

Cultural Centre to mark 15th anniversary with celebratory concerts



Celebration is the order of the day for the Aurora Cultural Centre as they kick off 2025, a year which marks their 15th anniversary of bringing arts programs to the community.

The Centre's anniversary party is set to begin next Friday, January 17, when performers who have been a part of the Centre's performing arts family almost since the very beginning return with new presentations for returning and new audiences.

"It's a celebration of what started as such a great idea and then had all this community support, Town support, and it's fun to pause 15 years in and celebrate," says Jane Taylor, the Centre's Communications Manager, an original member of the Centre's opening team. "I have had the privilege" and, literally, it has been a privilege "of stepping into this building before the doors opened, working with the original Executive Director, Laura Schembri, and the small original team, working to build that vision with community members because it is so important that it wasn't done in isolation. There was such enthusiasm from the Town, from the community, from the people just ready to kind of expand that vision.

"It's hard to believe sitting back, 15 years on, in this unbelievably gorgeous, expanded space, still in our original home that is familiar to us, but using this expanded arts hub [of Aurora Town Square] that just says so much about the vibrancy of arts and culture within York Region and beyond" it is an honour."

One of the Centre's first formal concert programs, one that has been part and parcel of each and every Performing Arts Season presented by the Centre, is the Great Artist Music Series, a classical program facilitated by award-winning classical musicians/producers Bonnie and Norbert Kraft, both residents of Aurora.

The Great Artist Music Series will help usher in the anniversary celebrations when it presents the Campbell, Fagan, Park Trio" featuring clarinetist James Campbell, pianist Angela Park, and, in a first for the series, a soprano voice in Leslie Fagan" on January 17, with a 7.30 p.m. showtime.

Anniversary celebrations will continue on January 25 at 7.30 p.m. when Aurora Cultural Centre favourite John Sheard brings his Salute to the Beatles to the stage, alongside Quisha Wint and Paul Neufeld.

"Angela Park is a beloved Canadian pianist and an incredible accompanist and she has graced our stage a number of times" we're grateful to have the three of them here to celebrate that night," says Taylor. "John Sheard has been synonymous with our programs and the growth of programming here and he was delighted to come back on our 15th. He is bringing back a number of folks who have been on our stage before who will have a wonderful look back on those favourite Beatles tunes."

There will be a celebratory cake for patrons and attendees at each event, as well as an auction of smaller works created by artists whose pieces have previously graced the Aurora Cultural Centre's walls. Artists set to be represented at the January 17 show include Jessie Chiu, Eva Folks, William Lottering, Nancy Newman, Judy Sherman, and Helen Walter. Stepping into the spotlight on January 25 will be artists Katie Argyle, Marlene Ash, D. Ahsén:nase Douglas, Helen Lucas (a gift kindly donated by Ernestine Tahedl), Nancy Newman, and Ernestine Tahedl.

There is a deep gratitude for those artists who helped build the programming here and are now donating their original works so their patrons will have something to walk away with that night, says Taylor. Being here is just a thrill that never goes away. I love walking out into the lobby and talking to families who are coming in, the newcomers coming in, the people who say, 'I have never stepped over the threshold before' and so many people coming in for the first time. I was just so excited to be helping build arts and culture in this community and now it is just gone way beyond what I could have imagined.

This is the community's space. All this programming is built for the community. It is listening to the community, responding to what we're hearing from them, taking that vision and growing it through our own professional team. This is their building to come and explore and to see where we can pique their interests and always have that sense of welcome.

For more on next week's celebrations, and the balance of the Centre's 2024-2025 Performing Arts season, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca.

By Brock Weir