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SUMMERWORKS PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL 2026

FIGHT | FLIGHT

**INTIMATE BY DESIGN, URGENT IN RESPONSE, AND
BOLDLY INTERNATIONAL**

AUGUST 6 TO 16, 2026 | ACROSS TORONTO

TORONTO, ON (June 23, 2026) | SummerWorks Performance Festival returns this summer with a bold and intimate season of international contemporary performance. From **August 6 to 16, 2026**, independent artists and companies from Toronto, across Canada, and around the world will take over venues and public spaces across the city for 11 days of theatre, dance, live art, music, site-engaged performance, and community-centred programming that responds to the urgency and complexity of this moment.

The 2026 edition features **35 projects with 27 live performances**, including **three world premieres, six works in development, five site-engaged performances**, and **seven workshops and panel discussions**. This year marks a significant moment in **SummerWorks'** history, as 1/3 of the overall curated programming features international artists and creative collaborators from ten (10) countries and regions (Australia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iran, Mexico, New Zealand, and Taiwan), **making this one of the Festival's most internationally diverse editions to date.**

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public spaces throughout the city, this year's Festival theme, **Fight | Flight**, brings forward urgent creative responses to this troubling moment in time. Across the 2026 Festival, artists root themselves in place, community, ancestry, and practice, while also shifting perspectives, rewriting histories, and creating new narratives through the body, exploring memory, consent, transformation, and identity, through resistance, humour, and intimacy.

*"This year's Festival feels like a powerful reflection of where **SummerWorks** is headed," says **Michael Caldwell, Artistic Director, SummerWorks**. "We are presenting one of our most international summer Festivals to date, with artists from across Canada and around the world bringing radically intimate and deeply imaginative works to Toronto. Our vision for an international hub for contemporary performance is now tangibly happening within the Festival programming, alongside our continued commitment to support the development of new work, to nurture artistic risk and experimentation, and to engage diverse audiences with local, national, and international independent artists and small-scale companies to collectively and creatively envision our future," says Caldwell.*

Featured works include **Blood Brothers** by Sheep's Clothing Theatre, an immersive, site-specific adaptation of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, uniquely set at the Delta Upsilon Fraternity on the University of Toronto campus, presented through a new programming initiative with **Outside the March** called **The Expansion Pack**; **Hello Sunshine!** by Sara Porter, a world premiere solo clown opera about living with invisible disability and a lifelong acute sun allergy; and **Rot Hat** by Montreal-based Nate Yaffe, a world premiere dance and live music performance that moves through historical fiction, speculative ceremony, humour, grief, and joy.

Narratives connected to wrongfully incarcerated artists feature prominently in **Date of Performance** by Maryam Khalili, an Iranian lecture-performance discussing censorship and collective resistance under conditions of isolation and repression, and **GPO Box No. 211** by Theatre du Poulet, an object theatre performance drawing from an exchange of letters with an imprisoned Hong Kong artist.

International programming features prominently in this year's Festival.

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and the boundaries between our bodies and our memories; ***The Butterfly Who Flew Into the Rave*** by Oli Mathiesen (New Zealand), a high-octane, hyper-physical dance performance rave from a rising Māori/Indigenous choreographer; ***Body Story*** by Xin Ji (New Zealand), a virtuosic solo work exploring complex identities; ***Collision Project*** by Unlock Dancing Plaza, showcasing the experimental performance practices of four Hong Kong artists; ***Retina Maneuver*** by Ping-Hsiang Wang (Taiwan), a lecture-performance as a fanatical search for queer understanding, through digital archives; ***Our Other Organ*** by Boaz Barkan (Denmark), a humorous and unsettling dissection of contemporary Jewish identity; and ***Working on My Night Moves*** by Julia Croft and Nisha Madhan (New Zealand/Australia), a genre-defying live work that reaches towards multiple feminist futures.

SummerWorks continues to champion new work and artist development through its **Associate Artists Program**, which supports artistic projects over two Festival cycles. This year's Associate Artist projects include ***Tandava*** by Nova Bhattacharya and Suvendrini Lena, and ***Little White Room*** by Amy Nostbakken, Norah Sadava, and Vicky Araico (Mexico).

Community-engaged programming initiatives are woven through the fabric of the Festival each year, and 2026 is no exception. **Summer Break** returns as a collection of free performances and workshops focused on rest, embodied practice, and community gathering, creating space to slow down, pause, and reflect, generously funded by the Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation. This year's Festival features a workshop and community meal with **The AMY Project**, a workshop and public space intervention with **The Switch Collective**, further collaboration with **The AFC**, curated conversations on urgent topics in Toronto's arts and culture community, as well as bespoke sectoral gatherings for local, national, and international artists, curators, and presenters.

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Blood Brothers by Audrey Persaud

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Additional performance works include:

- ***Festivals are Scary: Fish Walks by the Lake*** by Emily Jung and Theresa Cutknife, a mobile performance along the water that brings forward the urgent history and current context of Grassy Narrows First Nation.
- ***Every Day of Peace in the Last Hundred Years*** by Moez Surani and Nina Leo, a visual performance installation at A Space Gallery that invites audiences to contemplate war and peace through active participation.
- ***Historic Building in Downtown Location*** by Dawn Jani Birley and Birgit Schreyer Duarte, a housing-market drama/ghost story/gothic opera exploring urban housing crisis and communication barriers with Deaf and hearing artists.
- ***Secret Ingredients*** by Keely O'Brien, a participatory theatre project that uses cake to explore human relationships.
- ***SummerWorks at Union*** with Lemon Bucket Orchestra, a 120-minute outdoor performance by Toronto's original guerrilla folk party punks in front of the city's primary transit hub.

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- ***Provisions*** by Lester Trips, a physical theatre work as body horror, speculative fiction, and understated cringe comedy.
- ***Golden Rez Dog*** by Marcus Merasty, a somatic investigation into personal, collective, and Indigenous ancestral histories.
- ***Soft Squishy Things*** by Ghost River Theatre, an intimate object-theatre performance exploring isolation, identity, and our human need for connection in the vast emptiness of space.
- ***We Move Together or Not at All*** by Sasha Kleinplatz, a durational choreographic installation and sonified greenhouse activated by different soloists.

FESTIVAL INFO

When: August 6 to 16, 2026

Where: Venues and public spaces across Toronto

Tickets: On sale July 13, 2026, via summerworks.ca

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Golden Rez Dog by Philippe Latour

ABOUT [SUMMERWORKS](#)

For 36 years, **SummerWorks** has supported and showcased innovative Canadian performance. The Festival is an internationally-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 36th 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 Trillium Foundation, the Government of Québec, and Toronto Arts Council, as well as TD Ready Commitment, Aubrey & Marla Dan Foundation, Metcalf Foundation, Lindy Green Family Foundation, Creative New Zealand, Taipei Cultural Center in New York (Taiwan), Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, Ministry of Culture (Denmark), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Denmark).

Our presenting, programming, venue, and community partners include Citadel + Compagnie, Factory Theatre, Native Earth, The Theatre Centre, Theatre

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March, Union Station, Unlock Dancing Plaza, Volcano, The AFC, The AMY Project, Cahoots Theatre, The CanDance Network, CPH Stage, dance: made in Canada festival, Nightswimming, Ontario Presents, Phoenix the Fire, Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), Tarragon Theatre, Toronto Alliance for the Performance Arts (TAPA), Toronto Fringe, Why Not Theatre, along with our media and design partners B-Rebel PR, Monnet Design, and NEXT Magazine.



Soft Squishy Things by Matt McKinney

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