

Put your showstopping talents forward for second annual Aurora Performing Arts Festival

It's time to dust off your dancing shoes, warm up your vocals, and flex your acting chops – the Town of Aurora is looking for your talent ahead of the Aurora Performing Arts Festival.

The second annual Festival, which is hosted in partnership with Marquee Theatrical Productions, will take place at Town Park on Saturday, June 10, but if you want to find yourself on the band shell stage, you have until Sunday, May 28, to apply online.

The Aurora Performing Arts Festival is billed as an exciting talent search for youth and children.

Judges are looking for vocalists, actors and dancers in three different age categories (seven and younger, 8 to 11, and 12 to 17), from across York Region, to put their talents to the test.

The winner of the 12 – 17 Vocal category will also be crowned Aurora's 2023 Teen Idol.

“It was well received last year. We had so many entrants that we decided to break it down now,” says Marquee founder Sheryl Thomas. “You never know the first time you do something like this how many people are actually going to sign up for it, but there seems to be such great interest that we've decided to break down the age categories.”

One of the categories Ms. Thomas would like to emphasize this year is the drama category, which she felt was under-represented in 2022.

This is a view shared by Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, who said while the Town has done vocal competitions in the past, such as the previous format for the Aurora Teen Idol competition, having drama and dance on stage was a new, but welcome experience.

“We want to see this grow, building on last year's success and then growing above and beyond that,” says Ms. Ware. “Welcoming these two new disciplines was a whole new learning curve. It was refreshing, and really, really motivating. I was also in awe again that these youth have the confidence to do what they did!”

What struck Ms. Ware in the first year of competition was the quality of entries as well as how many youth were engaged, especially with the three different disciplines of singing, acting and dancing.

“We're really looking forward to seeing the growth in those that did participate last year as well as welcoming new entries,” she says. “It's the second year, still trying to get the word out there. It's not just for the community of Aurora, but it's for all of York Region. I was blown away by the talent. I don't know where my expectations were but even with the youngest categories, the youth have the energy, they have the curiosity, and they have the confidence to really be able to do the talents they do. I don't remember being at their age and having the confidence to be on the stage to do what we saw happening and I really think those traits of confidence as well as the actual artistic talent they do have, I think those are really great ingredients for building an overall well-rounded individual.

“I really think the arts, especially in this format with the three disciplines, it's really important that these opportunities are made for youth and they are promoted. There might even be some people in the audience who haven't even tried a discipline and they might be motivated by this. It may inspire them to look to an organization to register or to learn more because arts are so essential from an appreciation perspective as well as a personal development perspective.”

But, in addition to the Aurora Teen Idol sash, there are also cash prizes and scholarships, not to mention “goodie bags” with prizes, including free swim and skate tickets, swag, and products from local businesses.

?This Town is very proud and appreciative to be able to work with the calibre of Marquee Theatrical Productions,? says Ms. Ware. ?They are very passionate about this so it is really great to be able to partner with them again on this journey and a journey that we're definitely looking to grow this year.?

Entries are available online at marqueetp.com/apa-festival.

Along with each entry, applicants will need to submit a video of their performance.

The deadline to apply is Sunday, May 28, 2023.

For more information on the Aurora Performing Arts Festival, visit aurora.ca/artsfestival or contact Ms. Ware through the Town's Special Events line at 905-726-4762, or Ms. Thomas through Marquee Theatrical Productions at 905-713-1040.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter