

## Amanda Tosoff returns home with Words project

# CapU grad bringing new tunes to jazz fest showcase

[Christine Lyon](#) / North Shore News

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Amanda Tosoff plays Frankie's Jazz Club on June 30 as part of this year's TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival. Photo Supplied

**Amanda Tosoff Words CD release, Thursday, June 30, 8 p.m. at Frankie's Jazz Club, 765 Beatty St., Vancouver. \$15. Part of the TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival. Visit [coastaljazz.ca](http://coastaljazz.ca) for tickets and info.**

Amanda Tosoff has a way with words.

Her fifth album, fittingly titled *Words*, marks the first time the Toronto-based jazz musician has incorporated vocals into her compositions. The nine new tracks feature not her own words, mind you, but a medley of poems and lyrics from classic English literature, the contemporary Canadian repertoire, and her own family members – all set to her original music.

The new release is “a bit of a departure from what I’ve done in the past” notes the Capilano University grad, whose last four albums focused mainly on instrumental modern jazz.

“This project is a little different because it involves poems that I’ve found that really speak to me,” Tosoff says. “Because of that, it naturally morphed into something a little bit different. It’s got elements of jazz, obviously, but also a bit of folk, a bit of pop, a bit of classical as well.”

The eclectic album was released back in March, and Tosoff is now taking it on the road for a jazz festival tour, which includes a stop in Vancouver June 30 as part of the TD Vancouver International Jazz Festival. Joining her on tour are vocalist Felicity Williams, guitarist Alex Goodman, bassist Jon Maharaj and drummer Morgan Childs, all of whom are featured on the recording.

The opening track is a light and ethereal musical adaptation of William Wordsworth’s “Daffodils” – one of Tosoff’s longtime favourite poems. She’s also written melodies to accompany contemporary Canadian poems, such as “Owl Pellet” by Tim Bowling and “The First Day of Winter” by Laura Lush. Tosoff’s sister, Melissa

Mansfield, contributed lyrics for two songs on the album, and her father and uncle, Lloyd and Ted Tosoff, both singer-songwriters, wrote the words to “Living in the Past.”

“It’s a bit of a mix of material,” Tosoff says, admitting she’s not exactly a poetry buff and only recently discovered some of the writers she decided to feature. “I just came across their poems and was so moved by them that I had to write.”

The process of setting pre-written material to music was an improvisational one for Tosoff. She’d sit at her piano, try singing the first line, record it, and listen back. From there, she added instrumentation to capture the mood. “It just came out naturally,” she says.

Tosoff was raised in a musical household – not surprising considering the heavy presence of her relatives on her latest album.

“My family is quite musical. My mom played classical piano growing up, my dad’s written country songs and would always play, and my whole extended family is also very musical.”

She developed a passion for music as a high school student at White Rock’s Semiahmoo secondary.

“They have a fantastic music program and that’s where I got really interested and saw it was something I could pursue,” she says. “I played some other instruments along the way, but piano was always the one that was my favourite.”

It was in high school that Tosoff found herself drawn to jazz and she went on to study the genre at Capilano University. Since then, she’s performed with internationally recognized artists such as Ingrid Jensen, Emilie-Claire Barlow, Phil Dwyer, Christine Jensen, Brad Turner, Kelly Jefferson, and Jodi Proznick. She received the CBC Galaxie Rising Star Award at the 2007 Vancouver International Jazz

Festival and the General Motors Grand Prix de Jazz at the 2009 Montreal Jazz Festival. She also earned a master’s degree from the University of Toronto.

Tosoff says she’s eager to return to Vancouver to perform in front of her hometown family and friends.

“I don’t think I would even be a musician if it weren’t for the Vancouver community and all my teachers and colleagues,” she says. “I’m just really, really excited to come home.”

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