America, Europe and Asia. Don't miss their Aurora debut.

There will be a pre-concert talk with Rick Philips at 7 p.m.

The Once, billed as St. John's, Newfoundland's gift to vocal harmonies, will give the community plenty of things to talk about when they perform on May 24 at 7.30 p.m.

[The Once] is sometimes a capella, sometimes traditional, sometimes original and always heartwarming due to lead vocalist Geraldine Hollett's remarkable voice," says the Centre. A port in the storm,' their latest material is soaked with the poetic charm and sunny sadness of the trio's collective disposition.

Blues returns to the Centre on June 7 at 7.30 p.m., in a concert by Angelique Francis with the supporting act of Jay Blues.

Ottawa's gifted multi-instrumentalist and prodigy emerged out of her Carlton University music degree playing acoustic bass and shouting out her debut Kissed By The Blues," says the Centre. In 2023 she won the Blues JUNO Award for the sophomore Long River,' elevating her further to national and international touring.

Jay Blues, fresh from Toronto's curbside busking, jamming and electric sessions that display his love of Jimi Hendrix and the pantheon of blues heroes, is an inspired fresh face that is digging into the roots of blues from a Caribbean perspective.

Bringing the curtain down on the 2024-2025 Performing Arts Season on June 21 at 7.30 p.m. is Sue Foley with her One Guitar Woman? show, dedicated to female guitar pioneers.

These are the women who were expressing themselves through the instrument as far back as the 1920s, at the inception of radio and recorded music including Maybelle Carter, Memphis Minnie, Mary Osborne, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and more," says the Centre. Celebrating these women of excellence, Sue presents an evening of varied guitar styles and musical genres interspersed with their stories and her own personal narrative.

For more on the season, including ticket information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir