



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Cultch, in collaboration with Urban Ink, presents

TRANSFORM: A Cabaret Festival

Curated by Corey Payette & Heather Redfern

WHEN: Oct 2-12, 2019

WHERE: ALL THREE CULTCH VENUES: Historic Theatre (1895 Venables St.), York Theatre (639 Commercial Dr.), and Vancity Culture Lab (1895 Venables St.), PLUS, auxiliary spaces

TICKETS: Tickets from \$15. Single tickets on sale now through The Cultch's Box Office: 604-251-1363 or tickets.thecultch.com.

The Cultch announces the sensational line-up of the inaugural *Raven Transforming Cabaret Festival*, coming this October

—*Nine nights. Three stages. One revolutionary new festival*—

(Vancouver, BC) – The Cultch, and Urban Ink, are thrilled to announce the line-up for the first year of *Raven Transforming Cabaret Festival*. Curated by Corey Payette (Artistic Director of Urban Ink) and Heather Redfern (Executive Director of The Cultch), this inaugural year will bring together over 50 Indigenous and non-Indigenous performers—comedians, musicians, burlesque performers, drag artists, and more. This varied group of multi-disciplinary performers will take over The Cultch's three theatres, including its lounges and lobbies from October 2-12, 2019.

Around the world, cabaret festivals emerged as a raucous and exhilarating way of expressing uprising during periods of change. "It's been a platform for political discourse and for engaging in deep conversations all around the world," says festival co-curator, Corey Payette. "It's also a space where people can push the boundaries of what is considered acceptable in the mainstream." *Raven Transforming Cabaret Festival* is inspired by a bold new concept to bring radical and lasting change to live performance in these unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples. "I think that reconciliation is a really difficult subject matter, because we are not as far along as we should be," says Payette. "What I know for sure, is that artists are always the ones to lead the way."

"You name it; it's going to be part of the cabaret festival," says festival co-curator Heather Redfern. From *Cirque Transforming* (a night of circus performance), to *Drag Transforming* (a night of drag performance), to *The Women of Comedy* (featuring Martha Chaves, Steph Tisdell, Nour Hadidi, and Erica Sigurdson), The Cultch's spaces will be alive with every imaginable type of show. Other not-to-be-missed events include *Virago Nation: Stripping for Sovereignty* (Vancouver's all Indigenous Burlesque troupe), *The Darlings* (Vancouver's multidisciplinary non-binary drag show), *Journey to South Asia & Beyond* (a collaboration with Diwali in BC), *Family Drag Brunch and Dress Up* (hosted by Peach Cobblah and Isolde N. Barron), *African Village Experience* (hosted by Jacky A Yenga), *Where the Two-Spirit Lives* (Marshall Vielle's one-person show), and *The Flame: Cabaret Edition* (Vancouver's favourite storytelling series).

A cabaret festival would not be complete without plenty of great music and *Raven Transforming Cabaret Festival* will spotlight musicians such as Leela Gilday, Silla and Rise, JB the First Lady, M'Girl, Sandy Scofield, Veda Hille, and Corey Payette. In addition, festival participants are invited to join artists and VIPs each night at a festival club night, a creative space for festival artists to collaborate and test out exciting new and developing material, while enjoying the beats of DJ Kookum and DJ Skylar Love.

To give audiences a taste of what is in store for them, the festival kicks off with two wild opening night celebrations—hosted by Musqueam artist, Quelema Sparrow, and Australian cabaret star, Lisa Fa'alafi (co-creator of smash-hit Hot Brown Honey)—featuring rousing presentations from many of the festival performers. “This year’s festival has such an incredible line-up,” says Redfern. “I’m so excited for everyone to see what we have put together, because it is going to be so much fun!”

“Raven Transforming Cabaret Festival will be a gathering for so many artists to share their daring and powerful works with audiences and inspire landmark conversation for years to come.”
—Corey Payette, Festival Co-curator

Corey Payette – Co-Curator

Heather Redfern – Co-Curator

Quelema Sparrow – Indigenous Protocol Keeper/Host

Lisa Fa'alafi – Director/Host

LINE-UP FOR TRANSFORM: A CABARET FESTIVAL

Opening Night Bash

OCT 02 & 03, 7:30PM | York Theatre

TRANSFORM: A Cabaret Festival kicks off with two spectacular Opening Night celebrations! Hosted by Musqueam artist Quelema Sparrow and renowned Australian cabaret artist Lisa Fa'alafi (of *Hot Brown Honey* fame), the stars of this year’s festival join forces in an unforgettable extravaganza. Featuring a unique mash up of exhilarating dance, music, and comedy numbers like nothing you’ve seen before.

Vhine und Szong: Fantastic Femmes

OCT 04, 7PM | Historic Theatre

Veda Hille’s intermittent song series returns with a cabaret festival twist. The essential elements are all here: songs, stories, and you—with wine! Join our quintessential East Van host as she and her guests, Jaye Simpson and Carleigh Baker, read and sing and reminisce. Anything could happen, because its Vhine und Szong!

The Women of Comedy

OCT 04 & 05, 7:30PM | York Theatre

Some of the funniest women we know are taking over the York in a side-splitting night of comedy. Featuring Canadian Comedy Award-winner Martha Chaves, Australia’s rising Indigenous comedy star Steph Tisdell, Toronto-based comedian Nour Hadidi, and beloved local comedian Erica Sigurdson. These fierce, fresh, and funny ladies will have you laughing until your belly hurts.

The Darlings

OCT 04, 9:15PM | Historic Theatre

Provocative and imaginative drag theatre! The Darlings are a multidisciplinary non-binary drag performance collective based in Vancouver. Their work challenges the boundaries of conventional drag and explores genderqueer, non-binary, and trans experience through the use of movement, poetry, performance art, theatre, and immersive installation.

Steph Tisdell: Identity Steft

OCT 05, 4PM & OCT 06, 2PM | Historic Theatre

Indigenous comedian Steph Tisdell delves into issues of identity and colonialism, while discussing the merits of white guilt vs overt racism. Her mental health struggles culminate in a hilarious journey, ultimately leading somewhere inspirational. *Identity Steft* is a rip-roariously hilarious show with insightful lessons interwoven throughout.

Virago Nation: Stripping for Sovereignty

OCT 05, 8PM & OCT 11, 9:15PM | Historic Theatre

Vancouver's very own all Indigenous Burlesque troupe! Virago Nation is a collective of Indigenous artists creating performance through burlesque, theatre, song, and spoken word as well as workshops and community networks to rematriate Indigenous sexuality.

Family Drag Brunch & Dress up

OCT 06, 11AM | Vancity Culture Lab, Founder's Lounge, Cultch lobby

Stories, laughter, and play at a family cabaret! Bring the kids for a lively afternoon including drag brunch, story hour, and dress-up spectacular. Fashion, makeup, and runway lessons from some of Vancouver's finest drag performers will have kids and adults alike ready to strut their very own Cultch Couture on the runway in a fabulous family fashion show (with kid judges!).

Journey to South Asia & Beyond

OCT 09, 7PM | Historic Theatre

Celebrate Diwali in BC with a multicultural evening of classical and contemporary South Asian dance and music that will push the boundaries of what is considered "cabaret." Through dance and live musical performances, a diverse group of artists will explore the parallels between Diwali and Indigenous culture. Curated by Rohit Chokhani. Featuring Karima Essa, Arno Kamolika, Mohamed Assani, and Nyla Carpentier. Part of Diwali Night at the Festival.

The Flame: Cabaret Edition

OCT 09, 7:30PM | York Theatre

Vancouver's own Storytelling Series brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous storytellers. A talented roster of raconteurs, ground-breaking BC storytellers, spoken word artists, and musicians dare to share their most personal, poignant, and hilarious true stories live on stage. Hosted by Quelemia Sparrow and Deborah Williams.

African Village Experience

OCT 09, 9:15PM | Historic Theatre

Hosted by Jacky A. Yenga, *African Village Experience* is an interactive event that involves storytelling, singing, and dancing. Part of Diwali Night at the Festival.

Where the Two-Spirit Lives

OCT 10, 7PM & OCT 12, 9:15PM | Historic Theatre

A whimsical and moving exploration of what it means to be Two-Spirited in the new millennium in Southern Alberta. Drag and storytelling combine to create this unique production!

Leela Gilday

Featuring Sandy Scofield & M'Girl

OCT 10, 7:30PM | York Theatre

An evening of powerful music from some of our country's most gifted musicians. Featuring passionate singer-songwriter Leela Gilday, with special guests Sandy Scofield and M'Girl.

Silla and Rise

Featuring JB the First Lady

OCT 10, 9:15PM | Historic Theatre

Blending Inuit throat-singing and futuristic dancefloor beats, Silla and Rise are a Canadian musical group based in Ottawa. Featuring Vancouver-based hip hop and spoken word artist, JB the First Lady.

Leela Gilday: Intimate & Unplugged

OCT 11, 7PM | Historic Theatre

Get up close and personal with the one and only Leela Gilday. More raw, more intimate, and more Leela than anything you've heard from her before, this virtuosic singer-songwriter strips her music back to its essence for an soulful evening of acoustic song and authentic storytelling.

Cirque Transforming

OCT 11, 7:30PM | York Theatre

Contemporary circus crossed with traditional hoop dancing! Inspired by traditional hoop dancing, fire circles, and spinning orbs, a variety of circus artists come together for a deluge of whirling wheels, flying sparks, and so much more.

Corey Payette Musical Songbook

OCT 12, 7:00PM | Historic Theatre

A transformative evening of music from Corey Payette's award-winning and critically-acclaimed musicals—featuring songs and stories from *Children of God*, *Les Filles du Roi*, plus a sneak peek of the new musical, *Sedna*.

Drag Transforming

OCT 12, 7:30PM | York Theatre

The Queens of East Van, Peach Cobblah & Isolde N Barron, host a drag spectacular! Featuring unforgettable performances from Quanah Style, The Darlings, Jaylene Tyme, Coco, and Celestial Seasons. These fearless queens are challenging gender norms while pushing the boundaries of drag, and having a tucking great time doing it!

Conversation, community, a club and cabaret bites!

Raw, unfiltered, experimental performances from ground-breaking artists in The Cultch lobby and Vancity Culture Lab in between performances all festival long.

PLUS: The Vancity Culture Lab will transform nightly into a festival club (Club TRANSFORM) that will turn up the volume as festival artists come together for a spontaneous, surprising, and spirited mash up of performance styles. Unlike anything you've experienced on a Cultch stage, this will be an intimate testing ground for all your favourite artists to experiment and try out new material with a live audience. Featuring dance beats from DJ Kookum and DJ Skylar Love.

ABOUT COREY PAYETTE:

Corey Payette is proud of his Oji-Cree heritage from Northern Ontario, and has worked across Canada as a playwright, actor, composer, and director. He is the Artistic Director of Urban Ink (Vancouver, BC), past Artist-in-Residence with English Theatre at Canada's National Arts Centre, and the founder of Raven Theatre (Vancouver, BC), focusing on new works by Indigenous artists. Corey has worked as an Artistic Associate with Full Circle: First Nations' Performance and The Indigenous Cycle at the National Arts Centre, an investigation into the broad spectrum of the Indigenous body of work being created within Canada's borders. This cycle resulted in the creation of a new department of Indigenous Theatre at the National Arts Centre, which launches its inaugural season this year.

As a theatre creator, his original musical *Children of God* (book/music/lyrics & direction) was developed through the Collaborations in English Theatre at the National Arts Centre, Vancouver Playhouse, Firehall Arts Centre, Western Canada Theatre, Arts Club Theatre, Urban Ink, Full Circle: First Nations Performance, and Raven Theatre. *Children of God* had its world premiere in 2017 at the York Theatre (The Cultch), followed by a tour to the Mainstage at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, and Western Canada Theatre in Kamloops. Following the Segal Centre run in Montreal, it had a return engagement at the York Theatre (The Cultch) in Vancouver, followed by a tour of southern British Columbia.

His second musical *Les Filles du Roi* (music & direction, with co-book/lyrics with Julie McIsaac) was written in English, French, and Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) and had its world premiere in 2018 in Vancouver at the York Theatre (The Cultch), commissioned by Fugue Theatre and produced by Fugue, Raven Theatre, Urban Ink and The Cultch. *Sedna* (music composition & direction, co-created with Renelitta Arluk and Marshall McMahan) had its world premiere at Caravan Farm Theatre, co-produced by Urban Ink, and will tour next season to Vancouver. His next musical has been commissioned from Bard on the Beach in Vancouver.

As a director, *Children of God*, *Les Filles du Roi*, and *Sedna* - other credits include: *Moonlodge* (Urban Ink/NAC English Theatre), associate director for *A Christmas Carol* (NAC English Theatre 2017 & 2018), and associate director of *Indian Arm* (Rumble Theatre).

Acting credits include the world premiere of the musical *The Road Forward* by Marie Clements; *Beyond Eden* (Theatre Calgary/Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company); *La Cage Aux Folles* (Vancouver Playhouse); three seasons at the Chemainus Theatre Festival; and a tour of the Yukon with Gwaandak Theatre, as the lead in the world premiere of *Justice* (Yukon Arts Centre, presented at the NAC's Northern Scene Festival).

Corey holds a B.F.A. in Music Composition from York University, and composed the film score to the documentary *AMIN AMIR* (OMNI TV). He is the past Grand Chief of the Board of Directors of the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance (IPAA) and past board member of Vancouver Native Health Society providing mental, physical, and spiritual relief to Aboriginal people on the DTES (Vancouver, BC). His album *The Music from Children of God*, the published script, and the piano/vocal songbook are available on the shop tab, [iTunes](#), and [Spotify](#).

ABOUT HEATHER REDFERN:

Heather Redfern has been the Executive Director of The Cultch since 2007. Over the past 12 seasons, Heather has built an international reputation for The Cultch through her innovative curation and impeccable leadership. She is highly regarded as a curator who programs presentations from local, national, and international companies each year. Under her leadership, The Cultch's programs have achieved growing audiences, and are renowned for their diversity and risk-taking.

Before coming to The Cultch, Heather was the Executive Director of the Greater Vancouver Alliance for Arts and Culture, and the Artistic Producer for Catalyst Theatre in Edmonton. She has sat on numerous boards including the Koerner Foundation and the Edmonton Arts Council. She was the first Chair of the national Magnetic North Theatre Festival, an organization she helped to found, and was an instrumental part of the leadership team that helped to revive the festival in 2019.

In July 2019, Heather was honoured with the Vancouver Now Representation and Inclusion Award at the Jessie Richardson Theatre Awards, for her work at The Cultch. Heather has also been honoured with the City of Edmonton Business and the Arts Award, for Excellence in Arts Management, and the Mallory Gilbert Leadership Award, for sustained, inspired, and creative leadership in Canadian Theatre.

ABOUT URBAN INK:

Based in Vancouver, Urban Ink Productions creates, produces and disseminates original theatre by Indigenous and Culturally Diverse artists. Across Canada, Urban Ink is putting the power in the hands of Indigenous and Culturally Diverse artists to tell their own stories from their own unique voices. Founded in 2001, Urban Ink has always been a company where Canadian stories are told. Today, under the passionate artistic direction of Corey Payette, our company goes even further, promoting Intercultural understanding, igniting conversations from coast to coast, and celebrating the rich history of its land by bringing communities together in a National conversation that affirms diversity as a shared Canadian value.

ABOUT THE CULTCH:

Since 1973, The Cultch (formally the Vancouver East Cultural Centre) has been one of Vancouver's most diverse and innovative arts and cultural hubs. The organization operates three theatrical venues, a gallery, and various ancillary spaces in the heart of East Vancouver. The Cultch offers dynamic contemporary programming in theatre, dance, music, and the visual arts, bringing world-class cultural presentations to thousands of citizens each year through its own programming and through providing rental opportunities for community users. Our purpose is to provide a venue for performance that serves a diverse and engaged public and provides space for artistic experimentation and development, building an audience for local companies and presenting cutting-edge national and international work.