

Cultural Centre launches 15th anniversary Performance season

Local music lovers on Friday night were able to get 'Up Close and Musical' with singer-songwriter Barbra Lica as the Juno-nominated artist took over the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall as the first show of the Aurora Cultural Centre's 15th anniversary season.

'Up Close and Musical' is the overarching theme of this 2024-2025 Performing Arts Season that spans everything from strings to stand-up.

Following A Concert for Truth & Reconciliation Monday to mark Orange Shirt Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, fall performances will resume this Saturday, October 5, with comedian Martha Chaves, who is returning to the Cultural Centre with 'I Got My Papers!' hosted by Ali Hassan, and featuring comedians Fiona O'Brien and Danish Anwar.

'Nicaraguan-Canadian comedy celebrity and émigré [Chaves] returns to Aurora with a focus on immigration to Canada,' says the Centre. 'Newcomers to the country are shaping the identity of our culture and Martha loves to poke fun at all the issues arising.'

'Ali Hassan is host of Laugh Out Loud (CBC Radio & Sirius XM) boasting a 1 million+ audience. A Canadian Comedy Award nominee, he is a regular performer with the Just for Laughs Festival in Montreal and Toronto, the Winnipeg Comedy Festival and has performed across Canada, in the US, the Middle East and in the UK. Ali was also part of the Just for Laughs cross-country Comedy Night In Canada tour hosted by Rick Mercer, performing 23 shows across Canada over 25 days. Ali's solo show, Muslim Interrupted, brought the house down at the world-renowned Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and then toured to over 30 cities across Canada, receiving accolades and an enormous amount of press coverage along the way.'

Showtime is 7.30 p.m.

Activating Brevik Hall, the Aurora Cultural Centre's historic performance space within the heritage Church Street School on the morning of October 26 will be the family show Pop! Pop!, a Carousel Players Production.

'Two characters who are very different from each other are exploring a strange new world and finding surprises in this colourful sensory experience,' says the Centre. 'One instinctively hides, the other instinctively seeks. Together they find lots of surprises that pop up everywhere!'

Pop! Pop! is a performance piece for children ages 2 to 4 and their caregivers. There are sensory experiences, live music, adorable puppets - lots of fun for children and adults alike.'

Doors open at 10.30 a.m. for an 11 a.m. showtime.

A busy November begins on November 1 with Old Man Luedecke (the recording name of Chris Luedecke), a Juno Award-winning and Polaris-nominated singer-songwriter, who will be appearing alongside supporting act Mehdi Rostami.

'A multiple East Coast Music Award winner known for his high energy banjo driven stompers, touching guitar ballads and dry humorous stories, Luedecke has been making a soundtrack to an authentic life for nearly 20 years,' say organizers. 'Songs like I Quit My Job at the beginning of his career and The Early Days at the beginning of his family and dozens of other fan favourites trace a warm line of effort, sadness and joy and provide a soundtrack to many peoples' own progress through adulthood, touching a rare place of truth and charm in the holiness of the mundane. His performing style with his easy-going humour and storytelling creates a rare space of hopeful and intimate magic.'

Doors open at 6.45 for a 7.30 p.m. show.

Next up, on November 16, is a concert featuring influences of Mexico and South Africa as Amanda Martinez takes the stage, supported by Eliana Cuevas.

Amanda Martinez is a Canadian singer-songwriter whose music is an original blend of influences from her Mexican and South African roots. Recognized with multiple nominations as Latin Jazz Artist of the Year (Canada's National Jazz Awards), Best World Music Artist (Canadian Folk Music Awards) and she was the winner of Best World Music Artist (Toronto Independent Music Awards).

Her latest album *Recuerdo*, released at a sold-out show at Koerner Hall as part of the TD Toronto Jazz Festival in June 2024, an exploration of sensuous Cuban-influenced flamenco rhythms, is dedicated to the memory of her late father Gustavo, who bicycled to Toronto from Mexico in 1956 and from whom she says, 'I got my love of music.'

Doors open at 6.45 p.m. for a 7.30 showtime.

Internationally-recognized Canadian Brass, which will take over the Aurora Town Square Performance Hall on November 22 at 7.30 p.m.

Exciting, iconic and ever entertaining, the Canadian Brass is the world's most famous brass group. With 138 recordings, over 2 million albums sold and 3 Grammy Awards, this showstopper will launch the very first concert of the Great Artist Music Series in the new Performance Hall! From classics to contemporary hits, their music weaves freely across musical genres. Their infectious energy and unparalleled musicianship promise an exhilarating evening for all.

If you can't wait until December to get into the holiday spirit, come out on the month's eve when Steven Taetz brings his unique show to the Performance Hall on November 30.

Steven Taetz brings it all to this exuberant holiday show to kick off the season featuring a mix of familiar classics in the seasonal lineup, and songs from his newly-minted 2024 holiday album. He covers it all; Michael Bublé-style pop/swing, Elvis' Blue Christmas, Mariah's epic All I Want for Christmas, a beloved Joni Mitchell cover, classics 50s-60s pop, jazz standards and originals.

December's program begins in Brevik Hall as Fireside Munsch, featuring a performance of four of Robert Munsch beloved classic kids' stories, comes to life on December 7 at 2 p.m.

M. John Kennedy's high-energy performance features four of Robert Munsch's classic stories performed as one wacky storytelling play. Whether you're a child or a child-at-heart, these beloved Canadian classic stories offer plenty of laughter and a familiar warmth to ring in the holiday season.

Rounding out the roster for 2024 will be a holiday performance with Laila Biali in the Performance Hall, with special guest Jane Bunnett on December 14 at 7.30 p.m.

Wintersongs and Holiday Classics features a quartet featuring flute and sax star Jane Bunnett. A renowned pianist and JUNO Award winner for her vocal prowess, Laila is a national figure on the CBC Radio's Saturday Night Jazz broadcast.

For further information on the Aurora Cultural Centre's 2024-2025 Performing Arts Season, including tickets, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir