

## **Attachment 2 - Examples of Toronto Arts Council Grants Supporting an Inclusive and Equitable Theatre Sector**

### *1) Examples of BIPOC theatre practice supported through TAC granting*

**b current Performing Arts** (Theatre Operating) develops new works by diverse artists primarily rooted in the cultural, social, and political experiences of the Canadian and international Black and Brown Diaspora. They explore spoken and written word, dance and movement pieces, traditional and contemporary works and works from youth culture. Their 2023/24 season will include co-production of Fairview by Jacke Sibblies Drury with Search Party Productions in Vancouver; workshop of Windrush: A Theatrical Audio Experience by Marcel Stewart and 6x10 by Rachel Mutombo; as well as touring Freedom: A Mixtape Live by Marcel Stewart to the National Arts Centre and Montreal.

**Native Earth Performing Arts** (Theatre Operating) is Canada's oldest professional Indigenous theatre company dedicated to developing, producing, and presenting Indigenous theatre and dance. Artistic programming is rooted in Indigenous experience but expressed through a multiplicity of performance traditions and new media initiatives. They are committed to providing a base for a diversity of artists - established and emerging, across discipline and nation - to work together. The 2023/24 activities will include co-presentation of Canoe by Unsettled Scores with Theatre Passe Muraille and Toronto Consort, Women of the Fur Trade by Frances Koncan with National Arts Centre and Great Canadian Theatre Company; producing an audio drama version of Tara Beagan's They Know Not What They Do; presenting Omaagomaan by Waawaate Fobister; the 36th iteration of Weesageechak Begins to Dance Festival as well as the 8th edition of 2-Spirit Cabaret with Buddies in Bad Times Theatre.

**The Tita Collective** (Theatre Projects) will present a new musical sketch comedy show, Ms. Titaverse, at the 2023 Toronto Fringe Festival. Inspired by the Ms. Universe pageant, and the pageant culture that is popular in the Philippine community, Ms. Titaverse will feature new songs and sketches that draw from their respective experiences as members of the Filipin\* diaspora, and how they navigate the world as Filipina-Canadians.

**Why Not Theatre** (Theatre Operating) is a BIPOC led Theatre company that has established a reputation as a company synonymous with inventive, experimental, cross-cultural collaborations resulting in shows featuring new Canadian writing, company-devised and site-specific shows alongside revitalized interpretations of classics in Toronto and on the world stage. In 2024, they will produce Enemy of the People by Henrik Ibsen; co-produce Quote Unquote's production Universal Childcare at Canadian Stage; and support the presentation of Women of Usher by Josette Bushell-Mingo and Benevolence by Kevin Matthew Wong. They will continue supporting theatre collectives through their Share stream; offer RISER and ThisGen Fellowship; and continue work on the Space Project.

**daniel jelani ellis** (Black Arts Program) will present an original play called 'Speaking of Sneaking'. The play connects Afro-Caribbean traditions using dance, poetry and ritual theatre. The play follows the story of Ginnal who sets out on a migration journey. Jaz "Fairy J" Simone will choreograph the dance component, adding dancehall elements to

the story. Mentorship will be provided by D'bi Young Anitafrika, a dub poet, playwright, and performer.

**Andrew Moodie** (Black Arts Program) will create a play called 'DEXTER' about the life and legacy of Dexter Pottinger, a Jamaican fashion designer, activist, and cultural icon. Pottinger was known for his bold and innovative designs, advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights, and his tragic murder in 2017.

**Ashima Suri** (Animating Historic Sites Program) is a South Asian artist who will present "ROOTS", a multi-disciplinary arts experience that includes community-led dance and theatre workshops, interactive site-specific physical dance theatre performance and a series of community-led discussions on how our history is reflected in our present day lives at the Scarborough Museum.

**Hinprov** (Newcomer and Refugee Arts Engagement) is Toronto's first and only BIPOC South Asian Theatre Ensemble that trains, performs and practices bilingual improvisation (Hindi and English), to do a series of workshops to engage with newcomer artists, to develop shows and give stage time to the emerging artists in BIPOC community.

*2) Examples of actions that TAC operating grant recipients have taken to advance equity and inclusion in the theatre sector*

**Fringe Festival of Toronto** implemented a new, two-phase lottery system to choose artist companies for their Digital Fringe Festival. They reserved at least 50% of available slots in each category for applicants who are Indigenous, Black or People of Colour.

**SummerworksTheatre Festival**, recognizing a lack of diverse voices in Canadian arts media, created a pilot program to develop and uplift BIPOC voices in art criticism. Summerwork commissioned three emerging BIPOC critics to write a response to work in "We Were, We Are, We Will Be" and paired them with mentors in the field for editorial support. The commissioned writers included Jenna Shummoogum (supported by the Toronto Star's Carly Maga and Karen Fricker), Nicole Eun-Ju Bell (support by NOW's Glenn Sumi), and Sid Malcolm (support by ByBlacks.com's Rosey Edeh). In 2021, two additional writers (Alicia Murrin and Natasha Adiyana Morris) were commissioned and supported with mentorship by BIPOC writing staff at NOW Magazine.

**Paprika Festival's** Indigenous Arts program supports four young Indigenous Artists and is led by an Indigenous Facilitator and Indigenous Producer, who both have access to paid mentorship within their roles. All the program's guest artists are Indigenous, and Paprika prioritizes engaging Indigenous mentors, from the same nation as the participants, if possible.

In addition, over 90% of theatre operating grant recipients organizations present collaborations and co-productions led by artists and partners identifying as part of TAC's equity priority groups. Recent and upcoming examples include:

- "The Trials and Triumph of a Tar Baby" is a story of mental health from a Black woman's perspective, in which we meet two women who on the exterior share many

similarities but due to their extremely different upbringings have very different views of themselves, their beauty, and their worth. This new Canadian musical new Canadian musical by Jewelle Blackman, inspired by Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" and is presented by The Musical Stage Company.

- "As I Must Live" It is a funny, endearing, and thought-provoking new work from award-winning spoken word artist Luke Reece. Through poetic storytelling touching on everything from antagonistic squirrels to Chris Pratt's abs, Reece shares his experiences growing up with a mentally ill father in a mixed-race family. Featuring Reece's signature deft wordplay, with the direction of internationally acclaimed audience-specific practitioner Daniele Bartolini and stunning projections from one of the UK's leading immersive production design companies, Limbic Cinema. "As I Must Live It" brings the page to the stage for an intimate and pun-filled event. The production was presented by Theatre Passe Muraille in February-March of 2024.
- "Truth" by Kanika Ambrose is adapted from the Governor General's Award-winning novel "The Gospel Truth" and tells the story of a courageous 16-year-old, the arrival of a stranger from the north, and a trail of secrets that could change everything. From the American South to St. Catharines, Ontario, "Truth" chronicles the fierce strength and resilience of a community as it struggles to find freedom. "Truth" is presented by Young People's Theatre.