

Saturday's Performing Arts festival set to showcase array of local talent

An array of local talent in multiple age groups and multiple disciplines will be in the spotlight this Saturday, June 15, as the Aurora Performing Arts Festival returns to Town Park.

Kicking off at 10 a.m., the festival, hosted by Marquee Theatrical Productions in association with the Town of Aurora, will culminate with the crowning of Aurora's 2024 Teen Idol.

"It's shaping up to be a great event with lots of entertaining entries," says Marquee's Sheryl Thomas. "We had to make some really tough choices with the panel of judges to get our finalists in line. A real positive [this year] is our acting division is finally taking flight, which is nice, and the vocal category is strong, strong, strong. We're hoping that everyone comes out to not only support our performers and the show itself, but also the Aurora Farmers' Market, which is happening at the same time."

Now in its third year, the Aurora Performing Arts Festival has expanded every season and Thomas says the community is getting "more and more involved" with each passing year.

This same view is offered by Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator with the Town of Aurora, who says she's "so grateful I'm not a judge!"

"The talent this year, if you look at the story of the evolution of those coming forward, sharing their talents, the quality of it - it's not even describable the amount of talent in York Region that are choosing to participate in this Performing Arts Festival," says Ware. "You never know who you're going to see on that stage and maybe the next time you see them it will be on that jumbo TV screen."

"Even if the ages (of participants) are young, this is your one and only opportunity to see the age of innocence as a precursor to someone potentially exploding into performing. Sheryl and I have the inside scoop because we've seen the videos, but this event is so unique. It's not like Concerts in the Park when you come knowing you're going to see a tribute artist and you know what you're in for; when you come to an open arts festival, you're given an unmapped experience across different genres, different age groups. It's an unplanned adventure that we're providing to you for free!"

This year's Festival is also something of a finale.

While it will continue into the foreseeable future, it's set to move from Town Park next year to new space at Aurora Town Square, a switch which Thomas says will allow the Festival to expand even further.

"I'm really excited to move into that - it's going to be a game-changer because we can add other components to the performances," she says. "The lighting can be a new thing and weather is never going to be a factor, and that's a beautiful, beautiful thing right there. I think that is going to be a great way to kick things off for the next season!"

For more on this year's Aurora Performing Arts Festival, visit www.aurora.ca/en/recreation-arts-and-culture/aurora-performing-arts-festival.aspx.

By Brock Weir