

Cultural Centre goes for the Gold with new concert series

Soccer stars have arrived in the GTA looking to capture the coveted gold World Cup, but world-class artists are set to descend on the Aurora Cultural Centre this fall as the organization launches a new concert series.

The Aurora Cultural Centre recently launched their Gold Circle concert series with the announcement of a performance by Matt Andersen, slated for February 25, 2027, a centrepiece of next year's Aurora Winter Blues Festival.

The second Gold Circle concert ? *Zombie Blizzard*, featuring Aaron Davis and Measha Brueggergosman on October 3 ? was announced last week and tickets for the third, a fall performance by acclaimed singer-songwriter Jane Siberry, will go on sale later this week.

A fourth concert in the series is still under wraps, but will be announced this fall.

Derek Andrews, Performing Arts Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre, says the new Gold Circle series was brainstormed as a way to elevate the local concert experience.

?Executive Director Suzanne Haines and I felt that we could take the level of talent up to match the quality of the building,? says Andrews. ?We really feel we can do some special things on stage and to do that means developing a strategy called Gold Circle. It's always an interesting process and challenge to find artists that work for our mandate and are available and interested ? and when I say ?mandate,? it fits the character of what we do with the Centre, and that's to keep things fresh and original.?

The Centre describes Anderson as ?a powerful giant in performance? who ?leaves it all on the stage in an incredible display of energy, songcraft, and guitar prowess.?

?Audiences are left breathless from his full tilt blues roots renditions of original material,? they say. ?A consummate performer, he will move your heart with his honest, no holds barred emotion, humour and charm. Supporting the night with an opening set are rising stars Campbell & Johnson, the guitar virtuoso couple hailing from New Brunswick and PEI.?

Booking Matt Anderson for the Aurora Winter Blues Festival ? and announcing his participation in the Festival early ? was a no-brainer for the Centre. Haines is a particular fan of Anderson's, and Andrews came to the table with a key suggestion.

?We reached out to ask if he would consider playing a smaller room, because he plays Massey Hall when he's in Toronto, and [his management] agreed,? he says. ?His booking agent has put together a whole tour and we sort of became an early anchor with that; they've put about 10 dates together for him to tour in the area.?

With the Davis and Brueggergosman concert, perhaps it was a matter of sheer curiosity with bandleader Davis and acclaimed opera star Brueggergosman putting their considerable talents together for something altogether different.

?Witness a ground-breaking collision of literature and music in *Zombie Blizzard*. This new song cycle, composed by **Aaron Davis**, sets the hauntingly beautiful poetry of Margaret Atwood to music,? says the Centre ?Featuring the world-renowned **Measha Brueggergosman-Lee**, the performance blends classical concert arias with jazz-influenced art songs. With a virtuoso brass section and Atwood's own voice triggered throughout the cycle, the evening tackles deep themes of gender, grief, and humor. It's a rare, multidisciplinary event that pushes the boundaries of the jazz-opera genre.?

?I'd known of Measha's opera stardom internationally, but to hear that she was playing around in another genre was fascinating,? says Andrews, picking up the thread, of the development of *Zombie Blizzard*. ?Of course, his jazz chops will be in evidence on the piano, but she's singing Margaret Atwood poems, so that's also a fascinating aspect on that concert.?

The Sibbery concert, sales for which will go live this week, is another showcase for a Canadian original.

?She's a real maverick in doing things her own way, not dissimilar to Loreena McKennitt, who took command of her career; after having record companies do a certain amount, she just got fed up with the industry and developed her own way of doing things, performing in salons and taking command of everything in her career. I've seen Jane recently performing and she's still got all the charm and insights and brilliant stuff that she had when she established her identity.?

To learn more about the artists taking part in the Aurora Cultural Centre's Gold Circle concert series, including tickets, visit www.auroratownsquare.ca/events-tickets/whats-on.

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