

?Hear Us Roar? ? Cultural Centre hosts comedy first for International Women's Day

The Aurora Cultural Centre is programming something with ?Broad Appeal? to mark International Women's Day ? an evening of comedy that is a Centre first.

Broad Appeal, an International Women's Day Comedy Show, will take over the St. Andrew's College stage on Friday, March 8, with headliner Martha Chaves.

Chaves, an award-winning comedian, will be joined on stage by Cournney Gilmour, Zabrina Douglas and Sarah Boston, a troupe described as ?fierce, ferocious and effin' funny.?

?I want people to leave quoting us,? Chaves tells The Auroran. ?I want the audience to leave happy and I want them to leave thinking women comics are strong. In 2024, people still believe women aren't funny. You don't know how many times I play a club or a bar in northern Ontario or Alberta where they come and tell me, ?You know what? We don't like women, but we like you!' and they actually think that's a compliment.?

Chaves laughs when she recounts these experiences, underscoring that the themes she and her fellow comedians touch upon are universal.

Not every experience is universal, however.

Chaves, a Nicaraguan-Canadian, is a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, speaks with an accent, and all this, she says, gives her ?a lot of things to balance? in her work. But, at the end of the day, she just wants to make people laugh ? even if she approaches serious topics in a ?silly? way.

?When I do shows in some places they have never seen a Hispanic woman with an accent, who is gay, when I sense they may not be open to me for whatever reason, whether it's a bar with a lot of macho guys and bros there, and I see them laughing, I think, ?Boy, I did something! I opened their mind a little bit. I misunderstood these people. I guess we're all the same.?

Chaves, a resident of Toronto, got her comedy start in Montreal where she took a comedy course to bolster her goals of becoming a tour guide. Fluent in four languages, she just wanted to have the tools to make that all-important connection by coming up with jokes right off the top of her head.

The course happened to be hosted in association with the Just for Laughs festival, where students graduate with a show of their own, and, as far as Chaves is concerned, there was no looking back.

?I don't know what happened, but the next day I woke up with a smile thinking this is what I want to do. It sounds corny, but it was just like that,? she says. ?It's like there were a choir of angels ? you don't know what you don't know until you know! I didn't know it took so much sacrifice, so many amateur nights to get a good five-minute set. I just embarked upon it, all of a sudden I didn't have a job anymore, and I dedicated my life to stand-up comedy. At the end of my life, if I didn't invent a cure for COVID, at least I made people laugh and that makes me very happy.?

Also playing a big part in her happiness is teaching stand-up at Humber College and Toronto Metropolitan University.

?I teach seniors who want?maybe they don't want a career in comedy, but they want to experience a show at least once in their lifetimes,? she explains. ?That's when I thought I did the right thing, where I can extend my knowledge to kids and older people.

?I thought at Just for Laughs I'd made it, but no, you want more and more. The only alternative is to move to the United States to

become a superstar because that's what you want to be: a household name. Unfortunately, in Canada, the industry has not been open to us like that. I am happy making my living in Canada doing comedy; I wish I was a household name, but I want happiness. I want the kids I teach to have hopes of a better career than my generation of comedians had. I want to continue to make a climate where younger generations want to stay in our country.?

For more information on next week's Broad Appeal comedy show, including tickets, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

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