

St. Max student has something to Crowe about ahead of Hoedown Showdown semifinals



By Brock Weir

14-year-old Kahlan Crowe is no stranger to the audition process.

Often when she puts her voice forward to judges or teachers, it can be in a non-descript room or even outdoors depending on the fickleness of Mother Nature. This summer, however, she had a very different experience stepping onto a real stage in a real theatre for the first time, belting her way into the Semi-Finals of the Hoedown Showdown.

Crowe is one of 20 semi-finalists who have made it through into the next round of the Hoedown Showdown, which takes place next weekend at Aurora's Ribfest, kicking off at Machell Park on Friday, September 5.

Set to take the semi-finals by storm, the St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School student is currently working on getting the song 'DONE?' by The Band Perry just right before the next round.

'The lead singer of The Band Perry has a lot of attitude when she sings, she's a really good performer, she has an amazing voice, and her songs usually tell a story,' says Kahlan.

For Kahlan, who recently participated in the Aurora Teen Idol competition, this foray onto the Theatre Aurora stage was all about performance. Through her vocal lessons and training, she has also put a concerted effort into her own showmanship and using the stage to her best advantage, and that training came in particularly useful over the summer.

'This was really nice because I hadn't actually performed on stage inside with the lights and the cameras and everything on me when it was just me on the stage,' she explains. 'It was a really great experience to be up there and just have fun, sing and perform for the judges and audience.'

'When they called my name I was thinking, 'don't forget the lyrics and don't mess up because I forgot the lyrics in my other performance for Aurora Teen Idol. I still got in, but I had a fear of that ' but after this performance, I got rid of that fear completely and I am completely fine now. I was also just thinking about stage presence, having a good time and enjoying it while you are there, and just making the song your own in ways that you can.'

Her efforts paid off. Following her performance, judges heralded her stage presence, urging her to practice even more with that ahead of the semi-finals, but also fine tuning her voice to make sure she is on top of all the notes required.

?I am practicing every day like they told me,? she says, noting she is also working on her song for the finals, if she makes it through to the next round ? Dolly Parton's ?Jolene?. ?We are perfecting them, adding things to them and hopefully that will make it better.?

This next time, however, she is bringing something else out of her arsenal: a guitar, with which she has been practicing for over a year.

?I am working on volume, working on crescendos and decrescendos, adding some flavour to what I have found by making it louder or softer at certain parts of the piece to a excitement or to make it more soft and gentle. In DONE, there is one note that is really high, so I am working on making sure I can hit that note all the time. At first when I tried to do it, it was a little bit pitchy and my vocal teacher helped me find some new techniques on how to reach that note without it sounding like I am straining my voice.?

At the end of the day, as important as vocals are, Kahlan is looking forward to looking out from the stage, finding people in the audience smiling along with her, engaged in her performance. She hopes they both have fun and listen to the words in the song. She also says she is looking forward to meeting everyone involved with Ribfest and Hoedown, and being a sponge for every experience this opportunity has to offer.

?I am going to try and do my best all the way through, give it 110 per cent and if that is not good enough, I can always take away that I tried my best and know I took away from that experience. Hopefully I learned things from the audience, learned things from the judges, and I will take their criticism away and make good of it.

?If I do [take the ultimate Hoedown Showdown crown] the recording session, guitar, and all that stuff could really lift off the career I am trying to make happen. It is my dream.?