

Music and mystery in store leading up to Valentine's Day



By Brock Weir

Great songs are songs that hold up no matter who is singing them and allow each musician to bring something new to the table.

That is the philosophy local musician Judy Marshak brings to the table when she is planning her concerts. Ms. Marshak and the Judy Marshak Quartet have their Valentine's Day dates all settled, coming together for a new concert next week at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

It is one of many unique things going on around town in the lead-up to Valentine's Day, which offers something for everyone.

Ms. Marshak has pieced together a program she says is reminiscent of the great jazz cabarets of Manhattan from the 1930s through the 1960s, focusing on numbers from the Great American Songbook.

"Every time you hear them sung by a different artist, you never get sick of them," she says. "Funny Valentine is one of them and a perfect song for the night."

Citing the "gorgeous" and "fabulously witty and satirical" songs by Dave Frishberg and Bob Dorough, such as "Peel Me a Grape", made popular by the late jazz artist Blossom Dearie, she promises an evening to remember.

"There are a number of obscure songs and lots of songs people will know from very well-known composers like Cole Porter, Rodgers and Hart, George Gershwin, Hoagy Carmichael, and the guys who really knew how to write a song," says Ms. Marshak.

"I think I have gathered a fabulous selection of music that gives everybody a little something. There's three fabulous musicians, and then there's me on the ukulele and not only will they hear some brand-new classical love tunes, but they will laugh. There is comedy, there's jazz, and there's romance."

The Aurora Public Library also promises comedy and romance "along with some mystery and thrills" if you're brave enough to take on a blind date in the lead-up to Valentine's Day.

How does "check me out and take me home" grab you as a pick-up line? If it tickles your fancy, the Aurora Public Library hopes it will entice you to pick up a mysterious book beginning this week. As part of their Valentine's Program, the Library's Cindy Shaver and Reccia Mandelcorn, put their creativity together, selecting a variety of books, covering them up with brown paper to keep them a secret, and plastering them with tried and true pick-up lines to entice you to want to slip into something more comfortable and

settle down for a luxurious read, whether you've picked up a well-thumbed volume or a literary wallflower.

?This has been too much fun and a labour of love,? says Ms. Shaver. ?There have been a lot of extra hours sitting at home, wrapping books and thinking of lines. It has been more than what we originally anticipated, but it is such a fun idea and I think the community is really going to embrace it. Sometimes people need a bit of a push and some enticement to get out of their comfort zones.

?The idea is to get members out of their comfort zones in trying something fresh and new and, of course, not judging a book by its cover! You have no idea what you're going to pick up. You get a little bit of a hint, but the idea is you take a risk, you take it home and then unwrap it.?

Tickets for the Valentine's Day Concert are now available through www.auroraculturalcentre.ca, or by calling 905-713-1818. Showtime is 8 p.m.