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For Immediate Release

## Contra Curates Letters Home (That I Didn't Want to Send) Explores a Complicated Definition of "Home" as part of TD Amplify Cabarets

**April 12, 2022 CALGARY** – What does the word "home" mean to you? For some it may be simple: a single location, a perfectly preserved snapshot in time, but for many it's much more complex, and contradictory. *Letters Home (That I Didn't Want to Send)* is a cabaret that turns a flattened portrayal of cultural background into a full, messy picture. Featuring TD Incubator program participants and curated by the wildly talented TD Incubator Fellow Contra, one half of the Calgary hip-hop group Cartel Madras, this cabaret will dare to say quiet thoughts on home, family, and identity out loud from the stage. Join Arts Commons Presents **Saturday, April 30 at 7pm and 10pm** in the **Engineered Air Theatre** for the **TD Amplify Cabaret series** performance of *Letters Home (That I Didn't Want to Send)*.

Dance, spoken word, and music take the stage as part three in the 2021-22 season of the TD Amplify Cabaret series. In part one, *Two Doors: Dispatches from In-Between*, TD Incubator artists took the first steps into a post-pandemic performance arts world. Part two, *Now Listen: A Black Poet's Message*, spoke to life on the prairies for Black artists as part of Black History Month. Now, *Letters Home (That I Didn't Want to Send)* casts its gaze upon the artists' personal definition of home. Spoken word artist **Alisha Ebrahim**, dancers **Ariel Fuoco** and **Nicole Charlton Goodbrand**, R&B vocalist **Tomi Nu** and visual artist **Harvey Nichol** reveal brave truths around issues of country, nationhood, religion, sexuality, and more under the guidance of TD Incubator Fellow, hip-hop artist, founding member of THOTNATION/SANSFUCCS, and filmmaker **Contra**.



TD Amplify Cabarets feature participants from Arts Commons' TD Incubator program, a season-long professional development program for artists who move between performance and visual art genres. The TD Amplify Cabaret series is the perfect avenue for the Incubator cohort to find new audiences, flex their artistic practice, and explore creative

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intersections with their peers. This season, the four cabarets form an overarching narrative that speaks to the lived experiences of the TD Incubator artists involved.

*“The idea of home, which today can be conflated with the demographic or background you represent, is often flattening,” says cabaret curator Contra. “Are there conversations you have been meaning to have with your idea of home that you have not been able to? Are there letters you are hoping to send that are challenging and radical? Can you speak about ‘home’ without performing for the Western gaze?”*

*“With Letters Home (That I Didn’t Want to Send), Contra turns the gaze of our TD Incubator artists to the idea of ‘home,’ which is a critical theme for our audiences given how immediate it is in the minds and hearts of so many Calgarians,” says Josh Dalledonne, Associate Director, Social Impact at Arts Commons. “As we watch the world – and ourselves – change at breakneck speeds and with no indication that things will slow down, it’s natural and necessary that we reconnect to that space where we so often recharge and launch forward from.”*

The 2021-22 season of TD Amplify Cabarets, produced by Arts Commons Presents, is the fourth year of the innovative series elevating the voices of Calgary artists from equity-seeking communities, bringing new perspectives and different forms of live art to the Arts Commons Presents offerings. This ground-breaking season wraps up with ***Through the Fire: This Cabaret Can Save your Life*** on Saturday, June 4, 2022. For tickets, or to learn more, visit [artscommons.ca/arts-commons-presents](https://artscommons.ca/arts-commons-presents).

**What:** *Letters Home (That I Didn’t Want to Send)*  
**When:** Saturday, April 30, 2022 at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m.  
**Where:** Engineered Air Theatre, Arts Commons  
**Who:** Arts Commons Presents  
**Tickets:** 403-294-9494 or visit [artscommons.ca/lettershome](https://artscommons.ca/lettershome)

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For media inquiries, high resolution images, or more information contact:  
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**Contra** is a multidisciplinary artist who navigates the Canadian arts and culture landscape as a musician, director, producer, and creative strategist. Her most prominent project to date is through her work in Cartel Madras, an expansive and experimental music project now signed under Sub Pop Records. As a founding member of the THOTNATION/SANSFUCCS collective her artistic journey has also brought her into the world of art direction, visual production, and creative strategy. Challenging cities, industries, and narratives to allow new voices in is at the very centre of how Contra pursues all her creative endeavours; furthering culture and allowing art to thrive.

Using her eclectic professional background within the creative sector, Contra has been able to combine her artistry with business strategy and marketing acumen with initiatives through her collective. Through her work in Cartel Madras, she has developed counterculture showcases for new artists while touring extensively within Canada & The United States giving her an immediate, essential and thorough pulse of the underground across Canada. In 2021 she expanded her expertise into overseeing the creation and production of art exhibitions, digital series and documentaries.

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**Nicole Charlton Goodbrand** is a dance artist based in Moh'kinsstis (Calgary, AB). She holds a BA in Dance from the University of Calgary, a BA graduate diploma from The School of Alberta Ballet, and a Professional Dancers' Postgraduate Teaching Certificate from the RAD. She has performed with La Caravan Dance Theatre, Corps Bara Dance Theatre, mixOLOGYdanceMine, J-SIK Movements, O2 Company, Project InTandem, and with choreographers Davida Monk, Linnea Swan, Barbara England, Sylvie Moquin, Marynia Fekecz and Pamela Tzeng. Nicole's choreography has been presented in Fluid Fest, Alberta Dance Festival, Quick+Dirty Festival, To The Awe, WildDogs Screendance Festival, Dance Montage, and Skylines Dance Series. Nicole is a certified RAD instructor (RAD-RTS), teaching contemporary and ballet technique at North Calgary Dance Centre. She has taught as a sessional instructor at the SCPA- University of Calgary, and as a guest instructor for W&M 2/Surge, The School of Alberta Ballet, Ember Company, and O2 Company.

**Alisha Ebrahim** is a Health Sciences student at the University of Calgary and an undergraduate researcher at the Hotchkiss Brain Institute. In addition to her love of Science, Alisha has a strong passion for poetry. In her work, she incorporates English poetry with lines from the Qur'an and words from her Gujarati heritage to represent her Ismaili Muslim background and contribute to the establishment of a cosmopolitan ethic in the poetry community. In all of her writing, her goal is to spread love and empathy to leave the world in a better place than she found it.

**Ariel Fuoco** was born in Calgary, Alberta Canada and started dance at the age of three. Over the years she trained in Ballet, Tap, Jazz, Modern, Contemporary, Lyrical, Ballroom and Acrobatic Partnering. Ariel received all graded medals from pre-primary to advance in ballet syllabus' R.A.D./Cecchetti and tap/jazz syllabus ADAPT. Best known for her innovative and compelling choreography, Ariel has won an abundance of awards: Multiple Top Choreography Awards, Canadian Dance Choreographic Achievement, Adjudicators Choice Awards, and being invited to NYC Young Choreographers Festival. In addition to her accomplishments in dance, Ariel has worked with outside charities and public speaking events about building confidence and inspiring children to pursue the arts.

**Harvey Nichol** was born in the Tondo District— Metro Manila and is currently a Calgary based-artist. His body of work at the beginning of his art-making practice was heavily influenced by neo-expressionism, his love of mythology, pop art, cubism, and his personal life. Currently, Harvey is being influenced by various genres such as art nouveau and geometric abstraction. Harvey had his first solo show titled 11 years ago at Phil & Sebastian in Fall of 2019 in partnership with Perspective Magazine. The exhibition was dedicated as a memoir to his late mother as a celebration of her life and of her 11th death anniversary. Harvey channels all that he had gone into something positive through his creation of art on different materials and methods of expression; he creates tattoos, designs clothes, and recently moved towards woodwork cut-outs and 3D vinyl toy art.

**Tomi Nu**, (she/they) is a Filipino-Canadian queer multidisciplinary artist working out of NVRLND Arts Foundation. As a self-taught artist, they've broadened their art form over the past few years to express the realities of vulnerability through being a singer, producer, songwriter, ceramicists, videographer, editor, illustrator. Tomi has spent their last few years developing and exploring different mediums that allowed them to show the realities and feelings of being a person of colour, queer 20 something trying to cope with the uncertainty of the times. Confessional in its nature, their art is to encourage those to find strength in vulnerability all while embracing different perspectives and choice in techniques.

**Arts Commons Presents** invites you to discover the transformative power of the Arts. As the programming arm of Arts Commons, the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada, Arts Commons Presents is one manifestation of this mandate, achieved through the programming and presenting of our in-house series': BD&P World Stage, National Geographic Live, PCL Blues, TD Amplify Cabarets, and TD Jazz, as well as the work that we do in the community. Through this

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work, we are able to do our part to further enrich our city, as well as create opportunities for Calgary-based artists on a multitude of levels.

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