

Windborne brings traditional harmonies, international influences to Cultural Centre

The Aurora Cultural Centre is now in the second phase of its Voices of the World performing arts season, and these voices will come to life this December 2, when the Boston-based Windborne makes its Aurora debut.

This Saturday, on the stage at the historic Aurora Armoury, now home to Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute, Windborne will present a showcase of their vocal harmonies, "Music of Midwinter," with FreePlay as a supporting act.

"Known for their innovation of their arrangements, their harmonies are bold and anything but predictable," says the Centre. "Windborne are adherents to folk music's long-time alliance with social activism, labour and civil rights, and other movements that champion the oppressed, the poor, and the disenfranchised."

Windborne comprises of Lauren Breunig, Jeremy Carter-Gordon, Lynn Rowan and Will Rowan who came together with a love of harmony coupled with a drive to explore different styles of music across both borders and centuries, "illuminating and expanding on the profound power and variation of the human voice."

"It's all about exploring what the voice is capable of and we do that in a number of ways," says Carter-Gordon. "There's a section of what we do that is really looking at some of the ways the voice can be used in harmony from different countries and cultures with different singing masters from different places like Basque country and Lithuania where we just were, and in the Mediterranean, learning not just one of the notes and one of the syllables, but vocal production and how you conceive of a song. What are the cultural ways that people understand what it means to sing in harmony and the different ways of using the voice? Another big part of what we do is singing songs from the past - movements of social struggles, environmental rights, workers' rights, or just human rights."

Windborne's interest in vocal harmonies has its roots in the New England tradition in which its members grew up. Harmonies at any kind of gathering became second-nature to them. Their parents, says Carter-Gordon, would often join in the harmonies, "but everyone was kind of improvising their own harmonies on the spot to make this whole, big group sing and that is sort of the fabric in which we learned what music was."

"That was really part of our childhoods," he says, adding that it wasn't until their teen years that they discovered not every part of the U.S. had this tradition of harmonies, but was more engrained in cultures beyond their shores.

"We started as a group of friends who like singing together rather than as a band who wanted to be touring performers. I am the newest one in the band, joining in 2013, but the three of them did their first concert in 2004. For many years, it existed as something that was a hobby and fit in other parts of our life, but it changed in a pretty dramatic way in January of 2017."

It was just around Inauguration Day in the United States and the band was keen to release a book called, "Song of the Times," bringing together songs of social movement. Their efforts got a boost when a video of them singing outside Trump Tower went viral with people the world-over telling the band their music was just what was needed at just the right time.

"That was really the moment we were made aware this was something special," says Carter-Gordon, adding their next project will be an album capturing the magic of mid-winter and solstice, a preview for which will figure in this week's Aurora show.

"We want people to take away that musical experience. There is that cross-cultural connection that we talk about in our concerts, the history of the songs, the styles that they come from and when we're doing our music?it can almost be like a trojan horse; people who might not think so much about these ideas in their everyday life will end up being in an emotionally receptive space to these ideas. We're talking about something that happened 200 or 400 years ago? and are still relevant to today's world and that allows them to think about it in a new way, making those connections across the centuries and continents, giving a more connected feeling of what

the world is.?

For more about the concert, including ticket information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/windborne-freeplay. Doors open at 6.45 p.m. for a 7.30 showtime.

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