

# MEDIA RELEASE



For Immediate Release

## Through the Fire: This Cabaret Can Save your Life is the Climax of the 2021-22 Season of TD Amplify Cabarets from Arts Commons Presents

**May 17, 2022 CALGARY** – What better way to welcome the summer months than with a blast of red-hot passion? Kicking off International Pride Month, *Through the Fire: This Cabaret Can Save Your Life* is a fiery, passionate collection of artists that are exploring art as a method of survival with dance, music, and media art as their tools. Join **Arts Commons Presents** on **Saturday, June 4 at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m.** in the **Engineered Air Theatre** for the ***Through the Fire: This Cabaret Can Save Your Life*, a TD Amplify Cabaret.**

[Through the Fire: This Cabaret Can Save Your Life](#) is the final of four TD Amplify Cabarets in the 2021-22 season of Arts Commons Presents, all of which have been curated by Calgary underground arts icons **Contra** (of Cartel Madras) and **Jae Sterling** – the inaugural Fellows of the [TD Incubator program from Arts Commons](#) to develop local interdisciplinary artists. Each cabaret has been a thoughtful, impressive combination of the city's hottest performers - and *Through the Fire* is a fitting conclusion with five thrilling artists who put passion, expression, and pride at the forefront of their work.

Outspoken advocate for inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community, **DeVery Bess** has made their mark in Calgary's drag community. DeVery is beloved for their playful nature and passion – both onstage and off – seeing DeVery perform is always a delight. DeVery is a founding member of Bromantics based in Montreal and often performs with Fake Mustache a drag king troupe of performers who raise money for local queer charities.

Originally from Guatemala and a proud member of the 2S/LGBTQ+ community, Artistic Director of Dancers Studio West, **Rufi Oswaldo** is known for his richly eclectic dance career and a seemingly insatiable curiosity for new experiences and creative experimentation. A PhD candidate in performance studies, his work focuses on the dynamics between interpersonal touch, gender and race in dance.

Also a lover of artistic experimentation, musician **Natalie Chai** brings her mix of neo soul and R&B to the cabaret where the themes of mental health and personal well-being resonate with *Through the Fire's* core message of rebirth through struggle. She has recently expanded into music production, working on CBC's *My Lyric I Never Knew* as well as in the role of writer/producer for the short film, *Power Moves*.

Born in Mexico and educated in architecture and design, Flamenco dancer **Silvia Temis** is beloved in her hometown of Calgary as the lead singer of Notas de 4, nominees for the Global Artist of the Year in 2021 from the Western Music Awards and recipients of the 2021 award for World/Cultural Music Group from the YYC Music Awards. Expect pulse-racing Flamenco performances from this master.

And finally, providing visuals for the cabaret is artist **Bryan Faubert** whose work as founder of Studio 34 has continued to enrich and welcome new artists into the medium of sculpture. Bryan's latest project has him in residency in a decommissioned LRT car, currently set outside the beloved Downtown West café, Loophole.

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Arts Commons Presents began the 2021-22 TD Amplify Cabaret season in November 2021 with *Two Doors: Dispatches from In-Between*, which looked at our limbo space following the plunge into pandemic stasis. In parts two and three, performers shared their lived, intersectional experiences and their relationships to the prairies and the notion of “home.” Now, the Cabaret artists – all of whom have been participants in the inaugural Arts Commons TD Incubator program, have emerged into a brave new post-pandemic world. *Through the Fire: This Cabaret Can Save Your Life* is about rebirth, renewal, and survival. If it feels like there’s chaos in your brain, your legs can’t move, and your heart is frozen, it’s time to let their fire warm you!

*“At this critical juncture, we have a choice to live quietly or to move with vigour, passion, and fire,” say cabaret curators Jae Sterling and Contra. “Instead of allowing our reality to create chaos in your brain, remind yourself that you are a collector of thoughts, tools, and spirits. Have fire? Share it. Use it to create new paths and new manifestos. But remember to respect it.”*

The 2021-22 season of TD Amplify Cabarets, produced by Arts Commons Presents, is the fourth year of the innovative series which elevated the voices of Calgary artists from equity-seeking communities, bringing new perspectives and different forms of live art to the Arts Commons Presents offerings. 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. Stay tuned for the announcement of the 2022-23 TD Incubator Fellows at [artscommons.ca/incubator](https://artscommons.ca/incubator).

**What:** *Through the Fire: This Cabaret Can Save Your Life*  
**When:** Saturday, June 4, 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/fire](https://artscommons.ca/fire)

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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.

**Jae Sterling** is a multidisciplinary artist and founding member of the THOTNATION/SANSFUCCS collective. Beginning as a musician, he has extended his art form over the years to include painting (acrylic & oil), digital design & mixed media, streetwear design, and written essays.

Through his early years in Kingston, Jamaica to the landscapes of North America, Jae has spent the past few years developing his artistry by weaving his experiences growing up in Jamaica and South Florida, and coming into adulthood in Canada into all his projects. In 2019, his exploration in hip hop led him to be one of 10 artists selected for the National Music Centre's Alberta residency program. Sterling has so far released four music projects and has toured in Alberta and Ontario.

In 2020, Sterling embarked on an ambitious year-long multimedia exhibition, Riding Horses with White Men (RHWWM). This exhibition debuted in Calgary in summer 2020 and is currently touring across Canada into 2021. The success of RHWWM led to him being one of Calgary's first Black muralists, painting The Guide & Protector in Chinatown.

Jae's more recent work, falling under the self-styled title of BULLY, veers towards examining race, sexuality, violence and art's ability to retell and heal histories while simultaneously violating them. In 2021 Jae intends to release a collection of essays from the RHWWM exhibition and launch BIG BULLY apparel.

**Bryan Faubert** received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Nova Scotia University of Art and Design and his Master of Fine Arts from the University of Calgary in 2020. In 2014 he opened Studio 34, a sculpture studio, where he taught workshops and classes and conducted his own studio endeavors. This space was open to the public to experiment and learn, creating accessible, shared knowledge.

Bryan is a member of the Wolf-Sheep Arthouse Collective in Victoria and an artist at the nvrlnrd. Arts Foundation in Calgary. Faubert's exhibition history stretches from Nova Scotia to Toronto, down to Mexico and back up to Vancouver and consists of graffiti expositions, installations, pop-ups, artist run centres, public sculpture and commercial venues. Last spring Bryan travelled to New York to apprentice with internationally acclaimed sculptor Cal Lane. This endeavor has inspired his current public sculpture with a C-Train car, which may become the new home base for Studio 34 in Calgary.

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**DeVery Bess** has come a long way, having 10 years of performance experience. Born and raised in Montreal they find themselves now based in Calgary Alberta. From the beaches of Vancouver to the harbors of Halifax they have had the opportunity to wow and entertain crowds with their charisma and smooth moves topped with the cheesiest of puns. They are only known as DeVery Bess, and it's a promise.

**Natalia Chai** (she/her) is an Edmonton artist now based out of Calgary. Natalia performs regularly in both cities and notably had a once in a lifetime opportunity to represent Canada at the 2018 Chengdu International Sister Cities Youth Music Festival to, not only introduce R&B/Neosoul to China, but to also raise global awareness in building stronger cultural connections through music.

Skilled on the piano and keyboard, Natalia is featured in many artists' projects on keys and voice. Recently, she has expanded to become the operations and sound manager for a new animation series, with contributions to music production in the film industry such as CBC's *My Lyric I Never Knew* and even wrote/produced the soundtrack for an independent short film called *Power Moves* that was selected for the 35th Edmonton International Film Festival. Natalia is a proud independent community partner with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and Canadian Mental Health Association of Calgary where she connects her belief in the power of creating a community that isn't afraid to discuss tough topics.

**Rufi Oswaldo's** purpose is to inspire reflection, gratitude, and joy through his dance practice, humour, and unique perspective. He concurrently serves as the Artistic Director of Dancers' Studio West and researches as a PhD Candidate at York University. For over twenty years, his richly multi-disciplinary dance career has spanned "Latin" and standard dancesport, Cuban traditional and social dance styles, contemporary dance, and physical theatre.

**Silvia Temis** is based in Calgary Alberta and is the lead singer of the award-winning musical ensemble *Notas de 4* which fuses Latin Jazz, Cuban, and Flamenco rhythms. Currently, Silvia and the band are working on their 2nd album to be released in 2022 thanks to the support of Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

Their first recording, *Rosas and Lilies*, received the 2020 YYC Music Award for Best Global/Cultural Recording of the Year and was nominated at the Western Canadian Music Awards for as 2021 Global Artist of the year. Silvia collaborates with a variety of artists singing traditional Flamenco and is an active member of the Flamenco community as an organizer and teacher of dance and song workshops and Flamenco events.

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