



## The arts are for everyone

*Bringing music to care homes adds brightness to many lives*

IT'S 11 a.m. on a Wednesday morning, and 50 or so residents of the L'Accueil Colombien seniors home in St. Boniface are gathered for a concert. Many close their eyes and nod their heads as harpist Janelle Nadeau — “the world’s only combine-driving harpist,” from Fannystelle, Man. — performs everything from Elvis Presley to Bach.

The concert is doubling as the Manitoba launch of Concerts in Care, a program that will bring professional musicians to long-term care homes in rural and northern Manitoba. Presented by the Manitoba Arts Network in partnership with the Manitoba chapter of Health Arts Society, the program brings live music directly to people who don't often have access to it. The 45-minute concerts are free, and they happen on-site.

In addition to Nadeau, Simon Miron, Rhonda Head, David Playfair, Neil Weisensal, Rachel Landrecht and Aaron Hutton are among the other Manitoba artists slated to put on concerts in the coming months. So far, 48 concerts have been planned in 16 communities. Pending funding, the goal is to deliver concerts to all 87 personal-care homes in rural and northern Manitoba at least once a year.

The B.C. chapter of Health Arts Society has been putting on Concerts in Care since it was founded in 2006. Nadeau, who graduated from the University of British Columbia in 2008, is no stranger to the program. She's played more than 200 Concerts in Care in B.C. (Full disclosure: I retooled Nadeau's current website bio.)

Forget the theatres and concert halls; the intimate shows she's put on in seniors, hospice and palliative-care homes rank among the most memorable in her career — and this is a woman who once backed Kanye West at a Vancouver concert.

“I've had people laugh, I've had so many people cry.



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I've had people just want to hold me,” she tells me after she's finished her set.

“The people who live in these homes and hospitals and all these care units across the province and across our country are people who need music. They love it. It's a bit of escape. Who doesn't want to escape their daily lives and enjoy beautiful music? So many of them can't leave where they're living. They need someone to escort them — but a lot of them don't have anyone to escort them. If we don't bring it to them, they aren't exposed to it.”

Live music is an experience many of us take for granted — particularly those of us who are able-bodied, have a disposable income and live in the city. But everyone should have the opportunity to participate in arts and culture; it shouldn't be reserved for a certain segment of the population.

Jeannette Carriere, 77, and Rachelle Hausauer, 76, have front-row seats for Nadeau's performance. “This is very special — especially at 11 o'clock in the morning,” Carriere says with a laugh. “I love being so close to it.”

Hausauer, who has a shock of purple in her snow-white hair, agrees. “I just love this. I used to get season tickets to the (Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra) all the time. It's just beautiful.” The harp has particular resonance with her. “You feel like you're on a cloud. You can let yourself go.”

Music also has an incredible connection to memory. Music & Memory programs, such as the one at Misericordia Place and Misericordia Health Centre, have been effective at reconnecting people living with dementia with memories that have been eroded by the disorder. Nadeau has made Elvis's *Can't Help Falling in Love* a set staple for that very reason; it's a crowd-pleaser wherever she goes.

On Wednesday, many of the women express happy little sighs of joy at hearing Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. Both Carriere and Hausauer walked down the aisle to that song.

“Every time I hear it, I get tears in my eyes,” Hausauer says.



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ABOVE AND ABOVE LEFT: Janelle Nadeau performs at the launch of Concerts in Care at the L'Accueil Colombien seniors residence.

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