



SUMMERWORKS PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL 2025:
BACK TO THE FUTURE | FORWARD TO THE PAST
MARKING 35 YEARS OF RADICAL ARTISTRY, EXPERIMENTATION, AND
CREATIVE COLLABORATION

AUGUST 7–17, 2025 | ACROSS TORONTO

TORONTO (June 24, 2025) - Entering its 35th year, SummerWorks Performance Festival returns with a landmark season of bold performance, intimate creative experiences, and daring artistic interventions exploring time — personal and collective, real and imagined. From August 7–17, 2025, artists and audiences will gather across Toronto for 11 days of theatre, dance, music, and live art in theatres, in public parks, in galleries, at transit hubs, and in the spaces between.

This year's Festival theme, ***Back to the Future | Forward to the Past*** invites reflection, imagination, and disruption with bold creative expressions that dive deep into temporality, exploring and questioning the past, present, and future, with a gentle curiosity and a critical ferocity. Inspired by the words of Dr. Elder Duke Redbird, and curated by Artistic Director Michael Caldwell, the 2025 edition features works that dive into our memories, our legacies, our bodies, and our relationship to time.

"For our 35th anniversary, we're not just looking back—we're pausing in the present to listen carefully, and to imagine what's ahead," says Michael Caldwell, Artistic Director. "This milestone Festival is filled with contemporary performance works that examine memory, identity, ritual, and resistance through a temporal lens. The artists are reflecting on their histories and lived experiences while boldly pushing towards an imagined future. The result is strikingly intimate and deeply connected."

Featured works include a thoughtful reimagination of three different plays within *The Sankofa Trilogy*, by legendary theatre maker, d'bi.young anitafrika.; Wayne Burns' unflinching solo *Cake*, an embodied reckoning with male beauty standards; Vanessa Goodman's collaboration with 4-time Grammy and Pulitzer Prize-winning artist, Caroline Shaw in an immersive dance/music concert, *Graveyards and Gardens*; and Daniele Bartolini and Vincent Leblanc-Beaudoin's surreal and atmospheric *Le Concierge*, an ambulatory mystery unfolding in the quiet corners of a Toronto secondary school.

The Festival also features powerful performance interventions, including *Phalanx: Revival*, a reimaging of the groundbreaking 1998 work by DNA Theatre, set in a public park; *Within Touch*, a sonic and ecological performance by SlowPitchSound/Chel Paterson that invites audiences into sensory communion; and *Xilopango* by Irma Villafuerte, an urgent and poetic dance-theatre work responding to political and environmental unrest.

With 35+ projects and over 200 artists, SummerWorks 2025 is a space to gather in curiosity, conversation, and complexity — to mark the past, anchor in the present, and move collectively into imagined futures.

Festival Highlights

Additional performance works include:

- *Bleu Néon* by Kim-Sanh Châu – A striking, body-centered solo featuring live Vietnamese rap music, exploring Asian diasporic identity and sexual objectification.
- *Gaylord* by Johnnie McNamara Walker – a staged reading of a new play-in-development inspired by Will Munro, a key figure in Toronto's 2000s Queer nightlife and visual arts scene.
- *the body symphonic* by Charlie Khalil Prince – a solo performance-concert about resistance and liberation, with live electric guitar, loop pedals and effects processors.
- *Lucky Bastard* by Breton Lalama – a new play-in-development, directed by Daniel MacIvor.
- *Be Vardy, Be Kojų* by Brigita Gedgaudas – an integrated dance/new media solo, using motion capture to uncover non-binary existence in Lithuanian folk dance.
- *The Chains* by Evan Webber – an innovative participatory performance, using the conventions of a personality test, to inform the staging of a live dramatic performance.
- *The Red Rose Bleeds* by Gaitrie Persaud – A Deaf-led queer horror piece inflected with uncompromisingly raw emotion.
- *Public Consumption* by Lester Trips (Lauren Gillis & Alaine Hutton) – A satirical, high-concept performance work exploring AI and cancel culture.

International works feature prominently in this year's Festival, as the result of a long-term strategy for sustainable international engagement. Highlights include:

Taiwan

- *Leftover Market* by Su PinWen – an interdisciplinary solo performance inspired by the term, “剩女 Shèng Nǚ”, meaning “Leftover Women”, with Taiwanese Mandarin and English pop music.
- *FreeSteps – NiNi* by Su Wei Chia – a site-specific exploration of contours, forms, and movements in public spaces across Toronto.

South Korea

- *The Ghosts Chat: What is a Festival?* by Baram Company – a new experimental play about the ghosts in our surrounding political and natural environments.

Community-engaged programming initiatives are woven through the fabric of the Festival each year, and 2025 is no exception. Highlights include:

- *Fat Fables* by The AMY Project – a fat-positive, queer-led storytelling piece rooted in collective creation with youth in the community.
- *Celebrating the Year of Black Performance* with The Black Pledge – a community gathering exclusively for Black performance artists, to celebrate the culmination of this year-long initiative highlighting Black performance across Canada.
- *Bringing Us Together: Dance, Description and Access* with Arts Assembly – a project that pairs dancers with blind and low-vision participants to explore access through movement.

Festival Info:

When: August 7–17, 2025

Where: Venues and public spaces across Toronto

Tickets: On sale July 15, 2025 via summerworks.ca

ABOUT [SUMMERWORKS](#)

For 35 years, SummerWorks has supported and showcased innovative Canadian performance. The Festival is a nationally recognized platform for new work by local, national, and international artists, fostering risk-taking, boundary-pushing performance, and deep engagement with community. As SummerWorks celebrates its 35th anniversary, it continues to serve as a launchpad for new voices, bold ideas, and transformative experiences.

FUNDERS AND PARTNERS

SummerWorks is generously funded by the Government of Canada, through the Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada Council for the Arts, the Government of Ontario, Ontario Arts Council, Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the Toronto Arts Council, as well as TD Ready Commitment, Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation, Metcalf Foundation, Work in Culture, Taipei Cultural Center in New York (Taiwan), Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (South Korea), KOFICE (South Korea), and K-arts on the GO (South Korea).

Our presenting, programming, venue, and community partners include Citadel + Compagnie, Factory Theatre, Native Earth, The Theatre Centre, Theatre Passe Muraille, A Space Gallery, Dancemakers, DanceWorks, The Dance Centre (Vancouver), Dance Arts Institute, Evergreen, Jamii, Trinity St Paul's Centre, Union Station, Why Not Theatre, The AFC, Artists' Health Centre, The AMY Project, The Black Pledge, Cahoots Theatre, CanAsian Dance, dance: made in Canada festival, Moonhorse Dance Theatre, Ontario Presents, Parbleux (Montréal), Toronto Dance Theatre, adelheid, Chimerik, DreamWalker Dance, Mass Culture, Toronto Fringe, TO Love-In, What the Festival, along with our media and design partners B-Rebel Communications, Monnet Design, and NEXT Magazine.

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