

## The summer season

### A 'best of cast' for the ninth season of the dinner show has already begun singing and serving at Cornerstone Theatre

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As the season starts, Cornerstone Theatre fixture, Joe Morris is excited about this season's Oh Canada Eh? Dinner Show.

Morris is in his seventh season and he calls this year's cast an amalgamation of the best people he's seen on stage.

"One of the beauties of this year, because everybody's returning, this has almost become a 'best-of' cast," Morris said. "We've picked these people out of all the years that we've done this show — and these people all really excelled at what they did — it's nice to have these people back here this year so we can really make this show everything it can be."

This year will see: Colleen Renne-Grivell — in a part-time role for most of the summer — Morris, William Petrie, Christine Stewart, Karita Mullins and Clayton Labbe tackle the two-and-a-half hour tribute to Canadian songs and themes.

"We knew at our first rehearsal, our first run through, that this was going to be great," Mullins said.

Auditions are held across Canada for the cabaret or Vaudeville style show and some in this year's cast auditioned years ago and are now returning for another run at the interactive performance.

Petrie is in his third season and he's happy to be back.

"It's a lot of fun to do this show, to get into costume, to entertain these people," Petrie said. "Just having a great time every night and knowing that I really made someone's evening."

The night begins as the performers, who double as servers, get to know their tables a little bit, to find out if there are any special occasions, for example.

"We encourage cheering, we encourage singing and dancing," Mullins said. "They're on their feet."

The show includes over 70 songs written or made famous by Canadians, covering everything from World War One songs to something as contemporary as a Shania Twain medley.

"There is a plot, kind of, in a roundabout sort of way," Morris said. "It's a night of entertainment is the best way to put it."

"It's beautiful, because this isn't the kind of show where you can go on auto-pilot," he said.

"The whole feel of the room changes every night."

Mullins said her favourite interaction in the show is when she plays the character Klondike Kitty.

"We generally have an idea of which particular men Klondike Kitty is going to flirt with for the evening," she said. "And it's always fun to come off the stage and be face to face with someone."

"They always get a little red in the face and their wives always give them a new nick name after the show."

"The special part about this show people forget about what's going on in their lives, there's so much going on here, that they can't think about anything but what's going on in front of them," Mullins said.

Morris said that the theatre is trying to get the locals back, especially those who haven't seen it in five or six years as the show does change, he said. There's new material and new choreography

"We're constantly evolving and changing the show," he said. "When they originally envisioned the show 18 years ago now, the demographic that they were writing for are considerably older and they're not really travelling anymore — so we've obviously updated for our demographic. And as the years go on, we'll continue to update.

"When we've got a permanent staff, a permanent artistic director, it's really easy for us. We know we're going to do this show every year and so we think, 'OK, what are we going to make better this year? Well, why don't we re-do the rock medley, why don't we re-do this . . . .'"

This season one of the revamps is to include foreign translations for French, German and Japanese guests. And Cornerstone's artistic director, JP Thibodeau, has reworked the sound and lighting this year.

As part of the effort to win locals back to the show, there's a special for the duration of the summer as Cornerstone is offering a buy one, get the second one half-price ticket deal. While as always kids, 16 years old and younger, are free with a paid adult.

The cast of this year's ninth season of the Oh Canada Eh? Dinner Show will perform nearly 50 shows over the course of the season from April 23 to Oct. 20. Seating time is 6:15 p.m. on show nights. For more information, call Cornerstone Theatre at (403) 609-0004, or go to [atthecorner.ca](http://atthecorner.ca).

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