

Aurora announces musical lineup for Town Square opening

Music will lead the celebrations as the community gears up for the opening of Aurora Town Square next month.

Tickets are now on sale for the extensive grand opening program, which will unfold between September 21 and October 13, designed to showcase the new amenities that will become the hallmark of the downtown gathering space, particularly the Performance Hall that is the centrepiece of the Church Street School expansion.

"The grand opening of Aurora Town Square is an exciting moment for our community," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. "We are thrilled to welcome everyone to this vibrant new space and bring a multitude of experiences and performances to the heart of downtown Aurora. There's something for everyone. Join us in celebrating this incredible milestone!"

First up, on September 21, the Norman Dance Company will present what's described as an "exclusive original production celebrating China's rich culture from the perspective of the four orchids." The Norman Dance Company has been a popular fixture for the Town's annual Multicultural Festival and this "homecoming" will take place in the brand-new Performance Hall at 7 p.m.

The following afternoon, at 2 p.m., the Performance Hall will host the York Chamber Ensemble with their new program, entitled "Mozart to the Movies."

The transition from music to movies will continue on September 23 from 7 to 9 p.m. as the Aurora Film Circuit presents a screening of *The Queen of My Dreams*.

"Against the backdrop of a shared obsession with Bollywood fantasy, Mariam, a Pakistani Muslim woman, and her Canadian-born daughter Azra come of age in two different eras," say event organizers of the film.

Canadian Singer Songwriter Marshall Dane takes over the Performance Hall space on September 24 with a 120-minute program beginning at 7.30 p.m.

"Marshall Dane is a Canadian singer-songwriter, recording artist, and five-time Male Artist of the Year Nominee (CMAO)," say organizers. "Marshall Dane writes original Country songs that cross genres and bridges the gap between mainstream pop, rock, and new country. His performance also features an ASL sign language interpreter, making this an inclusive concert experience."

A new experience for Aurora will take place in the Performance Hall on September 26 with a "Silent Dance Party" which will see revellers dancing the night away with a personalized disco party.

"Provided with your own set of headphones and the ability to choose your favourite musical genre, you will share the Performance Hall dance floor with others who are also absorbed in their own, individual musical experience."

This innovative event will take place beginning at 7 p.m.

As *The Auroran* reported last week, Barbra Lica will help the Aurora Cultural Centre mark the start of their new chapter as the multi-award-winning artist plays the Performance Hall on September 27, while, on the following evening, the Aurora Public Library makes its mark on Town Square by hosting a screening of the National Film Board's *WaaPaKe*.

"For generations, the suffering of residential school Survivors has radiated outward, impacting Indigenous families and communities," say organizers. "Dr. Jules Arita Koostachin's deeply personal documentary *WaaPaKe* (Tomorrow) moves beyond intergenerational trauma, with an invitation to unravel the tangled threads of silence and unite in collective freedom and power."

September's programs will continue on September 28 with the Dave Mowatt Trio and Traditional Anishinaabe Grandmother Kim

Wheatley with a program of music and storytelling; and on September 29 with a mini-film festival of short films produced by local seniors.

This event is hosted by Shadowpath.

“Walk the red carpet, have your picture taken at our photo booth and munch on popcorn as you enjoy four short five-minute films by local seniors and Shadowpath artists,” say organizers. “A facilitated talkback with the filmmakers and creative team to follow the screening with exciting announcements revealed.”

As the fall gets underway, more of Aurora's cultural organizations will have the opportunity to program the new space.

Kicking off October's programs, the Aurora Community Band will present a Broadway Musical Night in the Performance Hall on the First, featuring music from such shows as Les Miserables, Chicago, Grease, and The Lion King.

The following evening, the Sultans of Swing will present their Refuge Project.

“The Refuge Project speaks to the changing face of Aurora and reflects the theme of working together for a common goal. Including 30 amazing musicians who have come to North America as recent immigrants and refugees, each with exceptional talent and extraordinary stories, The Refuge Project celebrates the creativity, diversity, and passion of Canada's immigrant community.”

Town Square's first “music salon” on October 3 will feature Alan Cross.

“They're called ‘salons’ because no two audiences are ever the same, each salon is completely different,” and believe us, they're a lot of fun! Alan is an internationally-known broadcaster, interviewer, writer, consultant, blogger and speaker. If you're into music and would love to broaden your horizons as part of an interactive gathering of music fans, this is the right event for you.”

Rounding out the month will be “Sweet Soul Music with George St. Kitts & Cocktail Lounge Experience” on October 4, a Marquee Theatrical Productions Revue on October 6 featuring “a compilation of musical theatre performances from past big-name shows performed by local talent,” the world-premiere of the short film The Rug, filmed at Aurora's Hillary House National Historic Site, on October 6; a screening of the Telly Award-winning documentary Happy Woodland Pet Cemetery: Uncovering History on October 7; a musical program by past Aurora Teen Idols Louisa Barbosa and Ysi Cattle on October 8; Exodus: A Tribute to Bob Marley, led by Lazo, on October 9; classic rockers Zeus on October 10; Fiddlestix on October 12; and local band The Beresfords on October 13, featuring their popular program of Taylor Swift's hits.

An additional performer for October 11 will be announced soon, organizers add.

“In addition to the Grand Opening performances, Aurora Town Square will host a variety of activities, programs and exhibits. These experiences provide an exciting preview into the future of Town Square, inviting the community to explore and engage with the dynamic new space. From interactive art installations, heritage exhibitions featuring the Aurora Collection, to family-friendly workshops and cultural showcases, there is something for everyone to enjoy and experience at Aurora Town Square.”

By Brock Weir