

Take in theatre, music, dance during Culture Days

By Dianne Wood, Record staff

WATERLOO REGION — Listen to the reading of a play inspired by a local hanging, attend an open rehearsal of a concert band or ride around on a bicycle, looking at art.

These are some of the free activities offered to Waterloo Region residents during Culture Days, running from today through Sunday.

The second annual **Culture Days** event is meant to raise awareness of arts and culture in cities across Canada.

In Waterloo Region, residents are invited to explore theatre, music, dance, film and visual arts at numerous events scheduled over the three days.

Culture Days is “not a regular arts festival,” said Aubrey Reeves, the Ontario manager for **Culture Days**.

“It’s not about putting on the same old show for free. It’s giving the public a behind-the-scenes and hands-on experience. When they see what goes into producing arts and culture, they become more interested in seeing it.”

On Sunday, there will be a staged reading of a play by local playwright Dona Paul Massel at the former Waterloo County Gaol and Governor’s House at 77 Queen St. N. in Kitchener. The play, called *On the Inside*, was inspired by the story of James Allison, who was hanged in 1898.

“Patrons are frequently astounded to find that they ‘saw the whole thing’ in their minds as they listened to a staged reading,” says a **Culture Days** news release.

The play imagines the scene inside the home of the jail governor and his wife in the six months before the hanging. The

couple lived at the jail property.

“You came into the kitchen to get into the jail,” Massel said in an interview.

“A hanging has a profound affect on everyone in the community in which the hanging takes place ... mostly on the governor and his wife who lived in the jail property,” she said.

The hanging occurred in a woodshed in the jail yard. Massel said people climbed on the roof of a bowling club, where the library is now located, to watch over the wall.

Those who attend the 2 p.m. reading in Courtroom 2 of what is now the provincial offences court will be able to ask questions of the cast and playwright, plus take short tours of the jail.

“It’s Kitchener history,” Massel said of her unfinished play.

The Wellington Winds concert band will hold an open rehearsal on Sunday from 7 to 10 p.m. on Dupont Street West in Waterloo. The conductor and players will be on hand to discuss the preparation that goes into a concert.

On Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., people are invited to go on a bike tour to see art in the community. They can borrow a bike from CAFKA (Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area) at 200 King St. W., then tour with C Magazine editor and avid cyclist Amish Morrell.

There are family-friendly events during Culture Days. Kids’ story time at 10:30 a.m. today at the Cambridge Libraries and Galleries on Saginaw Parkway will feature Winnie the Pooh and friends.

For a complete list of activities, go to www.culturedays.ca.

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