

Managerial Commentary – Q2 2025

Introduction

The 2nd quarter of 2025 saw many milestones including the conclusion of our 2024-2025 season of professional performing arts programming, the launch of our 2025-2026 performing arts season, and our first spring term of classes in Aurora Town Square. We participated in special events and outreach into the community to highlight our residency back in our home, and shared events like volunteer appreciation week with our resident partners, an event we hope to make a tradition in the space. Our gallery program held fast with new exhibits, the launch of our student gallery through our Youth Artists on the Rise, and a special estate sale for the family of beloved artist, Helen Lucas. Lastly, we closed out Kaleidoscope in the Schools with final shows in York Region with South Asian and Indigenous shows.

There continued to be substantial planning for a new professional development programming opening in July called the Brevik Collaboratory, and our summer camp season. Town of Aurora, Aurora Public Library and ACC staff came together to make sure the summer of activity was well planned, clearly communicated, and organized to serve the needs of the community.

The Board held the 15th anniversary Annual General Meeting in our Homeroom Galleries, honouring Dee and Leonard D'Arrigo for 15 years of service with a Town of Aurora certificate and brought on new energy with directors from our community to serve on the Board.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Presenting Sponsors		 Insurance Richard Gong, Agent 15342 Yonge Street • (905) 727-6333	 GERANIUM <i>From the ground up™</i>			
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A SNAPSHOT OF AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE Q2 OPERATIONS

April – June 2025

Volunteer Appreciation Week

April 27, 2025 – May 3, 2024

Our volunteers' unwavering dedication and passion are the driving force behind every event, exhibit, and experience at the Aurora Cultural Centre. They help to make the ACC a welcoming space where community can come together and thrive.



Aurora Cultural Centre thanks our dedicated team of volunteers!

Aurora Chamber Home & Living Show

April 26 & 27, 2025

Community members stopped by our booth to learn about upcoming ACC programming in Education, Gallery & Performing Arts. Emerging artist Jay Blues entertained with two incredible guitar-driven blues sets.



Community Outreach at the Aurora Chamber Home & Living Show.

Helen Lucas Estate Sale

May 22, 2025 – June 5, 2025

Helen Lucas Studio & Online

We were grateful to partner with the family of Helen Lucas to facilitate a spring sale of final works within her estate. This includes over 200 drawings, prints, and, of course, her grandiose flower paintings offered in a variety of sizes.

From May 22 – June 5, patrons have been purchasing their own Helen Lucas', both online and



A small sample of works from Helen Lucas' collection

in-person, at her home studio. Proceeds from the sale go to her estate, with a portion supporting Aurora Cultural Centre programs.

Aurora Street Festival

June 1, 2025

Yonge Street, Aurora

Members of the ACC summer camp counsellor team met with the community at the Aurora Street Festival to share information about our summer camp programming with the community at large.



Summer camp staff at the street festival

Sip, Savour & Support Fundraiser

June 12, 2025

It was an evening of flavour and purpose! This unforgettable fundraiser in support of Kaleidoscope in the Schools was made possible by generous sponsors and every guest who joined us. Your support is shaping the compassionate, creative leaders of tomorrow, one KITS performance at a time!



Sipping & savouring for a good cause!

ACC Annual General Meeting

June 18, 2025

Our Annual General Meeting welcomed members of the community as the 2024 final year end report was shared and questions and comments from the public were welcomed. The Board also commended long-time volunteers Dee & Leonard D'Arrigo for 15 years of dedicated service to the Centre.



Dee & Leonard D'Arrigo with Board President Mary Ann McConkey (centre)

2025/26 Season Launch

June 26, 2025

Members of the public joined us for an evening of celebration as we revealed the 2025/26 Performing Arts Season. The event featured live performances while providing an exclusive first look at the unforgettable season ahead!



Comedian Martha Chaves and Performing Arts Manager Derek Andrews

PERFORMING ARTS EVENTS

“Genius + Soul” The Music of Ray Charles

April 5, 2025 at 7:30 pm

DaVIDE De Simone Performance Hall

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/2024-25-genius-soul-ray-charles-tribute/>

JUNO Award-winning producer and musical director Lance Anderson returns to the Centre with an all-star Canadian cast of award-winning blues and roots musicians in a special concert honouring the father of Soul – Ray Charles! Featuring special guests Kenny ‘Blues Boss’ Wayne on keys, soul and gospel singer Quisha Wint, Gene Hardy on saxophone and Keavn McKenzie on percussion. The powerhouse lineup of hits included What I’d Say, Hit the Road Jack, The Nighttime is Right Time, and Hallelujah, I Love Her So.



Martha Chaves “United Colours of Canada”

Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 7:30pm

DaVIDE De Simone Performance Hall

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/2024-25-martha-chaves-united-colours/>

This comedy show celebrated all the shades of Canadian humor. Featuring comics Daphne Joseph, Leonard Chan, Fiona O’Brien, George Westerholm, Danish Anwar and Judy Croon, the show was hosted by Martha Chaves, known from her appearances on CBC Radio’s Because News, The Debaters and Laugh Out Loud. Chaves also teaches at Humber College and Toronto Metropolitan University inspiring the next generation of stand-up comedians.



Cheng² Duo

May 3, 2025 at 7:30 pm

DaVIDE De Simone Performance Hall

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/2024-25-cheng2-duo/>

Named one of CBC Music's "30 Hot Canadian Classical Musicians Under 30" young and dynamic brother and sister team the Cheng² Duo (pronounced Cheng Squared Duo) have been making music together for the past 16 years. They have gained worldwide recognition after winning major international competitions and receiving a 2024 JUNO nomination for 'Classical Album of the Year; Small Ensemble'. Captivating audiences and critics alike with their unique and refreshing programs, cellist Bryan Cheng and pianist Sylvie Cheng share an undeniable chemistry, and demonstrate a rare balance of infectious exuberance and mature and profound interpretations. Their recitals are in high demand in major concert halls throughout North America, Europe and Asia.



Cheng² Duo

The concert was preceded with a talk by Rick Phillips, Host and Producer of Sound Advice at 7 pm.

The Once

Saturday, May 24, 2025 at 7:30pm

DaVIDE De Simone Performance Hall

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/2024-25-the-once/>

Newfoundland has a storied history of stunning songwriters, poets and players. Over the course of the last decade **The Once** (Geraldine Hollett, Andrew Dale and Phil Churchill) have writ and knit themselves into that story. Their harmonies grab you by the heart, and their music melts what's left of it.

With the release of 2024's *Out Here*, the band has delivered a thoughtful and playful assembly of songs mingling their musical roots from Newfoundland along with folk, bluegrass, country, Americana, and modern indie rock. The trio has written and toured for more than a decade, and been recognized with multiple Music NL Awards, EMCAs, JUNO nominations and three Canadian Folk Music Awards.



The Once

Angelique Francis + Jay Blues

Saturday, June 7, 2025 at 7:30pm

Davide De Simone Performance Hall

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/2024-25-angelique-francis/>

Angelique Francis has established herself as a bona fide star on the Canadian blues, soul, jazz and folk scene. Her soulful smoky vocals and instrumental techniques are reminiscent of a bygone era, but with a unique and modern sensibility. Her vocals trace the influences of legends like Big Mama Thornton, Koko Taylor, Aretha Franklin and Bessie Smith. Francis' most recent album "Long River" won the 2023 JUNO Award for Blues Album of the Year. Fresh from Toronto's curbside busking, jamming and electric sessions that display his love of Jimi Hendrix and the pantheon of blues heroes, Jay Blues is an inspired fresh face that is digging into the roots of blues from a Caribbean perspective.



Angelique Francis

Sue Foley

June 21, 2025 at 7:30 pm

Davide De Simone Performance Hall

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/2024-25-sue-foley/>

Multi-award-winning blues artist and 2025 Juno Award Nominee, Sue Foley presented "One Guitar Woman" a show devoted to the female pioneers of guitar. These are the women who were expressing themselves through the instrument as far back as the 1920's, at the inception of radio and recorded music including Maybelle Carter, Memphis Minnie, Mary Osborne, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and more. Celebrating these women of excellence, Sue presented an evening of varied guitar styles and musical genres interspersed with their stories and her own personal narrative.



Sue Foley

GALLERY PROGRAM

In-person gallery visits are in the Homeroom, Great Hall and Lower Hall Galleries in the 22 Church Street space of Aurora Town Square. Gallery hours are:

Homeroom Galleries: Monday – Saturday 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (open until 7 p.m. Wednesdays)

Lower Hall & Great Hall Galleries – Monday – Friday 8:30am – 9pm, Saturday 8:30am – 6pm, Sunday 8:30 am – 4pm

Exhibitions are also accessible through our online gallery and a virtual 3D map.

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/current-exhibitions/>

#MCOYA25

Mayor's Celebration of Youth Arts 2025

In person: February 8 – April 20, 2025

All Galleries

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/mcoya25/>

When Aurora Thaws

A Visual Soliloquy by Jianming Chen

In person: May 1, 2025 – July 13, 2025

Lower Hall Gallery

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/jianming-chen/>



Over the last decade, Newmarket-based painter Jianming Chen has documented settings of York Region through captivating oils. A plein air painter, Chen has become a recognizable figure in the community, setting up his easel at recreational trails, residential streets, and farmer's markets, to paint for hours on end. Only rarely, is he deterred by the natural elements.

This winter, Chen was selected as the Aurora Cultural Centre's first artist-in-residence. He dedicated his residency period from February 1 to April 20 to test the limits of his plein air practice, painting in conditions as low -13 Degrees Celsius though until the spring thaw.

This solo exhibition is a culminative celebration of his accomplishments during the residency. His first solo exhibition, it is also a spotlight on his incredible multi-year practice for the community to recognize.

Said Through Silence

Group Exhibition - Jing Fu, Karim Abed, Rollex Austin, William Lottering

In person: May 1, 2025 – July 27, 2025

Great Hall Gallery

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/said-through-silence/>

The Digital Age has transformed the world through groundbreaking technological advancements. Computers, smartphones, the internet, and artificial intelligence have reshaped how we live—from how we gather information to how we communicate and relate to one another.

While some recall life before technology was embedded into daily routine, some have never known a world without it, putting forth unique challenges in the ways we communicate and relate to each other. In a world so 'connected', how is it that we feel so distant?

Said Through Silence meditates on this phenomenon, bringing together the introspective works by four local artists, into direct visual conversation. Touching on themes of home, nature, technology, and abstraction, the exhibited works look inward on what life is like growing and adapting within a rapidly changing world, with a particular focus on our shared home of York Region.

This exhibition is curated by Samantha Jones.

Public Reception | Thursday, May 1, 6:30 – 8:30 pm | Lower Hall Gallery

- Thursday, May 1, 6:30 – 8:30 PM, celebrating the opening of all exhibitions in the hallway galleries. Refreshments were provided and all were free to attend. Remarks at 7 PM.

Laurence Vallières

Solo Exhibition

In person: May 8, 2025 – July 22, 2025

Homeroom Galleries

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/laurence-vallieres/>

The Aurora Cultural Centre is excited to introduce Montreal-based sculptor Laurence Vallières to the community through a one-of-a-kind, all-sculpture exhibition in our Homeroom Galleries.

Laurence Vallières (born in Québec City, 1986) is a Montreal-based artist, internationally acclaimed for her larger-than-life cardboard sculptures. Initially focusing on ceramics during her education at Concordia University, her art evolved following a 2010 artist residency in St. Petersburg, Russia, where she was exposed to the practice of urban art.



Environmental concerns and sustainability lie at the core of Vallières's practice, which she expresses through depictions of animals and references to pop culture characters like Mickey Mouse and Tweety Bird. Each of her creations are made from recycled cardboard, often gathered from the very location where her projects take place. Reflecting on her ties with urban art, where work is often created in response to pressing cultural, social, and political issues, her dedication to cardboard in her art serves as a call for sustainability—a commentary on consumer culture, advocating for the movement of reuse over consumption and waste.

Come witness unimaginable feats of cardboard art through the renowned lens of Laurence Vallières in this special visiting artist showcase. This exhibition is free for all ages and family friendly.

Reception + Artist Meet & Greet

- Thursday, May 8, 6:30 – 8:30 PM in Homeroom Galleries. Refreshments are provided and all are free to attend. Remarks at 7 PM.

Open Studio

Weekly on Wednesdays

Art Activity Room

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/events-for-artists/>

YAR Muddle Mural Meet-Up

First Tuesday of every month

3 pm – 5 pm

Art Activity Room

<https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/event/muddle-mural/>

Gallery Art Bytes

Art Bytes are an ongoing online series that accompanies our exhibitions and give viewers an opportunity to deepen their understanding about the art and artists. Art Bytes are available for viewing through our YouTube channel during and after gallery exhibitions. Art Bytes can be found here: [Gallery Art Bytes link](#)

Art Byte Topic	Exhibition	Link
Jianming Chen: ACC Winter Artist-in-Residence	When Aurora Thaws: A Visual Soliloquy	Jianming Chen ArtByte

Said Through Silence – Said by the Artists	Said Through Silence	Siad Through Silence ArtByte
Visiting Artist Laurence Vallières	Laurence Vallières	Laurence Vallieres ArtByte

EDUCATION PROGRAM

Spring Term Education Classes

Our commitment to providing a vibrant and inclusive learning environment is evident in the range of classes offered and the positive feedback received from participants. Q2 offerings included an array of educational programming for senior adults, adults, youth and children, including workshops, multiweek classes, and PA Day camps.

Program	Start Date	End Date	Age Details
Adult & Senior Adult			
Watercolour Level 1 (55+)	March 31, 2025	June 23, 2025	Older Adult
Watercolours The Basics (55+)	April 7, 2025	June 2, 2025	Older Adult
Watercolour Level 2 (55+)	April 8, 2025	June 10, 2025	Older Adult
Expand Your Horizons in Acrylics Level 2	April 8, 2025	May 27, 2025	Adult
Drawing Fundamentals	April 9, 2025	June 11, 2025	Adult
Watercolours – Intermediate & Advanced	April 9, 2025	May 28, 2025	Adult
Guitar Intermediate	April 9, 2025	May 28, 2025	Adult
Acrylic Paint Beginner (55+)	April 10, 2025	June 12, 2025	Older Adult
Acrylic Paint Intermediate (55+)	April 10, 2025	June 12, 2025	Older Adult
Drawing Fundamentals (55+)	April 10, 2025	June 12, 2025	Older Adult
Watercolours: Basics & Beyond	April 10, 2025	June 5, 2025	Adult
Printmaking: Linocut Basics	April 10, 2025	April 10, 2025	Adult
Crepe Paper Butterfly Ranunculus Flower	April 13, 2025	April 13, 2025	Adult
Printmaking: Trace Monotypes	April 24, 2025	April 24, 2025	Adult
Introduction to Textile Sculpting	April 27, 2025	April 27, 2025	Adult
Child & Youth			
Comic Drawing for Children	April 7, 2025	June 2, 2025	Children
Learn Anime	April 9, 2025	May 7, 2025	Youth
Lil' Jammers Caregiver & Child (2)	April 12, 2025	June 14, 2025	Pre-school

Rhythm Kids	April 12, 2025	June 14, 2025	Children
Children's Visual Art 1	April 12, 2025	June 14, 1025	Children
Children's Visual Art 2	April 12, 2025	June 14, 2025	Children
PA Day 7 to 12 years (2)	June 9, 2025	June 9, 2025	Children
PA Day 4 to 7 years	June 9, 2025	June 9, 2025	Children
PA Day 7 to 12 years (2)	June 27, 2025	June 27, 2025	Children
PA Day 4 to 7 years	June 27, 2025	June 27, 2025	Children

To see current educational offerings please visit: <https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/adult-classes/> or <https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/childrens-classes/>

Kaleidoscope in the Schools (KITS)

The KITS 2024/25 season was available to elementary schools throughout York Region. Each production had its own voice and vision for performing arts excellence with young audiences within the overall programming ethos of voices from Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities, with French and English offerings across several performing arts disciplines. School principals make their show selections through our website: <https://auroraculturalcentre.ca/kaleidoscope-in-the-schools/>

This KITS season concluded with two programs in the 2nd quarter: Karima Essa Body Positive Bollywood Dance, and Kung Jaadee Haida & Squamish Stories

KITS Production Tour Schedule: Q2 2025

Date	Production	School*	Community
April 3 – April 11	Karima Essa: Body Positive Bollywood Dance	Moraine Hills PS, Ecole Chantal-Benoit, Meadowbrook, Aurora Heights PS, Wilclay PS, Bayview Glen PS, Jersey PS	Aurora Keswick Markham Newmarket Richmond Hill Sharon Thornhill
April 23 – May 2	Kung Jaadee: Haida & Squamish Stories	Deer Park, Fairwood PS, Teston Village PS, Black River, Lester B Pearson, Devins Drive, Regency Acres, Waabgon Gamig	Aurora Keswick Maple Sutton West

* CES = Catholic Elementary School, EEC = École Élémentaire Catholique, PS = Public School

ACTIVITY STATS YTD Q2 2025

	2025	Q2
1	Educational Programs (incl. KITS)	57
2	Volunteer hours donated	1210
3	Art Exhibitions	4
4	Art Bytes	3
5	Art Bytes Online Views	210
6	Gallery Artists Exhibited	61

7	Virtual Gallery Views	1097
8	Performing Arts Events	7
9	Free Community Events	0
10	Outreach Events	5
11	Public Meeting	2
12	Visitors (across all pillars)	73134

Organizational Information

CENTRE HOURS

Business Hours	Monday to Friday	8:30 AM – 4:30 PM plus in-person programming needs
Staff Office Hours	Monday to Friday	8:30 AM – 4:30 PM
Events & Classes	As programmed	
Virtual Galleries	24/7	

AURORA CULTURAL CENTRE STAFF (as of June 30, 2025)

Executive Director	Suzanne Haines
Finance Associate	Franca Zumpetta
Administrative Assistant	Helena Barkla
Audience Services Manager	Alyssa Spear
Front of House Managers	Debbie Bunze
	Shelagh Carlini
Education Manager	Aitak Sorahitalab*
Education Assistant	Anna Vander Heide
KITS Tour Coordinator	Benton Roark
Gallery Manager	Samantha Jones
Gallery Assistant	Adora Lau
Performing Arts Manager	Derek Andrews
Production Manager/Technical Director	Robert Hess
Technicians (Part-Time)	Anne Keillor
	Caitlin Stafford
	Drew Chale
	Erwin Lau
	Hussein Esmail
	Jake Robertson
	Jasper Jacobs
	Jonny Juffs
	Mikaila Strickland
	Shawn McNamara

Development Officer
Development Co-ordinator
Interim Marketing Manager
Digital Services Specialist
Marketing Assistant
Summer Outreach
Summer Program Supervisor
Summer Camp Counsellors

Glenn Coulson
Vacant
Kayla van Zon
Matthew Knox
Jenny Burton
Milaina Colucci
Romy Barakat
Amitis Almasi (Jr)
Christy Lai (Jr)
Andrea Huerta (Jr)
Shericko Chen (Sr)
Bryan Ho (Sr)
Shannon McClelland (Sr)
Nazia Munir (Sr)
Julia Sobiesiak (Sr)

**On Leave*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS – Q2 at end of June 2025

Executive

President	Mary Ann McConkey
Vice President	Morry Patoka
Treasurer	Paulina Vujinovic
Secretary	Anita Townsend

Directors

Edlene Antonio
Garry Blye
Phiona Durrant
Stephen Lusk
Mandana Gholami Mobarakabadi
Colette Nemni
Councillor John Gallo*
Councillor Ron Weese*

**Ex officio Town of Aurora Directors. Ex-officio Directors have the full rights & responsibilities of Directors of a corporation under the Ontario Corporations Act.*

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee
Finance & Audit Committee
Development Committee
Governance & Nominating Committee
Outreach Committee

MEETINGS

The Board of Directors meet approximately 10 times per year and committees meet monthly as required.

COMPLIANCE & REPORTING CONTROLS

The Centre has strict compliance, oversight, and reporting procedures in place; third party bookkeeping, a Finance & Audit Committee, several specialized Board committees, the day-to-day oversight of the Executive Director and the monthly review by the Board of Directors who each have personal and collective fiduciary responsibilities related to the governance and financial health of the Centre.

MONTHLY

Financial

- Third Party bookkeeper processes bi-weekly AP/AR and payroll, reconciles financial activity each month and creates financial statements that are reviewed by Treasurer, Finance & Audit Committee and Executive Director (ED).
- Statement of Account for Current Source Deductions (and payment) made to CRA.

Operational

- ED creates monthly activity report and presents to Board of Directors; once approved this is posted to the public website.

QUARTERLY

Financial

- Accountant creates GAAP quarterly financial report based on bookkeeper's financial statements. This is reviewed by the Treasurer and Finance & Audit Committee and presented to the Board. Opportunity for questions from Directors. Once approved, ED provides this report to the Director, Community Services at the Town of Aurora as per our Agreement (and to the Mayor, Town Council, and Town CAO as a courtesy).

Operational

- ED creates a Managerial Commentary reporting on activities during the quarter in question.
- This is presented to the Board. Once approved, ED provides this report along with the Quarterly financial Report to the Director of Community Services (and Mayor, Council, and CAO). This report is posted on public website.

Oversight

- ED provides a compliance statement to the Board stating that all payments have been made and all areas of the Centre's compliance responsibilities have been met.

ANNUALLY

Town of Aurora

- As per Agreement

Canada Revenue Agency (Federal Government)

- Registered Charity Information Return
- Ontario Corporations Information Act Annual Return

Imagine Canada

- Annual report on compliance of the Standards identified by IC as a requirement of our accreditation.
- Board reviews Compliance report and IC comments

Current Funders (this is variable)

Canada Council for the Arts

Canadian Heritage

Canada Summer Jobs
Ontario Creates
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Young Canada Works

Financial Review

Third Party Audit undertaken annually.

Financial standing publicly posted annually on the websites of the CRA, Imagine Canada, and our website.

ONGOING COMPLIANCE

- Town of Aurora
- Imagine Canada
- Banks
- Insurance
- Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL)
- Service Ontario (Provincial Government)
- Canadian Code of Practice for Consumer Protection in Electronic Commerce
- SOCAN/Entandem

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Haines, Executive Director