

Aurora Performing Arts Festival returns June 15 ? and now?s the time to audition

The countdown is on for the 2024 Aurora Performing Arts Festival.

Now going into its third year, the burgeoning festival, at which the Aurora's Teen Idol is just one component, will take place at Town Park on Saturday, June 15, highlighting local youth talents in the fields of music, dance and drama.

Applications for interested young artists are now being accepted through May 20 and applicants must submit a video audition between two and four minutes, all recorded within the last six months.

Divided into categories according to age and discipline, the competition is open to York Region residents between six and 17, with the Aurora Teen Idol crown reserved for youth in the Ages 13 ? 17 vocal category.

The Aurora Performing Arts Festival is a joint venture between the Town of Aurora and Marquee Theatrical Productions. Since its inception in 2022, it has grown significantly year over year, and this year could prove extra-special.

?This might be our last year in Town Park and we want to go out with style as it will likely move to Aurora Town Square in 2025,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, who describes herself as a ?big champion? of the Senior Vocal Category due to its connection with the grand prize. ?Aurora Teen Idol has such an important role in our community, which I think youth really look forward to and aspire to. With Marquee bringing forward the idea of the younger age groups, as well as the two additional disciplines, really strengthens and further promotes the importance of the three disciplines but also builds momentum to keep these youth engaged as they age ? and maybe they'll become the next Broadway star.?

As successful as the vocal categories are, Marquee's Sheryl Thomas says the acting categories have been ?underrepresented? in previous years' auditions, and in the lead up to the May 20 deadline, she's really going to be focused on encouraging participation in this area.

?We get a great selection of genres represented,? says Thomas, venturing a guess that one of the hurdles is a misunderstanding of what constitutes auditioning with a monologue. ?Some people enter with maybe a scene from a movie and they think they're supposed to do the three different parts, not just speaking from one person's vantage point. Eventually I would love to grow [the festival to have] duologues or small scenes, but we're in our infancy and want to establish the monologue portion first and then expand.?

Adds Ware: ?To take the stage takes so much courage. I've always been in awe of the contestants because I don't know if I would have had the courage at that age. I think we're looking at a very specific trait in these youth.?

?It's seeing the innocence behind the stage of the [contestants] cheering each other on, then to see this nervous youth then go on the stage and transform into a performer cheered on by their competitors, it is rewarding to see that they have the empowerment and that emotional intelligence to be able to support each other versus seeing each other as rivals or competitors. It's that individual network that organically happened last year.?

Similarly, when looking back at the first two years of the Aurora Performing Arts Festival, Thomas says what sticks with her are those ?jaw-dropping? transformative moments.

One such moment last year involved a young seven-year-old who wowed the crowd with the unlikely selection of a Guns N' Roses song while playing the guitar.

?It is those oh-my-gosh moments you see on TV shows where it's wide-eyed, jaw-on-the-floor ? the unexpected moments that are ?wow' moments. It is so fantastic to be a witness to it and it's just an honour to watch that.?

If you're interested in submitting an application and video audition for this year's festival, Thomas stresses that it needs to be a recently-recorded showcase with a focus on what you're hoping to deliver. She advises recording your audition in a distraction-free environment ? sorry, pets! ? and they're open to hearing any music or dramatic genre you can think of. For more information, including how to submit your application, visit aurora.ca/ArtsFestival.

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