

Katelyn Shulver captures Aurora's 2023 Teen Idol crown



Newmarket resident Katelyn Shulver described winning the Aurora Teen Idol contest on Saturday afternoon in leafy Town Park as ?a dream. I've done competitions before, but to win ? it's shocking for me.?

Shulver, the second-place finisher in 2022, was congratulated on-stage by last year's champion Olivia Varma, and Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas.

The modest and affable Grade 12 student from Sacred Heart Catholic High School found her victory ?personally satisfying because I'm always singing. Around the house, at school, in the car. It was so nice to perform today in front of such a welcoming community.?

Shulver's singing acumen?despite having to ?battle through a sore throat? ? was on vivid display in the contest as she edged out a pair of talented vocalist: runner-up Diya Tirone and third-place finisher Aashika Reddy.

In our post-contest interview at a picnic table in Town Park, Shulver named Ariana Grande and Christina Aguilera as two of her many musical influences.

The talented singer mentioned that she has modeled her vocal performance style after the dynamic Aguilera. Also influential in Shulver's development as a performer has been her avid participation in local theatre and her recent lead role in Sacred Heart CHS's major drama production.

?I've done theatrical productions with Marquee [Theatrical Productions] and learned from those stage experiences. Recently, I enjoyed playing the role of Donna in our high school's presentation of ?Mamma Mia!?

Shulver performed the role popularized by Meryl Streep in the 2008 movie version of British playwright Catherine Johnson's jukebox musical, based on the songs recorded by ABBA.

While Shulver's dynamic performance was much to the delight of hundreds of assembled audience members in Town Park and she noted emphatically that ?the stage can be a magical place,? the high school senior also has her eyes set on another place?specifically, in Kingston, where she'll be ?attending Queen's University in September.?

Shulver will pursue ?a Science degree specializing in the Life Sciences including Biochemistry.?

Seeing stirring performances by so many teens on Saturday was particularly satisfying for Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, one of the event's principal organizers.

Ware organizes 26 events per year for the municipality, but it was evident that the event in Town Park on Saturday is near and dear to her heart.

?The Aurora Teen Idol contest shows the community that we have so many talented teens in our three categories: Theatre, Dance, and Vocals. One of the most satisfying elements is when I am back stage and we see how nervous the performers are, but as they enter the stage, we see them transform into seasoned performers.?

Equally-pleased with this year's Aurora Teen Idol event was Sheryl Thomas, Executive Director of Marquee Theatrical Productions, and another key event organizer.

?Our mandate as an organization is to host festivals. It's very satisfying to see how well this event has been embraced. We saw 23 fabulous performances today.?

Thomas is looking forward to the upcoming season of local Marquee Theatrical Productions that will include ?Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat? and ?The Little Mermaid.?

The talent needed to cast those Marquee Theatrical Productions seemed in part to be on the outdoor stage on Saturday. So many young performers delivered terrific moments for the audience at Town Park. In addition to the three winners in the Senior Vocal Division, the Intermediate Vocal title went to 1st Place winner Domenica Castillo with 2nd Place going to Ashley Yong, and 3rd Place to Vienna Zhong.

1st Place in the Junior Vocal Division went to Jessica Tang, with 2nd Place and 3rd Place going to Jessica Reddy and David Toombs, respectively.

In the category of Dance, 1st Place in the Intermediate Division was captured by Aimee Jia and the runner-up in 2nd Place was Abigail Gwyn.

In the category of Theatre, Alissa Gokhshteyn captured the 1st Place prize in the Senior Division while Olivia Gwyn won the 1st Place prize in the Junior Division.

By Jim Stewart