



# Uplifting Canada's Groundbreaking Theatre Artists



SIMINOVITCH  
**THEATRE  
FOUNDATION**

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**2023 Annual Report**



## Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends and supporters,

I am thrilled to share the many achievements and growth of the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation over the past year, made possible by your generosity.

In a world where everyday interactions shift to virtual platforms, the live and immersive experience of theatre is crucial to our collective well-being. Theatre holds a unique power: it fosters empathy and understanding, provides a safe space for emotional and intellectual exploration, offers an escape from the mundane, and sparks thought-provoking dialogues. In these times of uncertainty and rapid change, the work of theatre is more important than ever.

**Cover image:**  
Phillipe Boutin,  
*The Rise of the  
BlingBling*

For over 20 years, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation has awarded Canada's most valuable theatre prize, comparable to the Giller and Sobey awards. Today, we offer a portfolio of seven programs to foster innovation, connection, and creativity among theatre artists and within the art form.

This growth has been accomplished as a nimble organization, strongly supported by an engaged board of directors, spanning from Salt Spring Island, BC to PEI. This leadership, made up of artists, former Siminovitch Prize Laureates, arts managers, and patrons, underpins the ongoing efforts to expand the national reach and impact of our programs.

In 2023, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation launched a bold three-year strategic plan. Our plan is anchored by four strategic pillars designed to help artists thrive creatively and economically through skill-building, mentorship, networking, and profile-building. You will notice these four pillars in the subsequent pages, underpinning the impact of our program offerings.

Your support is central to our commitment to advancing theatre in Canada. By investing in the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation, you help ensure that theatre remains a powerful force for good. Thank you for your belief and trust.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Aimée Ippersiel'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Aimée Ippersiel



# 2023–2025 Strategic Snapshot

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## Our Vision

A world with more human connection and understanding because of shared theatre experience.

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## Our Mission

Advancing the art form by investing in groundbreaking theatre artists.

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## Our Values

In the spirit of the renowned Canadian scientist and innovator Dr. Lou Siminovitch, who said, “creativity is not easily defined, understood, or even recognized, but there are those who rise above the clouds,” we lift artists who are renewing and redefining Canadian theatre.

**Inventive:** We applaud fresh thinking.

**Community Driven:** We celebrate theatre artists, and inspire, convene, and connect artists and audiences.

**Optimistic:** We see theatre artists leading us into a future where Canada is a model for how people may live well together.





## Recognizing Artistic Leadership

The recognition and financial resources awarded through the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation support artists evolving Canadian theatre in new and exciting ways by creating work that challenges, inspires, and reflects the diversity of Canadian experiences.

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**Image:** 2023  
Siminovitch Prize  
Finalists: Mishka  
Lavigne, David Yee,  
Berni Stapleton,  
d'bi.young anitafrika.



Image:  
David Yee

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## The Simovitch Prize

Since 2001, the Siminovitch Prize has stood as Canada's most valuable theatre award given to one exceptional director, playwright, or designer every year. This prestigious program is sustained by a growing community of supporters committed to nurturing and celebrating Canadian artistic excellence. By providing significant public recognition and substantial financial support to Canada's most innovative mid-career theatre artists, the Prize encourages groundbreaking and unforgettable theatre experiences.

In December, our community of artists and supporters gathered for the awarding of the Siminovitch Prize shining the spotlight on

four remarkable playwrights. **David Yee** was announced as the 2023 Siminovitch Prize Laureate, receiving \$75,000.

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*"The Siminovitch Prize has always been emblematic of a body of work that is transformative, disruptive, visionary... There is precious little in the arts world that celebrates the body of work of a mid-career artist and invests in their future... It rewards potential over product. It is the measure of an artist to be selected for this Prize."*

— **David Yee,**  
**2023 Siminovitch Prize Laureate**



David was recognized along with three exceptional finalists, each receiving \$5,000, a national profile, and a short documentary for their portfolio. Each of these artists has made exceptional contributions to the art form, pushing the boundaries of what theatre can be and achieve.

## 2023 Siminovitch Prize Finalists

- d'bi.young anitafrika
- Mishka Lavigne
- Berni Stapleton

## Nominations and the Shortlist

Distinguished members of the Canadian theatre community are chosen each year to serve as the jury for the Siminovitch Prize. Last year, we received nominations for playwrights from coast to coast, and the jury selected a shortlist of four exceptional finalists.

### 2023 Siminovitch Prize Jury

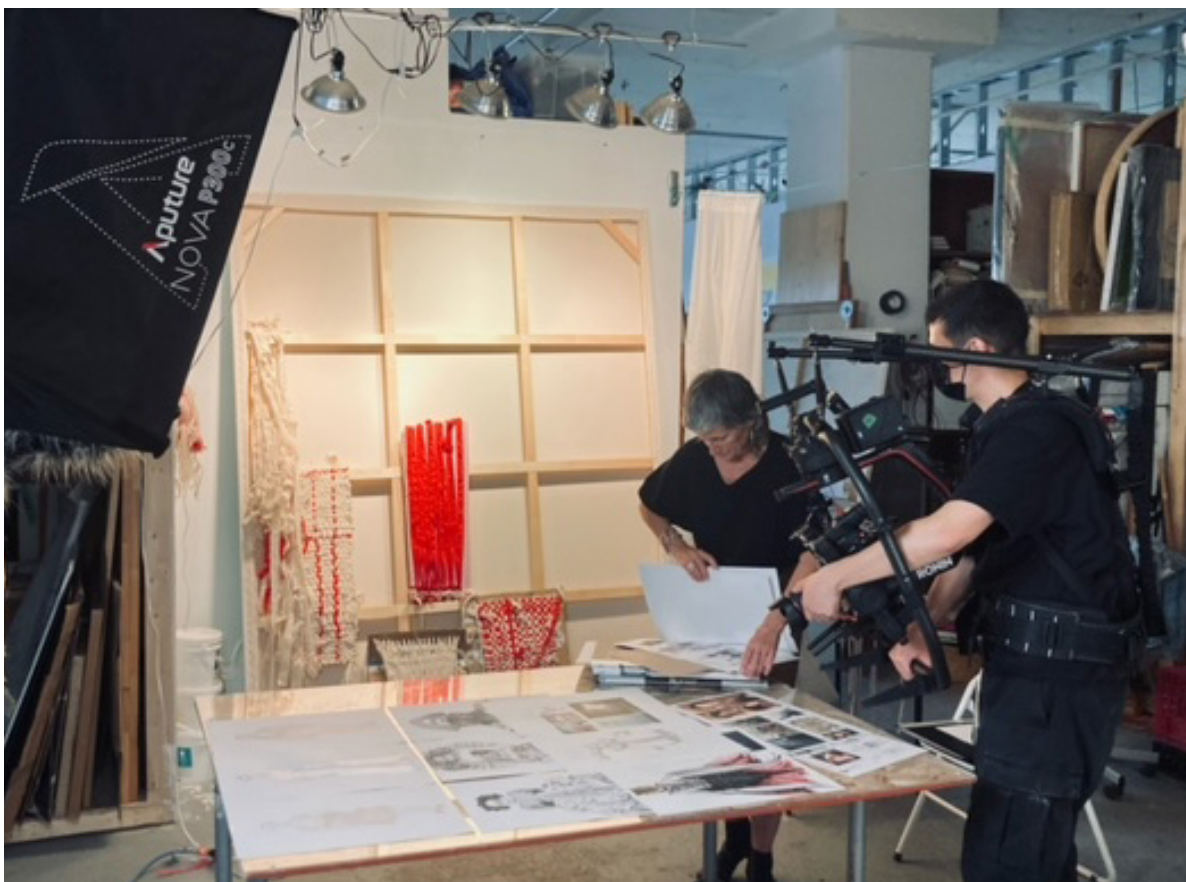
- Leanna Brodie
- Jessica B. Hill
- Rosa Laborde
- Mani Soleymanlou
- Guillermo Verdecchia,  
*Jury Chair*

*"The experience of being seen, noticed, applauded, and shortlisted has begun to open so many doors for me and has also led to a newfound recognition and respect for the type of work I do in the outer reaches away from heavily populated areas. It has definitely signaled to the country that I exist, that I'm here, that I have created, and that I will continue to create art until I can no longer function."*

**- Berni Stapleton,  
2023 Siminovitch Prize Finalist**

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Our ability to celebrate and elevate artists is made possible by the support of partners like **Power Corporation of Canada**, whose multi-year funding for the Siminovitch Prize shortlist provides the resources needed to develop new ways to raise the profile of these artists. As a result, we are seeing evidence of greater impact through new collaborations, commissions, and positive feedback from the shortlisted artists.



**Image:**  
Linda Brunelle,  
Documentary  
Filming

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## Siminovitch Showcase Documentaries

In 2023, our supporters fueled the creation of four documentaries spotlighting the finalists for the Siminovitch Prize. Originating as a pilot initiative in 2021, this project has grown into a vibrant library showcasing the innovative practices of today's leading theatre artists. These unique, revealing, intimate portraits premiere annually at the awarding of the Siminovitch Prize and are shared across our social channels, website, and newsletter. Our partnership with **Air Canada** has helped expand reach to inflight audiences, enhancing national and international visibility for these celebrated artists, and showcasing theatre practices in Canada.

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*"Watching my documentary for the first time moved me to tears, seeing the filmmakers reflect so many facets of my life and art with such compassion and poetry. The film sacredly portrays my elders, peers, mentees, and my praxis. It's an honour to share this archival representation of my journey."*

**- d'bi.young anitafrika,  
2023 Siminovitch Prize Finalist**

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## Investing in Future Talent

The Siminovitch Theatre Foundation is dedicated to nurturing the next generation, empowering their voices to shape and enrich our cultural landscape.

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**Image:** Julie  
Phan, 2023  
Siminovitch  
Prize Protégé



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## Siminovitch Protégé Prize

The Siminovitch Protégé Prize remains a cornerstone of support for emerging talent. Selected annually by the Siminovitch Prize Laureate, this \$25,000 prize recognizes outstanding early-career artists with exceptional promise and dedication to their craft. In 2023, **Julie Phan** was celebrated as the Siminovitch Protégé.

*"I haven't always believed in myself, but David Yee always has. He's stood with me up against impossible situations and continues to care for me and push for my development to this day. It means a lot that he is able to partner with the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation to provide me with further support to do this."*

**- Julie Phan,  
2023 Siminovitch Prize Protégé**

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## Emerging Artists Grants

In 2023, the Emerging Artists Grants program was launched to increase support for burgeoning new talent. Each Siminovitch Prize finalist designates an emerging artist to receive a \$5,000 grant and a national profile. Additionally, the pair receive an extra \$2,000 to support collaboration.

This program offers vital funding and mentorship, linking recipients with experienced artists to boost their networks and their professional and creative growth. The impact of **The Youssef-Warren Foundation's** contribution underscores the integrated role that our philanthropic partners play in nurturing the next generation of artistic leaders.

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## Artists In Residence

In 2023, Siminovitch Prize Laureate, David Yee, and Protégé, Julie Phan, embarked on a two-week residency at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, which offered dedicated time for reflection, research, and creative production. Delivered with the support of the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and the National Arts Centre, this residency helps to strengthen mentorship, foster collaboration, and ignite creativity in a supportive environment, free from distractions and surrounded by the beauty of Banff.

*"In a world where we are multi-hyphenates by financial necessity, compelling us to work at unsustainable paces in multiple paradigms... the freedom to focus solely on writing my play (which has evaded completion for a decade and a half) meant the absolute world to me."*

**— David Yee,  
2023 Siminovitch Prize Laureate**



## 2023 Emerging Artists Grant Recipients

- Caroline Belisle
- daniel jelani ellis
- Sashoya Simpson
- Nicole Smith

*"The honour of being chosen is a beautiful acknowledgment of the potential seen in my work, and with much gratitude, I'm thankful for this opportunity."*

**— Sashoya Simpson,  
2023 Grant Recipient**

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**Images:** (clockwise): Caroline Belisle, daniel jelani ellis, Sashoya Simpson, Nicole Smith, 2023 Grant Recipients.

## Spotlight on Collaboration

Sashoya Simpson will produce her first full-length play, *Lulu*, in collaboration with d'bi.young anitafrika as Director, as part of the 2024 Hamilton Fringe Festival.

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Berni Stapleton and Nicole Smith will partner to research and develop a new theatrical creation, *Taste*. Fascinated by the idea of community collaboration, taste as an aspect of design, and the table as an area of exchange, Berni and Nicole will explore the relationship between Newfoundland recipes and the people tied to them.



**Image:** Daniel Brooks and Marie Brassard, Backstage Conversations (April 2023). Daniel (1958–2023) was the inaugural Siminovitch Prize Laureate.

## Inspiring Community Connection

The Siminovitch Theatre Foundation occupies a unique role as the sole national platform in Canadian theatre that fosters connections among artists and audiences across disciplines, geography, career stages, and languages. Over its 23-year history, the support of our donor community has helped develop a network of 108 of the most innovative Canadian theatre artists.

But our reach doesn't end with the Siminovitch Prize honourees.

At the heart of our strategy is the commitment to breaking down barriers within the artistic community and between audiences. By introducing new artists to each other and exposing audiences to diverse works, we aim to catalyze new collaborations and presentation opportunities.



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## Groundbreaking Backstage Conversations

Each Backstage Conversation recording pairs two innovative artists for a unique and intimate exchange, offering audiences a rare glimpse into the minds of creators shaping Canadian theatre.

In 2023, Backstage Conversations proudly showcased the artistic, linguistic, and regional diversity of our network through these engaging dialogues:

- Hannah Moscovitch & Brendan Healy
- Daniel Brooks & Marie Brassard
- Michel Marc Bouchard & Yves Sioui Durand
- Weyni Mengesha & Ann-Marie Kerr

These conversations help drive theatre practice forward through the exchange of ideas, while celebrating artists' voices and impact.

## Spotlight on Connection

In 2024, Siminovitch Prize Laureate and finalists David Yee and Berni Stapleton will collaborate with composers Chris Thornborrow and Duane Andrews on *Irresistible Neighbourhoods*, a double bill of live radio dramas. This exciting project, part of the NAC SPHERE Festival, will feature stories set in Toronto and Newfoundland and Labrador, focusing on the future of Canadian communities and their evolving relationship with water.

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## Digital Resources

In 2023, we launched the new Siminovitch Theatre Foundation website to serve as a comprehensive archive of all Laureates, finalists, Protégés, emerging artist grant recipients and jurors. Our new digital home is a testament to the incredible community reach and support the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation has garnered, and the generous donors who make this work possible.

A focal point of our digital work was the "Artists' Eye" newsletter. This monthly publication features in-depth profiles of network members and a comprehensive listing of their productions across the country.

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## Looking Ahead

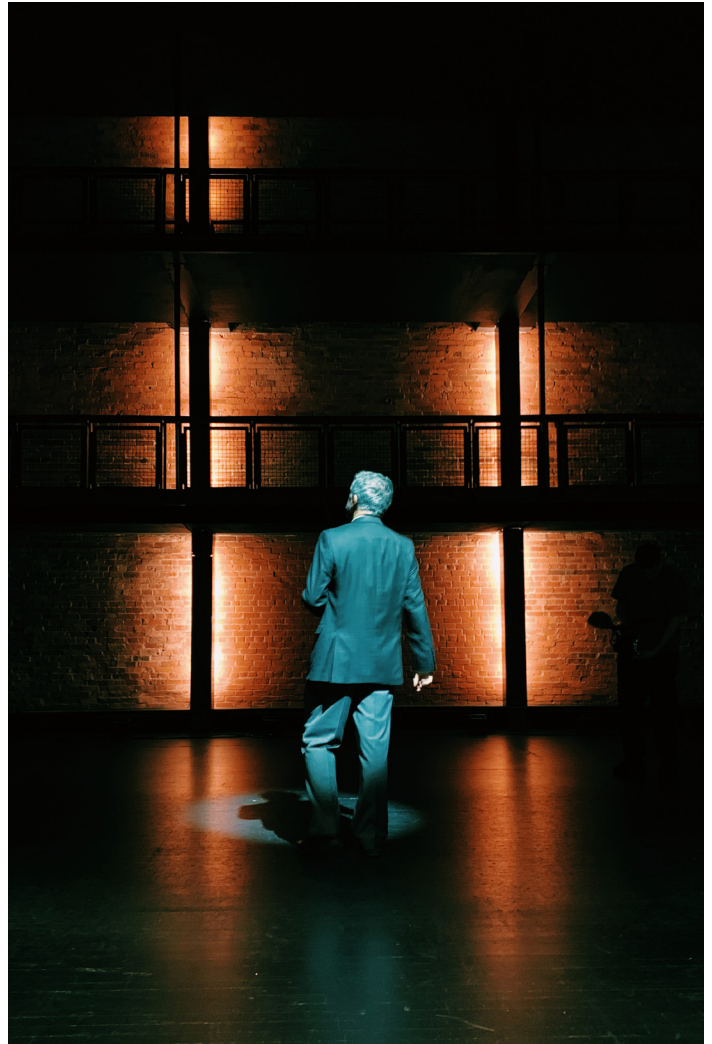
Building on the momentum of 2023, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation is excited to embark on four new endeavours in 2024.

**Expanding National Outreach:** We are committed to ensuring our programs reflect the full spectrum of regional diversity across Canada, and we are developing live in-person events in major theatre hubs across the country.

**Measuring Impact:** To better understand our influence over time in the Canadian theatre ecosystem, we are formalizing an impact measurement framework. This initiative will help guide decision-making, allowing us to focus our resources on delivering the greatest impact.

**Formalizing the network:** What could be achieved if we bring together some of Canada's most creative thinkers? In response to community requests, we are designing an ambitious gathering in 2025 to better connect the network of celebrated Siminovitch Prize recipients and support their networking and skill development.

**Engaging Educators:** Recognizing the educational and evergreen value of the Siminovitch Showcase documentaries and Backstage Conversations, we are building partnerships with educators. Our goal is to provide unique resources for theatre students and foster a deeper connection between academic learning and real-world theatre practice.



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**Image:** Guillermo Verdecchia, Jury Chair

These initiatives underscore our commitment to fostering a vibrant and interconnected theatre community in Canada. These new projects show great potential to further the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation mission – but we can't do it alone. If you have not already made a three-year Theatre Trust pledge, we hope you consider investing again in 2024 to uplift groundbreaking theatre artists.

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# Maximizing Impact Through Operational Sustainability

As the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation has expanded our program offerings to support Canadian theatre artists, we remain guided by a commitment to strategic and impactful investments. Supported by a growing community of donors, we are proud of our accomplishments in deepening our offerings and achieving longer-term sustainability. In just five years, we have moved from an annual fundraising cycle around the Siminovitch Prize to a portfolio of seven programs and a planning horizon into the next decade. This progress would be impossible without your generous support and dedication to Canadian theatre.

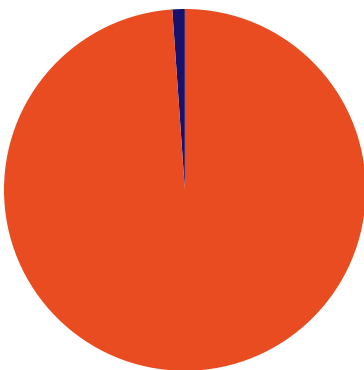




## 2023 Board of Directors

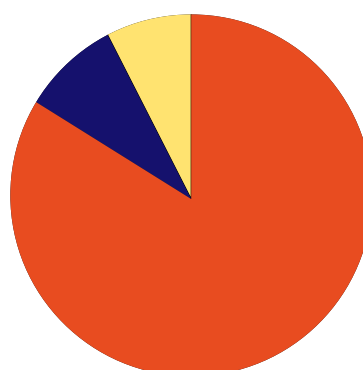
- Briony Glassco, *Chair*
- Duncan McIntosh, *Vice-Chair*
- Denise Achonu
- Bernard Amyot
- Diane Blake
- Micheline Chevrier
- Gillian Evans
- Camilla Holland
- Colin Jackson
- Susan Lightstone
- Alexandra Montgomery
- Dr. Kathy Siminovitch
- Margo Siminovitch
- George Thomson
- Marcus Youssef

## 2023 Summarized Financial Statements



### REVENUE

- Private Donations \$473,736
- Government Grants \$4,258
- Total: \$478,021**



### EXPENSES

- Program = \$431,910
- Fundraising = \$38,455
- Administration = \$42,639
- Total: \$513,004**

Full financial statements are available upon request.

The 2023 budget included a planned \$35,000 deficit as a strategic investment in initiatives to support growth and long-term impact. The organization maintains net assets of \$213,145.

# Our Supporters

The generosity and commitment of donors and partners across Canada make the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation’s work possible. Despite what the name might suggest, the organization is not endowed and relies on the generosity of individuals, corporate partners, and foundations every year. Whether you have contributed \$20 or \$20,000, your support has directly led to the launch of new programs to support artists across Canada. Without supporters like you, the impact made in 2023 and the sustainability we are developing for the future would not be possible. Thank You!

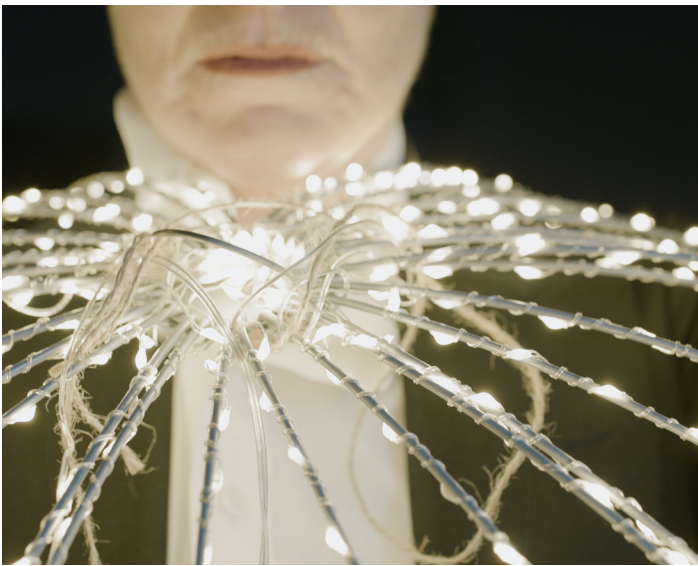


Image: Ann-Marie Kerr, *The Best Show*

## Catalysts (\$100,000+)

**Diane Blake &  
Stephen Smith**

## Visionaries (\$25,000+)

**Power Corporation of  
Canada, Siminovitch Shortlist  
Presenter**

**Royal Bank of Canada,  
Protégé Prize Presenter**

**The Youssef-Warren  
Foundation**

## Luminaries (\$10,000+)

**Astrid Lundrigan Cohen**

**Blakes, Cassels &  
Graydon LLP**

**Gillian Evans**

**Colin Jackson &  
Arlene Strom**

**Kingfisher Foundation**

**Jill & Geoff Matus**

**Mawer**

**Duncan McIntosh &  
Wade McLaughlin**

**Rotman & Rotman-Kaiser  
Family**

**Salah Bachir &  
Jacob Yerex**

**Lawrence &  
Judith Tanenbaum**

**TD Bank of Canada**

**The Birks Family  
Foundation**

**The William and  
Nona Heaslip Foundation**

**The Wuchien Michael Than  
Foundation**

**Tricon Residential**

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## Innovators (\$5,000+)

Air Canada  
Banff Centre for Arts  
and Creativity  
Burgundy Asset Management  
K.M. Hunter Charitable  
Foundation  
Dr. Kathy Siminovitch  
Lion's Mane Fund at Aqueduct  
**McLean Smits Family  
Foundation**  
National Arts Centre  
The Fred A. Litwin Family  
Foundation  
**George Thomson &  
Judith Beaman**  
Work in Culture  
Margie Zeidler

## Patrons (\$1,000+)

Anonymous  
**Bernard Amyot**  
Lisa Balfour Bowen  
Alexandra Brown  
Bruce Case  
Alan Greenberg  
Trudy Heal  
**Aimee Ippersiel**  
**Susan Lightstone**  
Alexandra Montgomery  
Robert Rubinoff  
Drs. Dorothy & Jeffrey  
Siminovitch  
Margo Siminovitch &  
Alan Peterson  
Shelley & David Peterson  
Government of Canada

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**Names that appear in  
bold are members of  
the Siminovitch Theatre  
Foundation Theatre Trust.**

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## Theatre Trust

We are deeply grateful to the members of the Theatre Trust, who have made significant three-year pledges to provide vital financial support for the Siminovitch Prize and our growing portfolio of programs. Multi-year commitments provide sustained support, helping us plan with confidence and continue our mission of uplifting groundbreaking theatre talent through a unique portfolio of profile raising, skill building, networking, and mentorship programs.

*"As the population of Canada increases and diversifies, it is important to elevate cultural engagement by encouraging and celebrating our best. Canadian theatre needs to strive for excellence, and the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation enables this. I have invested in the Foundation because it will inspire new talent, raise the quality, and connect all Canadians in the enjoyment of theatre."*

**— Diane Blake, Theatre Trust Member**





# **SIMINOVITCH THEATRE FOUNDATION**

The Siminovitch Prize was established in 2001 to celebrate creativity and discovery. Named in honour of Lou and Elinore Siminovitch, the impact of the Prize lies in the investment and recognition it offers to theatre, uplifting artists' work, and providing mentorship and encouragement to the next generation.

Canadian theatre will forever be nourished by the twelve families and organizations who founded this organization, and by Lou and Elinore Siminovitch who inspired them.

Thank you to all of our generous donors for building on this legacy with your continued belief and investment in the future of theatre in Canada.

**82231 7160 RR0001**

**PO Box 48015, RPO Davisville**

**Toronto, ON**

**M4S 3C6**

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**Aimée Ippersiel**

**Executive Director**

**[aimée@siminovitchprize.com](mailto:aimée@siminovitchprize.com)**