



Expanding the  
possibilities  
of performance

**ARTISTIC AND MANAGING DIRECTOR LAURA NANNI  
TO LEAVE SUMMERWORKS AFTER ALMOST A DECADE**

TORONTO May 31, 2022 - The Board of Directors has announced that after seven successful years with the organization, Laura Nanni will end her appointment as Artistic and Managing Director of SummerWorks in April 2023. Since starting in 2016, Laura has been a driving force for change within the organization, and the artistic community as a whole, using her strategic vision to spearhead SummerWorks through a period of positivity and re-imagining. She significantly increased its reputation as a global leader in contemporary performance, and curated countless new works that continue to engage audiences, and nurture artistic creativity and innovation.

*“As a passionate arts and community building advocate Laura led the organization through a period of extraordinary change that has strengthened its reputation as a leader of contemporary performance on an international scale. Laura brings an open and thoughtful approach to every project, and is a fierce advocate for caring, sustainable and process driven artistic works.*

*Laura implemented long term and strategic goals that advanced the organizations accessibility and inclusion practices, expanded free programming, and gave a wider range of opportunities for local and global artists. SummerWorks has never been stronger due to Laura’s steady hand, and is now positioned to do phenomenal things for 2023 and beyond. She has made an indelible impact on SummerWorks - our artists, our audiences and our supporters, that will last for years to come. As sad as we are to see Laura leave, the Festival is now more influential than ever, and we have never been more excited for the next chapter of its 30+ year history.”* Hilary Green, Chair of the Board

Laura Nanni (she/her) is an award-winning and forward-thinking curator, producer, and artist with over 15 years experience planning and delivering large-scale festivals, events, performances, and public art projects. She is recognized across the globe for her successful leadership of initiatives focused on artistic experimentation, community building, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Past roles include: Programming Supervisor and Exhibition Manager for Nuit Blanche Toronto (2013-2015); Rhubarb Festival Director for Buddies in Bad Times Theatre (2010-2014); Staff Manager, Festival Venues & Operations for Toronto

International Film Festival (2010-2012); and Curator and Program Coordinator for HATCH mentorship and residency program at Harbourfront Centre (2008-2010).

*“Leading SummerWorks has been an honour. My relationships and learnings, as well as the boundless creativity I’ve been surrounded by are aspects of the role I will always treasure. In my time at SummerWorks, I have centered values in my decision making and artistic visioning—prioritizing care, collaboration, curiosity, creative risk, diversity and difference. I have aimed to make changes that contribute to a more sustainable, inclusive and equitable sector; and sought to introduce works that encourage connection, ask crucial questions, and give opportunities to experience the world around us in new and unexpected ways. I am motivated to make positive impacts, not only in the arts, but in our world as a whole. I am always asking, “What’s needed?” “How can we do better?” and “How can the arts help us reimagine what’s possible?” said Nanni*

During Laura’s tenure one of SummerWorks’ main focuses was to expand the scope of participation and access for artists and audiences. With that in mind, she evolved the organization’s business model in 2018 to waive all artist participation fees; followed by a move to a guaranteed artist fee model in 2020. Under her leadership, the Festival also broadened its accessibility resources for staff and artists to incorporate accessibility at the earliest stages of planning and performance creation; contributing to the presentation and growth of over 30 projects by disabled-identified artists and over 100 new works offering ASL, captioning, audio description, visual stories and/or relaxed performance options for audiences.

In addition, SummerWorks expanded the organization’s support of performing artists’ research and development with new technologies, leading to the creation of multiple new digital, immersive, and participatory works, and cross-disciplinary experimentation through the SummerWorks Lab. Laura also led the team to develop SummerWorks into a major contributor of free programming in the public sphere and expanded the organization’s capacity to support community engaged practice through the Public Works programming stream; leading to the presentation of multiple large-scale performances and collaborations between artists, and local residents and small businesses as part of ArtworxTO: the City of Toronto’s Year of Public Art 2021-2022.

*“The transformation over the last six years would not have been possible without the dedicated support and immense enthusiasm of the entire SummerWorks community— artists, team, partners, audiences, donors, funders, and Board. I am tremendously proud of how far we’ve come and what we have achieved together. I leave the organization in strong financial standing with endless possibilities for its future. I am thrilled for the months ahead, and to witness how SummerWorks will continue to transform with new leadership for years to come.” said Nanni*

As part of her lasting impact, the organization significantly increased its Global reputation by establishing multiple co-presentation partnerships and collaborations with organizations across

Canada, as well as in Australia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and the UK to widen the scope and long-term reach of work by SummerWorks artists. SummerWorks was able to also eliminate its inherited deficit, and transition the organization from annual to multi-year public and private funding, growing the overall revenue to \$800,000 in 2022, increasing the organization's capacity to plan long-term.

Laura will continue leadership until April 2023 to allow ample time for the national leadership search and crossover. The Board will take this opportunity to examine new leadership models with recruitment being led by LeSage Arts Management. As well, a group of guest curators, to be announced later this year, will be engaged to curate the 2023 Festival in the interim.

### **About SummerWorks**

**SummerWorks expands the possibilities of performance. We are** a leader, collaborator, and community builder at the forefront of contemporary performance – asking crucial questions; nurturing artistic innovation; and presenting new works that reflect the complexity and diversity of our society. Anchored by our annual SummerWorks Performance Festival in August, SummerWorks offers a year-round program of creation, presentation, and learning opportunities for artists and audiences.

### **OUR VALUES**

#### **Creative Risk and Curiosity**

We engage with artists, audience, partners, and staff who are inquisitive, willing to experiment and be adventurous. We encourage bold ideas, new directions, and big questions, cultivating space for exploration and innovation.

#### **Care and Collaboration**

We carefully consider all the choices we make, understanding that the works we curate, the time we give, who we work with, and spaces we use impact the experiences people have. We prioritize connection and dialogue, as well as community and relationship building. By working with artists and partners to exchange ideas and resources we're able to multiply our impact.

#### **Diversity and Difference**

We celebrate diversity in arts and people, prioritizing inclusive and accessible processes and experiences. We look to introduce professional artists and audiences from diverse communities to each other and to be inspired by our similarities and differences.

#### **Get social:**

Website: [summerworks.ca](http://summerworks.ca)

Twitter: [@SummerWorks](https://twitter.com/SummerWorks)

Facebook: [SummerWorks Performance Festival](https://www.facebook.com/SummerWorksPerformanceFestival)

Instagram: [@SummerWorks\\_festival](https://www.instagram.com/SummerWorks_festival)

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