

**A CELEBRATION OF THE DIVERSITY OF CANADIAN ARTISTRY
LAUNCHES WITH THE ‘YEAR OF BLACK PERFORMANCE’
Over the next 12 months, the initiative will map and celebrate Black artistry
across the country**

STRATFORD, Ont., August 17, 2024 - The Black Pledge Collective is proud to launch a venture designed to unite artists and arts workers of African descent prior to the end of the [United Nations’ Decade for People of African Descent \(2015-2024\)](#). **The Year of Black Performance** is a bold, groundbreaking initiative that showcases and celebrates the vibrant, diverse, and multidisciplinary essence of Black art performance in Canada.

The launch will take place during the Stratford Festival immediately following **Get That Hope’s** 2 p.m. performance **on Saturday, August 17, 2024** at the Studio Theatre. The play, which explores the personal and cultural experiences at the heart of a Jamaican-Canadian family’s life and identity, is Black-directed, Black-led and Black-supported. It was created by Andrea Scott, an award-winning Canadian playwright, and is directed by André Sills, a multi-award-winning performer and Stratford Festival veteran.

“The Year of Black Performance is a pivotal moment for Canada, highlighting the relevance and importance of Black artistry,” shares **Sedina Fiati, lead producer for the Black Pledge Collective**. “By recognizing and supporting the contributions of Black artists, we aim to inspire future generations and ensure that Black art in live performance continues to thrive and influence the broader cultural narrative in Canada.”

The Black Pledge Collective was formed in 2020 during the height of worldwide racial reckoning. Five theatre companies signed the pledge to affirm their commitment to address anti-Black racism within their organizations. 2b Theater Company (Halifax), Newworld Theatre (Vancouver), Nightwood Theatre (Toronto), Shakespeare in the Ruff (Toronto) and the Stratford Festival (Stratford) are founding signatories of the Black Pledge.

“We are very happy to have the launch of the Year of Black Performance here at the Stratford Festival,” says **Anita Gaffney, Executive Director for the Stratford Festival**. “Our season is filled with Black-led productions this year; shows we are immensely proud of and artists whose talents are lighting up our stages. We thank the Black Pledge for the guidance they provide Canadian theatre as we all undertake the important work of improving representation both on and off the stage, and in diversifying the stories we tell. This work is vital for the future of theatre.”

The Year of Black Performance encompasses theatre, dance, opera, comedy and hybrid art forms, fostering a sustained effort to decolonize artistic disciplines while amplifying Black performances. The initiative, which will wrap in August 2025, will include a nationwide call for

submissions for Black-led and Black-focused projects that will be made available on an interactive website designed to profile the variety of Black performance projects across Canada.

The Year of Black Performance is a multilingual project funded by the Canada Council for the Arts and Toronto Arts Council, with support from Ontario Culture Days. For more information and to submit your projects, visit the [Year of Black Performance](#).

###

About The Black Pledge Collective

Compelled to action by the 2020 uprisings following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many others (now termed “the racial reckoning”), The Black Pledge Collective (BPC) was created by a group of Black women theatre artists to hold arts organizations accountable for their commitments to combat anti-Black racism in live performance. Led by multi-award-winning artist and activist Sedina Fiati, the collective includes experienced professionals Georgia Grant, Janelle Cooper, Naomi Bain, Nikola Steer (aka Coco Framboise), Ren Niles, Tamara Jones, and Velvet Wells. The initiative calls on organizations to support Black artists by creating actionable anti-racism plans, and to build long-lasting relationships with Black communities. So far, five organizations—2b theatre, Newworld Theatre, Nightwood Theatre, Shakespeare in the Ruff and the Stratford Festival—have signed the pledge.

The Black Pledge Collective has led numerous workshops and panels across Canada, including sessions with the Stage Managing the Arts (SMArts), SPARC Rural Arts Network and the Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance. In addition to fostering relationships with pledged organizations, the collective has formed strategic partnerships with Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA), Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and Choral Canada.

About DAYO Media & Communications Inc.

DAYO Media & Communications Inc. (DM&C) is an award-winning Toronto-based team of media and communications experts. Since 1999, DM&C has steered the development of multimedia and publicity campaigns, communications strategies, television shows and media literacy workshops for organizations in Canada, the United States and the Caribbean. Creating content by connecting the intersection of journalism and communications, DM&C is committed to causes that challenge us to talk, think and act. www.dayo.ca

For media inquiries and requests, please contact:

Dayo Kefentse, Managing Director
DAYO Media & Communications
info@dayo.ca
416-573-3296

Natassia Morris, Project Manager
DAYO Media & Communications
natassia@dayo.ca
647-901-5457