

Marquee celebrates grant funding to increase capacity, teaching opportunities

Young aspiring actors and dancers will soon have more opportunity to pursue their passions, thanks to Marquee Theatrical Productions and the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

On closing night of Marquee's latest adult production, *The Addams Family*, the local theatre company celebrated a recent grant of \$145,300 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) that will go towards helping Marquee recover from the impacts of the global pandemic. The money will also aid in transforming existing spaces into two classrooms with spring dance floors, the purchase of audio-visual equipment, and the creation of an outdoor learning space.

These investments, says Marquee, will give people in the community improved access to programs and events at the Marquee studio for years to come.

I am thrilled to help ensure the sustainability of Marquee Theatre School in their mission to build life-long admiration of the arts and instill valuable skills in our youth, such as confidence, respect and time management, said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy at the presentation. This is an example of how the Resilient Communities Grant, through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, strengthens community-based charitable organizations like Marquee in providing pathways of accomplishment for our youth.

Added Marquee Executive Director Sheryl Thomas: The impact of this Ontario Trillium Foundation grant is beyond our wildest dreams. This grant has allowed us to procure equipment that we normally have to rent over and over again. It has also provided us the opportunity to adapt our spaces to meet the needs of our programs and services, and to adapt to new ways of working, meeting the demands of our increasing registration.

Last week, during a meet and greet for the cast of their upcoming production of *Joseph & The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, Marquee was able to use the new rooms for the first time.

Everyone was like, 'wow,' when they came in, Thomas tells *The Auroran*. They are pretty excited to get to use it. We're still finishing the floors but they will be done for the summer camp's use. It is just a few weeks away, quite honestly, and it has allowed us to accept more children and start another whole program, which is really exciting.

We now have summer camp for kinder-kids right now, which is a brand-new thing for us. We've had kinder-kids during the school year but not during the summer time. Now we have enough rooms where they can have their own space and have their own camp experience as well. It is allowing us to do some bigger projects and team more youth in the community. It's a nice expansion with usable space that we can teach in as opposed to just being storage or set construction space. It is really nice and it will be handy dandy.

PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

The grant funding and the transformed space is not the only exciting thing for members of the Marquee community.

This weekend, they're gearing up to host the second annual Aurora Performing Arts Festival, in partnership with the Town of Aurora, which will take place Saturday, June 10, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Town Park.

There are a lot of vocal entries this year, says Thomas. That always seems to be the biggest category. We finished our judging on Thursday, and there's a cute little boy playing the guitar and singing at the same time. The range of music is quite something because this little boy is singing Guns N' Roses' Sweet Child o' Mine, and there's stuff from Disney, from pop, jazz, something basically for everybody and the finalists range in age from seven all the way up to just under 18.

?We have acting, dancing and singing represented, which is really great, so we have some neat stuff and our Aurora Teen Idol will be there to sing and hand over the torch for who will be the next Aurora Teen Idol as well. Treat yourself to a morning of great entertainment and fun, watching youth basically give all they got on the stage to an audience and what's also really nice is we're paired up with the hours of the Farmers' Market as well and they can actually get a nice twofer: get a nice treat, and sit down and watch an awesome show that is absolutely free.?

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