Destination Stratford
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

5TH ANNUAL LIGHTS ON STRATFORD WINTER FESTIVAL SET TO 'REIMAGINE' STRATFORD IN A NEW LIGHT

Stratford, Ontario, November 13, 2024 – Now entering its 5th year, the multi award-winning Lights On Stratford annual winter festival, managed by Destination Stratford, will once again transform Stratford's heritage downtown and park system with luminous art and interactive light installations over the course of six weekends in the darkest and coldest part of the year.

The Lights On Stratford 2024/25 theme is **REIMAGINE – to have a new idea about the way something should be**.

The LIGHT TRAIL starts in Market Square with not one, but two light art installations.

Introducing the award-winning EMERGENCE by This is Loop, the collaborative artistic partnership of artists Harriet Lumby and Alan Hayes based in the UK.



Emergence photo credit: Nunzio Prenna

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"*We are thrilled to be bringing Emergence to Stratford this winter. This represents not only the Canadian debut for Emergence but also the first time we have exhibited any of our artworks in Canada*," said Alan Hayes, Lead Artist of This is Loop.

With reflective surfaces completely covering all its facets EMERGENCE takes on the surrounding environment providing new ways of perceiving a previously familiar space. The structure consists of 75 large mirror units covered on all surfaces with a mirror finish arranged into a cylindrical pavilion style structure with three wheelchair accessible entrances, with a total of approximately 14,000 LED pixels on the entire structure. These LEDs are visible from inside and outside and display a constantly evolving and mesmerising program of highly complex light patterns choreographed to the accompanying audio track.

The second light art installation for Market Square is STARGATE.



Stargate photo courtesy of Chalk River Labs / Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

"*We're so thrilled to be a part of Lights On Stratford this year! It will be the Canadian premiere for STARGATE, and we can't wait to share this amazing projection sculpture at one of our favourite festivals*," said Jay Tettamanti, a Canadian artist and the award-winning innovative force behind Chalk River Labs, a Melbourne-

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based creative studio.

STARGATE features a 12ft square encompassing a circular ring, ingeniously designed to usher viewers on an awe-inspiring journey through the cosmos. This sculptural marvel employs projection mapping to wrap the entire structure with mesmerising visuals that can be appreciated from any vantage point. Viewers are encouraged to climb into the central ring, serving as both a meditative space and a source of breathtaking photo opportunities, creating interaction and shared experiences among spectators. Hypnotic visuals create an otherworldly portal where the audience is transported to the realm of the stars while standing firmly on Earth's soil.

At the other end of the LIGHT TRAIL, Tom Patterson Island will be transformed into a GARDEN OF DELIGHT featuring two international light art installations.

Step into an enchanting musical garden where towering TRUMPET FLOWERS invite you to explore a vivid, interactive world of light and sound, inspired by the charm of vintage gramophones.



Trumpet Flowers photo courtesy of Amigo & Amigo

Mushrooms hold a symbolic allure across cultures, often heralded as harbingers of

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good fortune. SHROOMS transforms this folklore into an immersive art piece featuring a series of colossal inflatable mushroom forms.



Shrooms photo courtesy of Amigo & Amigo

The Destination Stratford Welcome Centre and warming station features the year-round light art installation EVERBRIGHT.

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Photo courtesy of Destination Stratford

EVERBRIGHT is an interactive wall of light dials that gives participants the ability to create colourful, large scale pictures. EVERBRIGHT allows creation and collaboration across its dials for up to 20 participants at a time. Each of the 476 dials offer a spectrum of colour to create stunning patterns and designs. EVERBRIGHT is a modern re-imagination of the much-loved childhood toy: Lite-Brite. While there, be sure to purchase your glow-in-the-dark Lights On Stratford toque.

The light adventure continues at LIGHTWALL, a permanent year-round voice-activated interactive installation mounted on the façade of the heritage building at 70 Ontario Street.

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Photo courtesy of Destination Stratford

And HEART, a crowd favourite, will be reinstalled at the heritage bandshell.

Launching this winter is LIGHTBRIDGE. Colourfully highlighting the arches on the William Hutt Bridge, this installation will remain in place for year-round enjoyment.

Building on the success of the collaboration with Stratford Transit, FREE HOP-ON-HOP-OFF SHUTTLE BUSES offer a heated and accessible way for patrons to visit each of the main locations with buses visiting each stop every 15 minutes.

New for this year is a collaboration with Stratford Summer Music, Destination Stratford and Stratford Festival to showcase **NYX: electronic drone choir**, who created the incredible soundscape for the EMERGENCE light art installation. NYX embodies live electronics, drone and ecstatic choral sound, testing the limits of organic and synthetic modulation to explore the entire spectrum of collective voice as an instrument.

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Photo credit: Tyr Liang

The NYX concert performance is at 7:30pm on Saturday, January 18th at the Tom Patterson Theatre. Tickets are available at stratfordfestival.ca/NYX-Live

The Stratford Summer Music workshop session with NYX is scheduled for Friday, January 17th. Tickets are limited so register early. More information and tickets are available at stratfordfestival.ca/NYX-Workshop

And from 6:30pm to 8:00pm on Sunday, January 19th, NYX will help close out the 5th annual Lights On Stratford by hosting an interactive experience at the EMERGENCE light art installation in Market Square.

This year, Destination Stratford is excited to partner with the Stratford Country Club to present GLOW & THROW, a unique glow-in-the-dark curling bonspiel.

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Photo courtesy of Destination Stratford

Family and “try-it” glow curling sessions will be during the day on Saturdays and Sundays, while date night glow curling sessions are available on Friday and Saturday evenings. The main GLOW & THROW bonspiel is scheduled for Saturday, January 18th at the Stratford Country Club’s curling facility.

A street curling demo will also be hosted at Market Square for opening and closing weekends.

Light art experiences are also featured throughout the city including “Bright Ideas” at the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus, Stratford Public Library, Gallery Stratford, and Stratford Perth Museum, just to name a few.

The community truly comes together during the festival to celebrate winter with pop-up live music concerts, silent disco parties, glow-in-the-dark curling, winter film festival screenings, light-themed fine art shows, accommodation packages and local restaurant specials with to-go offerings including mulled wine and boozy hot chocolates that can be enjoyed Al Fresco while taking in the lights.

Lights On Stratford runs from December 13th through to January 19th, Thursday to Sundays, 5pm to 10pm. For more information and a full calendar of events, visit lightsonstratford.ca.

Lights On Stratford is made possible through the support of its partners and the

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generosity of its sponsors. It is funded in part by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), and has been financially assisted by Experience Ontario, a program of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

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For more information, please email hello@visitstratford.ca.