

dance
IMMERSION
2024
2025
SEASON



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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



WELCOME TO *DANCE IMMERSION'S* 2024-2025 SEASON!

For our exciting 2024-2025 season, we are bringing you events exemplifying the diversity of interdisciplinary movement expressions from African Diasporic artists across Canada.

Dance, music, theatre, spoken word, visual and digital media: The artists presented in our new season move beyond the inessential borders drawn between art forms to tell our stories, provoke thought, and move us forward.

In addition to mainstage presentations, educational gatherings, new community co-presentations, and online connection activities, we are bringing back *dance Immersion's Showcase Presentation*, as well as more afternoon matinée performances for greater accessibility to the shows.

We also have a new partnership program with Tarragon Theatre to provide shared creation and professional development opportunities for dance and theatre artists to help invigorate and strengthen our storytelling practices and build bridges between forms.

Finally, we present *dance Immersion's THRIVE! THRIVE* is a video mentorship toolkit designed to provide dance career insights to all emerging dance artists. This essential online toolkit will be available in the fall of 2024, and provides tips, insights, and stories from Black dance artists practicing in Canada on *The Business of Dance*, *Support Systems for Dance Artists*, *Crafting & Developing a Dance Work*, *Working with Collaborators*, and *Community & Self-Care*.

Welcome to *dance Immersion's* 2024-2025 season!

As we begin our next 30 years, a reminder of our renewed mission is on the back page. We look forward to exploring, learning, and moving with you.

Timea Wharton-Suri

2024-2025 SEASON AT A GLANCE

- Events take place in Toronto and are primarily conducted in the English language.
- Venues have accessible seating, and assistive listening devices and ASL services are available in some locations.
- Many events have economically-accessible pricing options.
- Event ticket and registration links coming soon.

OCTOBER 2024

National Showcase
of Canadian
Blacks in Dance
Presentation

SHOWCASE

NOVEMBER 2024

Black & Rural Presentation

Black & Rural Community
Gathering Co-Presented
with b current

Toronto Biennial of Art/
DanceWorks
Co-Presentations

MULTIPLE

JAN-FEB 2025

Online Bantaba & Instagram
Live Discussion Series

Dance Ontario
DanceWeekend Showcase

Call to Artists open for the
DTM Creation Lab

MULTIPLE

FEBRUARY 2025

DJATA:
CONVERSATION OF
THE MANDEN
(Excerpt): Aly Keita

SHOWCASE

APRIL 2025

BOW'T TRAIL
Retrospek
Presentation

RETROSPEK

JUNE 2025

DTM Creation
Lab - Professional
Development /
Mentorship Lab with
Tarragon Theatre

CREATION

2024-2025 SEASON IN DETAIL

PRESENTATION

National Showcase of Canadian Blacks in Dance

- » Saturday, October 5, 2024 @ 8:00 PM
 - » Sunday, October 6, 2024 @ 2:00 PM
- Harbourfront Centre Theatre, Toronto

The *dance* Immersion showcase returns! For our 2024 National Showcase of Canadian Blacks in Dance, we are bringing you the works of artists of different generations from Vancouver, Calgary, Montréal, Ottawa, and Toronto. Join us for an exciting exploration of dance that spans the breadth of contemporary aerial dance, Krump, traditional and street dances from Nigeria, hip hop/contemporary fusion, tap dance, contemporary African, and Afro-fusion.

Choreography by: **Corporeal Imago, Marie-Nëika Obas, Vladimir “7Starr” Laure, Ambrose Tjark, Lisa La Touche** – with music by **Etienne Charles, BaKari Lindsay, and Esie Mensah!**

PRESENTATION & COMMUNITY STORYTELLING GATHERING

Black & Rural: Shayna Jones & Pi Theatre

- Toronto Premiere!
 Presented by *dance* Immersion
 Hosted by Tarragon Theatre, Toronto
- » November 20 – 22, 2024, 7:30 PM

Black & Rural is an artistic inquiry into the hearts and minds of Black folks tucked away on Canada’s countryside. Project lead, Shayna Jones, aims to seek out, honour, and showcase stories from rurally based Blacks (like herself) to nuance and challenge the monolith of what matters to Black Lives. Created and performed by **Shayna Jones** and produced by **Pi Theatre**, *Black & Rural* weaves spoken word, movement, music, and verbatim theatre together in a spellbinding performance that is resonating across the country.

A Black & Rural Community Workshop & Performance Retreat at Adinkra Farm

Shayna Jones, *dance Immersion* & *b current Performing Arts* are collaborating to offer Ontario-based African Diasporic artists a communal learning experience that includes embodied storytelling workshops, informal performances, collective drumming, and a home-cooked African-Caribbean meal!

» Saturday, November 23, 2024 from 10:00 AM – 10:00 PM,
including travel to [Adinkra Farm in New Lowell, Ontario](#).

PRESENTATION & EDUCATION

DJATA: CONVERSATION OF THE MANDEN (Excerpt): Aly Keita

Venue: [Meridian Arts Centre Studio Theatre & Upper Gallery, North York](#)

» Friday, February 7, 2025 @ 7:30 PM – Workshop

» Saturday, February 8, 2025 @ 8:00 PM – Excerpt Presentation & Discussion

Presentation: In this duet work-in-progress showing, Aly draws inspiration from the Manding epic, one of the most significant founding narratives of West African oral traditions, dating back to the 13th century. In this piece, he focuses on the central character, Soundjata Keita, and the segment of the legend known as the “Awakening of the Lion.” Through his dance—acrobatic and percussive—Aly embodies the messages conveyed by the griots’ sung tales, while also reflecting his personal journey in a continuous dialogue between strength and vulnerability. *dance Immersion* will present the full version of this piece with additional cast members, in the 2025-2026 season.

Discussion: In this extended post-performance discussion designed to enlighten participants on deepening musical practice through movement, Aly discusses his musical creative process is composite: he shapes the sound environment while developing his movements, creating a loop where music and dance respond to each other.

Workshop: **African rhythms and melodies in action – a bodily experience.** Aly Keita uses exercises in singing, dancing, and physical coordination to develop rhythmic awareness, encouraging participants to feel and express rhythm and melodies in their bodies.

PRESENTATION

BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek: Rhodnie Désir Créations

Harbourfront Centre Theatre, Toronto

- » Friday, April 4, 2025 @ 11:00 AM & 8:00 PM
- » Saturday, April 5, 2025 @ 8:00 PM

Following our 2023 Toronto presentation of the studio excerpt of this work, we are proud to present the stunning full-length BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek in April 2025. Since 2015, Rhodnie Désir has been exploring the Americas in search of Afro-descendant cultures, including Martinique, Haiti, Brazil, Mexico, Halifax and New Orleans. The choreographer, driven by a desire and a need to transcend her origins, has been immersing herself in the African cultures and rhythms of the peoples who were taken to these lands. The resulting performance piece, BOW'T TRAIL Retrospek, is a conversation between the present and the past, channeled through the body of Rhodnie Désir, in which more than 130 testimonies collected on lands of the Americas still reside. In this award-winning interdisciplinary work, Désir transcends polyrhythmic and majestic textures and sonorities while her body is mysteriously enveloped by video projections and plural memories connecting the audience to the universe of her travels. She is accompanied on stage by two maestros: Engone Endong and Jahsun. The matinée is presented in partnership with DanceWorks.



INCUBATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Dance/Theatre/Music!

dance Immersion will be a company in residence at Tarragon Theatre beginning in the 24-25 Season!

Tarragon Theatre is a creation and playwrights theatre. We seek to create theatre that investigates artistic form, from non-traditional practices and methods of storytelling, to movement, music or non-text-based performance - all toward creating enriching and provocative theatre experiences. Equally a hub for creation, development and education - Tarragon is Canada's Neighbourhood Theatre.

Within this interdisciplinary partnership:

- Tarragon Theatre will host presentations curated by *dance* Immersion at its wonderful Toronto venue
- *dance* Immersion and Tarragon will periodically develop and produce co-curated new works by local artists, and
- Our two organizations will collaborate on an exciting new shared professional development program for dance and theatre artists.

Our first such professional development program is **DTM Creation Lab**, a two-week paid creation residency that will provide four artists with dramaturgical, musical, and choreographic mentorship and development space. **DTM (dance/theatre/music) Creation Lab** will foster cross-disciplinary collaboration, spark inspiration, and create shared insights and experiences between dance and theatre artists that help build meaningful, career-changing connections. The two-week intensive will culminate in an In-Studio Showcase of the artists' works-in-progress.

DTM Creation Lab will run from **June 16 through June 27, 2025** with resident artists selected from an open call in early 2025.

EDUCATION

THRIVE: Video Toolkit for Emerging Dance Artists

Emerging Dance Artists: We see you!

With the THRIVE Toolkit, you will be able to dive into the THRIVE videos on our website to receive insights, tips, and advice for all emerging dance artists. The webpage will also provide further written resources to help move your careers forward!

The THRIVE Toolkit 2024 is created by *dance* Immersion, with artists based in Toronto, Canada lending their experience and voices to help dance artists flourish. THRIVE features insights from Natasha Powell, Kevin A. Ormsby, Vivine Scarlett, Jaz 'Fairy J' Simone, Ronald A. Taylor, and Timea Wharton-Suri.

This resource is funded by RBC and supported by Jorgen Dance / George Brown College Dance Department.

Coming to the web in the fall of 2024!

PLUS! EDUCATION & COMMUNITY DISCUSSION EVENTS

- Our first partnership with the Toronto Biennial of Art to co-present events featuring **Nickeshia Garrick** (co-presented by DanceWorks), and **Travis Knights**.
- Our ongoing curation of one of the choreographies presented at **Dance Ontario's DanceWeekend** showcase.
- **Online Bantaba & Instagram Live Discussion Series** following the **Community Corner Conversation Blog**.
- Our ongoing **artist profiles** in our newsletter and on our website.

JOIN OUR FAMILY OF SUPPORTERS!

Help drive opportunity and inspiration for Canada's African Diasporic dance artists with a donation to *dance* Immersion as we expand our vital, award-winning programming. Donations go directly toward artist fees for presentations, workshops, and residencies.

You can make a one-time or monthly gift to *dance* Immersion by:

- **credit card at our website:** www.danceimmersion.ca/donate/
- **credit card online at Canada Helps:**
www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/dance-immersion/
- **sending a cheque to our mailing address:**
1000 Yonge St Suite 303, Toronto, ON M4W 2K2

dance Immersion began in 1994 with a determined Vivine Scarlett working to create more opportunities for Black dance to enrich communities and be enjoyed across Canada. Today, and every day since, *dance* Immersion recommits to supporting the strength, beauty, diversity, and contributions of African Diasporic dances.

We have produced 75 stage and studio presentations, over 300 educational events, and directly served more than 2,000 Black Canadian dance artists to date. Many artists we have supported have gone on to create their own dance companies, receive international performance opportunities, and gain new skills that have propelled their careers forward. We are privileged to have collaborated with so many artists whose testimonials echo the sentiments that while each greatly appreciates opportunities to work with all presenters, it is through working with *dance* Immersion that they feel understood, respected, and championed.

We thank you in advance for your partnership in sharing the joy, wisdom, and healing of dance, especially African Diasporic dance forms that continue to influence, inspire, and push cultures forward as they are practiced and enjoyed internationally.



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

Public Funders:



Canadian Heritage Patrimoine canadien

Legacy Series Sponsor:



THRIVE Emerging Artist Toolkit Sponsor:



Venue and Presenting Partners:



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.

We provide our services via three interconnected platforms:

- Presentation of dance works to the public
- Incubation of choreography by emerging and established artists
- Education for artists and communities of all ages.

This work is all part of our expanding role as a home for the production of exceptional new Black Canadian dance works.

Artistic Vision Statement: *dance* Immersion's curatorial and programming practice is driven by the rhythm cultures that continue to be developed around the world by African and African Diasporic artists. We present performance works and educational and mentorship programs that embody the fluidity of the past, present, and future, viewing a connection to cultural traditions as a grounding base from which contemporary expression can take root to fly. Our work connecting people is founded in the intergenerational nature of learning, sharing, and community. We platform artists with a view of passing on wisdom through art, and our medium is dance. May everyone touched by our work dance to the music of these universal rhythms.

Staff:

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

Board of Directors:

Kai ner Maa Pitanta – Chair; Yanmife Fajek – Treasurer;
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Yvonne Francis; Ayanna Lee-Rivears.



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