

Gypsy jazz resounds on Canadian soil

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Christine Tassan et les Imposteures bring their energetic blend of Québécois song, traditional folk, and gypsy jazz to Performance Works, via the Rogue Folk Club, on Sept. 29. For this upcoming tour, the Imposteures band, which typically includes a rhythm guitarist, violinist, and bassist, led by Tassan on lead guitar, will also feature the brassy bombast of trumpet and trombone. The six-piece is set to debut their live performances of their latest album *Django Bells*, a wintry blend of different styles and genres, all influenced by the works of Django Reinhardt.

“I think it’s like pretty creative. We do a lot of research. And we try to vary the rhythm, not just play swing rhythm: we play waltzes, and even a little bit of traditional Québécois music into those songs. And then, once we have the whole repertoire, and it’s pretty arranged, we rehearse with the whole band, and each one adds their own ideas to what we’re doing,” says Tassan.

Django and jazz



For eponymous band-leader Christine Tassan, the Imposteures band has presented all sorts of unique creative opportunities. The group, like many gypsy jazz or ‘manouche jazz’ bands, is heavily influenced by the works of legendary Romani guitarist Django Reinhardt. But despite the lasting status of Reinhardt, whose performances from the 1930’s-1950’s are posthumously celebrated to this day, Tassan says that his cultural influence and impact has stuck mostly to Europe.

For Tassan, this has allowed a great opportunity to share and celebrate this eclectic and energetic brand of jazz with not just her home of Montreal, but with Canada and the rest of the world as well.

“It’s very important for us to have people discover that kind of music because it’s very famous music in Europe, but in Canada it’s not as well known,” says Tassan. “It’s nice for us to bring some sort of discovery to that music, and to explain what gypsy jazz is, who Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli are, and who the Roma people are. That’s what we have in mind.”

A new take on a classic style

But while Tassan and the group are deeply inspired by the works of Reinhardt, the approach of the Imposteures band has always centered around innovation and creative composition which brings other musical influences into the group's repertoire. Indeed, with the band's 16-year history as either an all-women or majority-women group, Tassan felt a natural incentive to take a novel approach: a greater focus on song conception and arrangement.

"We had to make our own path. And what we did is a bit different than men bands: instead of just thinking in terms of virtuosity and playing very fast, which is very characteristic of gypsy jazz, we tried to focus more on the project itself, what kind of repertoire we could propose that is not the same repertoire as a lot of gypsy jazz bands," says Tassan.

For Tassan and the band, this involved taking different musical influences from various band members' own musical backgrounds.

"So we [worked in] the different influences of the musicians who are part of the band like classical, traditional folk, jazz, and Québécois song. That's what we integrated in our music, and that's what gives us a show that is totally different than what other gypsy jazz bands do," says Tassan.

All in all, the creative process of arranging and composing different songs is a rewarding endeavour. But for Tassan the end goal is, and has always been the same: an inspired and engaging live performance.

"What I like to do, and the band is the same, we want to perform. I choose a repertoire and we record albums, but the final goal is ultimately performing in front of the public," says Tassan. "The interaction with people is very important for us, so during the show there's a lot of humour, it's very dynamic, with a lot of different things in the show. So when we do a new project, we want to have some variety so that people will enjoy it in the whole show."

For more information, please visit www.roguefolk.bc.ca

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