

Aesma daeva

When Aesma Daeva hits the stage at Toronto's Opera House, they will be bringing the poetry of Toronto's first female poet, Isabella Valancy Crawford, to the stage with them.

"The first time I heard of Crawford was when I was looking for poetry about Native Americans," says John Prassas, the band's founder. "Upon reading her poem 'The Camp of Souls,' I almost immediately had a melody for the first and last verses. The meter makes the poem easy to set to music, but for me the colors she uses embrace the colors I try to convey through music. My favorite line is the last: 'For love is the breath of the soul set free.' I think this phrase should be as popular as the quotes of Shakespeare."

The setting for "The Camp of Souls," a track from Aesma Daeva's new album, "The Dawn of the New Athens," consists of standard rock elements with choral and symphonic harmonies. The composition awakens memories of the 20th century mystical composers Arvo Part and Eleni Karaindrou. The intricate harmonies are handled by members of Rose Ensemble and Vocal Essence, both professional choral groups from Minneapolis. Lead vocalist Lori Lewis expresses the passion of Crawford's poem in the symphonic metal ballad. Instead of hard rock guitar solos, the song appropriately features a Native American flute.

In America, Crawford is not very well known, but to some she is Canada's Emily Dickenson. "Crawford is a poet who should be revived and cherished by a generation other than her own," says Prassas. "It's really only the beginning. More composers will discover her."

Aesma Daeva will be opening for Sweden's symphonic rock band Therion at the Opera House on October 29, 2007.