

Great Artists series opens Friday with Glenn Gould tribute



Pianist Stewart Goodyear plays the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday night. Photo by Andrew Garn (Columbia Artists Management)

By Brock Weir

As a budding pianist growing up, Bonnie Kraft always felt a personal connection with Canadian musician Glenn Gould.

As a child of four, Ms. Kraft was taught piano by her musician father and her dad, in turn, shared a piano teacher with the iconic virtuoso.

She cherished his LPs, did everything she could to emulate him and now Ms. Kraft, who shares a Grammy with her husband, fellow musician and producer Norbert Kraft, is bringing Gould's music home in the sixth season of their Great Artists series.

The 2016 Series, which launches at the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday, January 22, opens with pianist Stewart Goodyear with "A Homage to Glenn Gould."

Mr. Goodyear, who recently turned the music world on its ear with his Beethoven "marathon" - playing every sonata written by the composer by memory back to back for over 11 hours - is described by the Krafts as a "skyrocketing" artist.

"I think we have him at an amazing time in his career," says Ms. Kraft. "He was just signed on by the biggest New York management company, Columbia Artists, he has performed with many major orchestras all over the world and in the past week he has played New York, Washington and Aurora."

"This homage is almost a replica of Glenn Gould's debut concert in the United States 61 years ago."

The Krafts founded the Great Artists series to bring classical music and musicians to Aurora. At first, the series focused on the piano, but as it has grown in popularity so too has its variety.

"We like to have some variety of repertoire within the classical world, approach, and now we have a variety of instruments as well," explains Bonnie. "We know each of these performers, not just personally, but their artistry. We are committed to these high calibre artists. They are big city, world class musicians playing in Aurora. They are used to a huge concert grand for a 3,000 seat hall. When we explain the nature of the concert, the intimacy, and the kind of piano [we have], they get very excited. Each one loves playing in this kind of venue. They feel the vibes from the audience, the audience is close, and they are all very enthusiastic."

For Norbert, it is difficult to say whether they are surprised the community has embraced the Great Artist series as it has. They knew

they had a winning formula, but it was something a little bit different for the community.

'We know there is a core musical audience and they certainly come to every concert and they have always been supportive,' says Norbert. 'We know they are our core but we have tried to develop a more appreciative audience. The numbers that are coming [to the concerts] and expressing their opinions based on almost a naïve knowledge of music. I have had many people come up to me after and say, 'I have never been to a classical concert before, but this was just so great.'

'It is about the connection. It is quite a privilege that we have access to these wonderful, internationally renowned musicians and can bring them right here to Aurora. Aurorans don't have to drive down to Toronto or New York to get the finest performances. We have it right here in our own home.'

Stewart Goodyear's Homage to Glenn Gould opens this Friday at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$34 for adults and \$28 for seniors and students. The series continues Friday, March 11 with a return engagement from Soyeon Kate Lee and concludes April 15 with the Brasil Guitar Duo. A subscription to the three concert series is \$95 for adults and \$78 for seniors and students. Subscribers receive a free classical CD from Naxos.