



Drayton Entertainment Announces New Digital Series for the New Year

Backstage Pass series streaming for 10 weeks starting January 30

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – New year, new digital series! Patrons can provide vital support to the theatre industry and enjoy top-notch entertainment from the comfort of their homes with Drayton Entertainment’s brand-new digital streaming series, *Backstage Pass*. With in-person performances prohibited due to government restrictions related to rising Omicron numbers, the not-for-profit charitable arts organization will keep audiences connected to the performing arts by offering 10 weeks of virtual entertainment – the *Backstage Pass* series will run Sunday nights from **January 30 to April 3**. Each hour-long episode will be available on demand for seven days after it airs.

Watch the trailer for *Backstage Pass* now: <https://youtu.be/Gc4koyN0QA4>

“We wish we could welcome audiences into our venues in person, but health and safety must be the top priority right now,” says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment. “We hope this fun virtual series brings theatre-lovers some much-needed joy and entertainment as they stay home to stay safe. By purchasing the series, patrons will not only learn more about the Canadian theatre industry and many of the artists that they know and love, they’ll also be providing important support in the midst of these latest restrictions, which have once again shuttered our operations.”

Hosted by Mustakas, *Backstage Pass* features exciting performances and interviews with over 40 incredible Canadian theatre artists, everyone from beloved veteran actors and the country’s leading stars, to up-and-coming young performers poised for success. Audiences will love hearing personal stories and watching compelling performances from many popular artists including **AJ Bridel** (*Kinky Boots* for Drayton and Toronto/Charlottetown’s *Anne of Green Gables*), **Patrick R. Brown** (Drayton’s *Beauty and the Beast*/Broadway’s *The Lion King & Aladdin*), **Alexis Gordon** (Drayton’s *Godspell*/Shaw Festival/Stratford Festival), **Lisa Horner** (Drayton’s *9 to 5: The Musical*/Come From Away Toronto), **Lee MacDougall** (Drayton’s *The Foursome*/Come From Away Original Broadway Company), **Robert Markus** (Drayton’s *Chicago*/Dear Evan Hansen Toronto/Stratford Festival), **Marcus Nance** (Drayton’s *The Little Mermaid*/Stratford Festival/*La Boheme* Broadway), **Tim Porter** (Drayton’s *ELF*, and many panto productions), **Michael Vanhevel** (Drayton’s *Big Band Legends*/Recording Artist), **Danielle Wade** (Drayton’s *Mamma Mia!*, *Footloose*/Broadway’s *Mean Girls*), and many other talented performers.

Backstage Pass follows the success of Drayton Entertainment’s first digital offering *We’ll Meet Again*, a variety show that was only available to a limited audience in 2020. The professional theatre company filmed the 10-episode series during the initial pandemic shut down and made them available as a means to stay connected to current patrons while the theatres were closed to in-person performances. This new series will be available for purchase publicly.

“*We’ll Meet Again* was a wonderful experience. Audiences were so happy to see virtual performances from some of their favourite Drayton performers in 2020,” said Mustakas. “This next series is totally different from *We’ll Meet Again* in terms of content, but it follows a similar weekly format. In addition to some exceptional performances, *Backstage Pass* includes heartwarming personal interviews with the artists – audiences get to learn more about them as people, and hear some fun behind-the-scenes stage stories. It’s really a blast.”

Backstage Pass will also include a *Smile of the Day* segment from popular entertainer **Neil Aitchison** as his loveable alter-ego Constable Archibald F. Inkster, and a recurring visit from funnyman *Wade Lynch*, whose “royal” appearance is sure to elicit some laughs. Lynch recently appeared as Little Big Man in *A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline* in St. Jacobs over the holiday season.

Audiences will also get to meet the nine finalists in *The Great Community Talent Search* over the course of the series. Each week, a contestant will share their talent, and on the final episode, audiences will be given instructions on how to vote for the Grand Prize winner. The Top 9 finalists are: **Emma Reynolds** of Penetanguishene, **Faridhusen Mansuri** of Guelph, **Emily McRobbie** from Harriston, **Malia Dilana Alfonso** from Leamington, **Adam Rigby & Cayleigh Lennox** from Dundas, **Abigail Shatford** of Pelham, **Simon Zenker** of Elmira, and the **Rezonation Quartet** from Kitchener-Waterloo.

“We’re excited about the unique way that this series highlights homegrown talent, both established and up-and-coming. There are many shows about actors and the behind-the-scenes process on Broadway, but so few, if any, shine the light on Canadian talent and the theatre industry here in Canada. I think viewers will love learning more about the performers that they’ve seen (or are going to see) on stages across the country,” said Mustakas.

The series was filmed by 519 Films. Drayton Entertainment has partnered with TheaterMania to stream *Backstage Pass*. TheaterMania is a live stream and video-on-demand platform for theatre and entertainment enthusiasts. Tickets are purchased from Drayton Entertainment directly and patrons are then sent a secure link to watch the series on the TheaterMania platform as each episode is released. Tickets are on sale now. Audiences can choose to buy the complete series for a package price or select individual episodes for purchase. Learn more and buy online at www.draytonentertainment.com or call the Box Office at **1-855-372-9866**.

Plans are still underway for in-person programming at Drayton Entertainment’s seven stages across the province. The 2022 Season is expected to be announced later this winter.

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