

A woman with a large afro hairstyle, wearing a long, flowing red strapless gown and large gold earrings, is captured in a dramatic pose. She is looking upwards and to the right, with her right arm raised and hand open. The background is a dark, gradient grey.

dance Immersion's



**HONOURING LEGACY
& BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE**

2023-2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: GIVING OF THANKS

dance Immersion's work is centred in Tkaronto.

We GIVE THANKS for the many blessings that have enabled us to gather here.

We GIVE THANKS to the ancestors for the path they have paved and for the protection and guidance they continue to offer as we journey forward.

We GIVE THANKS to one another knowing that we can only do what we do by working together respectfully and peacefully.

We acknowledge that the land we gather on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This includes the many peoples, named and unnamed, who have stewarded this land before our arrival.

The territory is the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably care for and share the resources around the Great Lakes. We are Treaty Peoples, including those of us who came here as settlers – either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

We are grateful to be able to share this space with so many knowledge-keepers, including the courageous artists with whom *dance* Immersion collaborates every day.

Àsẹ, Aché, Axé

DANCE INTO THE FUTURE

The 30th Anniversary of *dance* Immersion celebrates the continued journey of moving our dance expressions with heightened emotion, strength, and power. The vision, birth and continued growth of *dance* Immersion has been possible only through the many blessings connecting me to experiences and people that have informed my journey.

My journey has been one of service to my love of dance and the excellence of who we are. The creation of the organization was done at a time when it was needed, driven by an understanding that no matter who or what tried to discourage me, I would continue to serve within this vision.

I looked to see who came before me and was already doing this work, I asked many questions, I sought help, I diligently did the work, and most of all, knew that I was being guided. I stood within my power knowing that those who came before me expect me to continue the journey on the path that they have paved.

The organization has created space for dancers to work from their own experiences and environment; to be exposed to new experiences, gain development opportunities, and expand their networks and much more, all while acquiring tools that enhance and support careers in dance. *dance* Immersion has witnessed the growth, expansion and contributions of many artists who have connected with the organization over the past 30 years.

Our dances are rooted in, recorded and evolve through our innate ability to use this art form to influence and bring about change within ourselves and one another. We pass down our dances from generation to generation using information, no matter the genre, that is open to interpretation by the receiver who in turn passes it on to the next generation. Let's keep using our dances to mark our existence and make an informed statement about our social existence here and now.

Throughout the years I have gained a deeper understanding of self and community, and as I reflect on the positive experiences that have shaped my reality, I am ready to pass the torch over to the next generation in Timea Wharton-Suri. What a blessing to know that *dance* Immersion will continue to impact communities with positive activities that heighten, question, and nourish our connective love to dance.

As I pass the torch, I am filled with joy knowing that we continue to dance into the future with positive direction, resources and hope.

Here's to 30 more years!

Vivine



WELCOME TO DANCE IMMERSION'S 30th ANNIVERSARY SEASON!

For 2023-2024, we have put together a season spotlighting projects that move beautifully through deeply-researched ancestral legacies to healing to reclamation of unapologetic self-expression.

For us at *dance* Immersion, we raise a toast to legacy, transition, and a bright future! I have been connected to and benefitted from the work of Vivine Scarlett and *dance* Immersion for almost 30 years. My first paid performance was with my mentor Ronald Taylor in *dance* Immersion's second-ever Showcase Presentation. Since then, Vivine and *dance* Immersion have given me transformative opportunities to perform in further Showcases through companies I was working for; presented my work via the In-Studio Showcase; and entrusted me to help educate and mentor next generation artists as a facilitator for mentorship programming.

From an early age I was taught to give back, and I learned that we must help one another move forward with actions over words. In that spirit, I have donated to, volunteered for, invited, promoted, and collaborated with *dance* Immersion over those same years. Vivine and *dance* Immersion have witnessed and encouraged my development as a dancer, choreographer, administrator, programmer, and curator for 29 years. What an honour to be invited to continue Vivine's legacy by serving as *dance* Immersion's Executive Director beginning in 2024.

Understanding the responsibility and privilege of this position, we have been embarking on this transition since the end of 2020. We work collaboratively at *dance* Immersion, while I have transitioned into taking the lead on artistic direction, partnership development, communications direction, resource development, and production. I also continue my decades-long work as a mentor, coach, and cheerleader to Canadian dance artists. I have always taken the honour and duty of leadership seriously in the many hats I have worn. The threads weaving my work together are in harmony with those that *dance* Immersion has sewn through communities over the years: **Walk with integrity; create space for others to spread their wings; keep your eyes, ears, and spirit open; share knowledge; and never stop learning.**

Today's challenges are vast and the need for opportunities to create and develop quality dance work in nurturing environments is high. With this in mind, **I am stepping into the position with a passionate vision to develop and present the work of African and African Diasporic artists who aspire to move us forward with thoroughly-researched, rigorously-crafted art; and provide more resources for dance artists at all levels to support them in reaching this goal.**



As Newton said, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." I stand on Vivine's and many other people's shoulders through the past, present, and future. There are already people standing on mine. I welcome and am grateful for their gentle weight. Forward we dance, together.

With deep gratitude,

Timea



Staff Photo L-R: Zahra Badua, Timea Wharton-Suri, Vivine Scarlett, Jillian Greyson by Crated Dozen Photography

30th ANNIVERSARY SEASON OVERVIEW

Studio Presentation & Artist Talk

RHODNIE DÉSIR (Montréal)

BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek – Studio Version + Conference Discussion

OCTOBER 19 & 20, 2023

Venue: Winchester Street Theatre

A studio performance and an artist talk about the research and choreographic development of the work.

Our 30th Anniversary Season begins in October 2023 with the studio presentation of Rhodnie Désir's **BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek**. This is a full-circle moment for us. In 2013, *dance* Immersion presented a brief excerpt of the very beginnings of this dance piece in one of our Showcases. Rhodnie has since expanded the piece into a journey named **BOW'T TRAIL**, touring the Americas for research and development and performing the work globally. On its 10-year anniversary, and our 30th, **BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek** will return to Toronto for the first time since that 2013 debut. This studio version of the work will be accompanied by a conference discussion with Rhodnie about the development of the work. Note: This studio event is a pre-cursor to the performance of the full BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek that dance Immersion plans to present in Toronto in April 2025.

Synopsis: **BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek**, the ambassador piece of the BOW'T series, is a conversation between the present and the past, channeled through the body of Désir in which more than 130 testimonies collected on 7 lands of the Americas still reside. The choreographer, driven by a desire and a need to transcend her origins, has been carrying research in the Americas since 2015 to immerse herself with the African cultures and rhythms deployed by the peoples who were taken there.

Symposium

LEGACY SERIES: KRUMP

Artistic Director: Toronto Krump Community Trailblazer - **Marcus "O.G." Ademi Paris**

Faculty: The Prince of Krump - **Marquith "Crush" Miller** (Las Vegas); Canadian Krump Pioneer - **Vladimir "7Starr" Laureore** (Montréal); Toronto Krump Community Leader - **Jamari "Rhino" Whittaker** (Toronto); France Krump Dance & Music Pioneer (now in Toronto) - **Marion "Rulez" Arinloye**

NOVEMBER 24 – 26, 2023

Venue Partner: Hart House, University of Toronto

The Legacy Series examines the past, present and future of African Diasporic dance forms through celebratory educational events. This season, the spotlight is on Krump. The visionary international faculty members will deliver movement workshops, roundtable discussions, and a celebratory Session to provide education on the roots, present culture, and brilliant future of Krump.



Online Discussion & Exchange

ONLINE BANTABA & IG LIVE SERIES: Keeping the Flame Alive—How Can A Legacy Live, Evolve and Thrive?

DECEMBER 2023 THROUGH JANUARY 2024

Online: Zoom & Instagram

Throughout December 2023 and January 2024, Zahra Badua and Jillian Greyson will run our *Online Bantaba and Instagram Live Discussion Series* on the topic of *Keeping the flame alive - how can a legacy live, evolve and thrive?*

With this Community Corner Conversation, we aim to further our understanding of different perspectives on transition and legacy within dance companies and organizations. We will hear from a variety of artists and arts workers on the subject. The series begins with an Online Bantaba Zoom gathering that establishes key discussion points, and then leads into further conversations on Instagram Live in the weeks to follow. The national list of special guest speakers is to be confirmed.

International Presentation & Workshops

FERNANDO ANUANG'A (Nairobi, Kenya)

TRADITIONAL FUTURE

JANUARY 16 – 20, 2024

Venue: The Theatre Centre

North American Premiere – Fernando Anuang'a presents his internationally-renowned contemporary Maasai dance solo, **TRADITIONAL FUTURE**, in North America for the first time! With this work he explores: How do we evolve tradition toward modernity without obliterating its tracks, without betraying one's roots?

Fernando Anuang'a is an autodidact artist (self-taught dancer/choreographer). He is supported and inspired by Maasai songs, his ancestral memories, and his community's vocal rhythmic power for his vocabulary. He is driven by a will to take tradition into the future, and continuously researches ways for Maasai dance to live fully in this era. While tourists have exploited the image of the Maasai jump tradition, Fernando's practice instead infuses this cultural vertical energy with evolving Maasai undulation gestures. For his third solo, **TRADITIONAL FUTURE**, he stays loyal to the Moran (Maasai warrior) tradition as a symbolic root, while finding a deeper energy and more liberating form of self-expression to bring the tradition into the future.

In-Studio Presentation & Workshops

IMMERSION MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 2024

Venue Partner: Canada's National Ballet School

In March 2024 the public will be able to connect with the budding dance works of mentees who are working with mentors to guide the development of their pieces in our *Immersion Mentorship Program*. Beyond this In-Studio Showcase, we will be offering a week-long educational workshop series for all emerging dance artists covering how to research, develop, and craft a dance piece for successful presentation, as well as how to collaborate on, fund, and promote their work effectively to build communities of support around their practices.

As with our previous mentorship programs, we aim to improve the knowledge, skills, resources, and networks of emerging Black dance artists. We have seen how an improvement in knowledge and quality of work inspires other artists of all generations, and helps our evolving stories live on. Black artists have left profound imprints across this country historically; the *Immersion Mentorship Program* will extend and deepen those footprints and help leave a clear path for more Black dance artists of the future.

Mentees will be selected by an open call on the dance Immersion website: danceimmersion.ca/calls

Showcase Presentation

CINNAMOON COLLECTIVE & PULGA MUCHOCHOMA (Toronto)

MAY 2 – 4, 2024

Venue Partner: Canadian Stage - Berkeley Street Theatre

In April 2024 we have an exciting Double-Bill Showcase Presentation featuring new work by CinnaMoon Collective (Nickeshia Garrick + Irma Villafuerte) and Pulga Muchochoma under the themes of ancestry, healing, and self-reclamation.

The programme opens with CinnaMoon Collective's **SURRENDERED SPIRITS**. This is a new commissioned work (in partnership with Kaeja d'Dance) that delves into the truths and layers of fractured childhood stories that have influenced our disconnection and perception of the world and family. This work is a contemporary dance-theatre immersive experience that creates a vortex of physical and emotional energy between expressive racialized bodies, live music, and illustrative atmosphere. Surrendered Spirits rides the edge through physical and emotional virtuosity, guiding the performers and audience through collective healing from a place of breath, mutual care and reclaiming of self.

Pulga Muchochoma continues with the work *dance* Immersion commissioned for the 2023 IABD International Conference & Festival of Blacks in Dance - an extended version of which will be performed in the Fall for Dance North Festival 2023. **MÀSCARA** features choreography and movement performance by Pulga, and musical composition and performance by Kobèna Aquaa-Harrison. It delves into the subject of our true selves and the masks that we wear: We all have more than one face... From their perspective, outsiders may see one image at first glance, but there is always more to learn about the individual behind the mask.

Gala Celebration & Fundraiser

MULTIPLE LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL GUESTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2024

Venue Partner:

TO Live - Meridian Arts Centre, Lyric Theatre

June 2024 is our **GALA** celebration! For this one-night event, Vivine has curated a guest list to deliver speeches and performances, and we are screening a documentary short film about Vivine directed by Ella Cooper. Following the stage event, we are hosting a fête with refreshments, DJ, and dancing.

In advance of the big night, we begin our 30th anniversary campaign to raise funds for the **Immersion Residency Scholarship** and our **Building for the Future Fund**. The Residency will provide a Black Canadian choreographer selected by application with a creation and development residency that includes extensive mentorship from an artist leader to develop a dance work. The Future Fund supports our ongoing programming.

We thank Peggy Baker Dance Projects for their generous legacy gift of a total of \$50,000 in support of both the Residency and Future Funds!

And we look forward to connecting with you in celebration of Vivine's and *dance* Immersion's decades of contributions to the arts! Àse!

Be a part of it all!



SUPPORT DANCE IMMERSION

As we step forward continuing to honour legacy and build for the future, we invite you to share in our journey. There are three ways you can contribute to *dance* Immersion's mission and help support Canada's Black dance artists with expanded performance, development, networking, and educational opportunities:

1. Donate to our new *Immersion Residency Scholarship* that will provide a choreographer selected from an open call with a paid residency that includes direct mentorship with a dramaturg as they create or expand a dance work;
2. Donate to our *Building for the Future Fund* that supports the expansion of our ongoing presentation, mentorship, and workshop opportunities;
3. Sign up to be an *Event Volunteer* at one or more programs running each season.

Visit www.danceimmersion.ca/donate to donate, learn more about the funds, or sign up to volunteer.

We thank you for your continued support!

The Staff and Board of *dance* Immersion give thanks to our partners whose collaboration makes this exciting season possible:

Public Funders:



Legacy Series Sponsor:



Venue and Presenting Partners:



HartHouse

JÖRGENDANCE

canadianstage

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Dansons
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CANADA'S
NATIONAL
BAJLET
SCHOOL
Sharing
Dance

TOT TORONTO
DANCE
THEATRE

Our deepest gratitude to the individuals, artist collectives, foundations, and arts organizations that support our work through donations, volunteer time, and community collaboration.

Àse, Aché, Axé

DANCE IMMERSION

Vision: To bring opportunity and inspiration through dance.

Mission: *dance* Immersion advances and connects communities through producing, promoting, and supporting dancers and dances of the African Diaspora.

Board of Directors:

Kai ner Maa Pitanta – Chair; Valerie Augustine; Solange Fermin;
Junior Alexander Francis; Yvonne Francis; Ayanna Lee-Rivears.

Staff:

Curator & Executive Director: Timea Wharton-Suri
Programming & Communications Coordinator: Jillian Greyson
Administrative & Engagement Coordinator: Zahra Badua
Founder / Global Engagement Advisor: Vivine Scarlett

Collaborators:

Event Moderator: Nicole Inica Hamilton
Communications Consultant: Mercedes Findlay / Black Coffee Communications



***dance* Immersion**

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