

Newmarket Voice Festival celebrates milestone anniversary with new opportunities

For 25 years, the Newmarket Voice Festival has provided singers classes and professional feedback to help them on to the next stage of their passions and careers ? and to mark their milestone, the Festival is offering new opportunities for performers of all ages.

Set for February 21 ? 25, culminating with The Concert of Stars at Newmarket's Old Town Hall on Friday, March 3, popular voice classes, along with lessons in speech arts and drama are now in the offing.

?We have categories for all ages, from six and up, and it is to promote the interest and the study of performance of singing and now acting,? says Festival president Irene Ilic. ?This is our 25th year, but due to COVID we haven't had our event since 2019, so there's a real interest in getting back to public performance and we expect a lot of people to enter. It's a valuable learning experience; it's an opportunity to perform, hear from your peers, and be adjudicated by our professional adjudicators who give written and verbal feedback. It is also a chance to win one of our many scholarships.?

Ilic has been involved in the Festival since she moved to Newmarket from Toronto and saw the need for her own music students to have somewhere to go and get feedback from such independent adjudicators.

?I grew up in the States and never had the festival experience that is so rich in Canada, and I wanted to provide that opportunity for my students who, from a young age, can get feedback and just grow and learn. I try to hire adjudicators I feel I can learn from, too. We have been fortunate enough to be at the top of our field and associated with their own academic institutions, universities, Sheridan College in the case of musical theatre, and have had performing careers themselves. They are very inspiring when they give that feedback both in how to improve their technique as singers, but also tips on performing and how to be more effective when they perform.?

To participate in the Festival, interested performers must submit their application forms by January 31. The forms and further information are available at newmarketvoicefestival.com.

?By expanding our categories, we're hoping to attract new people, too, because it's for pop music as well as speech arts,? says Ilic. ?Whether you're studying privately with someone, are self-taught, or just love to sing, those are all the requirements needed, really. You want to sing and perform and you want feedback on how you're doing and what you can do to improve by someone who is a qualified professional.

?It's for anyone in York Region and beyond, it's for all ages, and even with more genres being offered, I think we're going to get more.?

The Newmarket Voice Festival is supported by, among others, the Optimist Club of Aurora, which has donated a total of \$1,000 to create several scholarships for participants residing in Aurora and who are chosen by adjudicators; additionally, Mayor Tom Mrakas has donated a Town of Aurora scholarship for an outstanding Aurora singer, which will be presented March 3.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter