

## Part II of Artpark season preview: Top musical acts set to perform at Lewiston venue

BY JOSHUA MALONI

GM/Managing Editor

Artpark & Company's focus for this summer – its 50th season – centers on five key words: spectacle, drama, Indigenous & global influences.

Indeed, arts and culture will take center stage this year, as the award-winning venue will host educational and entertaining events across the Lewiston state park's 150-acre campus.

In addition, organizers noted, "Artpark has already announced more than 30 performances and concerts, two festivals, several art installations, six international creative residencies, art camps, and even the launch of Artpark's 'Art Ale' in partnership with Resurgence Brewing Co."

President Sonia Kozlova Clark previewed the new season in a recent Q&A. This is part two of her interview.

*Q: I think, certainly, diversity in programming is something that you've been very successful at over the years.*

### ARTPARK

#### 2023 CONCERT LINEUP

**Styx** (June 2); **Buddy Guy** (June 10); **Young The Giant** with **Milky Chance** (June 13); **Ben Folds** (June 16); **Michael Franti & Spearhead** (June 21); **My Morning Jacket** (June 26); **The Australian Pink Floyd Show** (June 28); **Tori Amos** (July 8); **Barenaked Ladies** "Last Summer On Earth" tour with special guests **Five for Fighting** and **Del Amitri** (July 11); **Lauren Daigle** (July 14); **RAIN: A Tribute to the Beatles** (July 16); **Larkin Poe with The Allman Betts Band** (July 27); "Carmina Burana" (July 29); **Orville Peck** (Aug. 1); **Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit** (Aug. 5); **Richard Marx** and **Yacht Rock Revue** (Aug. 10); **Parker McCollum** (Aug. 17); **Whiskey Myers** (Aug. 20); **Pixies** and **Modest Mouse** (Aug. 28); and **Alvvays** and **Alex G.** (Sept. 1).

*The previous administration, out of necessity – then I would say popularity and practicality – focused on outdoor concerts. There was no indication the cultural programming you've initiated would become as well-received as it is today. What led you to believe those programs were possible – and that they could work at Artpark?*

**Sonia Kozlova Clark:** When I first came to Artpark, what I saw was, again, this vibrant palette of opportunities for presentation. I have produced very different types of arts and events in the past, and I could see how Artpark is unique from any other venues I had worked with.

Artpark as a place of nature and as a community presents almost limitless ways to explore the different types of performance, theater, music, Cirque, street theater, or art in public spaces. Also, of course, visual arts is a tremendous legacy and opportunity for Artpark, which we are strategically rebuilding. We are approaching these opportunities in phases and by layering one new discipline at a time.

The opportunities come from the site itself – its history, also its legacy, and, very importantly, from the people around us. It's the Buffalo community, so fond of innovative music and theater; the Lewiston community, so rich with people who know their history and the memories of coming to Artpark to experience the various types of performances. It's also the Indigenous people who were here long before any others.

Our understanding of what is diversity, specifically, at Artpark is also a very interesting subject. We often times talk with our board, funders, artistic partners and curators about how to make our organization more diverse, and how to make our audience more diverse. Often times, the fallback is to say, "Well, Lewiston is a pretty homogenous society." Initially, I thought, the local diversity was economic and maybe educational. But soon I have discovered the incredible depth and richness of the Haudenosaunee and their predecessors, thank you to Eva (Nicklas) and Irene (Rykszewski) from the Lewis-Ton Art Council, and Michele-Elise Burnett, who I've met through our board member Seymour Knox IV.

With their help, some reading, and the stories told by Neil Patterson Sr. of the Tuscarora Nation, or Peter Jamison of the Seneca Nation, and many others, I learned that the Haudenosaunee Nations are in themselves very diverse, but also so present here. Their presence here is not always the most obvious, as we see them through the limited focus of shared festivals or events, but the reality is so much richer.

Through the work of Michele-Elise, Artpark's Indigenous arts producer and staff member, our relationship has been flourishing now for a number of years, starting with the Artpark Strawberry Moon Festival and ex-

pecting now to a summer-long program focused on Indigenous ways of knowing. I am grateful to Kehala and Jordan Smith and all the scholars and artists helping us build a more close-knit relationship, which sometimes feels like family.

The success of attracting an audience is through seeing your community, all its fine tones and different shades of cultural and economic differences, social and even political views. And for us at Artpark, there is such an interesting palette to work with here.

Another path for success is in programming strategy. Layering the new over time, mixing it with the familiar. When you bring something new, the recognition doesn't happen all at once. You have to adjust the strategy for each particular kind of art and audience. It's not one-size-fits-all.

*Q: Of course, we know concerts are still a very big draw. What can you tell me, looking at this year's lineup, that stands out to you – or that people should be excited about or even curious about, with regard to the bands and the acts you've booked?*

**Sonia Kozlova Clark:** As you said, it's a very diverse lineup, and addresses different types of audiences.

I am, as always, excited about Barenaked Ladies, which now has become a staple event in Western New York.

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Ben Folds photo by Alysse Gafkjen • Styx photo courtesy of Artpark & Company

It's great to see the audiences coming back, and then some.

Buddy Guy is an iconic figure in music. It's his last – or self-proclaimed last – tour. We'll see. I hope he changes his mind. He will definitely be a highlight, for me personally, and I'm sure for many in the community.

I think Larkin Poe is a fantastic duo that I think everybody should discover, if they haven't yet – with the Allman Betts Band. Together, it's a great pairing.

One of my favorite musicians is Ben Folds. To me, it's definitely a highlight. I've followed his career from the very early days, and I'm so glad to see him back with us.

Pixies and Modest Mouse will close our amphitheater season, and what a great, incredible pairing that is. I'm definitely looking forward to that. I was doing the happy dance when we confirmed that particular concert.

For more information on Artpark & Company programming, visit [www.artpark.net](http://www.artpark.net). Tickets are available online at [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).

• Read part III next week.



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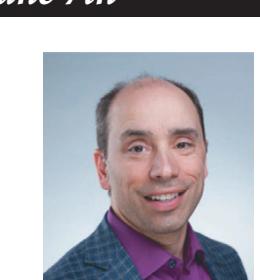
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