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Laval musicians nominated for Grand Jazz award

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By *Silvet Ali* • TLN

On Wednesday July 2, two Chomedeyians will be rocking the TD Canada stage at this year's Montreal Jazz Festival. The Arden Arapyan ensemble are nominated for the General Motors Grand Jazz prize. Pianist Arapyan is also up for the CBC Rising Star award. Made up of six members, the group boasts a multi-layered, worldly array of sounds and beats in their instrumentals, and their music is getting noticed.

"It's already an honour to play the fest but getting nominated feels really good. It's like a pat on the back," said drummer Michael Gasselsdoffer in his home on de Capri street. Arapyan, 25, and Gasselsdoffer, 30 make up the core of the group along with bassist Kyle Morin. The two friends met in Vanier College's music program six years ago and hit it off instantly. "We found out we lived in the same neighbourhood, started hanging out and eventually started playing together," said Gasselsdoffer.



Photo: Silvet Ali
Drummer Michael Gasselsdoffer and pianist Arden Arapyan

Local boys

"First off, I would like to thank the people of De Capri street who never complained about my drumming after all these years," said Gasselsdoffer with a laugh. He got his own drums at 12 years old on his own after saving up from his paper route. "Nobody complained over the years, except one time. My neighbour called once and asked to please not play that day because he'd just had his wisdom teeth pulled. I remember it because it was significant, just one time." he said.

Arapyan was born into a musical family and receives a lot of influence from his Armenian background. "My first gig was a wedding and it was really exciting. My family and community were very supportive growing up," he said. His father used to sing and Arapyan felt himself being drawn to the piano right off the bat. "I wanted to play so bad! I used to watch my dad's friend play and just stare. Music just became my passion," he said.

Future plans

Although both musicians have played the Jazz Fest before, it is the first time they will be performing together. The biggest challenge is finding the time to rehearse around different schedules. However, the ball got rolling when the ensemble won a contest on 91.5 Cool FM last November - Montreal's Jazz radio station. "Arden mentioned it so we got together, recorded some tracks and people voted online," explained Gasselsdoffer. The ensemble won, then found themselves nominated for the Jazz Fest along with nine other groups.

Both musicians agree the Jazz market is not highly marketable, but don't seem to mind. "Jazz doesn't force itself to appeal to the masses. You like it, because you like music. It doesn't make you like it and there's a freedom in that as a musician wanting to be creative" explained Arapyan.

What's next for the ensemble? "World domination," joked Gasselsdoffer. The friends do hope to record a full album soon and but also continue working on their own separate projects. "We talk about making a CD but are always busy with one thing or another. Somehow, things are now rolling so we'll see where it goes from here," said Gasselsdoffer.

The Arden Arapyan ensemble will hit the stage at the Jazz Fest at 7 and 9 p.m. on the Club Jazz TD Canada Trust stage. The shows are free. "We invite everyone to come check us out," said Gasselsdoffer.

Visit <http://www.myspace.com/ardenmusica> to take a listen.

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