



Pictured L to R: Canisia Lubrin, Joy Lapps & Erica Violet Lee, Beau Dixon & Aisha Sasha John

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF AUTHORS SPOTLIGHTS A NEW WAVE OF CANLIT INFLUENCERS IN THE NEW EMBASSY

The digital mini-series features programmes curated by Yousef Kadoura, Canisia Lubrin, Jen Sookfong Lee, Kai Cheng Thom and Syrus Marcus Ware

Toronto, February 2, 2022 – The **Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA)** is thrilled to announce **The New Embassy**: a new five-part digital series spotlighting artists who are shaping Canada’s literary futures. The events will stream for free between February and April, 2022 at FestivalofAuthors.ca. Events will be curated by **Yousef Kadoura, Canisia Lubrin, Jen Sookfong Lee, Kai Cheng Thom and Syrus Marcus Ware**; and feature spoken word, poetry, fiction and non-fiction, theatrical readings, music and dance performed by a roster of influential artists, including **Sze-Yang Ade-Lam, Britta B., Courage Bacchus, Aedan Corey, Rodney Diverlus, Beau Dixon, Jaz Fairy J, Aisha Sasha John, Kama La Mackerel, Joy Lapps, Janice Jo Lee, Erica Violet Lee, Kim Ninkuru, Dainty Smith, Zoey Roy** and others.

The New Embassy is a celebration of Canadian voices in the 21st century, presented in the spontaneous and innovative spirit of Toronto’s iconic **Bohemian Embassy**: the iconic 1960s coffee house that helped cultivate the careers of many storytelling legends, such as Margaret Atwood, bpNichol, Gordon Lightfoot, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Lorne Michaels, Michael Ondaatje and Al Purdy. The Bohemian Embassy is considered to be the foremother of the Harbourfront Reading Series, which has grown into the Toronto International Festival of Authors we know today. Prompted by the renowned Ai Weiwei quote “Everything is Art, Everything is Politics”,

The New Embassy will bring forward diverse perspectives and lived experiences through artistic works that explore the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and identity.

“The Toronto International Festival of Authors is excited to introduce The New Embassy, a digital platform for the next generation of storytellers who are reshaping literary and cultural experiences, redefining how we see the world,” says Roland Gulliver, Director, Toronto International Festival of Authors. “In the beloved tradition of Toronto’s historic Bohemian Embassy, we look forward to The New Embassy pushing creative boundaries to open up new forms of storytelling and new perspectives on the world we live in.”

The New Embassy events are available to watch for free by creating a complimentary website account at FestivalofAuthors.ca, with the exception of BLACK MAGIC / BLACK POWER and the presentation curated by Yousef Kadoura (title TBA), which will stream exclusively at HarbourfrontCentre.com. Events are available to watch at their designated release times and 72 hours thereafter. To learn more, visit FestivalofAuthors.ca/TheNewEmbassy. We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts.

THE NEW EMBASSY EVENT LINEUP

HOPE AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT | February 25 at 7pm ET

Curated by author **Canisia Lubrin**, The New Embassy’s opening event features a provocative programme of music, theatre and poetry. Experience the rhythms of **Joy Lapps**, leader of the Afro and Latin-Caribbean Jazz ensemble The Joy Lapps Project; a gripping monologue about the Springhill mining disaster of 1958, by **Beau Dixon**, presented as a selection from his one-man show *Beneath Springhill: The Maurice Ruddick Story*; as well as appearances from Cree poet, musician and artist **Erica Violet Lee** and Griffin Poetry Prize-shortlisted poet **Aisha Sasha John**. This event is presented as part of [Kuumba](https://Kuumba.ca), which is supported by TD Ready Commitment and the Government of Canada.

BEAUTIFUL JOURNEYS | March 18 at 7pm ET

Award-winning author, performer and queer healer Kai Cheng Thom brings ritual-performance, spoken word and movement together for a transformative mosaic of introspective art. Dancer and choreographer **Sze-Yang Ade-Lam** will join soul-folk singer-songwriter **Janice Jo Lee** for a special performance, followed by a poem reading and dance by Ade-Lam. Multimedia artist **Kim Ninkuru** presents a spoken word piece exploring rage, love, desire, beauty and pain in relation to her own body, mind and soul. Award-winning Mauritian-Canadian multi-disciplinary artist **Kama La Mackerel** shares a ritual-performance adaptation of their poem “My Body Is the Ocean”, exploring the relationship between the “island-body” and the ancestral memory of the ocean.

THE BRAVE AND THE VULNERABLE | March 25 at 7pm ET

Curated by **Jen Sookfong Lee**, author and co-host of the literary podcast *Can’t Lit*, this collection of powerful readings offers up a selection of deeply vulnerable, open stories that challenge social boundaries. Hear Toronto-based actor, burlesque performer and playwright **Dainty Smith** read her short story “Prayer and Paradise”; Two Spirit writer and artist **Aedan Corey** read from their highly anticipated upcoming collection of poetry; and Nehithaw-Dené Métis poet **Zoey Roy** presents an exciting spoken word performance.

BLACK MAGIC / BLACK POWER | April 26 at 7pm ET

Consider disabled, Deaf and Mad futures through a riveting set of performances by Black artists. Curated by artist and activist Syrus Marcus Ware, BLACK MAGIC / BLACK POWER explores the effects of the pandemic and white supremacy with performances by spoken word artist **Britta B.**, actor and Deaf Olympian **Courage Bacchus**, and dance/movement artists **Jaz Fairy J** and **Rodney Diverlus**. This event will be presented with ASL interpretation and visual captions. This event is presented as part of the [CoMotion Festival](#). Prior to the event, audiences are invited to hear more from the participants in a special re-release of **Climate for All: Disability Rights and the Environment** on April 21, which was originally broadcast as part of the 42nd Toronto International Festival of Authors in October 2021.

PRESENTATION CURATED BY YOUSEF KADOURA (TITLE TBA) | April 28 at 7pm ET

Lebanese Canadian actor, writer and producer Yousef Kadoura will curate an engaging event exploring accessibility, disability rights and shared experience. Stay tuned for a full list of participants and event details, coming soon. This event is presented as part of the [CoMotion Festival](#).

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Yousef Kadoura was born in the midwestern United States and raised in Ottawa Ontario, he is a Lebanese Canadian actor, writer, producer, as well as a right leg below knee amputee. Yousef is a graduate of the Acting (2017) program at the National Theatre School of Canada. He has worked as the Curator in residence at Tangled Art + Disability co-curating the Flourishing series in 2018. He is also a producer, creator and host of the podcast series Crip Times. Yousef is also a founding company member of Other He/Arts, a new performance collective.

Jen Sookfong Lee was born and raised in Vancouver's East Side and she now lives with her son in North Burnaby. Her books include *The Conjoined*, nominated for International Dublin Literary Award and a finalist for the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize; *The Better Mother*, a finalist for the City of Vancouver Book Award; *The End of East*; *Finding Home*; and *The Shadow List*. Jen acquires and edits for ECW Press and co-hosts the literary podcast *Can't Lit*.

Canisia Lubrin is the author of three books, including *Code Noir* (Knopf, 2023) and *The Dyzgraphxst* (M&S, 2020), winner of, among others, the Griffin Prize and OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean literature. Awarded a 2021 Windham-Campbell poetry prize, Lubrin is a Creative Writing professor at the University of Guelph.

Kai Cheng Thom is an author, performer, queer healer and mediator based in Toronto/tkaronto. She is the author of five award-winning books in multiple genres, as well as the writer of the *Ask Kai: Advice for the Apocalypse* advice column for *Xtra Magazine*. Kai Cheng has been featured in *Teen Vogue*, *The New York Times* and Emma Watson's feminist book club.

Syrus Marcus Ware is an Assistant Professor at the School of the Arts at McMaster University. A scholar, visual artist, activist, curator and educator, Syrus uses painting, installation and performance to explore social justice frameworks and Black activist culture. He is part of the Performance Disability Art Collective and is a core-team member of Black Lives Matter – Toronto. Syrus is curator of the That's So Gay show and a co-curator of Blackness Yes!/Blockorama. In addition to penning a variety of journals and articles, Syrus is the co-editor of the bestselling *Until We Are Free: Reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada*.

ABOUT THE TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF AUTHORS (TIFA)

The Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA) inspires, empowers and connects through the art of stories, offering book lovers a breadth of bold, ambitious and accessible literary experiences. As Canada's largest literary festival, the charitable organization provides engaging opportunities to meet, hear and learn from the world's best contemporary writers and thinkers. Since 1974, TIFA has presented thousands of authors, including 22 Nobel Laureates, who represent diverse perspectives and a range of literary genres for all ages. TIFA's creative programmes continue to adapt to changing times, capturing the most innovative and enlightening forms of storytelling, on stage and online. Based at Harbourfront Centre, TIFA delivers a year-round programme of events and activities that reflect Toronto to its residents, its literature to the nation and its creative ambition to the world. TIFA will hold its first crime and mystery festival June 3–5, 2022. The 43rd edition of TIFA's flagship festival will take place September 22 – October 2, 2022. Visit FestivalofAuthors.ca for more.

TIFA is grateful for the support of the Government of Canada – Department of Canadian Heritage; the Canada Council for the Arts; the Government of Ontario – Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries; the Ontario Arts Council; the Toronto Arts Council; and Ontario Creates, as well as the generosity of its donors.

ABOUT CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

The Canada Council for the Arts contributes to the vibrancy of a creative and diverse arts and literary scene and supports its presence across Canada and around the world. The Council is Canada's public arts funder, with a mandate to "foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in, the arts." The Council's grants, services, initiatives, prizes, and payments support Canadian artists, authors, and arts groups and organizations. This support allows them to pursue artistic expression, create works of art, and promote and disseminate the arts and literature. Through its arts funding, communications, research, and promotion activities, the Council fosters ever-growing engagement of Canadians and international audiences in the arts. The Council's Public Lending Right (PLR) program makes annual payments to creators whose works are held in Canadian public libraries. The Council's Art Bank operates art rental programs and helps further public engagement with contemporary arts through exhibition and outreach activities. The Council is responsible for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, which promotes the values and programs of UNESCO to contribute to a future of peace, reconciliation, equity, and sustainable development.

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