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Local News

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Summer music series brings talented performers to Benson Park

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Sunday afternoons for the months of July and August Benson Park will be filled with the sounds of music.

The Picton BIA, the Prince Edward County Arts Council, and the County's department of parks, recreation, and culture partnered together to earn a grant from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture to start the new program.

"There really has never been anything like this before in the county," said event co-ordinator Mary Sinclair. "It is such a wonderful opportunity for the residents of the county to see and hear such accomplished performers for free."

Among other acts, that lineup Sinclair describes includes Juno nominees, internationally acclaimed jazz groups and even the first Canadian Idol.

The launch of the Picton Performances In The Park series will feature Toronto's Zero Gravity Circus from 1-2 p.m. on July 4, followed by a revue featuring the county's Emily Fennell with Luther Wright and Jenny and Dan Whiteley. There will also be a balloon-twister, Pockets The Clown, and face painter Chris Van Krieken present.

On July 11, the Frere Brothers and Suzanne Pasternak will have a fun-filled program for all ages with audience participation and July 18, it will be the Marysburgh Mummies turn to entertain. The Jamie Stever Band rounds out July.

Aug. 1, Ryan Malcolm will take the stage with the participants and faculty of the Kids Performing Arts Initiative Rock Camp, which was started by Pasternak, John McKinney, and Katalin Kiss.

On Aug. 8, David Finkle's Heritage Trio, Northern Voices will bring songs from Canada's historical landscape, Metis fiddling, and native drumming to the stage.

The following two weeks, the program is collaborating with the Prince Edward County Jazz Festival for two "jazz-hop" shows. The Canadian Jazz Quartet plays Aug. 15 from 2-4 p.m. and on Aug. 22 there is a double-bill aimed at a teenage audience with Ron Westray's Jazz Hop from 1-3 p.m. and the Blair Yarranton Quartet from 3-4 p.m.

The season wraps up with a fiddle fest featuring the internationally acclaimed Zeke Mazurek and Josh Colbly on fiddle and Judy Fraser on guitar and vocals.

"We are all so excited about this series," said BIA executive director Roni Summers Wikens.

Arts Council chair Judy Kent added much of the lineup is geared toward all ages, while commissioner Barry Braun indicated he was pleased the event both brings people into Picton, but also showcases the downtown and its shops on Sunday afternoons.

All of the performances are open to the public.



GUEST STAR Jenny Whiteley is part of the lineup for the first Picton Performances In The Park set July 4. Whiteley has won two Juno Awards for best roots/traditional album of the year. (Submitted photo)