

PUSHFESTIVAL.CA

PuSh

20

International
Performing
Arts Festival

Impact Report 2025

Audacious.
Live.
Art.



PuSh's work mostly takes place on the unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the xʷməθkwəʻəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. In 2025, we were also grateful to host an event in Ts'elxwéueqw, the ancestral territory of the Stó:lo people. It is our duty to establish right relations with the people on whose stolen territories we live and work, and with the land itself.

Mission & Values

We are thrilled that the organizational review work of the past five years has led to a new mission, vision, and values for the PuSh Festival, which will form the foundation for our future planning.

Vision

We envision a society fully engaged in empathy and the arts, and activated by a festival that expands our sense of the world.

Mission

The PuSh Festival creates new possibilities for artistic expression and how we relate to one another. We present a performing arts festival that challenges our assumptions, facilitates deeper understanding, inspires the imagination and fosters meaningful connections.

Values

- Inter-cultural connection
- Transformative experiences
- Innovation & experimentation
- Social justice
- Care & reciprocity
- Accountability

PHOTO: SAYNA GHADERI

Welcome from Leadership

PHOTOS: SAYNA GHADERI

Dear PuSh Community,

As we reflect on the 2025 PuSh Festival, it's clear that this year has been a landmark celebration, not only of our 20th anniversary but of the audacity, vulnerability, and resilience inherent in live performance. In a world where connection and authenticity can often feel fleeting, we reaffirmed the power of live arts to transport us to new dimensions, creating spaces for play, reflection and collective regeneration. This Festival embraced alterity, exploring fluidities in gender, identity and culture, and shifting paradigms for how we relate to our environment and each other.

The 2025 Festival also underscored our ongoing commitment to inclusivity and internationalism. We made significant investments in work from the Global South, anchored national tours for racialized trans and gender-non-binary artists, and nurtured

new collaborations with cultural organizations like Latincouver and We The Roses Foundation. Guided by consultation and reflection, we expanded accessibility initiatives through Accessible PuSh and introduced new cultural protocols, ensuring safer spaces of care and kinship.

This year's success was made possible by the tireless dedication of our incredible staff, who ensured that each performance and interaction was infused with thoughtfulness and intention. Their contributions, along with the sold-out performances, and an electrifying atmosphere of public engagement, made this year's Festival truly unforgettable.

This was also a year of transition, marked by the departure of Keltie Forsyth as Director of Operations and Dr. Margo Kane as Director of Indigenous Initiatives. We welcomed Annie Clarke as incoming

Managing Director, Yvette Nolan as Board President, and Justin Neal as Vice-President. We are grateful for the incredible contributions of our outgoing staff, and excited to realize the vision of this new leadership team as we move into PuSh's next chapter, carrying forward the lessons, connections, and artistic expressions that defined 2025.

Thank you to the artists, audiences, donors, sponsors, community partners, board members and staff who made this year's Festival possible. Your participation made PuSh 2025 the place to be—and together, we've created something that will continue to reverberate far beyond the Festival.

With gratitude,
Gabrielle Martin
Artistic Director

Program Highlights

Audiences experienced 25 works across 17 venues, spanning dance, theatre, film, ballroom, and beyond.

"Dimanche was one of the best performance pieces I've seen in years."

PHOTO: MICHAELA BODLOVIC

Dimanche

FOCUS & CHALIWATÉ COMPANIES
// BELGIUM

BOGOTÁ

ANDREA PEÑA & ARTISTS
// CANADA

PHOTO: SAYNA GHADERI

Lasa Ng Imperyo

(A Taste of Empire)
RICE & BEANS THEATRE
// CANADA

PHOTO: SAYNA GHADERI



PHOTO: GLODI MESSI

OUT

RAY YOUNG
// UNITED KINGDOM



PHOTO: JONATHAN LORANGE

De glace (From Ice)

L'EAU DU BAIN
// CANADA



PHOTO: CHRISTOPHE RAYNAUD-DELAË

L'Addition

TIM ETCHells / BERT & NASI
// UK/France

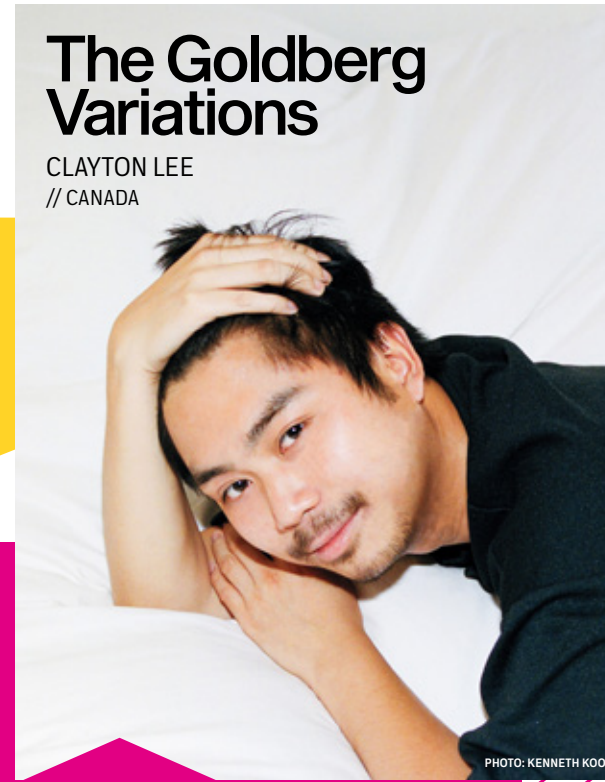


PHOTO: KENNETH KOO

The Goldberg Variations

CLAYTON LEE
// CANADA

"The stretching of transitional social boundaries: *The Goldberg Variations* represented PuSh at its best."



SEEING DOUBLE

A WAKE OF VULTURES
// UNCEDED COAST SALISH TERRITORIES



PHOTO: CHRIS RANDLE



K BODY AND MIND

Transpofagic Manifesto

RENATA CARVALHO
// BRAZIL

PHOTO: RAI DO VALE



Habitat

PETRIKOR DANSE
// URUGUAY / TIOHTIÀ:KE MO,ONNIYANG, UNCEDED TERRITOIRES
GUARDED BY THE KANEN'KÉHAGA PEOPLE

PHOTO: DENIS MARTIN



Géométrie de vies

COLLECTIF D'ART D'ART / STUDIOS KABAKO
// DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

PHOTO: SION DESIGN



Residencies

PuSh in Development champions the development of new artistic projects and animates the local artistic ecology through knowledge exchange with visiting artists.

This year saw the launch of our inaugural PuSh Residency with the following projects:

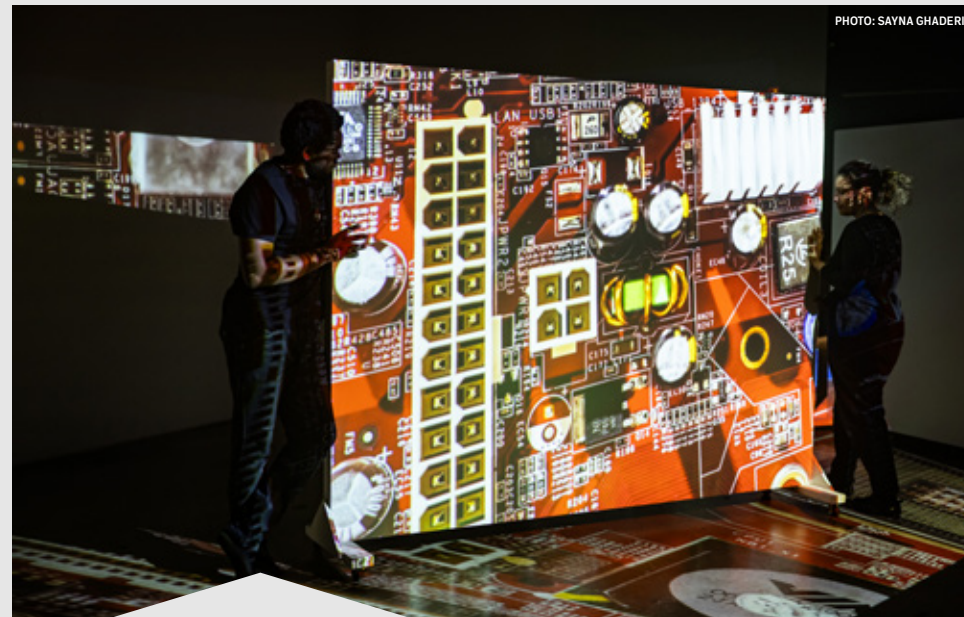


PHOTO: SAYNA GHADERI

Joseph K. Kasau Wa Mambwe (Democratic Republic of Congo), Majula Drammeh and Thabiaso Kubheka Persson (Sweden) carried out two weeks of creative research for their futuristic (Afro)play *What is already here?* culminating in a public studio showing. Supported by VIVO Media Arts Centre.

Andréane Leclerc (Quebec) shared her somatic, contortion-inspired practice throughout the Festival with a variety of workshops and dramaturgy consultations held at the Scotiabank Dance Centre, SFU School for the Contemporary Arts and The Post at 750. Supported by the Training Society of Vancouver.



PHOTO: MARK ANDRÉ GOULET

Industry Series



The 2025 PuSh Festival Industry Series, held from January 28 to February 2, 2025, brought together over 230 arts industry professionals, including more than 30 international performing arts presenters, for a week of networking, professional development, and curatorial research activities. With 11 Canadian performances and multimedia experiences at its core, the Industry Series plays a critical role in market development and export for Canadian talent, while serving as a vibrant platform for dialogue on pressing industry issues. Participants engaged in roundtable discussions on topics such as Indigenous futures, decolonial practices, and expansive dramaturgy. The program also included artist talks, studio visits, 20 tour-ready project pitches and off-programming from community partners.

PHOTOS: SAYNA GHADERI

With support from
the Roundhouse
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“It felt like we were talking about so many of the really challenging issues that are facing not only our sector and artist communities, but our society more broadly. But beyond just talking about them, PuSh really brought us together to work on solutions and to talk about tools and strategies that we might be able to enact all over the world in our communities to uplift and support the work of the incredible artists that we all love and value and cherish. I saw some incredible work presented and **I just came home feeling so uplifted and invigorated and connected and ready to go — ready to make change. Thank you PuSh!**”

– Kate Britton (Artistic Director of Performance Space, based on Gadigal land in Sydney, Australia)



PHOTOS: SAYNA GHADERI

“Because I showed *The Goldberg Variations* at PuSh, it will tour the world... we unlocked so many conversations with presenters in North America, Asia, Asian Pacific regions, Europe, etc. **It’s given me the kind of visibility I’ve always craved as an artist.**”

– Clayton Lee (*The Goldberg Variations*)





Youth Program

Delivered in partnership with Surrey's Solid State Community Industries since 2021, the PuSh Festival's "Elevate" program centres racialized and newcomer youth from outside Vancouver's urban core. It supports access to contemporary arts by providing tickets to PuSh shows, workshops with Festival artists, shared meals, and transportation.

This year, the program expanded to include 9-month mentorships between youth participants and local artists that culminate in a summer showcase. This showcase is produced by Symposia, an event-producing collective formed by 2022 youth program alumni.

- **114 discounted Youth Passes sold (\$20 for 4 shows)**
- **5 workshops for IBPOC Surrey-based youth, led by local and visiting artists**
- **4 nine-month mentorships**

PHOTO: CHIPO CHIPAZIWA

Volunteers

“If you are part of the arts community, PuSh is the festival for you. If you are not, PuSh will broaden your horizons in ways you can't begin to imagine.”

This year 96 volunteers contributed 865 hours to the Festival.



PHOTO: CHRIS RANDLE

We are so grateful to our volunteers, who are key to helping the Festival run smoothly each year. For our 2025 Festival, PuSh's generous volunteer community was there to offer a warm welcome to audience members, and connect them to this year's take-home experience, THIRST TRAP. They also put in a huge amount of work behind-the-scenes, from transporting artists to distributing program guides all over the city.

20th Anniversary



PHOTO: 唐健軒 CHEN-CHIE TANG



SARAH RACE PHOTOGRAPHY



SARAH RACE PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTO: SAYNA GHADERI

In celebrating PuSh's twentieth anniversary, we took the opportunity to look back and commemorate the profound impact PuSh has had on Vancouver's cultural landscape since the inaugural Festival kicked off in January 2005 under the leadership of Norman Armour and Katrina Dunn.

We dedicated season 2 of our PuSh Play podcast to interviews with the artists who have defined PuSh over the last 20 years, and this is what some of them had to say:



PHOTO: CHRIS RANDLE

“What is a festival? Festivals still remain one of the most important places where aesthetic conversations can be shared across international boundaries and PuSh is one of the few places in Canada where that happens.” - Milton Lim

“Every year the programming has always had these pieces where you're like 'so glad I saw that, because now I know that that exists'.” - Josh Martin

“I think PuSh is one of the most important festivals not only locally but in Canada, and the cultural context of PuSh is that awareness that things are constantly shifting and we need speak about them, we need to be brave about them, and we need to challenge each other — that, to me, is the legacy of PuSh.” - Fay Nass

“You just think about all those shows and all the different organizations and partners and artists that were working on those shows and the vast array of styles and ideas and the ravenous curiosity and appetite for material and performance that challenges us both in terms of its content but also in terms of its form.” - Marcus Youssef

“PuSh has always been a really important and vital gateway for artists here to have connection with the rest of the world. It's done a huge service in terms of fostering artistic practice here, changing the way that we make work, and really building this into a special artistic community.” - Maiko Yamamoto

“The work that has been brought in has always expanded my possibilities. The stuff I've seen at PuSh has been incredibly inspiring, it's like the tendrils overlapping through a bunch of worlds and it's just being drawn together by people's interest and enthusiasm.” - Veda Hille

Accessible PuSh

The PuSh Festival's accessibility program has made a significant impact on the community by ensuring that art and culture are more inclusive and accessible to a wide audience. The program's initiatives provide support for individuals with disabilities, those who are Deaf/deaf, blind or low vision, low-income and for those who are neuro-diverse to participate in and experience the Festival.

In 2025 these initiatives included:

- 2 “extra live/always relaxed” presentations
- 1 relaxed performance
- 4 venue visual stories
- 7 show visual stories or equivalent access guides
- 2 shows with ASL-interpretation
- 4 shows with surtitles
- 5 visual shows with written introductions describing sound
- 1 visual show with seating available providing access to felt sound
- 1 recorded digital stream of a show available with captions
- 4 post-show chats with LiveScript transcription services provided by request
- 8 vlogs
- 1 Deaf Festival volunteer
- 1 hard-of-hearing Festival volunteer
- 2 shows with volunteer student ASL-interpreters assisting with pre-show communication



PuSh by the Numbers

FESTIVAL

11,751
attendees

236
pieces of media
coverage

17
days

59
performances

17
venues

365
artists & arts
workers

86
industry & public
engagement
activities

231
local, national
and international
Delegates

212
free community
tickets

114
youth passes

76%
programming led/
co-led by Black
artists or artists of
colour

52%
programming
led/co-led by
2SLGBTQIA+
artists

SOCIAL MEDIA



1.7M views
12.8K link clicks
11K followers



944.5K views
3.3K link clicks
8.2K followers



112K show trailer views
12.3K Festival trailer views
825 subscribers

Website

From Festival Launch - Closing
201,141 website visits
42,850 website users

E-Newsletter

7K subscribers

Push Play Podcast

923 downloads

DEMOGRAPHICS

- 24% of PuSh patrons are aged 15-34, with 53% aged 35-54
- 85% said they planned to return to the Festival next year
- 16% attended the Festival for the first time in 2025, while 28% have attended the Festival for 3-5 years, and 10% from its inception 20 years ago
- 90% of our patrons reside in Metro Vancouver
- 94% believe the PuSh Festival makes Vancouver a better place to visit, live, or work

Thank You to Our Patrons Circle Donors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all PuSh Festival donors for their invaluable support, which enriches the cultural landscape and allows us to continue presenting innovative performing arts experiences.

This list reflects donations made between May 1, 2024 and April 30, 2025. If you have any questions about your recognition or support, please contact development@pushfestival.ca.

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Shayna Goldberg

Sylvia Roberts

Sylvie Bouchard

Thuc Lam

Tine Dupris

Tracey Boulton

“PuSh Festival has always captivated me for the panache and skilled curation of all its artistic endeavours. It's an adventure every event I attend.” - Linda Rosas, PuSh Donor



PHOTO: CHRIS RANDLE

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Thank You

The PuSh staff extends a special thanks to their loved ones for their unwavering support. PuSh Festival also gratefully acknowledges the invaluable contributions of former staff and the arts and cultural community in the Lower Mainland who support our work as partners, contributors, and champions.

PuSh wouldn't be what it is without this community, and we are grateful.

We would also like to thank outgoing staff members Sarah Sum and Alex Grigg and outgoing board members Camilla Tibbs (president), Johnny Wu (vice-president) and Thea Easton.



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