



SUITABLE CLIMATE

by Donovan Hayden

co-presented with b current Performing Arts,
Diaspora Dialogues, and Theatre Passe Muraille

"Suitable Climate" by Donovan Hayden delves into the forgotten history of Black settlers in Western Canada. From 1905 to 1912, over a thousand Black Americans migrated and established resilient communities around Edmonton, Alberta, despite facing systemic anti-Black racism. This historical fiction follows the Cook family, who navigated these challenges to build a home. Their story is intertwined with a contemporary narrative of a father and son rediscovering this hidden past. Both families confront the struggles of claiming space, resisting racism, and finding joy in their lives. By shedding light on this neglected chapter of Canadian history, "Suitable Climate" challenges the narrative that Black people are foreign and do not belong in Canada. The play underscores the enduring impact of Black settler communities on our present-day understanding of Black Canadian identity.

b current

**Diaspora
Dialogues**

**theatre
passe
muraille**

THE TEAM



Jamar Adams-Thompson - SON & LEROY MACINTOSH (CURLY)

Jamar Adams-Thompson is a Jamaican-Canadian multi Dora Award Winning actor, writer and storyteller. He holds a BFA-in Acting honours degree from the University of Windsor. Jamar frequently works as an Arts Educator and has participated in numerous play and film development workshops across Toronto. His affinity for theatre, storytelling, the creative arts and literature keeps him motivated to tell stories across all possible mediums. For BBFA, always. @jamaremercy



Kira Allen - Producer

Introduced to the magic of theatre and the arts at a young age, Kira is an arts manager drawn to storytelling in all its myriad forms. Kira has a long-time love of learning - when not working, you can often find her researching, reading, or taking a course to explore new things. She has a degree in Drama from the University of Toronto, a diploma from the Canadian College of Performing Arts, and a certification in Finance and Accounting from Toronto Metropolitan University. Kira specializes in systems and process improvement, is on the board of [Mural Routes](#), and is a 2023-2024 [DiverseCity Fellow](#).



Maetzin Alvarado - Production Assistant

Maetzin is a Mexican business professional, performer and dancer. She recently graduated from the Arts Administration and Cultural Management program at Humber College. With over 15 years of international administration experience, specializing in human resources, she also has experience in performing arts: theatre and dance. Maetzin is currently the Membership Manager for TAPA. She is also working with Dusk Dances as the Fundraising Coordinator for the 2024 Festival. This and her dedication to the arts in the community have led her to serve as one of MabelleArts' Art Ambassadors for the 2024-25 season. Determined to bring her passion and knowledge to Toronto's performing arts sector, her social justice advocacy led her to join b current to expand Black community awareness and history.

"I believe in art not only as a way of expression but as a way of life. That's why I advocate for it at every opportunity."



Arlene Duncan - MAMA and BONNIE

ARLENE DUNCAN is a singer and actor who works in television, film, theatre. Selected film & television credits include: The Spiderwick Chronicles, Suits, Deglassi: Next Generation, Accused, Titans, A Dog's Journey, Emmy award nominated FLINT & the award-winning web series' But I'm Chris Jericho & Teenagers. Theatre credits include: Sophisticated Ladies, the Dora Award winning productions of Ain't Misbehavin' and The Who's Tommy, Dora Award nominee for Mama Euralie in Once on this Island (The Musical Stage Company), a Dora & Toronto Theatre Critics Award winning role of Caroline Thibodeaux in the Dora Award winning musical Caroline or Change & as Mercy Nyanjiru in Serving Elizabeth, in her 2021 Stratford Festival debut. Arlene does the voices of Officer Rabbit on the popular children's cartoon, Franklin the Turtle, Mama Zungu in Bobo & Kipi, & HUB in the upcoming animated series Go Togo but is best known for her 6 seasons as Fatima Dinssa in the comedy Little Mosque on the Prairie (CBC/Amazon Prime/Disney+) & 4 seasons as Velma Diggs in the ground breaking drama Diggstown (CBCGem & BET+).



Keira Marie Forde - DINAH

Keira Marie Forde (Shey /They) is a multidisciplinary performer, creator, and community arts producer who has been working in culturally relevant pedagogy and arts for over nine years. Keira's recent performance credits include The Christie Pits Riot with Hogtown Collective, What's So Funny with Carousel Players, and her original work No More News for Nancy with Major Matt Mason Collective. Keira is committed to her practice in culturally relevant arts and allows her intersectionality of being a bi-racial artist with roots from Trinidad to inspire her work. Keira is also the Community Arts Coordinator for Toes For Dance.



Donovan Hayden - Playwright

Donovan Hayden is a Black Canadian theatre creator and political organizer. He strives to tell stories that engage, challenge, and activate audiences. He values doing theatre that is communal and centers the dynamic lives of Black people. He is currently based in Toronto and an Organizer at the nonprofit Progress Toronto. Blending his politics with theatre has become a way for him to ask questions and play around with answers.

Photo by Joël Ferguson-Salamin



Brendan Howlett - Dramaturg

Brendan is a director, actor, educator, facilitator, and theatre maker, born and raised in the Dish with One Spoon Treaty territory in what is now called Toronto. He has worked with companies across the country including, Punctuate! Theatre, The Citadel, The Theatre Centre, YPT, and Red Sky. Brendan completed an internship in Artistic Direction with Jillian Keiley at the NAC, was one of the 2019 Neil Munro Directing Interns at the Shaw Festival, and was the founding Artistic Director of Shakespeare in the Ruff, a company that he led for their first five seasons. Brendan received a master's degree from York University researching community-focused approaches to governance, structure, and programming of arts organizations.



Roy Lewis - FATHER and JOSIAH

Roy Lewis was born in West Bromwich, Birmingham, U.K. He has worked from coast to coast. He is a founding member of the Obsidian Theatre, He is a published author, He has worked in television film. He has spent sixteen seasons at Stratford Festival- highlights include: The Odyssey, Trials of Ezra Pound, Oedipus Rex, A Man For All Seasons. Film and TV work includes: Tommy Boy, Murdoch Mysteries, Degraasi Next Generation, The Last Witness. He has directed Hamlet, A Christmas Carol, Tempest. Roy lives in a house the size of a postage stamp somewhere in Southern Ontario farm country.



Natalie Morgan - MISS BETH

Natalie Morgan is a Toronto based actor, writer and producer. A graduate from the University of Windsor's Acting program, Natalie was the recipient of Patron's Pick for Best Female Performance at the InspiraTO theatre festival (2018). She has written a number of short films, including Social Witches (The Boys Club), which won the Spirit Award at the Toronto 48HR Film Challenge. Last year she debuted her first play Jessie & Me at the Toronto Fringe to rave reviews. Natalie values creating her own work and having an active role in telling stories that reflect the experiences of voices like her own.



Ngabo Nabea - WILBUR

Though born in Toronto, Ngabo Nabea spent much of his childhood travelling and studying abroad, before returning to study performance at Ryerson University. Upon graduating, he has performed theatre across the country, including leads in Twisted at the Factory Theatre (2015), The Number's Game by Storefront Theatre (2016), I and You at the Globe Theatre (2018), Fences at the Grand Theatre (2019), King Lear by Shakespeare Bash'd (2023) and, most recently, Three Sisters by Obsidian Theatre in collaboration with Soulpepper (2024). Socials: @_nguapo



Emerjade Simms - MAY

Emerjade Simms is a Jamaican-Canadian actor-storyteller, and arts educator. She is a graduate of the Acting program at the University of Windsor (BFA-Acting). Emerjade is also a 2016/17 graduate of the Mechanicals program at Factory Theatre. Select theatre credits include *Come Home: The Legend of Daddy Hall* (Tarragon), *Every Day She Rose* (Black Theatre Workshop), *Sweeter* (Cahoots/Roseneath), *Redbone Coonhound* (Arts Club), *The Mountaintop* (Persephone Theatre), *21 Black Futures: Omega Child* (Obsidian/CBC), *Peter Pan* (Bad Hats/Soulpepper), *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play** (Obsidian/Nightwood). Emerjade enjoys napping in her downtime and loves her mom like cooked food.



Marcel Stewart - Director

Marcel is a father, award-winning theatre maker, director, writer, educator, and arts administrator who serves as an Associate Artist for FOLDA (Festival of Live Digital Art). Marcel's curiosity about history and lineage - beyond the context of colonialism - is at the basis of his artistic practice. He holds a degree in Dramatic Arts from Brock University, was a member of the Soulpepper Academy, and completed the Theatre Enhancement Program (as a Directing Foreman) through Factory Theatre. Marcel often returns to the questions: Who am I? How am I? How did I get here? Who have I lost? What is my purpose?

Special thanks to:

**Theatre Passe Muraille, Diaspora Dialogues,
Michael Caldwell, Summerworks, and the
Metcalf Foundation**

b«current

 Diaspora
Dialogues

theatre
passe
muraille

METCALF
FOUNDATION

TORONTO
 **ARTS**
COUNCIL

FUNDED BY
THE CITY OF
TORONTO



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Ontario 



Conseil des arts
du Canada

Canada Council
for the Arts