



CITADEL THEATRE

LEGENDS OF CARNEGIE HALL



A Jessie Award-winning performer, **Alison MacDonald** has worked all across the country at theatres including Citadel Theatre, The Arts Club, Western Canada Theatre, The Belfry, Thousand Islands Playhouse, Prairie Theatre Exchange, and Chemainus Theatre Festival. She is a graduate of the Canadian College of Performing Arts and Red Deer College's Theatre Studies Program. Having been approved by the Patsy Cline Estate to portray Patsy Cline in the musical *A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline* (directed by **Daryl Cloran**), Alison received accolades for her portrayal of the role at theatres across Canada. She recently released an album filled with music from the 1950s and '60s, and is currently working on an album with her children's duo, The Whoopsie Daisies. Alison will pay tribute to the most beloved songstresses to ever hit the stage at Carnegie Hall during her *Beyond the Stage* performance this month.



CITADEL THEATRE

Citadel Theatre: When did you start putting together the idea for *Legends of Carnegie Hall*?

Alison MacDonald: It was about a year-and-a-half ago. I've always wanted to do a cabaret in Alberta, so I started thinking about songs that I wanted to sing and artists that I really appreciated. Patsy Cline and Judy Garland came to the forefront. And then I wanted to find what tied them together. The big thing was Carnegie Hall. And then researching other musicians that had played there - it was kind of an easy route to go down. It was really inspiring. I think the hardest part was picking the music because there are so many great songs. It was going, 'Oh, I want to do this song but [the show] can't be four hours long.'

CT: Is there a certain vibe or tone for the songs that you chose to include in the show?

AM: It's a good balance of upbeat [songs] and some nice ballads, but mostly, I like to think of a cabaret or this type of concert as a party that I get to host. Everyone's a guest and we just have a great time, so the vibe of the evening is really fun, upbeat, with great music but also some lovely ballads.

CT: Who are your guests during the show and why did you choose each of them?

AM: My first guest is **Rachel Bowron**, and she's singing on Friday night and Sunday afternoon. I chose her because I think she's a fantastic musical theatre performer and theatre artist in general. She brings a great dynamic to the stage; I knew it would be great fun to have her! We're also going to do a fun duet. On Saturday night, my guest is a musician by the name of **Celeigh Cardinal**. She just won the Indigenous Artist of the Year award at the Western Canadian Music Awards. I saw her perform at an open mic night a few months ago and thought she was amazing. She's got a real bluesy voice, which is very different from mine, so it's a nice juxtaposition to what I bring to the stage.

CT: Who are some female artists that you admire and why do you look up to them?

AM: Really, all of the females that we're celebrating in this show are artists that I admire. Judy Garland - she brought her heart to everything that she did. Patsy Cline was a real ballsy lady and a real leader in her time in music. In the 1950s, for a female singer to get that far on her own, is really incredible. All of the women - they're very different but what they have in common is passion and drive for what they do. They just have to sing, and you can hear it in their voice. Their storytelling through song is really awesome.

CT: When did you first start singing?

AM: My parents would probably say when I was five years old - just all around the house, I would sing! But I started taking lessons when I was 12. Through school, I took lessons off and on. And then I went to theatre school and musical theatre school and really started honing the craft more.



CITADEL THEATRE

CT: What attracted you to singing and acting as a career path?

AM: I think it's just something that I have to do. I love it and often, it can be hard - your daily life can be frustrating just trying to make things work. But I just love it so much that I can't imagine doing anything else.

CT: You received approval from the Patsy Cline Estate to portray Patsy Cline in the musical *A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline*. What was that experience like?

AM: It was really just putting three songs on tape - *Walkin' After Midnight*, *I Fall to Pieces*, and *Crazy*. I had to submit those to the theatre company and they submitted it to the Patsy Cline Estate. Whoever plays that character has to be approved to play it. I remember getting the email back saying that I was approved and it was so exciting.

CT: When did you do *A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline*?

AM: I did that at Western Canada Theatre in February of 2016 and also at Thousand Islands Playhouse May and June of 2016 – both were directed by Daryl Cloran! I also did it last year in Victoria; I produced it with a good friend of mine.

CT: Does any part of that experience come into play in your *Legends of Carnegie Hall* show?

AM: Yeah! Each of the artists that we're celebrating, I'll talk about them and about what my connection is to them. The Patsy Cline set means a lot - she was such a strong person and it was interesting to be able to step into those shoes. Sometimes, I can be a little girly and giddy, so playing such a grounded character like Patsy was such an incredible experience. Anytime I get to sing her songs, it feels like a real gift.

CT: You have actually been to Carnegie Hall! How old were you when you first visited and what were you doing there?

AM: I was 17 years old. I was in high school, and I sang in a jazz choir at Lindsay Thurber in Red Deer. Our choir was invited to sing in the North American Vocal Jazz Extravaganza, and it actually took place in Carnegie Hall. I think our choir was 15 people and we sang on the Carnegie Hall stage, along with about 12 other choirs. We got to sing two songs on our own - The Beatles' song *Ticket to Ride* and *How Do You Keep the Music Playing?* I remember looking out into the audience and thinking 'this place is so majestic looking.' When I think back on it, it kind of seems like it didn't really happen. It seems like a dream. It was a pretty awesome experience.

Legends of Carnegie Hall takes place November 16-18, 2018, in The Club at the Citadel Theatre.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call the Box Office at 780.425.1820 or visit

www.citadeltheatre.com.