



For Immediate Release
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MEDIA RELEASE

Theatre Calgary presents bold new
work from LGBTQ2S+ writers in

Page to Stage New Works Festival

Online - March 20 - 21, 2021

Calgary, AB... Theatre Calgary is dedicated to nurturing new works, new voices, and new stories, and providing a platform for them to be seen, heard, and discovered. Today, we are thrilled to announce our new *Page to Stage New Works Festival* that will launch March 20-21. This festival will provide resources for writers to have their work developed towards a next step opportunity at Theatre Calgary. This opportunity could be an additional reading, a more focused workshop, an exploratory workshop, or an actual production.

Curated by Theatre Calgary's Artistic Associate **Zach Running Coyote** and Artistic Director **Stafford Arima**, *Page to Stage* will have a specific focus each year. For our inaugural festival, the focus is on the works of LGBTQ2S+ writers. *"This is an opportunity for theatre creators to spend focused time with a team of experienced artists, creating brand new, world class theatre and showcasing it for an audience,"* says Running Coyote. *"Though underrepresented on our stages, these LGBTQ2S+ artists are telling vital stories that reflect the vibrant and ever shifting landscape of Albertan identity, and this festival gives them an opportunity to accelerate and deepen their practice as theatre creators."*

"New work and new voices are both exciting, and vital to the future of the arts in our city," says Arima. *"Even though the pandemic has halted regular performances on our stage, it has not stopped writers from needing a place to be able to share their stories, their visions, and their experiences with the world. I'm thrilled that Theatre Calgary will be able to continue to seek, develop, and ultimately present new work to our audiences by providing opportunities to artists whose voices need to be heard."*

"I am thrilled that Theatre Calgary has a focus on the future of nurturing and developing artists that broaden our perspective of who we are," adds Theatre Calgary's Executive Director **Maya Choldin**. *"Our name represents not only our city, but all of the people who live in Calgary, and it is our responsibility that our future storytelling includes everyone."*

After a call for submissions in January to LGBTQ2S+ artists in Southern Alberta, three plays from more than 50 submissions were chosen. The artists and plays for this year's festival are:

Sharanpal Ruprai (She/Her) - *Bollywood Basement Boutique*

Sable Sweetgrass Katoiyissa (She/Her) - *Awowakii*

Matthew Oliver van Diepen (They/Them) - *Agápi sti Fury*

(Show descriptions and artist bios on following page)

All three plays will be workshopped the week of March 15th, and each script will be given an online reading performance from March 20-21. Directors and casting for the scripts will be announced in the near future. Due to the ongoing health and safety gathering restrictions in place, all artists involved will be workshopping the shows online, and the readings will also be presented online for audiences.

Bollywood Basement Boutique - Saturday, March 20, 3:00pm

Awowakii - Saturday, March 20, 7:30pm

Agápi sti Fury - Sunday, March 21, 3:00pm

Tickets are \$10 per online reading, or \$25 for all three. For more information and ticket purchases, please visit theatre Calgary.com.

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The writers and the plays of *Page to Stage*:

SHARANPAL RUPRAI (She/Her)

Sharanpal Ruprai is an Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Winnipeg. Her debut poetry collection, *Seva* was shortlisted for the Stephan G. Stephansson Award for Poetry by the Alberta Literary Awards in 2015. Her second collection, *Pressure Cooker Love Bomb*, was shortlisted for the prestigious 2020 Annual Lambda Literary Awards, the Robert Kroetsch award for poetry, the Lansdowne Prize for Poetry and was the Goldie Finalist for Poetry. She is an editor for *Contemporary Verse 2: The Canadian Journal of Poetry and Critical Writing (CV2)*. Sharanpal Ruprai was the 2019-2020 Canadian Writer-in-Residence at the University of Calgary.

Bollywood Basement Boutique

In this hilarious family drama, Nimm is trying to be a good Punjabi daughter, but her body does not fit into all the wedding outfits her widowed Mum demands for her while she plans both of her daughters' weddings. Priya runs a successful clothing boutique with her son Ravi, from their basement. Ravi, a drag performer at night, has his own ideas of running a business, and they create their own clothes from the discarded or unsold items from their mother's store. Meanwhile, Ravi and Nimm hatch a plan to bring Jas, Ravi's lover from India to Canada. *Bollywood Basement Boutique* is anchored in identity, multiculturalism, and the impact of religious symbols that inform our understanding of our communities, influence our world, and how we shape ourselves.

SABLE SWEETGRASS KATOIYISSA (She/Her)

Sable Sweetgrass Katoiyissa is Blackfoot and a member of the Kainai Nation, born and raised in Calgary/Mohkinstsis. Sable is a mother and an Awowakii (transgender) storyteller dedicated to the growth and success of the local Indigenous arts community in Mohkinstsis and Treaty 7 Territory. She graduated from the English program at the U of C and received her MFA in Creative Writing from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She has written an award winning short story and essay, written and performed on stage for *Making Treaty 7*, and created a short film titled *IPOWAHSIN at Home*. Sable lives and works in Calgary/Mohkinstsis.

Awowakii

Chrissy Two Guns is a Blackfoot Awowokii (Transgender) mother, struggling to make ends meet. When her father, who she hasn't seen in years, shows up on her doorstep offering his residential school settlement money, and asking for a second chance, Chrissy is forced to make a decision that decides the fate of a family. *Awowakii* is a family drama about the resilience of Blackfoot Matriarchy.

MATTHEW OLIVER VAN DIEPEN (They/Them)

Oliver is a small-statured, large-hearted non-binary performer and amateur playwright creating queer art whenever possible. Raised on the stage, they have performed and worked with various professional and amateur companies including Gwaandak Theatre, Arts Commons, Play Between Your Thighs, Fake Mustache Drag Troupe, Rosebud Theatre, and MCS Theatre. They have been writing since they were young and have recently begun dreaming about happiness and queer love being freely represented onstage.

Agápi sti Fury

Set in the 1820s, this period drama tells a compelling story that combines the worlds of the Navy and Shakespeare in a riveting tale about love, censorship, and comradeship. While England was going through a theatrical dry-spot as a result of censorship laws, Navy ships HMS Fury and Helca were deployed to the Arctic with exploration crews. In an attempt to keep spirits high and hands busy, a theatre known as the Royal Arctic Theatre was created. However because the ships consisted of all-male crews, certain men onboard would cast in female roles...and this is where *Agápi sti Fury* takes a real piece of history, and gives it a twist from the imaginings of a Modern-day Queer!

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