



Toronto Arts Foundation Announces 2020 Awards Finalists

TORONTO, September 10, 2020 – Seven awards celebrating Toronto’s exceptional artists, cultural leaders and arts organizations will be presented at the annual Mayor’s Arts Lunch on September 24, 2020.

As the country continues to grapple with COVID-19, Canadians are turning to the arts to find solace, inspiration, and comfort. The arts have the power to bring people together, even when gathering may not be possible. Now, more than ever, a celebration is necessary. Toronto Arts Foundation is taking the lead to honour those who enrich our city and minds, through the Toronto Arts Foundation Awards.

This year, Toronto Arts Foundation is expanding the Lunch to include two of its annual awards that are typically presented at separate ceremonies: **The Emerging Jazz Artist Award** and **The Community Arts Award**. Additionally, in lieu of its annual finalist photo shoot, the Foundation has commissioned multi-disciplinary Antiguan artist **Amber Williams-King** to reinterpret finalist headshots through their illustrative and dynamic art. The 2020 [Awards Plate](#) was designed by renowned Toronto artist **Luis Jacob**.

Finalists for this year range from established leaders to emerging artists creating vital work. From veteran choreographers to a rising spoken word performer, to community arts organizations and groups committed to inspiring and engaging the next generation, the finalists offer a snapshot of the incredible range of talent and community within Toronto’s artistic scene.

The recipients of the 2020 Toronto Arts Foundation Awards will be announced at a reimagined virtual Mayor’s Arts Lunch on Thursday, September 24, where a total of \$86,000 in prize money will be distributed.

The finalists are:

ARTS FOR YOUTH AWARD

JAYU – a charity committed to sharing human rights stories through the arts

Nia Centre for the Arts – a charitable organization that supports, showcases and promotes an appreciation of arts from across the Afro-Diaspora

The Truth & Dare Project – an organization that provides free visual art workshops, self-care retreats, pop-ups, and an annual exhibit for young Muslim women in the GTA

CELEBRATION OF CULTURAL LIFE AWARDS

Karen & Allen Kaeja – choreographers, performers, idea originators and Co-Artistic Directors of Kaeja d’Dance

Sandra Laronde – arts innovator, leader and Executive and Artistic Director of Red Sky Performance

Ryan Rice – independent curator and an Associate Dean at OCAD University

COMMUNITY ARTS AWARD

Jamii – local arts group serving the Esplanade

MUSE ARTS – community arts organization that increases support, access and visibility to immigrant, refugee and newcomer artists

Unit 2 – arts and community space run by a collective of artist-activists

EMERGING ARTIST AWARD

Britta B. – poet, spoken word performer, emcee and artist educator

Leila Fatemi – emerging artist, curator and community arts worker

jes sachse – artist, writer and choreographer

EMERGING JAZZ ARTIST AWARD

Lauren Falls – bassist and composer

Matt Lagan – saxophonist, composer and bandleader

Jesse Ryan – saxophonist and composer

ROY THOMSON HALL AWARD OF RECOGNITION

Murray Foster – Juno-nominated musician, Professor and founder of Toronto Songwriting School, The Urban Orchestra, and Choir Nation

Nagata Shachu – Japanese taiko drumming and music group

Phem Phat Entertainment Group – produces the Honey Jam programme for young female artists

TORONTO ARTS AND BUSINESS AWARD

The recipient of the **Toronto Arts and Business Award** will be announced at the Mayor’s Arts Lunch on September 24.

The Mayor's Arts Lunch @ home is being presented virtually on September 24, 2020. The event will be hosted by music journalist and CBC radio host **Errol Nazareth** and **Jesse Wentz**, broadcaster, Director of Indigenous Screen Office and recently appointed Chair of Canada Council for the Arts. Featured speakers will include **Mayor John Tory** and former award recipient **Molly Johnson** will be the featured performer.

"Although the annual awards ceremony will look different this year, what hasn't changed is the unwavering dedication of Toronto's artists, arts organizations and cultural leaders who enrich our city in a multitude of ways," said **Claire Hopkinson, Director & CEO, Toronto Arts Council and Toronto Arts Foundation**. "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many things for us, including the importance of the arts sector to our well-being. Toronto Arts Foundation is proud to recognize the contributions of these outstanding finalists, who give back in so many ways."

The 2020 finalists were selected by panels of notable local artists and cultural leaders.

The panel for the Arts For Youth Award, Celebration of Cultural Life Awards, Emerging Artist Award and Roy Thomson Hall Award of Recognition consisted of: **Aida Aydinyan, Annalie Bonda, Cyn Rozeboom, Julian Sleath, Raoul Olou, and Régine Cadet**

The panel for the Emerging Jazz Artist Award consisted of: **Elizabeth Rodriguez, Jeremy Ledbetter, Joy Lapps-Lewis, and Josh Grossman**

The panel for the Community Arts Award consisted of: **Collette Murray, Anique Jordan, Julian Carvajal, Kristina McMullin, and Mahad Shoaib aka "arXade"**

The panel for the Toronto Arts and Business Award consisted of: **Gillian Smith, Nichole Anderson Bergeron, Leen Al Zaibak, Shawn Micallef, and Rebecca Carbin**

This year marks the 15th Mayor's Arts Lunch awards ceremony, a celebration of Toronto's artistic community that brings artists, cultural, government, and business leaders together.

For more details about the finalists (including interviews and unique portrait art of each finalist) and the Toronto Arts Foundation Awards, please visit www.torontoartsfoundation.org/awards.

To access the Awards backgrounder and unique portrait art, view our [Media Kit](#).

The Toronto Arts Foundation Awards are made possible through the generous support of individuals and organizations. If you are interested in supporting our Awards portfolio, or would like to establish a new award, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

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ABOUT

Toronto Arts Foundation is a charitable organization that sparks creative connections, spotlights artistic excellence, and supports vibrant cultural growth throughout our diverse city through private-sector investment. To learn more or to make a donation, visit torontoartsfoundation.org.

CONTACT

For more information or to book an interview with the finalists or Claire Hopkinson, please contact Sarah Gladki, Communications Manager, at sarah@torontoarts.org.