

GUELPH BLACK HERITAGE SOCIETY ANNOUNCES HERITAGE HALL REHEARSAL STUDIO

By Guelph Black Heritage Society

The Guelph Black Heritage Society is pleased to announce that we will be opening a new, inclusive music rehearsal space for rent in the basement of Heritage Hall. The space will feature a PA system, full drum kit, piano keyboard, and microphones, as well as gender-neutral washrooms and a kitchen for patrons to use.

The initiative was proposed by GBHS volunteer and local musician Laura Bailey, who identified a lack of inclusive rehearsal space geared toward diverse musicians who are women, people of colour, LGBTQIA, gender non-binary, and more. “There are very few rehearsal spaces for bands in general,” said Bailey, “and the ones that do exist are usually very male dominated. Some have even taken the whole ‘man cave’ thing to a new level.” Her vision for this new rehearsal space is to “create a safe and welcoming place for musicians who might not be able to find that elsewhere.” She believes that the historic building—a church built by refugee slaves from the Underground Railroad—makes Heritage Hall the perfect place for a diverse array of people to make music.

Bailey will be acting as the Booking Coordinator for the new space. She is currently sourcing equipment, and soliciting feedback from the community about what folks want to see in an inclusive band space like this. “So far I have heard that people want gender-neutral washrooms, diverse staff on site, and no gear snobs. Those are definitely things we can deliver.” To ensure privacy for patrons, the rehearsal space will only be rented out while no other groups are renting the building.

Prospective patrons can submit an online application form to rent the space, with both hourly and membership rates available. “We want to make sure the space is serving the community as we intended,” said GBHS President Denise Francis, “and that those using the space care about the building as much as we do.” The revenue generated by the rental will go toward renovations for the Heritage Hall basement and equipment costs to enhance the rehearsal space over time.

The GBHS Board unanimously approved the project this past summer, finding it complementary with our current Rampin’ It Up Campaign to make Heritage Hall wheelchair accessible, and thus a more inclusive cultural centre for all. Rehearsal patrons will also be offered discounted bookings when using Heritage Hall’s main stage space for concerts.

We are aiming to open the space for business this October. Stay tuned for the Grand Opening announcement! To inquire about renting the space, donating/selling equipment, or to offer your suggestions, please contact Laura Bailey at rehearsals@guelphblackheritage.ca.

Laura Bailey is a singer, songwriter, and vocal coach based in Guelph. For more information, check out www.laurabaileymusic.com.

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