Geelong Arts Centre will present the multi-sensory show Whoosh! as part of its 2022 Family Magic program. (Sarah Walker)

The wonders of magic

Geelong Arts Centre has revealed its Family Magic program will return this year, with a diverse range of family-friendly productions.

The program will run from March to August and feature six engaging and accessible performance catered to children under 12, with the intention of fostering their connection to the arts.

Geelong Arts Centre chief executive Joel McGuinness said the Family Magic program was the first theatrical experience for many children in the region and the centre took pride in helping families spark a love for the arts.

"Geelong Arts Centre takes immense pride in providing young people with a window into the world of the arts and making world-class arts experiences accessible to the many diverse families across our region," he said.

Kicking off the program in March, celebrated music educator, presenter, author and composer Karen Kyriacou will present Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's Jam for Juniors: Swan Lake.

Suited to children up to five years old, the 30-minute musical workshop will introduce to "the magic of music" through Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake.

In April, the centre will host the play, Emil and the Detectives, based on the 1929 novella by Erich Kastner.

In May, CDP Kids will present the adventures of Little and Big Nutbrown Hare as they discover the magic and colour of the seasons in a stage adaptation of Sam McBratney's beloved Guess How Much I Love You books.

In June, the centre will host Whoosh!, an immersive and multi-sensory performance where kids board a custom-built spaceship to work as a team and co-pilot an intergalactic adventure.

The show, created by pioneering theatre makers Sensorium Theatre, is designed to be suitable for children with a broad range of access needs, including those on the autism spectrum.

July will see young readers delight in witnessing Sheena Knowles and Rod Clements' much-loved picture book Edward The Emu be brought to life on stage by Monkey Baa Theatre Company.

The program will finish with Geelong Arts Centre's first collaboration with the Australian Chamber Orchestra.

In August the centre will present There's A Sea In My Bedroom, an adaption of the picture book by Margaret Wild and illustrated by Jane Tanner, which captures the magic of a child's fantasy world and provides the perfect introduction to live classical music.

"We are delighted to welcome children and families of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to engage with, and be inspired by, creativity across so many artforms," Geelong Arts Centre families, youth and creative learning senior producer Kelly Clifford said.

"The Family Magic program offers immersive, imaginative and creative experiences, that blur the boundaries between actor and audience whilst creating magical moments that spark joy and laughter."

For full program details, visit geelongartscentre.org.au/family-magic-2022.

Geelong wrestler Edward Dusk. (Jake Hurdle Photography) 264618_01

Wrestling at the Palais

The Palais Theatre will hold a unique event next weekend, welcoming Melbourne-based professional wrestling organisation Deathmatch Downunder for Malice at the Palais.

The 18-plus event will feature Geelong's own Edward Dusk challenging newly-crowned DMDU heavyweight champion Royce Chambers for the title, while fellow Geelong local Will Walker will face veteran Joel Bateman in a 'Surf City Deathmatch'.

Deathmatch Downunder head of community engagement Erin Dick said it was pleasing to finally be able to come to Geelong for a live show after the challenges of 2020.

"We've been dying to get back to live shows," she said.

"Professional wrestling in Australia is in its prime. We're confident that we can continue to deliver compelling and safe events for our community.

"There's no better time than now to become a fan of pro wrestling."

Like many performing arts, the professional wrestling sector was impact by COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions on gatherings.

Bateman said he was excited to again be able to perform in front of an audience.

"Professional wrestling is an amazing art form where you're able to leave your problems at the door for a couple of hours, and immerse yourself in this alternate universe," he said.

"We have all missed this during this pandemic, and I am so very happy to be back.

"This is an escape for us [performers and producers] as much as the people watching us perform."

Malice at the Palais is scheduled for January 22, with doors opening at 6.30pm.

Details: bit.ly/3zRZJWh

Community wellbeing upfront at CentreStage

By Elle Cecil

As Australia's largest amateur theatre company, CentreStage entered the 2021 Geelong Business Excellence Awards for the third consecutive year, and took home their third award in as many years.

After winning the Health and Wellbeing Promoting Workplace Award in 2019 and the Small Business Award in 2020, CentreStage has again taken out the Health and Wellbeing Promoting Workplace Award.

Sponsored by Barwon Health, this award is open to all businesses that can demonstrate a recognition of and commitment to delivering health and wellbeing workplace initiatives.

CentreStage purchased a shipping container to be used as an exclusive mental wellbeing hub free to use for students and families. In an effort to show staff, students and families that they are valued, CentreStage has put exceptional work into ensuring that all involved with the business are provided with frameworks to seek support and assistance when needed.

Managing director David Greenwood says he is proud to see CentreStage receive recognition for their hard work and dedication to community health and wellbeing.

"We're pretty stoked … it's a nice little acknowledgement that we haven't strayed away too far from our roots," David says.

"As a business owner, it's a sign that shows us we are on the right track – not quite there yet, but definitely on the right track."

With about 250 students between the ages of four to 18, CentreStage has been nominated for the Geelong Business Excellence Awards for the last three years by ecstatic parents.

"We have 100 new students coming on board in 2022, and our business had a massive year of growth coming out of COVID," says David.

Encouraging diversity and inclusivity, CentreStage offers classes and services that incorporate education, musical theatre events, theatrical rentals and corporate partnerships.

With a strong focus on stakeholder health and wellbeing, CentreStage are multi-award winners of the Health and Wellbeing Promoting Workplace Award. (Supplied)

CentreStage is holding internal auditions for its production of Les Miserables this month, and is expecting to have the show on stage by June.

Details: www.centerstage.org.au

CentreStage has taken out their third consecutive title at the 2021 Geelong Business Excellence Awards. (Supplied)