

Concerts in the Park shines light on local talent with the Borealis Big Band



By Brock Weir

The Borealis Big Band made their public debut this past December with a successful performance at the Aurora Cultural Centre. Over the last seven months, their musical muscles have been flexed elsewhere, but they are set to return to a hometown crowd this Wednesday at Concerts in the Park.

Concerts in the Park, the ongoing weekly summer concert series which takes place each Wednesday at Town Park from 7 ? 9 p.m., welcomes bands from across Canada, offering everything from classic rock to Caribbean rhythms, but it's rare they present talent from so close to home.

But the Borealis Big Band was just the ticket to grace the stage at the Town Park Band Shell and, according to bandleader Gord Shepherd, this is not your grandfather's Big Band.

When people think about Big Bands, they tend to think typically about musicians like Glenn Miller or Benny Goodman, that swing band music from the 30s and 40s,? he says. ?Our Big Band is definitely a contemporary Big Band.?

The Borealis Big Band has its roots in the Aurora Community Band, where some members wanted to found a band that was more compact with a more specific, jazzier focus. After members auditioned for Borealis, they worked to define their sound, and bowed at the Cultural Centre.

?After our first concert, our band was really happy with the audience we had and the band played so well and we were so, so well received by the audience,? says Mr. Shepherd. ?People were thrilled about the concert and were looking forward to hearing the band play again. At our next concert at Newmarket's Old Town Hall, we sold out that concert as well.

?Playing for the local crowd is much more exciting for us because there are a lot of people in the audience who know the members of the band. Our band is new enough that there is certainly interest amongst family and friends of members of the band who come out to see us. We haven't reached the point where our audience is too much beyond family and friends of people in the audience, but it is moving in that direction and that is what we're hoping to do in the future.?

This Wednesday, the Borealis Big Band will offer a varied program ranging from the classic Sing, Sing Sing, to the classic I Can See Clearly Now, Michael Buble's Sway, Brian Setzer's Rock This Town and Zoot Suit Riot, and, in a nod to another hometown hand, a selection or two from the Glass Tiger songbook.

In addition to the 20-member band on the bandshell stage, additional entertainment will also be provided by the Artistica Ballroom Dance team.

?We have developed a great relationship with Artistica because this partnership provides live music for their students to dance to,

which I assume they don't have an opportunity to do that too often,? says Mr. Shepherd.

Concerts in the Park begin at 7 p.m., and is preceded by miniature Aurora Farmers' Market, offering meals and tasty treats, starting at 5 p.m. and continuing through to the end of the concert at 9 p.m.