



Uplifting Canada's Groundbreaking Theatre Artists



SIMINOVITCH
THEATRE
FOUNDATION

2024 Annual Report



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear friends and supporters,

Theatre is a space where bold ideas take root—where stories unfold in ways that challenge, inspire, and transform us. In an era of artificial intelligence, digital fragmentation, and political polarization, theatre remains a powerful force, deepening empathy, sparking dialogue, and bringing people together through shared experiences.

The future of Canadian theatre is being built on these principles, and through our work, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation helps provide artists with the resources, networks, and opportunities they need to thrive. Over the

past two and a half decades, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation has evolved from awarding Canada’s most prestigious theatre prize.

Cover image:
Sonoyo Nishikawa (lighting design), *Le Roi Danse*


Today, our work spans seven initiatives offered throughout the year, all designed to advance Canadian theatre by championing artistic excellence and innovation.

As we reflect on 2024, I am proud to share the year’s achievements and the ways we supported theatre artists across Canada. Through profile-building, financial support, mentorship, and network development, we empower artists at pivotal moments in their careers. We also continue to think big and explore new ways to leverage our national reach and test new programs to meet the needs of Canada’s groundbreaking theatre artists.

As we look ahead to 2025 and our 25th anniversary, we do so with optimism, knowing the artists we support today will shape the theatre of tomorrow. The Siminovitch Theatre Foundation has always been about investing in artists—championing their creativity, fostering their connections, and amplifying their voices.

The future of Canadian theatre is being imagined, built, and brought to life by these artists—innovative artists shaping the next generation of the art form. Your generosity makes this possible. Thank you for believing in their vision and for being an essential part of the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation’s work.

Aimée Ippersiel



2023–2025 Strategic Snapshot

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

Advancing the art form by investing in groundbreaking theatre artists.

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

Siminovitch Prize

More than an award, the Siminovitch Prize is an investment in artists shaping the future of Canadian theatre. It is an affirmation of their vision, a catalyst for innovation, and a testament to the vital role of theatre in a thriving Canada.

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Image: Sonoyo Nishikawa (lighting design), *Désir* rehearsal



Since its inception in 2001, the Siminovitch Prize has recognized groundbreaking mid-career Canadian directors, playwrights, and designers whose work challenges conventions and reflects the richness of national experiences. One of the few awards that supports artists mid-career, it provides them with the freedom to take risks, experiment, and grow.

Each year, the Laureate receives \$75,000—the largest prize in Canadian theatre—empowering them to advance their artistic practice. In keeping with the Prize’s commitment to mentorship, the Laureate selects a Protégé, who receives \$25,000 to support their development.

Three finalists are also recognized, each receiving \$5,000, plus the opportunity to award \$5,000 to an emerging artist of their choosing.

Beyond financial support, the Siminovitch Prize offers national recognition and opportunities which encourage artistic experimentation and mentorship. Finalists and Laureates are each profiled in a dedicated short documentary and gain access to the Siminovitch network, a community of theatre artists at the top of their creative practice.

Being shortlisted or awarded the Siminovitch Prize has a transformative impact on honourees. 86% shared that it provided a sense of professional validation and boosted their confidence as theatre practitioners. Additionally, 84% reported increased visibility and recognition for their work, and 95% credited the Prize with supporting their next creative project or delivering a meaningful financial benefit.



2024 Laureate: Sonoyo Nishikawa

In 2024, the Siminovitch Prize honoured excellence in theatrical design, highlighting visionary designers redefining their fields, including sound, composition, lighting and puppetry.

In December, the theatre community came together to celebrate the four shortlisted artists with the help of gala spotlight sponsor **Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP**. As part of this celebration, the Siminovitch Prize was awarded to Sonoyo Nishikawa, an internationally acclaimed lighting designer known for her evocative and painterly use of light.

From independent theatre to large-scale opera, Sonoyo’s work transforms the theatrical space, crafting atmospheres that shape how audiences see, feel, and experience

performance. As a Siminovitch Prize Laureate, Sonoyo joins a community of artists who are transforming Canadian theatre and inspiring the next generation of theatre makers.

“The light on stage turns on and off, disappears and reappears, according to the ever-changing story, the movements of the performers, the rhythm of the music and the breath of the audience. It’s as ephemeral as fireworks. I aim to create lighting designs that give the audience hope for tomorrow, that leave them with a lifetime of inspiration, just like watching a sunrise or sunset.”

**— Sonoyo Nishikawa,
2024 Siminovitch Prize Laureate**



2024 Finalists

The 2024 Siminovitch Prize also recognized three finalists—each one an exceptional designer expanding the possibilities of storytelling and stagecraft:

- **Itai Erdal** (Vancouver, BC) – A performer, playwright, and lighting designer known for creating deeply atmospheric and personal theatrical experiences.
- **Debashis Sinha** (Toronto, ON) – A sound designer and composer who merges technology and tradition to craft immersive sonic landscapes.
- **The Old Trout Puppet Workshop** (Calgary, AB) – A puppetry company renowned for its imaginative, all-encompassing design work that transports audiences into entirely new worlds.

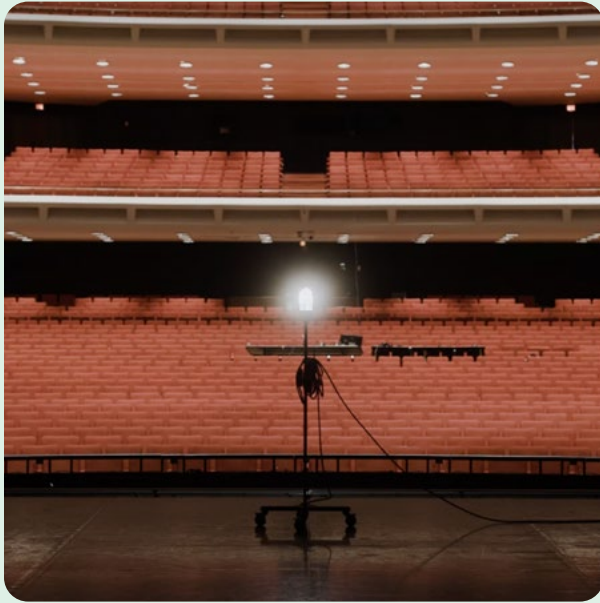
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“It’s wonderful to see how the Siminovitch Prize has expanded its scope over the past years to become much more of a process than a Prize. Being shortlisted is just the beginning – through the Backstage Conversation, the documentary, and even the writing of a speech, we’ve all been forced to think about our careers, our lives, our work on this planet in the short time we have.”

**—The Old Trout Puppet Workshop,
2024 Siminovitch Prize Finalist**

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Image: 2024 honourees, missing Hina Nishioka



The Selection Process

Mid-career artists are nominated by their peers for the Siminovitch Prize. Distinguished members of the Canadian theatre community are selected each year to serve as the jury, choosing a shortlist of four inspiring finalists.

2024 Siminovitch Prize Jury

- Renelitta Arluk
- MJ Dandeneau
- Soheil Parsa
- Jessica Poirier-Chang
- Guillermo Verdecchia,
Jury Chair

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“The shortlisted artists are outstanding designers who have challenged themselves and the boundaries of their practice for years. These are artists who listen deeply, who embrace the complexities, ambiguities and unknowns of the theatrical enterprise, and who are willing to sound the depths of the artistic process. Their work enriches all the other aspects of the theatrical undertaking, bringing out the best in their colleagues and co-creators. They have had and will continue to have a profound impact on other artists and audiences.”

– **Guillermo Verdecchia,**
2024 Siminovitch Prize Jury Chair.

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We are grateful to the **Power Corporation of Canada**, presenter of the Siminovitch Prize Shortlist, for their generous support to celebrate and raise the profile of each of these shortlisted artists.



Siminovitch Prize Documentaries

Thanks to our supporters, the Siminovitch Prize documentaries continue to shine a light on Canada’s most visionary theatre artists. In 2024, we produced four new films celebrating the Prize finalists, offering an intimate look at their creative process and artistic impact.

What began as a pilot project in 2021 has grown into a rich archive of compelling stories, premiering annually at the Siminovitch Prize ceremony and reaching audiences through our website, social media, and newsletter. Our partnership with **Air Canada** further amplifies this visibility, bringing the artists’ work to national and international audiences inflight.

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“The documentary is a lasting way to mark this wonderful moment in my life and has proved to be a valuable promotional tool even years after it was made.”

**—Gillian Gallow,
2021 Siminovitch Prize Laureate**

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Images: Documentary production

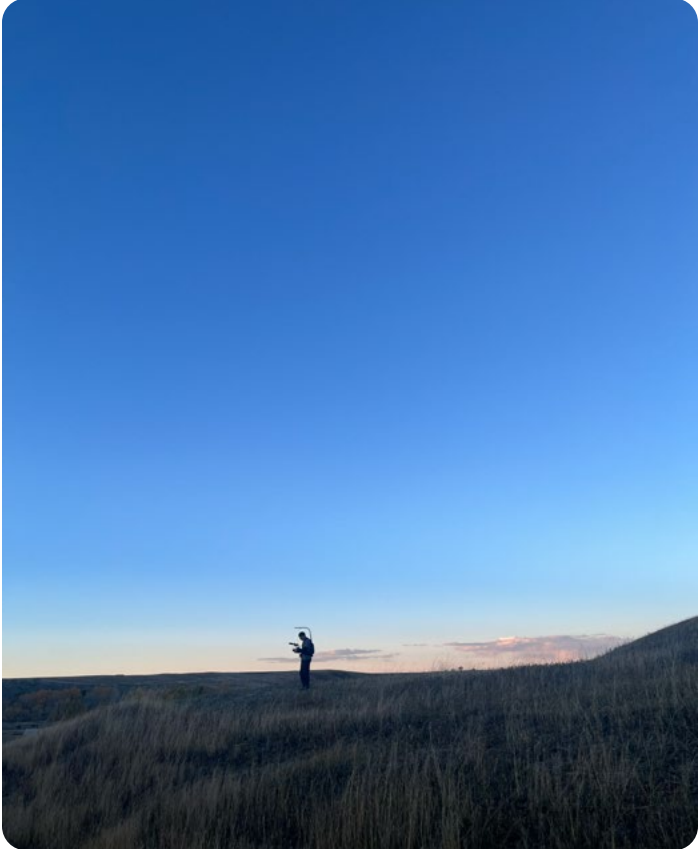




Image: Mayumi
Ide-Bergeron,
2024 Protégé

Investing in Future Talent

Siminovitch Protégé Prize

Selected by the Laureate, the Siminovitch Protégé Prize supports an emerging artist at a pivotal moment in their career. Presented by the **RBC Foundation**, the Protégé Prize provides \$25,000 and a year of mentorship and professional guidance, nurturing future theatre visionaries.

In 2024, Sonoyo Nishikawa selected **Mayumi Ide-Bergeron**, a multidisciplinary artist based in Montreal, as this year's Protégé. A graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's Set and Costume Design program, Mayumi's work bridges French and English theatre, blending poetic storytelling with an eco-conscious approach.

Thanks to a partnership between the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation, the **National Arts Centre**, and the **Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity**, the 2024 Siminovitch Prize Laureate and Protégé will have the opportunity to collaborate during an artist residency at the Banff Centre in 2025.

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"It's rare to meet someone that you feel a true artistic connection with, and even rarer to meet someone who also shares the same love of theatre and the same roots in a country... I feel deeply honoured and moved to have been chosen by Sonoyo as her Protégé as part of the Siminovitch Prize, and grateful for the funding and mentorship opportunities provided by the RBC Foundation."

**—Mayumi Ide-Bergeron,
2024 Siminovitch Prize Protégé**



Emerging Artists Grants

Launched in 2023 with generous support from **The Youssef-Warren Foundation**, the **Emerging Artists Grants** program offers a new way to nurture Canada's rising theatre talent. Each Siminovitch Prize finalist selects an emerging artist to receive national recognition, a \$5,000 grant to support their work, and an additional \$2,000 to facilitate collaboration with their mentor.

These grants provide more than funding—they create space for meaningful mentorship, enabling early-career artists to learn directly from established theatre professionals. By tapping into their mentors' knowledge and experience, recipients gain insights and skills that would take years to develop on their own.

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"This is an opportunity to uplift an emerging artist and pay forward what others did for me early in my career."

**—Itai Erdal,
2024 Siminovitch Prize Finalist**

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Image: Mayumi Ide-Bergeron (props design), *Kukum*



2024 Emerging Artists Grant Recipients

- **Dasha Plett** (Manitoba) - Selected by finalist Debashis Sinha, Dasha is a multidisciplinary artist exploring sound and performance.
- **Hina Nishioka** (British Columbia) - Chosen by finalist Itai Erdal, Hina is an emerging lighting designer dedicated to crafting immersive visual storytelling experiences.
- **Lane Shordee** (Alberta) - Selected by The Old Trout Puppet Workshop, Lane is a theatre designer and visual artist using reclaimed materials to bring environmental consciousness to theatrical storytelling.

Images (clockwise): Dasha Plett, Hina Nishikoya, Lane Shordee



Spotlight on Collaboration

One of the 2024 Emerging Artist Grants will support an immersive collaboration between **Debashis Sinha** and emerging theatre artist **Dasha Plett** to deepen Dasha's expertise in theatrical sound design.

Through this mentorship, Dasha will gain hands-on experience observing Debashis's creative process for upcoming Stratford Festival productions, receive practical training in ATMOS mixing, and take part in structured networking opportunities within Toronto's theatre community.

Mentorship initiatives like this support cross-generational knowledge exchange, expand access to cutting-edge technologies and strengthen professional networks—helping to guide the theatre innovators of tomorrow.

Artists in Residence

In 2024, Siminovitch Prize Protégé and Laureate Julie Phan and David Yee participated in a two-week residency at **Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity**. The residency, a partnership between the Siminovitch Prize and Banff Centre with support from the **National Arts Center**, provided space for reflection, research, and creative exploration in a supportive and inspiring environment.

"The opportunity to go to Banff and to have the time, capacity, community and care to devote myself to my work helped reinvigorate my practice... I revisited "CPC Barbie," a solo marionette piece that interrogates the idea of idealized womanhood in the Chinese diaspora; a piece I'd found myself blocked on due to the sensitivity of the subject matter... I cherish my experience, all of it — especially the discomfort of being an artist and the breakthroughs that come from it."

— Julie Phan,
2023 Siminovitch Prize Protégé

Inspiring Community Connection

The Siminovitch Theatre Foundation is the only national platform in Canadian theatre connecting artists and audiences across disciplines, geography, career stages, and languages. Over its 24-year history, with the support of our donors, we have built a network of 125 of Canada's most innovative theatre artists. But our impact extends far beyond our Siminovitch Prize honourees.

At the heart of our strategy is the commitment to breaking down barriers within the artistic community and between audience members. By introducing new artists to each other and exposing audiences to diverse works, we aim to open doors for new collaborations to be shared and experienced.



Image: d'bi.
young.anitafrika
and Djanet Sears

Behind the Curtain: Backstage Conversations

The **Backstage Conversations** series pairs two innovative artists in candid, unscripted discussions, offering audiences a rare glimpse into the creative processes shaping Canadian theatre. Through these recorded dialogues, artists share insights, challenges, and inspirations, sparking meaningful exchanges that drive theatre practice forward.

In 2024, Backstage Conversations continued to showcase the diversity and ingenuity of our network through these engaging dialogues:

- **Berni Stapleton & Kate Hennig**
- **Mishka Lavigne & André Gélinau**
- **d'bi.young anitafrika & Djanet Sears**
- **David Yee & Philip Akin**

Thanks to the generous support of the **Kingfisher Foundation, Mclean Smits Foundation** and **TD Ready Commitment**, these Backstage Conversations amplify the voices of those shaping the future of theatre in Canada.

Deepening the National Network

Delivering on our commitment to engaging theatre communities across Canada, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation partnered with **MobSquad** to host a play reading and artist conversation in Calgary on April 29, 2024. Featuring 2023 Siminovitch Prize Laureate David Yee, 2020 Siminovitch Prize Laureate Tara Beagan, and Lieutenant Governor of Alberta 2023 Distinguished Artist Mieko Ouchi, the evening brought artists and audiences together in a shared exploration of the power of theatre.



With 80 artists and audience members in attendance, the event sparked meaningful dialogue and connection. 81% of participants said they were introduced to a new artist at the event, and 90% said they left feeling more connected to Canadian theatre.

Looking ahead, we will continue to strengthen and engage our national network. As a peer-nominated award, the Siminovitch Prize relies on artists to uplift those in their community. By hosting events across the country, we are actively engaging with theatre communities, expanding the pipeline of future nominees, and ensuring that talent from all regions is recognized and celebrated.

Image: Michelle Thrush (host), Tara Beagan, Mieko Ouchi, David Yee

Expanding Access Through Digital Platforms

Beyond in-person gatherings, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation’s digital platforms connect artists and audiences to the conversations advancing Canadian theatre right now.

- **Our website** serves as a living showcase for the work and impact of Laureates, finalists, jurors, Protégés, and emerging artist grant recipients. It’s a space to explore their work and discover the creative voices driving theatre forward.
- **The Artist’s Eye** newsletter offers a behind-the-scenes look at theatre-making across the country, featuring artist profiles, interviews, and a national roundup of productions.

Through these digital resources, we continue to expand access, spark conversations, and celebrate the artists at the heart of our community—wherever they are. If you haven’t yet, we invite you to explore these resources and experience the creativity defining the future of the art form.

Shaping the Future

Theatre has long played a role in shaping national identity and bridging differences. In an era of artificial intelligence, digital fragmentation, and political polarization, its role as a space for inclusive and nuanced storytelling is more important than ever.

By bringing people together—physically, intellectually, and emotionally—theatre deepens our understanding of each other and encourages us to embrace complexity with empathy.

Theatre also helps us imagine the future we want to live in. Through our programs, we support artists to challenge assumptions, inspire reflection, and reimagine what is possible.



The Big Idea Experiment

As part of our commitment to investing in the future of theatre, we launched the Big Idea Experiment in 2024—an initiative exploring how groundbreaking theatre artists in the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation network might help solve multi-stakeholder problems in the world around them.

Image: Graphic representation of Big Idea conversation

On November 5, 2024, we gathered 24 leaders from theatre, science, engineering, marketing, architecture, medicine, journalism, law, and education for a full-day design thinking session. Together, participants explored how groundbreaking theatre artists' unique skills—storytelling, embodiment, disruption, and resourcefulness—could transform how experts from different fields might work better together to solve complex problems. Initial findings will shape more experimentation and evaluation in 2025 and 2026, where we will transition from exploration to action, launching pilot projects that apply our learnings to real-world challenges.

With donor support, we are creating conditions for the artists in our network to collaborate, and drive innovation in many sectors using groundbreaking theatre imagination. Theatre also helps us imagine the future we want to live in. Through our programs, we support artists to challenge assumptions, inspire reflection, and reimagine what is possible.

“In theatre, I have found a place to develop those muscles that have the potential to bring good into being, and then take those muscles out into the streets, into all the moments and rooms and spaces of my life.”

— **Debashis Sinha,**
2024 Siminovitch Prize Finalist



Looking Ahead: Celebrating 25 Years

As we step into 2025, we do so with excitement and purpose—this year marks the 25th anniversary of the Siminovitch Prize. This milestone is a moment to reflect on our legacy and, to look ahead to what’s next.

In 2024, we expanded our programs and deepened our support for theatre artists. In the coming year, we will build on this momentum with some key initiatives:

- **National Reach** – We will continue to strengthen our presence in theatre hubs across the country, ensuring artists in all regions benefit from our programs and community.
- **Measuring Impact** – In 2024, we made significant strides in understanding the influence of our work. With new insights, we can refine our programs to ensure they provide the greatest possible support to artists at every stage of their careers.

- **Big Idea Pilot** – We will build on our exploration of how theatre artists’ unique skills can transform problem-solving and collaboration across disciplines, moving into a pilot phase of research
- **Strategic Plan:** Our first strategic plan (2023–2025) guided the expansion of our programs beyond the Siminovitch Prize, creating new opportunities to support groundbreaking artists at key stages in their careers. In 2025, we will build on this progress by developing a longer-term strategic plan to further strengthen and expand our impact.

This is just the beginning! As we celebrate 25 years of championing bold and visionary theatre artists, we are preparing to unveil some significant announcements in early April 2025. Stay tuned!



Image (bottom): Sonoyo Nishikawa (lighting design), *La Vie Utile*

Maximizing Impact Through Operational Sustainability

At the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation, operational sustainability means ensuring there is a national platform to uplift groundbreaking artists and the art form when they need it most – encouraging them to continue to take risks, experiment, and push the boundaries of their craft.

In just five years, we've grown from offering the annual Siminovitch Prize to running seven dynamic programs that foster mentorship, development, and creative connection across Canada. We've done so sustainably, guided by a long-term financial and operational plan, and a growing community of donors.

2024 Financial Overview

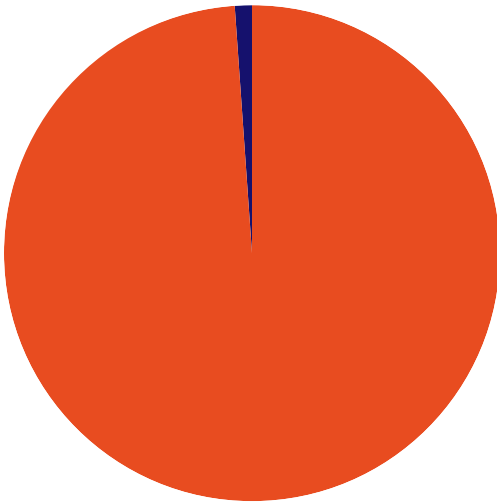
In 2024, donor contributions allowed us to invest over \$536,000 directly into artist-driven programs, including the Siminovitch Prize, mentorship initiatives, and emerging artist grants. This funding helped expand national outreach efforts, produce documentary profiles, and strengthen opportunities for Canadian theatre makers.

Leadership & Governance

Our Board of Directors ensures that Siminovitch Theatre Foundation remains mission-driven and financially sound while expanding its impact:

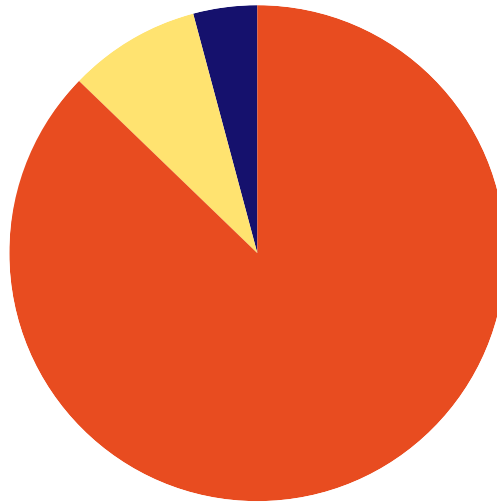
- Briony Glassco, Chair
- Duncan McIntosh, Vice-Chair
- Diane Blake
- Gillian Evans
- Camilla Holland
- Colin Jackson
- Susan Lightstone
- Alexandra Montgomery
- Lorraine Pintal
- Eric Savoie
- George Thomson
- Maiko Yamamoto

Revenue & Expenses



REVENUE

- Private Donations \$591,093
 - Government Grants \$5,000
- Total: \$596,093**



EXPENSES

- Program = \$536,302
 - Fundraising = \$52,613
 - Administration = \$24,156
- Total: \$613,071**

Audited financial statements will be available upon request in July 2025.

Donor Recognition

The generosity of our community fuels the careers of theatre artists, providing them with the critical support needed to thrive. Because of you, artists are gaining financial stability, mentorship, and access to expanded creative opportunities. Your support helps build their networks, elevate their profiles, and create the conditions for bold artistic visions to flourish.

Despite what the name might suggest, the Siminovitch Theatre Foundation is not endowed—we rely on the support of individuals, corporate partners, and foundations each year to champion Canadian theatre artists. The opportunities created in 2024—and the future these artists are building—would not be possible without you. Thank you.

Catalysts (\$100,000+)

Power Corporation
of Canada

Diane Blake &
Stephen Smith

The Youssef-
Warren Foundation

Anonymous

Visionaries (\$25,000+)

Birks Family Foundation

Gill Evans

**Colin Jackson &
Arlene Strom**

Kingfisher Foundation

**Duncan McIntosh &
Wade MacLauchlan**

**McLean Smits
Family Foundation**

Palmer Family Foundation

Royal Bank of Canada

TD Ready Commitment

**George Thomson &
Judith Beaman**

Luminaries (\$10,000+)

Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP

Astrid Lundrigan Cohen

Ira Gluskin & Maxine Granovsky
Gluskin

Mawer Investment Management

The William and Nona Heaslip
Foundation

Jay and Barbara Hennick
Family Foundation

Jill & Geoff Matus

Rotman & Rotman-Kaiser Family

The Gerald Schwartz &
Heather Reisman Foundation

Larry and Judy Tanenbaum
Family Foundation

Tricon Residential

Innovators (\$5,000+)

Air Canada

Banff Centre for Arts
and Creativity

Bernard Amyot

Calgary Arts Development

Calgary Foundation

Government of Canada

K.M. Hunter Charitable
Foundation

Susan Lightstone

Alexandra Montgomery

National Arts Center

Rozsa Foundation

Alex Sarian

Dr. Kathy Siminovitch

Margie Zeidler

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



Image: 2024
Siminovitch Prize

Theatre Trust

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Theatre Trust, whose multi-year pledges provide a strong financial foundation for the Siminovitch Prize and our expanding programs. Their generosity enables us to plan with confidence, strengthen our impact, and continue championing groundbreaking artists and the future of Canadian theatre.

“Now more than ever, Canadians need invitations to come together. Theatres around our country issue those invitations and make those opportunities every day. The Siminovitch Theatre Foundation provides financial, professional, community and artistic support to artists who will create something astonishing for us all to see when we accept the invitation to go to the theatre. That is why we support the Siminovitch Theatre Trust”

— Duncan McIntosh & Wade MacLauchlan



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.

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