

Emerging musicians take centre stage at Aurora Cultural Centre

Up-and-coming Canadian artists will reach new audiences this fall as part of the Aurora Cultural Centre's new RBC the NEXT Stage Series.

A rebrand of the Centre's popular RBC Emerging Artists series, the new iteration of the program will begin November 17 at the historic Aurora Armoury with Caity Gyorgi.

Gyorgi is a Juno-winning vocalist, composer and lyricist who will bring her acclaimed Jazz Quartet to the local venue with a program that combines jazz with swing and bebop.

"She has been called Jazz FM's Eight Canadian Women in Jazz You Need To Know," says Kalaisan Kalaichelvan, Performing Arts Producer at the Aurora Cultural Centre. "She is a phenomenal young talent and also someone who is really blowing up right now. Her concert is going to be a homage to the great jazz musicians and composers of the past, but also with a really cool virtuosic contemporary take on it."

The next scheduled performer in the series is Kaïa Kater, a Montreal-born Grenadian-Canadian with "deep ties to folk music and the years she spent soaking up Appalachian music in West Virginia." Known for her arrangements, banjo-picking and more, Kater is slated to play the Armoury on May 13.

"She is very accomplished," says Kalaichelvan. "She has been described by Rolling Stone as 'bluegrass meets Nina Simone,' which is always an exciting way to frame an artist. She's a brilliant songwriter, celebrated on CBC Radio, Rolling Stone, BBC Music, and also a Juno and Polaris Prize nominee and a Canadian folk award winner. She is someone I am really excited about because she has this brilliant way of telling stories in her songs that really creates this unique space when you're in the room with her. We're excited about that."

Rounding out the program at a new date to be determined is Dominique Fils-Aimé with Three Little Words, a celebration of the rich legacy of African-American music.

"We have been trying to get her into our season for some time now because she's just such an exciting name in the industry," says Kalaichelvan. "She is a celebrated Juno Award winner. She's a Polaris Prize nominee and she's just a really exciting voice that has a way of bringing the entire room to a pin drop silence. We're really excited to have her here."

All three, he adds, are "emerging artists who are really blowing up the national and international scene," and that is what the RBC The NEXT Stage Series is all about.

"One of the first things I am usually keeping my ear to the ground for is people with sort of a unique voice and perspective. I think there's something about people with certain kind of lived experiences that really translate into the music and that is what we're looking for: someone with something to say and that is usually the kind of thing that starts to define and shape the Canadian music landscape.

"We often look at genre and diversity of genre, especially in the next generation of music, you're seeing people pulling from folk and R&B and country at the same time, so the way that people blend these genres? and looking at traditionally what has been the appetite in Aurora, we try to find artists who are complementary to that. Part of my goal when it comes to programming is serving our community and our patrons in what they have come to expect and trust us for at the Centre and also finding ways to introduce them to new sounds and new artists in a way that is meaningful and that is a big part of my responsibility when I am programming that series."

For more, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter