



Prismatic Arts Festival returns to Halifax



By **Jordan Parker**

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The Prismatic Arts Festival was created to give a platform to Indigenous artists and musicians.

With their 2022 iteration, artistic director Raesa Lalani says they'll be continuing that important tradition.

"We are a multi-disciplinary festival, and have all types of artforms. We showcase these artists, and give the mainstage to artists of colour and Indigenous artists," he said. "We give opportunities to those who aren't typically included."

As Hurricane Fiona sets to lay down across Nova Scotia, the September 26 opening date is still set to go forward.

"Our Gathering of the Indigenous summit is that first Monday night. We also have a showcase evening we planned outdoor at the Grand Parade," she said.

"Right now, the only thing that's changed is the show has moved inside to the Neptune Theatre. We will of course be playing things by ear. But after the pandemic, we've definitely learned to adjust quickly."

The festival was started by Shahin Sayada, who founded his theatre company Onelight Theatre to give a platform in 2008.

"He recognized that as a person of colour, he wasn't being afforded important opportunities in creative spaces. He saw that there were others in the same position trying to do art for their livelihood," she said.

The festival was bi-annual until 2014, when they became the company-in-residence at Alderney Landing. Now they've found a home at the Neptune Theatre.

"We have an accessible venue, and we are so happy this huge regional theatre can help us promote diversity and equity. We have an amazing relationship," she said.

The festival has grown a huge amount since its more humble begins, and the evolution has been interesting for Lalani.

"Our first festival ever was a two-hour Neptune showcase. Now we are nationally-recognized. We expanded the International Arts Assembly and went to Ottawa," she said. "The 2019 iteration had us there and in Halifax. It was just amazing."

"Then the pandemic came the next year, and things had



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to change. But we also managed to have a festival both in 2020 and 2021 while working under regulations. We just keep continuing to grow.”

This year the festival – running September 26 through October 9 – features Aysanabee, Ceileigh Cardinal, Djely Tapa, Emmanuel Nwogbo, Samqwan, and so many more artists.

“It’s such a good line-up. We noticed music as an art-form translated pretty well online during the pandemic. I got to book musicians I was made aware of during the pandemic,” she said.

“We have local Deedee Austin working with Juno winner Ceileigh Cardinal. Ebnf10h will be here doing life dance. There’s truly something for everyone. We use accessible venues and a pay-what-you-can structure for shows.”

A number of industry events will also mark the fun-filled event. There will be The TALK Conference, the Open Spaces Program, and so much more. Lalani can’t wait to expose people to them.

“There’s going to be so much for people to get involved with this week. There’s a dance workshop that just sold out so fast because the community here was so excited,” she said.

“There’s also a dance battle in partnership with Live Art Dance. It’s open to all ages and levels of dance, and the breakdancing community is excited. We’d love kids to come out and see this talent too.

Meanwhile, the Monday International Indigenous Music Summit opening day will be a sight to behold. Titled “Bimiwizh (To Take Along)”, it offers a lot for eventgoers.

“There’s going to be a lot of discussion about being an Indigenous musician in the community. There will also be a showcase of local musicians to show them to new audiences.”

But further to that, things like the Masterclasses and Workshops will help the festival connect with people.

“We want to inspire people who either may want to get involved in the arts, or also cater to those who decided to dedicate their life to it. We put artists on mainstages, but we take them into the community too.”

For more information on the Prismatic Arts Festival, visit prismaticfestival.com/.

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