

?Arts are better together,? says Cultural Centre in season launch



We're out of lockdown, stores are opening back up, and the Aurora Cultural Centre has hit the ground running in rolling out programming.

?It's like a dream come true ? we've been waiting for this time and we're super-excited to be working with our team to build out each of our programs,? says Suzanne Haines, Executive Director for the Aurora Cultural Centre.

The Centre formally launched its 2022 season last week under the banner ?The Arts are Better Together.?

The season is underway right now in both their Performing and Visual Arts programs.

On now through February 10 is a virtual continuation of their Great Artist Music Series with ?Sounding Thunder,? which culminates this Thursday with a virtual artist reception at 7 p.m.

Commissioned by the Festival of Sound in 2018, Sounding Thunder is a musical journey into the life of renowned Ojibwe World War I sniper Francis Pegahmagabow, composed by Tim Corlis and written by Ojibwe poet Armand Garnet Ruffo.

?The performing arts was, for the Centre, the biggest impact,? says Ms. Haines of the pivots that resulted from COVID-19. ?It continued to be dogged by COVID as we have tried to gather with our community and we're [returning] in a very calculated way.?

This week also marks the formal launch of the Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts, a collective of Grade 12 art students from Aurora's five high schools, which has become a tradition for the Centre. Last year, due to COVID, the celebration was a virtual-only affair, but under new guidelines, the Centre is looking forward to welcoming limited numbers of patrons into their temporary gallery space at Town Hall to see the creativity our local youth want to share with the world.

?Our gallery has been online for so long and the opportunity to open that space up to visitors to see the art at such an incredible show is such a great way to open back up with the families and youth of Aurora,? says Ms. Haines. ?It's an unbelievable opportunity.?

Art-lovers can pre-book a time slot to take in the work in the Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts through March 21, with the online exhibition continuing through March 25.

The gallery space will be handed over to a small group exhibition from March 28 ? April 22 called ?Portraits of Personal History,? which will see the participants ?explore their personal stories through portraiture.?

Closing out the gallery for spring will be an exhibition of the work of Andrew Cheddie Sookrah entitled ?Backstories: The Researching Artist as Traveller and Interviewer,? which runs from May 9 through July 15.

Following Sounding Thunder, the Cultural Centre will take the show on the road ? this time to Theatre Aurora ? with Kattam and his Tim-Tams, a Family Day presentation on February 21 that is part of the Kaleidoscope Family Series. Trinity Anglican Church plays host to the Centre as the Great Artist Music Series presents Sarah Hagen with ?Perk Up, Pianist!? on March 11.

On April 7, the Centre will present First Nations musician Leela Gilday at the Aurora Armoury, and they will return on April 23 with Carousel Players Presents: Pop! Pop!, a part of the Centre's Meridian Magic Carpet Series.

And there's much more to come.

?We felt (the theme of Arts Are Better Together) was important to re-opening because that is what we have heard all through the pandemic,? says Ms. Haines. ?While our patrons are seasoned arts-goers for the most part, they have missed the opportunity to be a part of artistic activity and that is a common narrative. It's one that has come up over and over: the arts are better together. That shared experience, we know, is transformative. The ability to hear someone laughing, watch someone respond to what they are seeing with you, to learn something with someone else and to witness and discuss the art that is in front of you, that is really a cornerstone of how we, as humans, interact with artistic entities. We want people to have that feeling again.

?It feels like a completely new world. Every artist is in a different place than they were in 2020. Those who are ready to move forward were able to and we had to look a little more locally because international travel and international artists aren't as available. We're unable to make up for that lost time. It's lost and what we try to do in a pandemic is find moments of connection where we could. We have seen that emotional transformation with people as they watch the shows, so we're really ready to be back in that room again with audiences and artists working together to have an experience.?

For more on the complete Winter and Spring line-up from the Aurora Cultural Centre, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca or call 905-713-1818.

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