

## Duo joins forces for a cool night of hot blues



**By Brock Weir**

After soaking in church music as a child, Diana Braithwaite often had one destination in mind after the service finished: over to her friend's house to listen to her mother's Bessie Smith album.

She was barely a tween at the time but she knew from then on, as she would later tell fellow musician Chris Whiteley, "I don't think I can get out of these blues alive!?"

Thankfully for Ms. Braithwaite and Mr. Whiteley, they've very content to keep swimming with the current of the blues as they prepare to bring their unique blend of talent to the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday night, February 10, for A Friday Night Blues Party, held in conjunction with the Aurora Winter Blues Festival.

Famed performers who have toured around the world, it's rare the duo has the opportunity to play together as a band so close to home, but when the opportunity to play the Aurora Cultural Centre came about through their colleague, musician John Sheard, they jumped at the opportunity.

"We are both getting a lot of enjoyment about what happens when we perform together as a duo," says Chris. "We often get the comment from critics and theatre audiences that the chemistry is somehow good. I think we share a similar outlook on what makes good blues music and I think that helps it make it work for us."

So, what does ultimately make good blues music? There is a misconception, they agree, that the blues brings about, well, cases of the blues.

"It is very heartfelt music," says Chris. "There is a lot of emotion in there. If you just analyse it strictly from a musical point of view, some people say it is a pretty simple kind of music with only three or four chords, but these performers always brought something special to it and that's what the blues is: the personalities of the people and the personality we, as performers, try to bring to the blues. It is that heartfelt passion you can put into the music."

"People often think the blues is sad, but the blues often helps people feel better, and that is the history of the blues. They will be uplifted, but get a sense of the many different styles and people who helped make the tradition what it is."

Adds Diana: "We work hard at presenting shows that are highly entertaining and that is what we usually get back from the audience. We want to make sure we give people a really good variety and take them on a trip through the blues. There is something about music that releases a lot of things. We are pretty well masters at that and audiences will leave feeling better and leave feeling they have experienced a very authentic blues show. Come out on Friday ? and you won't be sorry that you did!?"

Diana Braithwaite & Chris Whiteley "Keeping the Blues Alive!", featuring John Sheard and others, arrives at the Aurora Cultural Centre this Friday, February 10. Doors open at 7 p.m., with the concert beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$30 in advance or \$35 on the day of the concert. For more information, call 905-713-1818.