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Augustfest concert series showcasing homegrown musicians

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Homegrown talent has returned home this week for the ninth annual Augustfest concert series at Brandon University's Lorne Watson Recital Hall.

The five-day series launched on Wednesday night, during which cellist Laura Jones and pianist Drew Quiring filled out an evening's worth of musical entertainment.

Key organizer David Wilson said that 10 of the week's 12 performers have Brandon links, and are either from the Wheat City or studied at BU's School of Music.

"The idea is to bring back people who have made it into the big time," he said, adding that considering the wealth of world-class musicians to come out of Brandon, it has never been too great a challenge convincing people to return for the annual series.

The challenging part is securing dates that work for the in-demand musicians, Wilson said, adding that since he strives to bring in the best of the best, they're oftentimes tied up with work.

"They're at the top of their profession," Wilson said.

That's why August came to mind, he said, adding that with many of the performers educators by trade, it was one of the last pockets of free time they might have before returning to classrooms.

Although the series centres primarily on BU alumnus, Wilson said that Augustfest is not a university-organized event, and is instead put together by an incorporated non-profit educational charity which he heads.

Wilson said that having travelled to communities across the nation, he kept returning home to reflect on why there didn't seem to be as much going on in Brandon.

Puzzled by what he saw, particularly with the musical talent coming out of BU, Wilson was inspired to create Augustfest.

This week's series includes an eclectic range of performers, which each day carrying a unique range of musical talent.

Wednesday's night's was more classical, centring on the playing of Jones and Quiring, while tonight's show will focus on clarinetist Jana Starling, a Brandon native who will perform Brahms' "Clarinet Quintet in B minor," which has been acknowledged as one of the greatest chamber music masterpieces composed.

She'll be joined by the show's strings-in-residence.

Friday's show will centre on virtuoso pianist Sergei Saratovsky, who will be performing Bach's "Goldberg Variations."

Saturday's show is called The Great American Songbook, and will feature soprano Laura McAlpine and tenor James McLennan performing Broadway hits.

The final show on Sunday will feature a unique range of pieces by bassist/composer Jesse Dietschi and tubist Justin Hickmott.

Admission is \$25 per concert in advance and \$30 per concert at the door for adults. Full-time students get in for \$15 per concert at the door only.

Information on tickets and show times is available online at augustfest.ca.

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