



**GOVERNOR GENERAL'S
PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS FOUNDATION
FONDATION DES PRIX DU GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL
POUR LES ARTS DU SPECTACLE**

NEWS RELEASE

CELEBRATING CANADIAN TALENT:

2024 GOVERNOR GENERAL'S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS LAUREATES ANNOUNCED

OTTAWA, February 22, 2024 – The Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Foundation is pleased to announce this year's recipients of Canada's highest honour in the performing arts.

The laureates of the **2024 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards (GGPAA) for Lifetime Artistic Achievement**, which recognize artists who have made an indelible contribution to cultural life in Canada and around the world, are:



Photo: Mathieu Savidant

Measha Brueggergosman-Lee – Soprano and faith advocate

Soprano Measha Brueggergosman-Lee's engaging personality, exceptional musicianship and powerful voice have taken her to the major orchestras and concert halls of every continent, as well as the opening ceremonies of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill, and a Royal Command Performance for Queen Elizabeth II.

Watch Measha Brueggergosman-Lee's [announcement video](#).



Photo: Alejandro Santiago

Ronnie Burkett, O.C. – Puppeteer, playwright, designer and performer

Recognized as one of Canada's foremost theatre artists, Ronnie Burkett has been credited with reinventing the art of puppetry. Provocative, topical, compassionate and entertaining, his work has revitalized puppet theatre, consistently attracting adult audiences who are enthralled by the colourful characters populating his miniature world

of big ideas. His productions have been commissioned and presented by major theatres and festivals, and have earned critical and public acclaim across Canada and around the world. He has also shared his knowledge and experience with hundreds of aspiring artists through masterclasses, workshops and lectures.

Watch Ronnie Burkett's [announcement video](#).



Photo: Eric Carrière / TVA Publications

Diane Juster, C.M. – Songwriter, composer, performer, pianist and arts advocate

One of Canada's most successful music artists, Diane Juster has been captivating audiences with her talent as a singer and pianist for nearly 50 years. She has written hit songs for such leading Canadian and international performers as Céline Dion, Ginette Reno (GGPAA 1999) and Dalida, and has a rich discography of her own. A tireless advocate for the promotion and protection of the work of Canadian artists, she is the co-founder of the Société professionnelle des auteurs et des compositeurs du Québec (SPACQ).

Watch Diane Juster's [announcement video](#).



Photo: Jeff Vespa

Andrea Martin – Actor

Andrea Martin's hilarious characterizations and heart-warming performances have been delighting audiences for over 40 years. A beloved icon of stage and screen, she gained prominence in the 1980s as a regular on the award-winning sketch comedy series *SCTV (Second City Television)*. Her Broadway career has earned her Tony Awards for featured actor in the musicals *My Favorite Year* (1993) and *Pippin* (2013), and she has an equally impressive list of film and television appearances.

Watch Andrea Martin's [announcement video](#).



Photo: Andrew Craft

Wes “Maestro” Williams – Recording artist, actor, author and motivational speaker

Often regarded as the “godfather of Canadian hip hop,” Wesley (Wes) “Maestro” Williams is the first Canadian rapper to achieve mainstream success. His debut album, *Symphony in Effect*, was the first album by a Canadian hip hop artist to reach platinum status, and his landmark single “Let Your Backbone Slide” was the first rap recording to go gold and the first rap song inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame. Alongside his musical career, Mr. Williams is also a successful film and television actor, author, and motivational speaker.

Watch Wes “Maestro” Williams’ [announcement video](#).

The **Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts**, which recognizes outstanding contribution by an individual or group in voluntary service to the performing arts in Canada:



Photo: Monique de St. Croix

Jenny Belzberg, C.M.

Jenny Belzberg is known across Canada as a passionate community activist and philanthropist. An enthusiastic advocate for the arts and education, and an outstanding volunteer, she has shown exemplary leadership in her involvement in a range of cultural and social action organizations, particularly Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. With her late husband, Hyman (Hy) Belzberg, she helped promote and develop the arts in her home town of Calgary, and has been a prominent force in her community for over 50 years.

Watch Jenny Belzberg’s [announcement video](#).

The **National Arts Centre Award**, which recognizes work of an extraordinary nature by an individual artist or company in the past performance year:



Photo: Julie Artacho

Mélanie Demers – Multidisciplinary artist, choreographer, stage director and performer

Mélanie Demers is the founding artistic director of Montréal-based contemporary dance company MAYDAY. She is known for complex, highly imaginative works that reflect her fascination with the human condition, the role of the artist in society, the interplay between language and movement, and the powerful link between the poetical and the political. In a prolific career spanning nearly three decades, she has created over 30 works that have toured internationally and captivated audiences and critics alike.

Watch Mélanie Demers’ [announcement video](#).

The unique **Mentorship Program**, generously supported by The Keg Spirit Foundation, provides a way for past GGPAA recipients to inspire the next generation by offering guidance to talented Canadian artists in mid-career. “Through The Keg Spirit Foundation, we are proud to support mentorship programs that enhance personal and professional growth, and enhance the broader community,” said David Aisenstat, Chairman and Founder of The Keg Spirit Foundation. “We are thrilled that widely acclaimed singer–songwriter Susan Aglukark will be sharing her depth of knowledge with her protégée Angela Amarualik for the next year through the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards Mentorship Program.”

The participants for 2024 are:



Photo: Denise Grant Photography

Susan Aglukark, O.C. – Mentor

Inuk singer–songwriter Susan Aglukark (GGPAA 2016) is one of Canada’s most distinctive music artists. She blends English, Inuktitut, and other Indigenous languages with contemporary pop arrangements to tell the stories of her fellow Inuit and other Indigenous groups. The emotional depth and honesty of her lyrics, her pure, clear voice, and her themes of hope, spirit and encouragement have captivated and inspired listeners

from all walks of life. She has released 10 albums and is much in demand as a keynote speaker and workshop facilitator.



Photo: Harishan Kobalasingam

Angela Amarualik – Protégée

Angela Amarualik was born and raised in Igloolik, Nunavut. Like many other small Indigenous communities, her town had its share of social problems. Ms. Amarualik worked hard to retain a good attitude, improve her circumstances, and be a role model for the younger generation. Starting with the ukulele, she began writing Inuktitut songs in her bedroom closet. Her musical style combines elements of traditional Inuit melodies and throat-singing with pop and folk.

Learn more about the GGPA [Mentorship Program](#).

“The arts play a vital role in our lives, bringing joy, hope and understanding of diverse cultures,” said Douglas Knight, Chair and CEO of the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards Foundation (GGPAAF), and Anik Bissonnette, Co-Chair of the Foundation. “While we celebrate and congratulate the exceptional 2024 Awards laureates, we should also pause and be grateful to all Canadian artists, and their supporters, who have given us light and a sense of community.”

“Through their artistic contributions, the recipients of the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards have left a lasting mark on the cultural landscape of Canada and beyond,” said Michelle Chawla, Director and CEO of the Canada Council for the Arts. “This award is a testament to the breadth of these artists’ talent and their ability to inspire and unite us. Congratulations on this major honour, and thank you for your contribution to the arts as well as for your impact on society as a whole.”

“The National Arts Centre is proud to be a founding partner of the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards,” said Christopher Deacon, NAC President and CEO. “We congratulate the 2024 laureates, whose extraordinary body of work has brought inspiration and joy to Canadians and to the world. We invite everyone to come celebrate the laureates with us at the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards Gala on June 8 in Southam Hall.”

The 2024 laureates will be honoured at three events in Ottawa, culminating in the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards Gala at the National Arts Centre on Saturday, June 8 at 8:00 p.m.

“We’re thrilled to welcome back RBC for a second year to celebrate our country’s performing arts luminaries,” said Juniper Locilento, CEO of the National Arts Centre Foundation. “Our sincere thanks to RBC for their continued support as Presenting Sponsor.”

“RBC is proud to partner with the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards which underscores our belief in the power of performing arts to connect and inspire,” said Andrea Barrack, Senior Vice President, Corporate Citizenship & ESG, RBC. “Congratulations to the 2024 laureates – our communities are strengthened by your incredible passion, talent and excitement.”

Thank you to our partners

Thanks also to the many sponsors and donors who make the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards Gala possible, including Lead Donor Donald K. Johnson, O.C., The Keg Spirit Foundation, The Azrieli Foundation, The Power Corporation of Canada, and Telefilm Canada.

These awards would not be possible without the support of our partners at the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the National Arts Centre (NAC). Compass Rose is our Communications Partner. As well, each year the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) creates incomparable short films that capture the essence of the laureates, and will première at the Awards Gala at the NAC on June 8 and online on NFB.ca.

“For 16 years, the National Film Board of Canada has been honoured to be part of the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards, bringing together talented filmmakers, NFB producers and creative teams from across the country to celebrate our GGPAA laureates. These short film portraits offer a unique tribute to Canadian performing arts excellence, showcasing the vision and dedication of our laureates. They’re also creative works of cinema in their own right, and a growing audiovisual heritage for all Canadians, freely accessible online. Congratulations to this year’s GGPAA laureates—your talent and dedication enriches and inspires us all,” said Suzanne Guèvremont, Government Film Commissioner and Chairperson of the National Film Board of Canada.

“As the official Media Partner for the GGPAA, CBC/Radio-Canada is again delighted to bring this celebration of Canada’s luminaries to people across the country. This year’s laureates have made an indelible mark on the performing arts in Canada and beyond. Congratulations!” said Catherine Tait, President and CEO, CBC/Radio-Canada.

Tickets for the **Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards Gala** go on sale to the public on Thursday, February 22 at 10:00 am ET online at nac-cna.ca/ggawards or by phone at 1-844-985-2787.

Created in 1992 by the late Peter Herrndorf, C.C., and Brian Robertson, under the distinguished patronage of the late Right Honourable Ramon John Hnatyshyn, then-Governor General of Canada, and his late wife Gerda, these prestigious awards are presented annually to Canadians whose accomplishments have inspired and enriched the cultural life of our country. [Nominations](#) for these highly acclaimed awards are submitted by members of the public to recognize artists who have made a lifetime commitment and contribution to the performing arts in Canada.

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For more information or to arrange an interview with a 2024 laureate, please contact:

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