

Blondin set to take a little piece of Aurora's hearts as Joplin at Concerts in the Park

Krista Blondin likes to just let loose and create a party atmosphere.

It's an approach that has gained her a following as a singer-songwriter, and it's the same approach Janis Joplin brought to the stage, making her a legend in her own brief time.

Blondin is now in her 20th year of helping to keep Joplin's legacy alive as a tribute artist, and this shared party atmosphere will return to Town Park next Wednesday, August 9, in Piece of My Heart: A Tribute to Janis Joplin.

"This is our 20th year of doing the Joplin tribute and it's kind of exciting and has evolved over the years in different ways," says Blondin. "This is a two-set show. We do, of course, all the hits of Janis, all the favourites, and sometimes we bring in other Janis-connected songs that people are familiar with that show her influences and we try to tie that into a story. It gives a flow, which gives people a lot of information about Janis' life in a short amount of time just to experience they're at a Janis concert. It's full-costume, back-to-the-sixties vibe."

Blondin sees Janis Joplin as both a "powerhouse" on stage while also being an "open soul, not afraid to tell it like it is, how she feels, giving everyone else a comfort level as well at the same time."

"I think for a lot of performers that gives a real freedom and acceptance to be how you want to be out there and really send out some good messages about love, life, freedom to really accept and learn about yourself and to be who you want to be."

As an artist, Blondin says one piece of audience feedback that always hits home is when people say they have been taken back in time, that it brought them back to a happy place in their lives, while also seeing younger generations in the audience who might know little about Joplin become a fan once they have sampled even just a taste of her legacy.

"I really enjoy letting people hear the different sounds that she also has in her voice, the different arrangements, whether it is the guitar, but then you have the horns coming in as well, which is a whole other sound. I enjoy taking people back to a time but also bringing a new generation to it, especially when it's kids. It's a really neat experience."

"When someone tells me they cried, I feel like I have done what I intended to do, which is to move people with the experience. That is something that we usually hear after the show, so those are definitely highlights and I think it's when people are really listening that you're really performing and there's the in-between song banter when no one else is talking, they're really listening to what I am saying, which is more in the voice of Janis. It's kind of a theatre show."

When Blondin is not in the guise of Janis Joplin, she's a singer of every genre. On the horizon she says, is another concert saluting music icons of the sixties, such as Etta James, Aretha Franklin and, of course Janis Joplin.

The twist this time is it will be Blondin interpreting the Joplin song book in her own voice, rather than trying to emulate their original artist.

In the meantime, she's focused on the upcoming Aurora gig.

"The message is to really bring the whole family together and experience the music," she says. "You can bring your kids to this show and they'll enjoy it, I hope. It's a story, it's a show, it's a lot of fun, and there's something for people to sit back and listen and it's also an opportunity dance and enjoy that outdoor concert Janis Joplin experience!"

Concerts in the Park take place at Town Park each Wednesday evening from 7 - 9 p.m. through to the end of August.

Events feature live music, food vendors courtesy of the Aurora Farmers' Market, as well as a different selection of its artisan vendors each week.

The concerts are free, but donations to the Aurora Food Pantry are encouraged.

For more information, visit aurora.ca/summerconcerts.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter