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Arts and Culture for Early Years May 4 – 24, 2020

## The International WeeFestival of Arts and Culture for Early Years returns for its 5th edition in May 2020

(TORONTO, ON) -- Toronto's **first and only contemporary arts festival dedicated to early childhood** returns for its 5th edition with a not-to-be-missed line-up from **May 4-24, 2020**.

Since its debut in 2014, the **WeeFestival of Arts and Culture for Early Years** has presented 35 productions and as many events, workshops, and concerts. Four of these works were original commissions which toured beyond the festival and five productions featured in the **Weefestival** have been nominated for **Dora Mavor Moore Awards**. The **WeeFestival** has experienced continued growth in audiences, presenting partners and community collaborators from across the arts sector excited to support the festival mission. After its leap to annual programming in 2019, the **WeeFestival** is busy preparing its exciting 2020 international edition.

Artistic Director **Lynda Hill** has this to say about this milestone edition:

*"It's hard to believe our 5th birthday is only months away. Just like those early years of childhood, time flies so quickly and like a young child, we've had a village of caring people that helped to raise us! We're grateful to our loving audiences who have grown along with us, our generous supporters, and to the artists who have shared their inspiring performances with us over the years."*

The Festival brings productions from **around the world** and **across the Country** that delight, stimulate, and inspire the **youngest of theatregoers** between the ages of 0 to 6 years. Performances in this international festival transcend and blend the disciplines of **music, theatre, dance, installation/performance, puppetry**, and **aerial arts** - all designed with the early developmental stages of childhood in mind and with **events and activities for the whole family!**

International programming includes **Rawums (:)** a hilarious and inventive performance about gravity and the highs and lows of flying and falling from Florshütz and Döhnert (Germany), a rich and heart-warming meeting of cultures and musical traditions in **Taama** from Théâtre de la Guimbarde (Belgium)/ Soleil Theatre (Burkina Faso), **The Cosy One Man Band**, a breathtaking performance from multi-instrumentalist Santiago Moreno, from La Mue/tte (France), **Round / (Girotondo)** a poetic and playful dance/theatre work from La Baracca-Testoni Ragazzi (Italy), the profoundly beautiful and wordless puppetry of **Ficelle / (String)** from Mouton Carré (France) and the sensory-installation for toddlers **DreamScape** by Ruchira Das of ThinkArts, India.

Programming from Canada with performances in French and English includes **Little Big Leaf / Sous la feuille** a delicate and visually rich performance from Ariane Voineau & Josué Beaucage (Montreal), **Mokatek and the Missing Star/ Mokatek et l'étoile disparue** the story of a young boy's journey to find a North star filled with puppetry and music and the from the acclaimed Indigenous theatre Ondinnok Productions (Montreal)/Vox Théâtre (Ottawa) which returns due to popular demand after a sold-out run in 2019, and **MAPA** from Théâtre des Petites Âmes (Montreal), about a finding home and belonging. Foolish Operations of Vancouver returns with **Paper Playground**, a new interactive dance production and finally, renowned Cree playwright and author Tomson Highway's **The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito** from Carousel Players (St. Catharines) will educate and entertain children and their families through music, storytelling, and puppetry.

The festival will expand its reach through presenting partnerships of WeeFestival productions in Hamilton as part of Kinderfest, Aurora Cultural Centre as part of their Magic Carpet Series, and Barrie's Talk is Free Theatre's new Wow Festival. Additional performances are planned at The Assembly Hall, Etobicoke and The Columbus Centre, North York.

The WeeFestival continues its commitment to professional development for artists and educators through its conference activity and to the creation of new Canadian work for very young audiences with creation residencies supporting three new works and the artists behind them.

Over the coming months the WeeFestival will put the final touches on a vibrant programme of free events including concerts, exhibitions, demonstrations, and workshops for children and families to be announced in March 2020.

Venues for the 2020 festival include The Theatre Centre, Factory Theatre, Small World Music Centre and other venues in Artscape Youngplace, The Spadina Theatre of Alliance Française, Studio 21 of Théâtre Français de Toronto, Pia Bouman School for Dance, and The Assembly Hall.

The WeeFestival is grateful for the generous support of The Department of Canadian Heritage through the Arts Presentation Canada Program and our major presenting partner Theatre Direct Canada. The 2020 edition is further supported by Istituto Italiano di Cultura Toronto, Goethe-Institut Toronto, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Francophone programme partners Théâtre Français de Toronto, Alliance Française, and the Institute Français.

For the details on the featured programming and general information regarding the 2020 edition of the **Weefestival** please visit [www.weefestival.ca](http://www.weefestival.ca)

More programming for this special 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition will be announced in February 2020. Group booking for kindergartens and daycares are underway. Tickets for the general public go on sale March 9 at <http://weefestival.ca/tickets/> or by calling 416.524-6261.

### **2020 WeeFestival of Arts and Culture for Early Years**

**May 4-24, 2020**

**Presented in partnership with Theatre Direct Canada**

**Tickets:** \$12 to \$20

**Online:** <http://weefestival.ca/tickets/>

**Information:** 416.524-6261

[www.weefestival.ca](http://www.weefestival.ca)

### **Festival History**

Launched in 2014 as a biennial event and project of Theatre Direct Canada, a leading innovator in the creation, production, and presentation of theatre for young audiences. With the support of The Department of Canadian

Heritage and the Canada Council, the inaugural **WeeFestival** was launched featuring performances from leading theatre companies from Europe and Quebec pioneering in the field of theatre for early years. The **WeeFestival of Arts and Culture** was created as a project of Theatre Direct Canada by **Lynda Hill** who led the organization for 18 seasons before stepping down at the end of the 18/19 season to advance the mission of the growing festival as a separate not for profit organization working in partnership with, and under, the charitable umbrella of with Theatre Direct Canada.