

Knitting, Happiness and Heritage on tap at Town Square ahead of Pride Fest

Looking for a little Happiness as we settle into spring?

Head over to Aurora Town Square now through May for opportunities to get moving, learn, and celebrate your authentic selves.

It's a busy spring with plenty of opportunities to stay active as the Town of Aurora hosts another popular Belly Dance Foundations series, an acclaimed Fringe Festival pick, and a collaboration with The Happiness Mafia.

"We have offered our Belly Dance workshop with instructor Tamara from Habiba Dance for quite a few years and it has been extremely successful," says Aurora Town Square's Nichole Campsall of the Belly Dance Foundations program which is now accepting names for a waiting list after a quick sell-out. "We've had quite a few participants enjoy each season since we started offering it, and we heard from some of the participants that they'd be interested in a bit of a longer commitment, so we decided to offer a five-week class for Spring, starting on April 13 for five Mondays."

While the Belly Dance Foundations program is full, you can put yourself on the waiting list via the registration links at aurora.ca/whatson.

Another popular return this month – albeit with a fresh twist – is set to unfold in the Aurora Town Square when Kirk Dunn stages *The Knitting Pilgrim* on Sunday, April 19, at 3 p.m.

Directed by Jennifer Tarver, *The Knitting Pilgrim* marks Dunn's second production at Aurora Town Square after *Spycraft* last fall.

"A three-time Fringe pick show that has performed over 115 times in six countries, *The Knitting Pilgrim* is the story of one ordinary guy who happens to be a knitter," say organizers of the play, co-written by Kirk and Claire Dunne. "*The Knitting Pilgrim* is the story of one ordinary guy, who happens to be a knitter, with lots of questions. He knits three huge knitted tapestries to try to tackle them – and it takes him 15 years to finish what he started. Turns out, his journey has just begun."

For Aurora Town Square, this second Dunn project to be staged in the Performance Hall is a testament to a proven partnership between artists and venue.

"Working with Kirk and his wife, Claire, is incredible," says Campsall. "They are just creative geniuses and to be able to bring them to Aurora, it's great for us to be able to share that with the community here. This is a one-man show and its internationally acclaimed. It's his story about using knitting to explore big life questions, and he created three large knitted tapestries throughout those 15 years. He's going to bring those tapestries here and they will be on stage with him.

"Also, for those who are big on knitting, part of the show is you can bring your knitting and knit along as you're listening to the story in the audience as well!"

The Performance Hall will come to life once again on May 16 when the Town of Aurora partners with The Happiness Mafia to present roots rock singer-songwriter Jeremie Albino in concert. Albino brings to the stage songs that are "grounded in the gritty storytelling of classic country music, propelled by the rhythms of old-school R&B, played with the wild abandon of early rock 'n' roll and sung with the deep feeling of southern soul."

"We're very excited to work again with the Happiness Mafia and bring Jeremie Albino here on May 16," says Campsall. "He's on a big tour right now with the Black Keys, so he's an incredible talent and very well-known, so it's great for us to be able to bring him here to Town Square and have more of an intimate environment for fans to enjoy.

"Our partnership [with the Happiness Mafia] has been great. They're local and we love to work with people local and they have great

connections in the music industry. It's just a great partnership to be able to bring those different acts here to our small, intimate venue, and we've had a great response so far.?

Another enduring partnership between the Town and community is the one with the Aurora Community Band and the Borealis Big Band.

This partnership will come to the fore once again at the end of May as they team up to host Aurora's second-annual Pride Festival on May 31.

?We're very excited,? says Campsall. ?We love working with the Aurora Community band and the Borealis Big Band. We worked with them last year on the Inaugural Aurora Pride Festival and it was the most incredible experience. It was really a celebration of community, belonging, and creative expression, and we're thrilled to be able to partner with them again this year.?

For more information on these Aurora Town Square events, including programs hosted by the Aurora Cultural Centre and beyond, visit aurora.ca/whatson.

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