

Jazz Fest's legacy: Kindling musical dreams for future generations

BY STUART DERDEYN, THE PROVINCE JUNE 17, 2015

AIDA



The band Electric Miles performs on the free, outdoor Robson Stage at last year's Vancouver Jazz Festival. This year's event kicks off Thursday and runs through to Canada Day on July 1. Mark van Manen/PNG archive

Photograph by: Mark van Manen, PNG

At anitaeccleston.com, there is a photo of Anita Eccleston and her sister Liz swinging on the chain at Gassy Jack Square while taking in the 1999 TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival. The trumpeter/singer now says that coming from down Kamloops to take in the festival was key in shaping her musical dreams.

"When I was 14 I told my dad I wanted to be a professional trumpet player and he drove me to Vancouver to go to Northwest Music to get the horn I'm still playing," says Eccleston. "I wanted to be the best classical trumpeter, but jazz fest shifted my focus. I'd sit there and soak it all up and dream."

This year, she plays with the Plastic Acid Orchestra on Friday (Georgia Stage, Vancouver Art Gallery, 7:30 p.m.), and with the Anita Eccleston Trio on Wednesday, July 1 (Granville Island Stage, noon).

It's a jazz dream come true for the young musician and she credits the Vancouver and Montreal festivals with keeping her fired up through the years: "Playing the festival it's like moving up another level."

This sentiment is echoed by former Chilliwack resident, now New York-based rising star trumpeter/singer Bria Skonberg, who performs with the Bria Skonberg Quintet at Performance Works on Friday, June 26, 7 p.m. Skonberg (briaskonberg.com) hit a homer with her latest CD *Into Your Own* (Random Act Records).

She joins an impressive number of fellow Capilano University Jazz Studies graduates playing the festival. Skonberg got an early big break receiving an award from the Jazz Fest, Capilano and CBC. Dal Richards was at the reception ceremony and invited her to join his big band. She stayed for the next four years.

"The Vancouver Jazz Festival has set a standard for musicality that has turned it into something of an annual goal for local players to aspire to," says Skonberg. "This year is a very special one for me as it's the first I've played since moving to New York. It's a jazz festival every day there, but I still feel strongly attuned to this one."

Two-time JUNO Award-winner in both the big band and composer categories, composer/saxophonist Christine Jensen leads her jazz orchestra — featuring sister, trumpeter Ingrid Jensen — at Performance Works on Friday at 7 p.m.

The Jensen sisters hail from the international-jazz-star breeding ground of Nanaimo. Christine says that many critical moments in her creative life were made possible by jazz festivals and the community that they nurture.

"Both the Vancouver and Victoria jazz festivals started up when I was a teenager and they made such a huge impression on me by showing that you could have a showcase for your music," says Christine. "I was able to see Bobby McFerrin when he was breaking, drummer Tony Williams, artists of a level you just wouldn't get without the festivals."

"Marilyn Crispell's free workshop when I was 17 was pivotal for me making my career choice because she told me 'you are making music and you need to go out and do it.' That really was essential in me forging an identity."

With two weekends of free performances, free shows and ticketed shows running Thursday to July 1,

there is no doubt more jazz dreams will be fuelled at the 30th TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival.

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