

Jane Coop gets down to 'prime level' emotions at concert series finale

By Brock Weir

Sibling rivalry can take many forms ? sometimes it can get a bit nasty, but other times imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

When Jane Coop's elder sister took up piano lessons when they were both children, Jane naturally wanted to follow suit. This 'typical sibling thing?', however, has taken her around the world to some of the grandest international concert halls where her reputation as a renowned pianist proceeds her.

Coop, who has been invested into the Order of Canada for her contributions to the nation's culture, will bring her unique brand of classical piano to the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday, May 20, as the final concert in the 2014 Great Artist Piano Series.

This series, founded by Aurora classical musician Bonnie Silver, has welcomed many huge names within the classical music scene to the Aurora Cultural Centre's Brevik Hall.

Coop and Silver go back a long way, since their student days together at the University of Toronto, and when Silver first brought Coop to the Aurora venue, it was one with which she immediately fell in love.

'It is beautiful, the audience is great, and I am so glad she has invited me back!' says Coop. 'In a place like the Cultural Centre, the people are right there and it feels like you are communicating with them and giving them something directly.'

As part of her program this week, Coop promises sonatas ranging from Beethoven to Scarlatti. In piecing together each program she says she looks for works that are either new to her or ones she has not tackled in a while. Each piece, however, is chosen to provide the audience with a wide variety of 'styles and textures.'

'The piano can sort of be monochromatic if you think of it as one piece after another with the same sound,' she says. 'This year, my program is centred around a new piece for me, a new Beethoven sonata, and I paired that in the first half with some Scarlatti which is similar in leanness of texture and brilliance. The second half is very much putting the piano on stage in all its glory, all its singing-ness and all its harmonies.'

This range on the piano is something that not only attracted her to the piano, but kept her coming back for more. Her teachers were instrumental in stoking this musical fire and encouraging her to delve deeper and deeper into the sound.

'It is always about communicating feelings,' she said. 'That is what music is and I never want to forget that. There are all sorts of aspects to it. There is the technical brilliance aspect, there is the colour aspect, and all that stuff, but it is really about conveying personal human feelings one to one. Whatever piece I am playing, when I am working on it, I am trying to dig into it and think about what the composer really meant.'

'To put it simply, is it about tragedy? Is it about loneliness? Is it about ecstasy? All of these are basic human emotions and that really comes down to the prime level and that is what I want to do. I hope people leave with the sense they have been somewhere they wouldn't have normally gone in their minds and it has taken them away from the usual, everyday mindset into some other realm. I think that is what art is supposed to do.'

Jane Coop takes to the stage this Friday, May 30, at 8 p.m. Doors open at 7.30 p.m. Tickets are \$30 (\$25 for seniors and students). For more information, call the Centre at 905-713-1818.