

[JAZZ MUSIC]

NINA MOINI: This Sunday, music will fill the Mississippi riverfront in North Minneapolis by artists like the one you're hearing now, Walter Chancellor, for the first-ever Northside Jazz and Heritage Festival. The daylong event brings together musicians, artists, and vendors to celebrate the rich musical and cultural history of North Minneapolis. Kristel Porter heads the organization behind the festival, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition. She's here to tell us more about it. Kristel, thank you very much for your time today.

KRISTEL PORTER: No, thank you for having me. I'm super excited to be here.

NINA MOINI: We're so excited to have you. Congratulations on this. It's the first one, which is so cool. What's the backstory behind how you decided we need to have this type of festival?

KRISTEL PORTER: Man, this is such a big deal. Honestly, we had got some funding. So West Broadway Business and Area Coalition is the organization that I lead. And we got some funding from the city of Minneapolis a couple years ago to basically work with local artists that live in North Minneapolis and the residents of North Side and really dig into what is the cultural districts. Minneapolis has cultural districts throughout the city. And West Broadway Avenue happens to be one of them.

And what does that mean? What is the culture of the North Side? And what are some things that we are not capitalizing on when it comes to our history and our culture that can bring people in and celebrate that with us? And so we spent about a year gathering residents and artists. And what kept coming up was, we need to really just start embracing how much music has really shaped the culture of North Minneapolis.

And we talk about how some small towns will say, we have the biggest ball of string in our neighborhood. And people will go on a road trip, and they'll reroute themselves 30 miles just to see a big ball of string or something. And we had Prince perform for the first time in front of an audience on West Broadway Avenue at the Capri Theater. And why do we not capitalize the amazing musicians that have come out of North Minneapolis? So the big thing was, we need a jazz festival. We need something that brings in all these artists, brings them back home, so we can celebrate that culture together.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, there's so much history in the area, too, just to even allow music to be shared. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

KRISTEL PORTER: Yeah. Well, I brought up that we have Prince. And actually, even North Minneapolis was the Juneteenth celebration. That's where you go to celebrate Juneteenth. And I remember growing up, and everybody got together. And if you hadn't seen folks for a while, if they left the neighborhood or we just get busy calendars, we knew that we were going to run into our family and friends that we haven't seen for a year at the Juneteenth festival. And some of the most amazing performances happened on stage at Juneteenth.

And then also, we have a big event that we throw in North Minneapolis called Open Streets West Broadway, seven stages along the entire avenue just showcasing so many artists and so many talented individuals. And so music is just really a big part of our community and our culture. It just is. There's no event where we don't have music involved. And so just making sure that we have an event that focuses solely on that. And on our only major business corridor in North Minneapolis, which is West Broadway Avenue, this is where it should be taking place is in that cultural corridor.

NINA MOINI: Yeah. And tell us a little bit about the significance of just being right on the river there.

KRISTEL PORTER: Oh, gosh, man, where do I start? So growing up in North Minneapolis, I would say that if anyone that's listening to this and has any experience of spending time along the Mississippi River, especially in the city of Minneapolis, you would know that there is a vast difference between the east side of the river and the west side of the river. North Minneapolis is on the west side of the river.

And growing up, we did not have access to that river at all. It was lined with industrial waste, we say, plants, factories. And you were not allowed anywhere near it. You would have been trespassing. Even though it's federal land along the river, you would have had to crawl the fence and go through a shipyard to even get to the river. And just recently, in the last decade, decade and a half, they started to open up spaces along the river to where people can actually walk along it.

And so now that we have that access, we are going to be celebrating in that space that is now open and available for people to be able to be next to the river. That was a big deal. And if you go just on the other side of the river, people fish and spend time on it and sit on it. There's even homes on the river in Northeast. So it's a great way to be able to say, hey, we're claiming this space back, and we deserve to be able to enjoy that water as well.

NINA MOINI: Give us a preview of the musicians and the vendors and what people can expect when they come out.

KRISTEL PORTER: Oh, man. We've got a lot of artists that are performing. We wanted to be very intentional, since this is our first North Side Jazz and Heritage Festival, about making sure that we first highlight the people that have come from our community that are here and that are Minneapolis residents, and especially North Side residents as well. So we have Kevin Washington, Jamecia Bennett, Omar Abdulkarim.

We have Ashley DuBose, which is very exciting to me, Joe Davis, the amazing Truth Maze, Jay Most and the Command Steppers, Maya Marchelle, Walter Chancellor, who you just played, Wensho Ashby-- amazing on the keys-- Monique Blakey, Aniyah Warren, and of course, Len Jones. Those are just some--

NINA MOINI: A packed lineup!

KRISTEL PORTER: --performing. Yes, a very big lineup. And it's going to be just amazing. I mean, I've had the privilege of being able to listen to all these artists and see them perform on stage. And it's amazing that it's a free concert for anyone who wants to come. We fortunately were supported by the Minnesota Humanities Center. We were supported by US Bank. We were supported by Zafa Wines, which is a Black-owned vineyard, which will also be providing wine at the space as well, if you want to taste that. And she's amazing. Her name is Krista Scruggs.

We were supported by North Memorial Health. And so this is community that have gotten together and wanted to provide this opportunity. Even North Side Funders Group as well has helped provide this event. Crooners as well as a sponsor. So we're just really, really excited. And then some of our vendors, oh, gosh, there's just so many to tell.

[LAUGHTER]

NINA MOINI: Give us a couple of food items.

**KRISTEL
PORTER:** Yeah, I'm not going to go into it all. But--

NINA MOINI: Give us some food highlights. People want to know.

**KRISTEL
PORTER:** We want to eat.

NINA MOINI: Yeah.

**KRISTEL
PORTER:** Of course, you can't have a jazz festival-- and of course, there will be some blues sprinkled in there-- without barbecue. So we will have 5 House Bar-BQ, Xstream Cuisine, and Thirst Trap, which is, I mean, delicious juices. Because we know it gets hot outside, and those juice vendors definitely keep me alive. [? Big T ?] Barbecue, Dipp'd By Riah, if you like some sweets, and so much more. There's a Jamaican catering service as well that's going to be there and a Plant Bar Cafe.

NINA MOINI: Amazing.

**KRISTEL
PORTER:** Cookie Cart, Honey's Soul Food and Bakery, the Sweet Shack, [? Nevaeh's ?] Sweet Shack. I mean, there's a lot of food that's going to be in this space.

NINA MOINI: Well, now I'm hungry. I'm hungry. I'm hungry, and I'm very excited for you. Looking forward to it this weekend on Sunday. Congratulations, Kristel, and have a wonderful time.

**KRISTEL
PORTER:** Yeah. Oh, thank you so much. I appreciate you.

NINA MOINI: Kristel Porter is the executive director of the West Broadway Business and Area Coalition.