

Cultural Centre promises family fun for February and Family Day



The arts can open up new perspectives for adults and children alike, and this gateway to something new is at the heart of family programming at the Aurora Cultural Centre this winter.

Next month, the Cultural Centre will see the return of popular performing arts series tailored to kids, but still fun and interactive for the whole family.

The Centre's Meridian Magic Carpet Series kicks off with a new show, *The Sandbox*, on February 11 at 11 a.m.

Developed by Tenon Mortaise, *The Sandbox* has been on the Centre's radar for several years and organizers are thrilled to bring the concept to Aurora.

"The Meridian Magic Carpet series introduces our littlest audience members to the wonder of live theatre," says the Cultural Centre's Jane Taylor. "It can be theatre, music, puppetry or dance, but it specifically engages kids at 18 months-plus. We never like to put a top end [on ages] because it is such beautifully-made children's theatre that everybody finds an entry point for it somewhere. We like to call it 'no shush theatre' because we don't expect [youngsters] to really know how to act when they go to the theatre."

"*The Sandbox* is so innovative; it uses a giant sandbox constructed on the stage, then there is night, shadow, and things get constructed? there are very few words in it, it's very captivating, and it's a perfect one to bring the littles in for the first time."

The *Sandbox* show will take place at Theatre Aurora and tickets are free thanks to the sponsorship of Meridian Credit Union in helping make the series a reality.

"Thanks to the generosity of community sponsors this year, and in a bid to really bring audiences back into that joy of having the family together for live performances as something specifically tailored to them, we're offering our family programming in 2022 and 2023 at no charge."

Richard Gong of Desjardins Insurance has stepped up this season as sponsor for the Kaleidoscope Family Series to make the next event free of charge as well. Set for March 11 at 11 a.m., the Hogtown Brass ensemble, known for their original music and unique arrangements, they will give youngsters and their families the chance to try some musical instruments themselves.

"The Hogtown Brass is an incredible classical music group, but they have this other side with the children's show," Taylor explains. "They're coming in through our Kaleidoscope in the Schools series this winter, but we're also bringing it in thanks to Richard Gong"

from Desjardins for a free family March Break performance on March 11. It's all the fun and raucous and loud bits about learning about brass instruments ? especially for families, there can be kids who are playing the trumpet, tuba or the trombone or might be thinking about it. They are highly engaging, fun, and funny.?

This show will take place at the Wurth Theatre at St. Andrew's College, one of the many venues the Cultural Centre has partnered with since temporarily vacating their space at the historic Church Street School for the construction of Aurora Town Square.

?It has allowed us to meet a whole bunch of new people,? says Taylor of forming new venue partnerships. ?That's the beauty of getting beyond the walls. We want to take that experience back to Town Square.?

And they want to deliver that experience to children when they are young, as well as creating experiences for every age level. It is, she says, the building of an ?arc for everyone in this community.?

?That's why you start the Meridian Series. That's the gateway to, ?What is this?' A very accepting, beautiful environment that shows them the suite of what's available. That's why we have puppetry, or we have music, or we have dance. Then we go into the Kaleidoscope Family Series, adding in the Kaleidoscope in the Schools Series?.so that every school child in Aurora has the chance to see professional performing arts in their own school. Thanks to our generous sponsors we're able to put this into all of our schools. Now you can see that they come up through Meridian, then they have actually gone into schools to see it, then we maybe transition to the Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts because they're into visual arts? you've created a community, a really foundational part of your community that says the arts is vital and vibrant here. That just forms part of who we are.

?That's an incredible privilege for the Aurora Cultural Centre to be involved in that. It's thanks to all the support we get, the community support, the sponsor support, the support from the Town of Aurora, all of this that makes it unique in this Town. Now that we're going to get back into Aurora Town Square, we're going to keep growing this kind of arts domination in Aurora!?

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