



## THE ART OF MUMMERING

For the 12th straight year, the annual Mummerters Festival carries on the culture and hilarity of mummerring while adapting to the realities of COVID-19

BY DILLON COLLINS

**Y**ou can't keep a good mummer down! While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has assuredly affected the way many of us approach the upcoming holiday season, many individuals and groups have pivoted to make the best of a bad situation, keeping the spirit in the season even if the tried-and-true traditions we rely on may appear different in 2020.

### FUN & FOOLISHNESS

The fine folks at the Mummerters Festival have determined to press on, bringing the fun, foolishness and plenty of opportunities to wear underwear as outerwear back again with their 12th an-



ALEX STEAD PHOTO

"We said ok people love the Mummerters, we're bringing the Mummerters Festival back." — Lynn McShane

nual extravaganza from November 28th to December 12th.

"We just really felt that this year, given COVID-19 pandemic and everything has kind of collapsed around us

in many ways ... we just thought that people enjoy this so much. How can we make sure that they can participate in something fun again and bring the educational component into it," shared



ALEX STEAD PHOTO

Lynn McShane, Executive Director of the Mummers Festival.

"We just felt, you know what, no way. We're not going to postpone or not have a 2020 festival. We just want to power ahead, and the board of directors is really committed to that as well. We said ok people love the Mummers, we're bringing the Mummers Festival back."

## CULTURE & TRADITIONS

The festival boasts a jam-packed schedule of events, workshops, lectures and performances taking place both physically and virtually.

With this year's theme of The Art of Mumming, organizers of the festival aim to examine the link between mumming culture and traditions and the local artisans who have incorporated the lore into their own works.

Among the can't miss highlights of the festival is Chainsaw Art with local artist Bill Guiney, a showcase presentation by professional Mummers Parade photographers Ritche Perez, Alex Stead and Greg Locke; an artist's panel featuring local artists Janet Peter, Doug Halliday, Tracie Boland and Dawn Hanlon; a special concert by local iconic musicians Bud Davidge and Paul Hamilton; and an interactive comedic mummer workshop featuring theatre artist Samantha Chaulk.

"There's so many wonderful artists and musicians and performers and storytellers in our community. We've always worked as much as we can with local artists, but this year let's really kind of do something. Mumming and



RITCHE PEREZ PHOTO

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the mumming tradition appears in so many different formats and types of art, especially when we're going online, let's reach out to them and let's showcase their work too," explains McShane.

## 'LOCAL ARTISTS'

"It's about that partnership with our local community and with our local artists to showcase what they do and how they so thoughtfully approach the tradition and incorporate it so beautifully in so many different ways."

Perhaps the cornerstone of the entire Mummers Festival is the signature and fan favourite Mummers Parade. And while pandemic restrictions naturally have caused the physical event to be cancelled, that hasn't stopped event organizers from keeping the tradition alive.

Mummers from near and far are being asked to submit short 20 to 30 second video submissions that will result in a

parade-length video montage, airing on Facebook on December 12. The deadline video submissions is December 1st.

## 'MUMMERS PARADE'

Our biggest disappointment was that we just couldn't go ahead with the parade," says McShane. "But COVID-19 is not going to keep a determined mummer down. So we thought, what can we do?"

"We're going to create and stitch together a Mummers Parade that, hopefully, will have lots and lots of fun and colour and noise and excitement.

And we want to showcase the hometowns of everybody who submit as well. So we want to see that. And I think it's going to be a very intriguing opportunity. So I'm really hoping that people are going to get onboard with this virtual Mummers Parade idea. I want people to share this opportunity. I would like to see submissions from Fort



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For full event details and registration pages visit [mummersfestival.ca](http://mummersfestival.ca)

McMurray to Fiji.”

For McShane and the entire Mummers Festival family, the preservation and promotion of these long-handed down traditions, marrying education and entertainment, serves as the life-blood of what we’ve come to know and expect each and every year.

And while COVID-19 has thrown this and each and every element of our normalcy for a loop in 2020, that commitment to cultural preservation and education, while never failing to create lasting moments and memories, is something that grows stronger with each passing day.

## ‘TRADITION ALIVE’

“What we really enjoy, especially in our workshops and our talks, is the opportunity to talk to parents and to talk to grandparents. So many people say to us that this is such a wonderful way to keep this tradition alive,” explains McShane.

“When we talk to families they say they bring their children specifically to teach them about the Mummering tradition and what it means to us and to learn to carry it on in their own way. It always links back to the history of the tradition and kind of teaching people about the past and how the tradition carries on in contemporary times. It’s what we can do to make sure that the tradition carries forward.”

For full event details and registration pages visit [mummersfestival.ca](http://mummersfestival.ca)

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