We may still be in the throes (or joys) of winter, but Aurora’s arts, history and culture scene is hotter than ever.

For the music and musical lovers out there, the Aurora Symphony Orchestra will present a free bilingual and family-friendly concert Feb. 11 (see story on page 6), the Aurora Singers will present its “A Star is Born” concert March 3 and 4, the Aurora Fox Arts Center presents the cult punk rock musical “Hedwig and the Angry Inch” through Feb. 10 and Sharon Kay White’s cabaret act “Love And Other Stuff” Feb. 16 and 18. Vintage Theatre presents Mary Louise Lee as jazz legend Billie Holiday in “Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill,” Jan. 12 through Feb. 18.

If you’re a fan of “straight” theatre, the Aurora Fox will have you in stitches as five Latinas “cut it up” in a dress factory in “Real Women Have Curves” by Josefina López, Feb. 23 to March 18 (see back cover). If the whodunit is more your style, don’t miss Vintage Theatre’s production of Anthony Shaffer’s “Sleuth” Feb. 2 to March 11.

If you’re a fan of public art, check out our cover story to the right. Finally, if Aurora history is your thing, check out the article on page 5 for all the cool stuff going on at the Aurora History Museum and Stanley Marketplace.

PUBLIC ART

Building Momentum in Aurora

2018 marks the 25th anniversary of Aurora’s Art in Public Places Program, and this milestone year is off to a great start.

The Colorado Business Committee for the Arts has included the city of Aurora/RTD partnership among the 12 statewide honorees for its 2018 Business for the Arts Awards. Its press release states: “RTD and the city of Aurora, in partnership, made an extraordinary and exemplary investment in public art with the creation of the light rail’s R Line.”

The last year has been full of big news about major projects along the light rail, integrated art for the Central Recreation Center, the plans for the 7-20 Memorial and the annual Art 2C on Havana Street Program.

Urban artist Bimmer Torres completed the mural that covers all four exterior walls of the Day Labor Center at 1521 Dayton St. Completed with the help of day laborers, the mural depicts day laborers as people with full lives, showing time with both work and family. Additionally, people are depicted larger than life, on a heroic scale. This is a powerful statement that forces viewers to take notice and physically look up at the people portrayed.

Artist Rik Sargent created the popular Glove Bench at Aurora Sports Park in 2002, but the elements took a toll on the piece and it was removed this fall. Working from Sargent’s original maquette for the Glove Bench, ID Sculpture, a Gunnison-based fabricator of cast concrete playground equipment, created and installed “Glove Two” in December. The new sculpture will be there to greet teams this March when the ballfields reopen, and we anticipate it will carry on the tradition as the site for team photos for many more years.
SPOTLIGHT ON:
Accomplished Theatre Artist Helen R. Murray

Helen R. Murray is a playwright, director and actor, and was the artistic director and co-founder of The Hub Theatre in Virginia; since January, she is the new executive producer for the Aurora Fox Arts Center—a service of the city of Aurora’s Cultural Services Division. Murray—who has a degree in theatre from Virginia Tech—has produced and directed multiple world, U.S. and area premieres, and has worked as an actor in many Washington, D.C., area theatres, including Forum Theatre, Folger Theatre, Theater J and Woolly Mammoth, among others. Her original plays have been produced nationwide and been nominated for the Helen Hayes Award and the Steinberg New Play Award, and won the 2016 Jewish Playwriting contest.

AC: How did you first get interested in live theatre?
HM: I played the villain in my third grade Valentine’s play. I loved it, and I was hooked.

AC: What prompted you to go from acting to directing and producing?
Really it was playwrights. I performed so often on new plays, or doing table reads for artistic directors to vet plays for their seasons, and I saw work that I thought was important being passed over. I wanted to produce that work. And I also had been wanting to flex my other artistic muscles. When I am directing, producing or writing, I have the opportunity to create worlds. I feel better able to share stories with an audience when I get to lead.

AC: How did you get interested in playwriting, and what have you written?
HM: I had been writing since college, but usually critical response or prose. It was because I was unable to find a holiday show that fit for one of Hub’s early seasons that I first wrote a full script. After that they just kept coming. My plays include “Merry, Happy... What?,” “Clara’s Little Questions,” “Wonderful Life” (a co-adaptation with Jason Lott), “Abominable,” “Redder Blood” and “The Magi.” I also have some pieces in development.

AC: You have said that you like to produce plays that engender hope in people. What does that mean? Why is that important to you?
HM: I have been most attracted to work that helps us understand how connected we all are. When you see a play with a group of people, and you are in the same room, sharing a story, especially one that allows you to feel like you are part of something bigger than yourself, then you leave inspired. Through the ages art has inspired incredible action in people. So, if I am going to spend my days making theatre, I’d like to be a part of that worthwhile anthropology.

AC: What are your hopes for the Aurora Fox and the Aurora Cultural Arts District?
HM: Right now, I want to get to know this community and help support the current season any way I can. I am enjoying working with the Aurora Fox staff immensely. As for next season, I’m working on some fun stuff and... well...you will just have to wait and see!

The District 2 Police Station has moved to 2nd Avenue and Abilene Street in the building that was the past site of the Aurora Federal Credit Union. Now it has become the perfect home for the light sculpture that was created as a prototype for the eight hanging light sculptures under the Colfax Bridge Light Rail Station. The police station provides a meaningful context for this piece, which conveys a message of community, diversity and service.

The Art in Public Places Program and Commission want to hear from you as they embark on the development of a new five-year plan. What does public art in Aurora mean to you? Where would you like to see public art in Aurora? What kind of public art resonates with you? Attend one of the upcoming presentations in February and March including those at the North Aurora Neighborhood Association (Feb. 8) and at Heather Gardens (March 20). For additional dates and times, to access the online survey, application deadlines on current projects and more, visit AuroraGov.org/PublicArt.

Finally, stay tuned for special anniversary events throughout the year. For now, thank you to all supporters of public art; what momentum we are building! Cheers to the next 25 years of more striking public art in Aurora!
**February**

02 | Opening Night: “Sleuth”
   | $ 7:30 p.m.
   | Vintage Theatre
   | 1468 Dayton St.

03 | Special performance:
   | “Hedwig and the Angry Inch”
   | $ 11 p.m.
   | Aurora Fox Arts Center
   | 9900 E. Colfax Ave.

10 | Closing performances:
   | “Hedwig and the Angry Inch”
   | $ 7:30 and 11 p.m.
   | Aurora Fox Arts Center

11 | Aurora Symphony Orchestra’s
   | Free Family and Children’s
   | Concert
   | 1 p.m.
   | The Hangar at Stanley
   | Marketplace
   | 2501 Dallas St.

14 | Staged Reading:
   | “Same Time, Next Year”
   | $ 7:30 p.m.
   | Vintage Theatre

16 | Aurora Fox Cabaret Series:
   | Sharon Kay White
   | $ 7:30 p.m.
   | Aurora Fox Arts Center

17 | Polynesian Arts and Culture
   | Programs
   | 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
   | Aurora History Museum
   | 15051 E. Alameda Parkway

18 | Aurora Fox Cabaret Series:
   | Sharon Kay White
   | $ 7:30 p.m.
   | Aurora Fox Arts Center

21 | Lecture: 460th Space Wing
   | $ Noon
   | Aurora History Museum

23 | Opening Night: “Real Women
   | Have Curves”
   | $ 7:30 p.m.
   | Aurora Fox Arts Center

24 | Visions Performing Arts
   | Presents “Rock Da Mic Youth
   | Poetry”
   | $ 6 – 8 p.m.
   | The People’s Building
   | 9995 E. Colfax Ave.

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**Exhibits at Aurora Municipal Center 2nd Floor Mezzanine**
- **Aurora Public Schools Traveling Art Show**
  - February and March
  - Pottery show
  - February
  - Other art mediums
  - March

**City of Aurora Cultural Program**

**Tickets Start at $26**
march

03-04  Aurora Singers presents “A Star is Born”
       $ Sat. 7 p.m. and Sun. 2 p.m.
       1275 Fraser St.

17  Polynesian Arts and Culture Programs
    11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
    Aurora History Museum
    15051 E. Alameda Parkway

18  Closing Performance: “Real Women Have Curves”
    $ 2 p.m.
    Aurora Fox Arts Center
    9900 E. Colfax Ave.

21  Lecture: “The Golden Age of Colfax Avenue”
    $ Noon
    Aurora History Museum

23-24  Aurora Fox Cabaret Series:
      Leonard Barrett, Jr.
      $ 7:30 p.m.
      Aurora Fox Arts Center

31  Visions Performing Arts Presents “Rock Da Mic Youth Poetry”
    $ 6 – 8 p.m.
    The People’s Building
    9995 E. Colfax Ave.

ongoing

“Ahedwig and the Angry Inch” Aurora Fox Arts Center
$ Through Feb. 10

“Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill” Vintage Theatre
$ Through Feb. 18

“Sleuth” Vintage Theatre
$ Feb. 2 – March 11

18th Annual Aurora Art Educators Exhibit DAVA
Through March 16

“Real Women Have Curves” Aurora Fox Arts Center
$ Feb. 23 – March 18

“US 40 and the American Road Trip” Aurora History Museum
Through May 6

“Wings to Satellites: A History of Buckley Air Force Base” Aurora History Museum
Through June 3

Art 2 C on Havana Temporary Public art Exhibit
Various locations on Havana Street between East Alameda Avenue and East Yale Avenue
Through September

Aurora Public Schools Traveling Art Show
Aurora Municipal Center
2nd Floor, Mezzanine
• February – Pottery
• March – Other Mediums

Visions Performing Arts
31

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$ 6 – 8 p.m.
The People’s Building
9995 E. Colfax Ave.

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The Aurora History Museum Brown Bag Lecture Series has two upcoming presentations that support the museum’s currently running exhibitions, “Wings to Satellites: A History of Buckley Air Force Base” (through June 3) and “US Route 40 and The American Road Trip” (through May 6). The associated presentations also provide additional enrichment and meaning to connect people.

On Feb. 21, Space Operations Officer Lt. Robert “Andy” Mathews, 460th Space Wing at Buckley Air Force Base, will talk about the mission of the 460th Space Wing and how the men and women of this unit protect America and its allies with satellite-based infrared sensors. And on March 21, local musician and curator of ColfaxAvenue.com, Jonny Barber, will provide a presentation titled “The Golden Age of Colfax Avenue” that is sure to entertain visitors with a discussion about the history of Colfax Avenue and the community it helps anchor.

The Brown Bag Lecture Series is sponsored by the Aurora Historical Society and runs from noon to 12:45 p.m. every third Wednesday of the month at the Aurora History Museum, 15051 E. Alameda Parkway. The cost is $4 ($3 for Aurora residents) and Aurora Historical Society members receive free admission. Be sure to bring your lunch and we’ll see you there. For more information, please visit AuroraMuseum.org under the section “Learn.”

The Aurora History Museum is starting two new programs at Stanley Marketplace.

The Stanley Activity Packs will offer marketplace patrons a chance to learn more about the unique and interesting history associated with Stanley Marketplace. Patrons will be able to check out a backpack with five activities inside. Using the map, they’ll travel around the marketplace learning about the original layout of the company and a little bit about the people and projects associated with Stanley Aviation, including some information about the company’s founder Robert Stanley. The packs are designed for ages 8 and up and children under age 13 should complete the activities with an adult, but you don’t have to be a kid to play. Adult groups are encouraged to check out a pack. The activity is free but donations to cover the materials are encouraged. Next time you go to Stanley, make sure to look for the activity packs by the north entrance.

Speaking of the north entrance, that’s also the location of the recently installed museum exhibit, a shortened version of “From Manufacturing to Marketplace, Innovation at Stanley Aviation.” This exhibit provides insight about the history of the Stanley Aviation company and its founder, Robert Stanley. Stanley Marketplace’s redevelopment of the former aviation facility embraces the site’s history in the new community-focused marketplace.

Visit AuroraMuseum.org or call 303.739.6660 for days and times when the activity packs will be available.
A city of Aurora staff member is taking an active role in helping identify gifted young actors to fulfill a revised state education requirement.

Cultural Arts Supervisor Lisa Mumpton was asked to serve on a committee to determine the best methods to collect data used by the Colorado Department of Education to identify exceptional or developmentally advanced students in performing arts.

The state’s recently amended Department of Education’s Exceptional Children’s Educational Act—which requires all schools to identify and serve exceptional or developmentally advanced students in one or more defined domains—now includes performing arts as one of those domains.

Identification of students who fall into the “exceptional” category can be complicated in the area of performing arts. The legislation requires that a student’s body of evidence must contain three qualifying data points, and traditional paper assessments are often not appropriate for the performing arts. When data from paper assessments are not available, the law allows for two or more indicators in the performance area.

The committee on which Mumpton serves agreed that some of the standardized testing used to assess artistic abilities could be used along with portfolio reviews and participation in ThesCon—an annual theatre education convention sponsored by the Colorado State Thespians and Educational Theatre Association. Unfortunately, not all Aurora Public School students perform at ThesCon and not all theatrical performance abilities can be measured using written testing and portfolio work.

To fill this gap, the committee created the first annual Aurora Public Schools Theater Festival, which took place Jan. 18 and was hosted by the Community College of Aurora. Students from schools throughout the district were invited to perform scenes, monologues and musical numbers for a panel of nine judges who were experts in theatre education. The committee provided judges with a rubric to ensure consistency. High school and middle school students performed in three separate spaces on the campus. The five-hour schedule was complex but the committee wanted to make sure that each interested student could participate. The committee hopes to expand the festival to include elementary schools in the future.

Congratulations to Lisa for being selected to help with this great opportunity for Aurora’s young and gifted actors!

Do you have young ones who are interested in music? Maybe you have a maestro who conducts along with music they hear? There is an opportunity for everyone to experience one of the top symphony orchestras in the metro area.

The Aurora Symphony Orchestra will present its annual Free Children’s and Family Concert at 1 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 11, at The Hangar at Stanley 2501 Dallas St.

Designed as a first-time concert experience, this 45-minute musical program will feature the rhythmic music of Central America and Mexico. To make this event extra special, the Aurora Symphony Orchestra has joined forces with Fiesta Colorado Dance Company, who will choreograph traditional Mexican dances to some of the musical selections. A unique feature of this performance is that the entire concert will be narrated in English and Español.

In addition to amazing music and dance, there will also be fun activities including the Aurora Symphony Orchestra’s “instrument petting zoo” after the performance, where future musicians are invited to get up close with the instruments they just experienced. Although entrance is free, RSVP is required to secure a seat. Please RSVP at AuroraSymphony.org/Family
Set in a tiny and hot sewing factory in East Los Angeles, the comedy-drama “Real Women Have Curves” explores the struggles of five women as they come to terms with their lives, their loves and challenging production deadlines.

The five women are Ana (Joelle Montoya), a young feminist and aspiring writer who just graduated from high school and longs to go to college, her sister Estela (Magally Luna), the owner of the factory, afraid to apply for illegal alien amnesty because she was arrested for illegal possession of a lobster, Carmen (Debra Gallegos), their mother, always ready to speak her mind on all issues, Pancha (Gabriella Cavarello), struggling with the fact that she can’t have children, and Rosali (Jaqueline Garcia), often forced to be the “mediador” of fights within the group.

In her playwright’s notes, Josefina López writes about how she grew up in Los Angeles always fearful of “La Migra” (Border Patrol officers). She once saw a meter maid and attempted to “act white” out of fear that the official-looking person could deport her. After the 1987 Simpson-Rodino Amnesty Act, López was able to become a legal resident. 15 Acting School in London, Montoya returned home to Colorado. “I connect closely with Ana in so many ways. I am not an immigrant, but I am the first in my family to graduate from a 4-year university, and I am definitely the first to have lived in London. To me, it was no big deal, but to my family, it was a huge source of bravery, and they were proud of this. I feel that Ana and I share the same spirit and journey of appreciation for our roots.”

“The play’s relevance for today’s audiences is pretty clear, given the current political climate,” said “Real Women Have Curves” director Melissa Lucero-McCarl. “The debate around how we deal with our undocumented workers has never been so polarizing, nor has the national discussion around how we treat/sexualize women and their bodies. I also think the play addresses a conflict that every displaced family has to face, no matter their culture: how to meld old world and new, and how that tug of war can wear on the second generation living in the new country. I love that the ultimate message of the play, however, is one of hope, creativity and possibility. Where would America be without such qualities?”

“Real Women Have Curves” plays at the Aurora Fox Arts Center from Feb. 23 to March 18. For tickets, visit AuroraFox.org.