Overture WITH THE ARTS

BRINGING ARTS & CULTURE TO MONTREAL'S YOUTH

PRESS KIT
WWW.OWTA.ORG
In a musical or stage performance, the overture is the opening, the introduction. Its aim is to capture interest and set the scene for what is to come.

So too is the mission of OVERTURE WITH THE ARTS: to introduce the performing arts to youth from all walks of life through low-cost programs, enabling them to pursue their passion in the arts when they wouldn’t otherwise have the financial means to do so.

OVERTURE WITH THE ARTS (OWTA) is a non-profit organization based in the West Island of Montreal, offering education in music, dance, drama and vocal training. Through in school and after-school programs and school tours, OWTA helps kids and teens find a creative outlet for self-expression and builds confidence and poise. Using the arts as a vehicle for education, OWTA incorporates multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary elements to foster an environment of learning, sharing and, of course, fun.

Drawing on the passion and talents of our team of instructors, OWTA furthermore provides engaging workshops, guest speaker sessions, industry mentorships and performance showcases.

In 2014, OWTA was the proud recipient of the Montreal Community Cares Award (Community Organization Category) from the Fondation Communauté Montréal à Coeur and the Award of Excellence (Honourable Mention) from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

OWTA’s activities are funded through grants, sponsorships and donations.

Watch our promo video online: https://youtu.be/vTusINEWIIU
WHY ARE THE ARTS SO IMPORTANT?

While there have been countless studies done to prove the importance of arts education, it remains a category often overlooked or diminished in many school curriculums. In fact, giving children and youth the opportunity to explore the arts helps to nourish their minds and their imagination, leading to improved academic results and yielding more responsible, engaged members of society.

Why? Because studying the arts helps us to think outside the box, see things from a different perspective and experiment with various forms of expression. This type of stretch thinking provides a valuable complement to traditional academic studies and arms kids with the skills they need to succeed in life.

Students involved in arts education also tend to be more tolerant of different ethnic groups, have a greater commitment to their community, and spend less time watching TV or playing video games.

“Performing arts provide a way to express ourselves. It allows us to tap into our creative side, and let ourselves shine in a new way. We can let our true feelings show using the arts... the arts makes it easier to feel good about ourselves, to gain confidence and even people skills.”

– Cassandra Bush, Riverdale High School Student
AKILAH NEWTON has a deep appreciation for performing arts.

Early in life, she discovered a fascination with dramatic arts while performing in an elementary school production of Annie. She continued to nurture her interest with training in music, drama, dance, and stage production.

After earning her Bachelor’s degree in Arts, Music & Entertainment Management, she felt a need to give back to the community that had helped foster her own dreams and aspirations in performing arts.

“IT’S ALL ABOUT THE KIDS. IT’S SO REWARDING TO SEE THE SMILES ON THEIR FACES. THE ARTS HAS A WAY OF BRINGING OUT JOY IN ALL OF US.”

- Akilah Newton

Recognizing that not all kids have the means to participate in arts programs, she set out to make training accessible to young people from all socio-economic backgrounds. She founded OWTA in 2009 to share her passion and experience with the youth in her community.

Reaching out to her network of talented artists and friends, Akilah assembled a team of dedicated instructors to deliver fun, power-packed educational sessions. The first program offered by OWTA provided an 8-week summer session of Jazz and Hip Hop dance classes for youth ages 12 and up. Since then, new programs have been added to OWTA’s arts education, responding to the creative needs of Montreal’s youth.
To carry out our goal of engaging youth, OWTA runs several programs throughout the year. The programs are diverse in nature, including performing arts, visual arts and media arts. Additionally, we focus on building partnerships with local organizations. This allows us to create a strong network of committed volunteers, partners and participants who continue to benefit from our activities.

**A.S.A.P. (AFTER SCHOOL ARTS PROGRAM)**

Offered from September to June, students in Montreal’s West Island community can participate in OWTA’s after-school arts program. Youth aged 12-17 are introduced to dance, music and theatre. Led by talented instructors, class sizes are small and intimate, providing a safe and fun atmosphere to explore the creative realm. In 2018 OWTA launched a new Musical Theatre program as part of its A.S.A.P. offerings.

**OVERTURE FILM**

Overture Film introduces youth to film production through videography, editing, storyboarding and more. Led by professional filmmakers, participants conceptualize film ideas, create original scripts, research and secure locations to film and cast talent. Furthermore, the program works toward advancing conversations on how we can best approach issues of diversity and inclusion. Overture Film gives youth the tools to share powerful stories about Canadian heroes.
In 2018 OWTA launched a Youth Musical Theatre intensive summer program for aspiring triple-threats. Kids and teens receive training in acting, dancing and singing while honing their skills in the performing arts. Participants also have the opportunity to perform in a musical production at the end of the summer.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

OWTA.ORG/MUSICAL-THEATRE-SUMMER/
To carry out our goal of engaging youth, OWTA runs several programs throughout the year. The programs are diverse in nature, including music, dance and radio broadcasts. Additionally, we focus on partnerships with local organizations. This allows us to create a network of committed volunteers, partners and participants who continue to benefit from our activities.

For 6 consecutive years, OWTA has hosted free concerts on Friday evenings in July and August at Starbucks in Chapters Pointe-Claire. The family-friendly performances showcase emerging local artists of different genres – including pop, rock, R&B, jazz and country. Starbucks donates a fantastic gift basket to raffle off at each show.

SUMMER BREEZE: CONCERT SERIES
OWTA.ORG/SUMMER-BREEZE/

SUMMER SING-A-LONGS
Tuesday mornings in July and August OWTA hosts a free children’s Sing-A-Long at Chapters Pointe-Claire. From 11:00am to 11:30am, kids (and parents!) sing along to their favourite songs led by a local artist. A fantastic prize is also raffled off at the end of each workshop.

OWTA.ORG/2018-SUMMER-SING-LONG/
SPRING INTO SUMMER FAMILY FUN FAIR
In May 2018, OWTA hosted our first annual family fun fair at Riverdale High School. The free outdoor event featured local vendors, food, music & dance performances, a petting zoo, face painting and more for the whole family.

COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS VENDOR FAIR
Each November, OWTA hosts over 40 local vendors and artisans at Riverdale High School for a fundraising holiday fair. This free family event also offered dance workshops, face painting, a magic show, and live performances.

WINTER WONDERLAND BRUNCH
Since 2013, OWTA treats 25 families in need in the West Island to an afternoon of free activities at the Pierrefonds Cultural Centre. Guests enjoyed a warm brunch, live performances, and dance workshops. Every child in attendance receives brand new books, toys, confections and a pyjamas.

ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISER
Each April, OWTA hosts an anniversary fundraiser to celebrate a yet another new milestone year of success. All of the proceeds from the music and comedy affair go towards funding our programs for youth.
**EVENTS**

**OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)**

**DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS CONFERENCE**

In March of 2017 we hosted our 1st Diversity in the Arts Conference in celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and Action Week Against Racism. Invited panelists spoke about their experiences as visible minorities working in arts and entertainment, prompting a much needed discussion on racism and the lack of cultural diversity represented in the industry.

**WOMEN IN THE ARTS CONFERENCE**

This vital event provides youth with the opportunity to learn about the different career options in the arts and entertainment industry. As part of the conference programming, female professional artists share their success stories with high school students and discuss topics including what inspires them, how to stay motivated in a competitive field, and following your dreams – among other challenges females working in the industry face.
# Overview of Annual Programs & Events

## Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.S.A.P. (After School Arts Program)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Unite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black History Month School Tour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echoes of Anne Frank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JAN</th>
<th>FEB</th>
<th>MAR</th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUN</th>
<th>JUL</th>
<th>AUG</th>
<th>SEP</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
<th>DEC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity in the Arts Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anniversary Fundraiser</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring into Summer Family Fun Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Breeze: Concert Series</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Sing-A-Longs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in the Arts Conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countdown to Christmas Vendor Fair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Wonderland Brunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

[Image of event participants]
Ms. Akilah Newton, Founder & Executive Director
Telephone: (514) 889-8678
Email: info@owta.org
Website: www.owta.org
Social Media: Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and LinkedIn

To register for programs or for more information: check back on OWTA’s website and sign up for our newsletter at www.otwa.org.

OWTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Executive Director: Akilah Newton
President: Modupeh Taylor-Cline
Treasurer: Kelvin Newton
Secretary: Diane Bates
Administrator: Justine McIntyre
Administrator: Nan Beaton
Administrator: Tina Wentzel
Administrator: Dyana Gampel
Administrator: Nathalie Mailhot
Administrator: Sophie Haynes
Administrator: Agnes Katsouros
Administrator: Sherri Rabinovitch

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTING PARTNERS:
City of Pierrefonds, Jim Beis, Mayor of Pierrefonds and City Councillors
Frank Baylis, MP for Pierrefonds/ Dollard-des-Ormeaux
The Department of Canadian Heritage
The Lester B. Pearson School Board Entrepreneurship Grant Program
Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal
Alberta Association for Multicultural Education
Arbonne Charitable Foundation
SOCAN Foundation
Girls Action Foundation
Kiwanis Club of Lakeshore Montreal Foundation
Martin Coiteux - MNA, Nelligan
Carlos Leitão - MNA, Robert-Baldwin
François Blais - Minister responsible for Recreation and Sport
Kathleen Weil, Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion
Sébastien Proulx, Minister of Families, Education, Sports & Leisure
Luc Fortin, Minister of Culture and Communications
Lise Thériault, Minister responsible for the Status of Women