

Voices of the World converge on Aurora Cultural Centre this fall

Voices of the World will continue to ring out through Aurora this fall as the Aurora Cultural Centre prepares for a busy fall performing arts season.

Building on their Voices of the World theme, which was announced this past spring, the performing arts season will begin October 20, when Joe Sealy takes the stage, supported by Thompson Egbo-Egbo.

Toronto-based jazz legend Joe Sealy is joined by long-time collaborator Paul Novotny on bass for a special piano concert supported by Thompson Egbo-Egbo with an opening set, says the Centre. An Order of Canada recipient, Joe won a Juno Award for his Africville project that captured an enormous piece of Canada's Black Cultural history.

November's performances will kick off with Basia Bulat on November 4, followed by pianist Philip Chiu on November 16, and Aurora Cultural Centre favourite David Francey on November 24.

With an electrifying voice and lyrics like silver arrowheads, Basia Bulat has become one of Canada's most conspicuous talents, says the Centre. Juno-nominated and short-listed for the prestigious Polaris Music Prize, she often appears solo in gigantic halls, winning over crowds with an autoharp or charango, stomping feet and two mighty lungs. Her massive talent has also been recognized at scale: her songs have been adapted for major performances with symphony orchestras, and she's been tapped for prestigious tributes to Leonard Cohen and The Band.

Philip Chiu's appearance with the Centre is part of the Great Artist Music Series, a program spearheaded and supported by long-time Cultural Centre patrons and Grammy-winning music producers Bonnie and Norbert Kraft.

Chiu, a Juno-winner, captivates listeners with pianistic brilliance, engaging storytelling, and a welcoming stage presence that favours openness, authenticity, and connection with audiences.

Immerse yourself in a mesmerizing journey through the timeless themes of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata intertwined with melodies of Chopin, Debussy, and Canadian composer John Burg.

The Scots-born Francey, on the other hand, is described as an artist who chronicles the lives of the working Canadian with humour, and 'open hearted' singing style and acute observations in his storytelling.

Bringing together this fall's music program is Derek Andrews, Performing Arts Producer for the Aurora Cultural Centre.

I have inherited the legacy of some great, hard work done by Jane Taylor in particular and I wanted to produce programming that was familiar and people are comfortable with, and at the same time try to push the envelope a little bit, he says, referring to Ms. Taylor, who continues her role at the Centre in a communications capacity. There are some acts that are hitting on the folk genre, several people who are, I think, going to be well-received like David Francey, but there are a couple of innovations with Windborne and Ariko in particular.

I shifted the emphasis and the presentation style and pulled out an emerging talent-approach that had been there, where we were expecting new faces to carry the box office, so to speak, and I've created shows where there's a support act in several cases, which is our way of introducing new faces.

To this end, at their December 2 Aurora performance, Windborne, a group with deep roots in the traditions of vocal harmony will be supported by Suba Sankaran and Dylan Bell of Freeplay while, on January 27, velvet-voiced nu-jazz piano keyboardist Elizabeth Shepherd will be supported by Charlotte McAfee-Brunner.

Rounding out the performance season will be the aforementioned Ariko on December 16, and The Last Waltz on January 19.

“A Lafontaine family band that draws on Franco-Ontario folk tradition, three sisters join mom and dad Lefave in a romp through fiddle frenzy and vocal harmony,” says the Centre of Ariko, whose performance is billed a Family Series Holiday Show.

“Performing as a family, Nicole, Kelly and Jill front Ariko (French for haricot snap bean!) in a joyful roots and zydeco blend of foot stomping good times.”

The Last Waltz, a musical celebration of The Band, was brought together by Orillia musician Lance Anderson to salute one of Canada's most iconic groups, The Band.

“This thirteen-piece project celebrates a remarkable repertoire and sound that supported Bob Dylan but broke out to sell millions of recordings, with a Scorsese captured film finale in San Francisco. The all-star cast features vocalists Chuck Jackson (Downchild), Johnny Max, Matt Weidinger and Quisha Wint.”

For Andrews, having The Last Waltz near the end of the fall/winter season is particularly poignant following the death of guitarist and songwriter Robbie Robertson last month.

“I can't help but draw attention to The Last Waltz,” he says. “It's kind of an all-star show with many artists who are bandleaders of their own projects, and celebrates great repertoire. I think that with Robbie's passing, it's even more poignant because they give their own interpretations for that great reservoir of Canadian song-writing.”

Tickets for the Aurora Cultural Centre's performing arts season are on sale now individually or as part of their Voices of the World passport. For more information on these performances, including venues, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

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