

Cultural Centre launches new season ? in new locations



Royal Wood opens the Cultural Centre's indoor performing arts season next month.

The Church Street School might be closed for the redevelopment of Library Square, but the Aurora Cultural Centre is set to re-open its doors ? and roll out a new season of in-person and remote programming ? at new locations within Aurora.

This season, the Cultural Centre will be on the road with performing arts, visual arts, and in-class programs at Town Hall, the Aurora Armoury, Town Park and other venues, allowing the organization to keep programs rolling in a socially-distant and safe way.

On Saturday, September 26, the Cultural Centre kicks off its performing arts season with Tribal Vision Dance, a toe-tapping socially-distanced performance at Town Park's Bandshell in conjunction with Culture Days.

Part of the Cultural Centre's Kaleidoscope Family Series, this free ticketed event will include singing, drumming and dance demonstrations up on stage while ticket-holders stay socially-distant in bubbles outlined on the lawn in front of the bandshell.

?We're not allowed to sing or dance, but you can tap your toe in your bubbles in your Town Park space,? says the Aurora Cultural Centre's Jane Taylor. ?We have probably had plans A through M about how we wanted to proceed with programming. When we looked at what we could do, because we are a not-for-profit charitable organization?we're able to make the decision ourselves based on programming that is not predicated on other forces. The most important part is predicated on safety protocols.?

Once things solidified, the Cultural Centre was able to begin programming ? and restoring some of the programming that was previously cancelled or postponed due to the pandemic, including a performance from acclaimed singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Royal Wood.

Wood is set to headline the Cultural Centre's first indoor performance of the fall season with a dinner-and-concert affair on Saturday, October 3, at the newly-restored Aurora Armoury, now home to Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute.

?Royal Wood is an incredibly engaging presence on the stage and he is a wonderful storyteller on top of it all,? says Ms. Taylor. ?He was always on our list to kick-off our year anyway, so I am thrilled he has agreed to come and do this show. What people can expect is a very small group of people attending the live performance. We have mapped out the Armoury with safety first in mind. Our guests will come before the show, they will pre-order their meal when they buy their ticket, and the Armoury is creating a delectable

menu for us.

“We will welcome guests in, seat them at their table, everyone will be masked until they sit down at their table as per restaurant guidelines, and, once they sit, they can take off their masks because they need to enjoy their meal!”

For those who do not feel ready to come out for an in-person meal and concert, the Centre is also selling a ticketed live-streaming experience.

The Aurora Armoury will be not just a concert venue for the Cultural Centre, it will also be a classroom for an extensive series of arts programs and workshops beginning in the last week of September.

“We have a number of new measures in place,” says the Cultural Centre's Leanne DiMonte. “One of the things we are doing is shortening the length of the programs [to] five weeks (from the regular eight weeks) because it is hard for people to commit to a longer period of time, especially in these times. The Armoury's classroom space is just around the corner from where we used to be, so it is handy for our patrons, and some classes will be held at the Aurora Seniors' Centre as well.”

All public health guidelines on wellness screenings will be implemented for all students and patrons upon entry and everyone – students, instructors, and staff alike – will be masked throughout the proceedings. Regular class sizes have also been reduced in an effort to ensure everyone has their own individual workstations and is able to maintain social distancing.

“We're starting our children's programs a little later than we usually do and that is just to essentially see how schools fare,” says Ms. DiMonte. “We held back on that and that was a very deliberate move. We have all our great core instructors back and we're really excited to be back in the classroom.”

Children's programming this season includes Around the World with Art with Danielle Zafirovski for kids between the ages of 4 – 6, with the same instructor leading Famous Artists & Their Styles for kids 7 – 10, and A Journey Through Art & Time caters to the 11 – 15 crowd. Feeling musical? You Can Uke It! as Anthony Clayton teaches youth 8 and up the ins and outs of the ukulele.

Adult programming includes painting classes with Helen Walter, Photography with Steve Somerville, wood carving with Marlene Ash, drawing and sketching with Khatcho Yazedjian, watercolours with Kathryn Christensen, jewellery-making with Lucya Almeida and much more.

“We really want to be able to offer these arts experiences in the safest possible way because we know how important having that creative outlet is to people's overall wellness,” says Ms. DiMonte. “We have had a lot of people asking, ‘When can we get back to the classroom?’ and we're excited to be doing it – and in a very measured way.”

For more on fall programming, including ticket information, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca or call 905-713-1818.

By Brock Weir