

Constellations Music Festival to bring Afro-Cuban, Brazilian and Haitian music to Town Park



Music representing Brazilian, Haitian and Afro-Cuban influences will get people up on their feet next Saturday as the Aurora Cultural Centre hosts their inaugural Constellations Music Festival.

Built around the theme of 'Under One Sky', the Festival will feature the talents of award-winning musicians Okan, Tio Chorinho with Flavia Nascimento, and Wesli.

'This comes from the idea that we all look at the same night sky, we look at the same stars, but we look at it differently, and there is a lot of beauty around that,' says Kalaishan Kalaichelvan, Performing Arts Producer for the Aurora Cultural Centre. 'The goal was to bring together different musical traditions from cultures around the world under one night sky and really celebrate the kind of music we have not just in the Aurora community but across the country.'

First up from 7 - 7.45 p.m. is Okan, a Juno Award-winning women-led ensemble that fuses Afro-Cuban roots with jazz, folk and global rhythms 'in songs about immigration, courage and love.' Tio Chorinho with Flavia Nascimento follows from 8 - 8.45 p.m.

'Flávia Nascimento joins Canada's first ensemble dedicated to performing Brazilian choro music,' say organizers. 'Combining Northeastern Brazilian styles such as forró and maracatu, Tio Chorinho is known for their unique repertoire, virtuosity, dynamics and easy-going charm on stage.'

Rounding out the evening from 9 - 9.45 is Juno Award-winning Montreal-based Haitian musician Wesli who is bringing a seven-piece band 'linking Haitian voodoo and rara with reggae, Afrobeat and hip-hop.'

'When we were talking about building this festival, it was the idea of really shaking up our programming and looking at what kinds of artists are we seeing on stage and making room for traditions that are outside of a European-Canadian tradition, especially as that term means so many things now,' says Kalaichelvan. 'Something we were really aware of is the face and the makeup of Aurora is changing quite quickly and we are seeing in Aurora all these new families moving in over the last couple of years. The question was how do we represent that community in our ethos, in our programming, in the artists we bring to them. This has been part of our

strategic planning and vision.

“Music is becoming so intersectional now and we're seeing artists exploring so many different kinds of sounds and traditions and bringing them together, it was really important to reflect that in our programming and bring that same spirit to Aurora and that has been the driving force for a lot of our vision for the years going forward. This festival was one big step towards that.”

The Constellations Music Festival is the “launch pad” for a new music series that will become a hallmark of the Aurora Cultural Centre when it moves into its newly revamped and expanded space in Aurora Town Square.

It will complement their popular Signature and Great Artist music series with diverse musical artists from outside the European tradition.

In the future, musical programming can include artists who have been influenced by Indian and Persian traditions and much more.

“The goal of the Festival in this series is to build a larger appetite for that in the Aurora community and stop ‘othering’ these other forms of music,” Kalaichelvan notes. “We have been very keen about avoiding the term ‘World Music’ because while the term has served its purpose a lot in the past, understandably it is coming to a point of why are we othering and marginalizing all these different kinds of ways of making music into this one box just because it doesn't fit into maybe a traditional European lens of pop music, jazz music, or R&B. All of these other genres have boxes of their own [and] we're trying to bring that perspective to this series and programming.”

“Bring your picnic baskets, bring your kids, and it is a really nice Saturday evening and you get to just jam with some of the best artists out there. We take a lot of pride in the calibre of musicians we're bringing to the Centre and we're really excited to see the community come out and celebrate with us.”

The Constellations Music Festival is free to attend.

For more information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

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