

Aurora Community Band to debut original song for Canada 150



By Brock Weir

O Canada and The Maple Leaf Forever are just two patriotic songs that have reached ?anthem? status ? officially and unofficially ? in our collective consciousness since Confederation a century-and-a-half ago.

But, will a specially commissioned song by the Aurora Community Band to mark Canada's 150th Anniversary this year have the potential to reach those heights? Well, there is no better way to tell than to turn out to Aurora's Canada Day Celebrations at Lambert Willson Park.

It is here that the Aurora Community Band will debut this new song, which they have specially commissioned from composer Bill Thomas, a professor at York University to be a modern ?anthem? to foster ideas of a modern nation.

In fact, ?anthem? is the watchword for Gord Shephard, leader of the Aurora Community Band, when asked just what promoted the fledgling community band to use their resources and do something special to mark Canada's historic anniversary.

?I asked Bill Thomas to write something that would not only serve the purpose of celebrating Canada's 150th, but also serve as something of a theme song for the community event,? says Mr. Sheppard of their participation in Canada's birthday party. ?We wanted it to be something we could play on a regular basis, but also being somewhat anthem-like along the lines of something John Williams might write.?

For the uninitiated, John Williams is the multiple Academy Award-winning composer who has penned the scores and themes for such iconic films as Jaws, ET, the Indiana Jones series, and many more. Indeed, this ?film music vein? is exactly what Mr. Shephard says the Aurora Community Band is going for, with a splash of ?I Believe,? the song written by Stephan Moccio and Alan Frew for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, which subsequently became ubiquitous with the sporting event.

?That was the idea I gave to him in terms of what kind of song we were looking for,? says Mr. Shephard, adding geography and multiculturalism are some of the themes he is thinking of. I think our band members have all been very excited about this, certainly our Board of Directors, who are the ones we have worked the most on doing this. They are not only very excited about it, but it marks an important time for our band because certainly if you are able to have the funds to have a piece commissioned, it means that you're doing pretty well.?

?I think there are a lot of people who have played concert band instruments sometime in their life, maybe as high school students, and I think when the opportunity is there for them to play in a band, I think a number of people find that is something they would like to do,? he adds of a key to the Aurora Community Band's success.

Indeed, visibility is also a key factor. There are plenty of opportunities to hear the band ? and maybe even think about picking up an instrument of your own ? throughout the year, whether it is their annual Christmas Market at the Aurora Cultural Centre, or several times throughout the spring and summer entertaining crowds at the Aurora Farmers Market.

?For an audience member, it is a great opportunity to hear people from your Town participate in a band and hear them play,? he says. ?We play a lot of popular songs, as well as more traditional concert music, and I think, for people interested in joining the band, it is a friendly and open atmosphere yet we really strive to play to the highest of our ability in terms of quality.?

The Aurora Community Band will play Aurora's Canada Day Celebrations at Lambert Willson Park on July 1, taking the stage between 12.15 and 1 p.m. But, if you can't wait that long, the Band is now putting the finishing touches on their special Mother's Day concert. ?With Quiet Courage ? A Musical Celebration of Mothers and Bravery? will take place at Trinity Anglican Church

next Sunday, May 14 at 3.30 p.m.