

Canadian Caribbean Arts Network (C-CAN)

C-CAN was founded by Rhoma Spencer on April 15 2017, when a chosen group of arts practitioners and professionals began to plan and manage the Canada-Caribbean contingent for CARIFESTA XIII in Barbados. After its successful representation in Barbados, C-CAN returned to the 2019 CARIFESTA XIV in Trinidad and Tobago.

Our current focus then in CARIFESTA was aimed at opening up regional, national and international opportunities to present, promote and effectively market the artistic works of Ontario's artists and artistic organizations of Caribbean heritage with potential Canada-wide impact.

MISSION

To instill and explore our cultural capacity through awareness of our creative 'Caribbeing' while remaining anchored to our Canadian reality.

MANDATE

To present and promote the Artistic products of our arts and creative practitioners of Caribbean heritage, whose works are inspired by the art and culture of the Caribbean. From the performing arts and film to multimedia and the culinary arts.

The COVID pandemic of 2020 saw the cancellation of CARIFESTA XV in Antigua and in an effort to keep the Collective active, we pivoted to presenting the works of our lead Collective member, Rhoma Spencer. In this regard we have presented the following activities: Queerantime, a Site Specific Physical Theatre Presentation as part of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre Pride in Place festival in 2020.

Login Logout, a Digital Monodrama as part of the Aluna Theatre Company Caminos festival 2021

Danse Macabre- A Play Development Workshop at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre 2022

Queen of the Road- The Calypso Rose Musical Workshop production in Collaboration with U of T's Queer and Trans Research Lab at Hart House Theatre.

Our Collective consists of an eclectic mix of Creative Artists and Arts Administrators with some having over 50 years of practice in their respective industry. From Theatre, Dance, Music, Carnival Arts to Administration and Diplomacy.

Rhoma Spencer- Artistic Director/Playwright

Rhoma Spencer – A multi-hyphenated arts practitioner practicing in Toronto since 2001. A graduate of York University with an MFA in Directing, she formed Theatre Archipelago(TA) in 2005 and under her Artistic Direction the company produced Mad Miss /Just Jazz in 2005,

Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine (2006), Twilight Café (2007), I Marcus Garvey (2009) Obeah Opera (2012).

Acting credits include: House of Bernarda Alba (ModernTimes/Aluna), Solitudes (Aluna Theatre), Jean and Dinah (Lordstreet Theatre) Mad Miss, Fallen Angel and the Devil Concubine (TA/bcurrent), Stori Ya (bcurrent) and two seasons of the groundbreaking Afri-Canadian sitcom, Da Kink in my Hair for Global TV. Film: Sound of Tears (Short) which received an African Academy Award for Best Narrative Short (Diaspora). The Apartment (TV series Pilot for CCN TV6, Trinidad). The award winning film, Scarborough (Comfy Films), Deep Blue (HaMa Films). Dora nominee in 2023 and winner in 2005.

Directing credits include: Queen of the Road- The Calypso Rose Musical, Login Logout Password, Queerantime (C-CAN). Just Jazz, I Marcus Garvey, Our Lady of Spills, Twilight Cafe (Theatre Archipelago) Carnival Medea- Trinidad, For Colored Girls- USA and many more. In addition to stage, she has been the Artistic Director of Pan Alive, the Steelband Music Festival during Toronto Carnival .

Stephen Hankey- Movement Director

A native of Trinidad and Tobago, Stephen Hankey is a dancer, master teacher in traditional Caribbean folk forms, Artistic Director, and Choreographer. Mr. Hankey teaches at the Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School (full-time) and is an Adjunct Professor at Central Connecticut State University. Stephen is the President and Artistic Director of the Island Reflections Dance Theatre, Inc., in Hartford, CT. He was a founding member, choreographer, and performer with The National Dance Theatre Company of Trinidad and Tobago. He holds a B.F.A. from the Hartt School, University of Hartford (Honors).

Derek Thorne - Music and Sound Composer

Since the 2000s, Derek has become a staple percussionist in Toronto's music scene while touring throughout Canada, the USA, and Europe, and further afield to west Africa and Malaysia. His versatility and hungry ear have fitted him in with a similarly wide range of music traditions and genres, co-creating and performing award-winning school presentations with arts-in-education company Hoza!; working as in-house talent at event companies Bongo and B Entertainment, ONQ Live, and Main Event Music; in dance theatre with Ballet Creole, Ronald Taylor Dance, Lua Shayenne Dance Co., and KasheDance; with funksters The Soul Motivators, calypso legends David Rudder and Calypso Rose, and JUNO winners Kobo Town.

Locally he can often be found adding his unique touch to blues with Sugar Brown, rock with Nichol Y Los Falsos, and African pop with Njacko Backo and Kalimbas at Work. His classical music collaborators include the Bach Children's Chorus, the St. Michael's Cathedral Boys Choir, and the Canadian Children's Opera Company.

Trevor Schwellnus- Set, Lighting and Projection Design

Trevor is a Toronto-based Scenographer – designing sets, lighting, and video for performance with independent artists. He has developed his approach to direction and dramaturgy through Collaborative creation in a designed environment at Aluna, leading the creation of Nohayquiensepa (Nooneknows) and What I learned from a decade of fear. His design works for Aluna's La Comunion, Madre, and For Sale launched him on his artistic path. One of his chief obsessions is the intersection of design, dramaturgy, and cross-cultural art-making.

Trevor has collaborated in theatre and dance with Modern Times, Jumblies, Fixtpoint, Cahoots, The Theatre Centre, Buddies in Bad Times, Independent Aunties, Obsidian, Tarragon, Small Wooden Shoe, One Reed, Marie-Josée Chartier, Ame Henderson / Public Recordings, Selfconscious Theatre, Dancemakers, Theatre Passe Muraille, and others. He has 6 Doras (of 17 career nominations), a Harold, and a Children's Choice Award. In 2015 he was shortlisted for Canada's Siminovich Award.

Candice Dixon- Costume Design

Candice is a Toronto-based costume designer and cultural practitioner specializing in Caribbean Carnival Arts. She is the Co-Founder and Creative Director of SugaCayne, a Caribbean carnival arts and production collective that brings a distinctive carnival design aesthetic and immersive "mas-building" experience to local and international carnivals. Since 2010, SugaCayne has created intricately designed costumes presented in Toronto, the Cayman Islands, Miami, Chicago, and Trinidad.

As Creative Director, Candice has led SugaCayne's "Innovation in Mas" initiatives in collaboration with the Design Fabrication Zone at Toronto Metropolitan University, pioneering the first Caribbean carnival costumes to incorporate 3D-printed and laser-cut elements. This groundbreaking work has been featured by CBC, CTV, Breakfast Television, NOW Magazine, and The Social, and exhibited at major institutions including the Royal Ontario Museum, the Design Exchange, Toronto City Hall, Yorkdale Shopping Centre, and the Ontario Science Centre.

Candice is also the creator and instructor of the first Carnival Arts course offered at an accredited Canadian university through Toronto Metropolitan University (Fashion at The Creative School). Her recent work has expanded into theatrical costume design through collaborations with Black Theatre School, further exploring the intersections of performance, storytelling, and Caribbean cultural expression.

King Cosmos (Henry Gomez) - Actor

Henry Gomez aka King Cosmos is a multi-media, multidisciplinary actor and card-carrying member of ACTRA and Actors Equity. He is a veteran stage, TV and film actor. After originating the role of Spike in Rhoma Spencer's Queen of The Road-The Calypso Rose Musical, he is happy to be back with C-CAN in the role of Magic. He is twice Canada's Calypso Monarch, an award-winning (Canadian Reggae Music and Canadian Urban Music) composer and recording artiste, an academic and educator. He has worked with the Toronto District School Board.

King Cosmos performs regularly at festivals in the GTA and other parts of Canada. Highlights include performances with Toronto Symphony and National Arts Centre Orchestras. He holds an MA and MFA from York University, and a B Ed from the University of Toronto. His 2024 audio/video opuses are available on Tube, Spotify and other streaming platforms. In addition to performing his original compositions, King Cosmos enjoys performing other genres of music. He also sings in Spanish and has delivered academic papers on calypso music at conferences in Toronto, Senegal and Ghana. Ongoing projects include research and specialization in the life and works of Harry Belafonte.

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