

Local talent will shine at Songwriters' Circle

By Amy Fuller, Record staff

Local talent at last year's Songwriters' Circle event drew a full house at Centre in the Square — two nights in a row.

That's why musicians who began their careers in Waterloo Region will take the stage again this year, and just a fistful of tickets remain.

Listeners seated at bistro-style tables on the main stage can enjoy a glass of wine during an intimate performance by Ben Rollo, Mike Todd and Allister Bradley on June 19.

Sean Jasmins, marketing and public relations co-ordinator at the centre, said about 250 people attended each show last year. This season, seating at the bistro tables has already sold out, so the centre is offering seats along the back of the stage.

"It's a musical celebration of three outstanding singer-songwriters who are members of our community," Jasmins said, adding that lighting and onstage seating creates a wonderful ambience.

The trio of local musicians will have an unusual vantage point, with their backs to the usual theatre seating area. They plan to improvise some pieces together as well as perform individually.

Bradley, 38, grew up in Toronto and played piano from the age of three, but moved to Waterloo to study mathematics after his parents encouraged him to get a "safe" job. After graduating from the University of Waterloo, he spent 15 years in software development before returning to his "one love," music.

He describes his music as piano-based, with a number of influences.

"I loosely call it Sting having cocktails with Norah Jones while Billy Joel and Bruce Hornsby argue over the cheque," he says.

The Songwriters' Circle event is a rare opportunity to hear him perform, since he focuses mainly on writing and recording. His second album, the aptly named *Too*, came out in March.

For Bradley, the appeal of the Songwriters' Circle performance is that with everyone on stage, audience members can enjoy up-close music but also meet the song-

Concert Songwriters' Circle

Centre in the Square, Kitchener
Thursday, June 19, 8 p.m.
Tickets: \$30 Call the box office at 519-578-1570 or online at www.centre-square.com

writers and hear how the songs evolved.

Rollo, whose music is a combination of acoustic, pop and folk styles, also says he looks forward to telling the story of each song.

"I think it's gonna be some really good, honest songs performed by guys who play for a living," he said. "We joke around with the crowd."

Rollo hails from Kitchener, and the 26-year-old has played drums, piano and guitar full time for six years. He estimates that he plays drums for about 20 different bands, including the Matt York Band and Anne Murray's daughter, Dawn Langstroth.

Six years ago, while studying contemporary music at Humber College, he met Todd, a guitarist. The two formed Benefits of Doubt, a musical partnership that has since dissolved.

Rollo says the pair still consider themselves best friends, but have moved on to solo work. His lineup for Songwriters' Circle includes original songs from a record he hopes to release this year.

Todd's MySpace page lists rock, pop and soul as his musical categories. He says he listens to a wide variety of music but rock and roll suits his "loud and boisterous" personality best. So while Todd studied classical guitar in his early teens, he always gravitated toward rock.

For him, Songwriters' Circle is a unique setting and a chance to "get in tune and get in touch with the audience."

"Every show should feel like a house party," he says.

Like Rollo, Todd plans to include numbers from his upcoming album. But he says the pair will revive some older Benefits of Doubt pieces, too.

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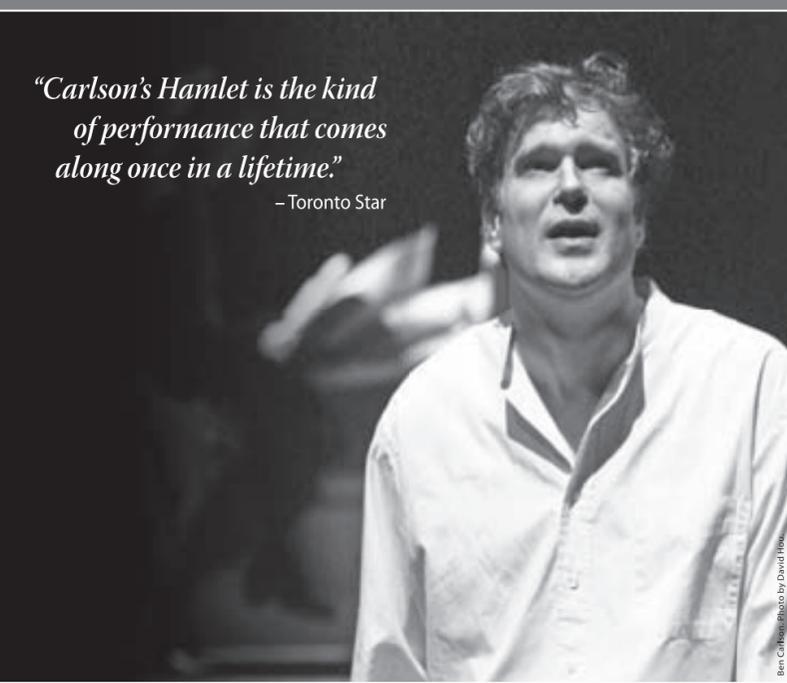
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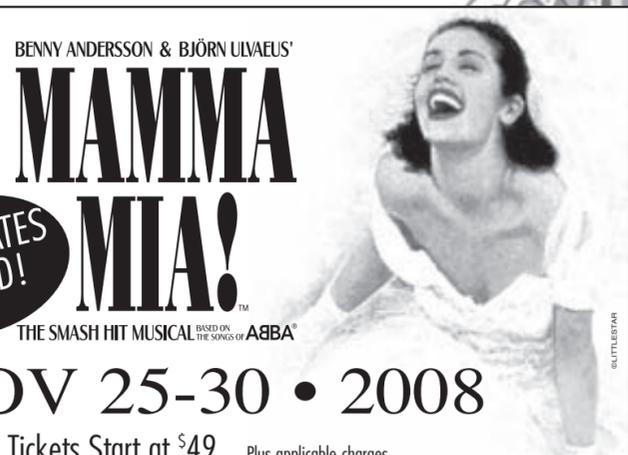
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