

Concerts in the Park series to launch with distinct Canadian flair



By Brock Weir

Concerts in the Park have become a popular Aurora tradition showcasing the sounds of the world under the open skies of Town Park throughout the summer.

Next month, however, Concerts in the Park is kicking off the 2017 concert series with a distinctly Canadian offering to coincide with the Canada 150 celebrations.

Looking for Lightfoot?

Concerts in the Park will offer a 'phenomenal' simulation.

A huge fan of Shania Twain? Well, would you settle for Shania Twain?

There's something for everyone, young or old, and also opportunities to help the Aurora Food Pantry when the first concert kicks off July 5 with a youth concert led by the Juno-nominated Carl Bergeron.

'This year we focused on Canadian bands, artists and songwriters and we stayed true to that theme,' says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. 'We wanted to showcase a variety of genres that we always do and give the audience a diverse experience from a capella to folk to rock. We like to think the spectrum has been met. It is a truly Canadian experience. We haven't gone outside Canada's borders and we really focused on making sure the content was Canadian. That was the effort for Canada 150.'

The 2017 Concerts in the Park series was officially launched Thursday afternoon at Town Park.

Mayor Dawe got the ball rolling with yet another significant boost from TD Canada Trust, who have stepped up to sponsor this year's event, providing people who make a donation to the Aurora Food Pantry with the 'ultimate concert experience.'

For every donation of food, you are entered into a draw for the full VIP experience, which includes front row seating and service for you and three friends in green Muskoka chairs, service, and food vouchers for on-site vendors.

'The Premium Seating experience is very equitable to what the experience is in being a TD customer, which is what they try to showcase to all their customers,' says Ms. Ware. 'They are dedicated to music and the arts and the Aurora community with having four branches here. This is just bringing the experience to the community in a different way. The Concerts in the Park series is celebrating its 20th anniversary and we like to think it is getting better each year and adding this partnership has enabled us to keep raising the bar.'

'Food donations go to the Aurora Food Pantry and there is a misconception they are only needed at Thanksgiving or Christmas time, but there is a need all year round. When you donate a food item, your name goes into a ballot and it is drawn at the beginning of the concert and you and three friends get upgraded to the seats. The first season we had the experience, the response was like, 'Really?' now it is 'How do I get in there?' It is definitely a sought after experience. Clearly, we are only giving this experience nine times this summer, so it really is a premium opportunity. The partnership with TD has allowed us to step up our game.'

Following the July 5 kick-off concert, the series continues July 12 with emerging country star Dani Strong, an original songwriter discovered through the Magna Hoedown.

Classic Lightfoot with John Stinson hits the stage on July 19, followed on July 26 with a tribute to Bryan Adams.

August 2 features the Toronto All Star Jazz Swing Big Band, a 40 person ensemble, followed on August 9 by the a capella group Cadence.

Celtic music will be in the air when the Mud Men hit the band shell on August 16, followed on August 23 with the original classic rock band The Kings.

The series closes August 30 with Shania Twin, a tribute to Shania Twain.

The summer concerts series is very much community-based. In keeping with that, we are going to have a rotating lineup of emcees for the evening, which are people who are aligned with certain community organization such as Activate Aurora, Windfall Ecology Centre, CHATS, and Neighbourhood Network, says Ms. Ware. Each week you are going to see a variety of emcees which we hope is going to draw a greater community connection as well.

This is the summer tradition in Aurora: Wednesday nights and concerts is where you go to meet your neighbours and make new friends. If you don't take the opportunity to come down, you're really losing out on a great opportunity.