

Prairie Talks hosting two events in 2013

Prairie Talks, a speaker series in the Geographical Center of North America started by Fillmore native Kristi Rendahl, will host two events in 2013.

At 2 p.m. on Sunday, April 21 in the Rugby High School Auditorium, the series will host actress, writer and comedienne Kim Schultz and composer and musician Amikaeyla Gaston in their performance of "No Place Called Home," a play written by Schultz with an original score by Gaston. Schultz was commissioned by Intersections International, a New York City-based nonprofit organization, to write the play after interviewing Iraqi refugees in the Middle East in the fall of 2009. The performance will be followed by an audience dialogue, including comments from a representative of the New Americans program at Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota. This event is sponsored in part by the North Dakota Humanities Council. A limited supply of Schultz's books and Gaston's recently released CD will be available for purchase and autographs.

"No Place Called Home" was directed by Sarah Cameron Sunde and enjoyed an off-Broadway run in New York City in the fall of 2010. It is currently touring nationally, with a recent performance at The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC as part of World Refugee Day. Nationally and internationally, Schultz has worked at The Guthrie Theatre, Childrens' Theatre Co., Theatre de la Jeune Lune, The Chicago Improv Fest, Second City, Disney Cruiselines, The Brave New Workshop, HBO Comedy Showcase and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Currently residing in New York, she has performed at The Hamptons Shakespeare Festival, Oberon Theatre, 3LD, Themantics Group and The Zipper Factory Theatre.

Proclaimed as one of the "purest contemporary voices . . ." by National Public Radio, Amikaeyla Proudfoot Gaston embraces the best of many types of music. Her sultry sound, as described by MTV, is "like listening to a velvet waterfall," and her soulful, roots jazz flavor captures the listener with dynamic passion and enchanting sincerity. She has won a multitude of music awards, including Best Jazz Vocalist, Best Urban Contemporary Vocalist, Best World Music



Bjørn Engesland

Vocalist and Best Debut Artist, and was named Washington DC's best Female Composer in 2006, 2008 and again in 2011 for excellence in original composition. She has performed, recorded with and travelled the world with award-winning artists such as Take 6, Sweet Honey In The Rock, Baba Olatunji, Mickey Hart, Pete Seeger, Esperanza Spalding and Sheila E, and was invited to perform at the Inaugural Festival of Sacred Chanting and Singing for the commemoration of the Golden Buddha at the request and invitation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

At 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 22 in the Rugby Eagles Club, the series will host Bjørn Engesland, secretary general of the human rights group the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, based in Oslo. Engesland started working with the Norwegian Helsinki Committee in 1995 and became secretary general in 1996. The committee, founded in 1977, bases its activities on the Helsinki Declaration that was signed by more than 35 European and North American states at the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, later OSCE) in 1975. The declaration states that respect for human rights is a fundamental factor in the development of peace and understanding between states. This event is co-sponsored by Bismarck State College's Embracing Diversity Team.

In the last few years the Norwegian Helsinki Committee's international activities have focused on the emerging democracies in Central and Eastern Europe and the for-



Kim Schultz, left, and Amikaeyla Gaston

mer Soviet Union. The committee works on addressing breaches of the Helsinki Declaration, OSCE documents and other international human rights treaties. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee is politically independent.

Prairie Talks events in 2012 featured Alan Bjerga, agricultural and food security journalist, author and 2010 president of the National Press Club, and Roxana Saberi, journalist, author, speaker and human rights advocate. The series was started to connect common sense people in north-central North Dakota with common sense people from around the world. Kristi Rendahl, the founder of the series, was born and raised in Benson County and is a graduate of Rugby High School.

Prairie Talks events are intended to engage, challenge, and inspire conversation. Talks are free of charge, but donations are welcomed to help defray expenses. Volunteers are also warmly welcomed.

Additional information can be found at www.prairietalks.org or by contacting Rendahl at 651-308-2530 or talktome@prairietalks.org.