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### The return of KUUMBA 2024, Toronto's largest Black Futures Month festival, celebrates Afro-Canadian culture with local and international artists

The month-long festival begins February 1 and includes Canadian queen of R&B *Jully Black*, *New York Times* bestselling author *Angie Thomas* and the launch of KUUMBA 365, a new initiative celebrating Black culture year long

**Toronto, ON** – KUUMBA, Toronto's longest-running month-long celebration of Afro-Canadian culture, diversity and creativity, returns in **February 2024** with a vibrant collection of multidisciplinary programming featuring artists from Toronto and around the world, including trailblazing Canadian Queen of R&B **Jully Black** and *New York Times* bestselling author **Angie Thomas**.

This year's future-focused festival, presented by TD Bank Group through the **TD Ready Commitment**, will capture the spirit of raising the voice, symbolizing the exhilaration of joyful expression. [Harbourfront Centre](#) will weave the vibrant tapestry of Afro-Canadian culture through a harmonious blend of music, spoken word, dance, visual art exhibitions, film screenings and breaking. Uniting community and sparking exchange around the creative and intellectual achievements of the Black diaspora, KUUMBA cultivates an inclusive atmosphere celebrating Black artists.

"Beyond offering thrilling programming for all to enjoy, we are committed to providing a platform to nurture meaningful conversations about the Black experience. KUUMBA 2024 will spotlight the boundless potential of the future in Black arts and culture," says Iris Nemani, Chief Programming Officer, Harbourfront Centre.

KUUMBA 2024 will also see the launch of **KUUMBA 365's** inaugural presentation centred on spoken word and literary arts. KUUMBA 365, in partnership with **The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery**, is a new, annual initiative celebrating Black culture all year long, welcoming three new artists each February to explore and create works through the Black cultural lens. This year's KUUMBA 365 cohort, **Dwayne Morgan**, **Randell Adjei** and **Paulina O'Kieffe-Anthony**, have documented their creative processes which, along with their final works, will be presented as part of KUUMBA 2024. The next group of artists commissioned for KUUMBA 365, whose works will be presented as part of KUUMBA 2025, will be announced on February 1, 2024.

Programming highlights of this year's KUUMBA 2024 festival include:

- JUNO Award-winning singer and Canada's Walk of Fame inductee **Jully Black** headlines the festival with a dynamic performance at the Harbourfront Centre Theatre, bringing her powerhouse voice and limitless charisma to the stage with a special guest opener Aqyila;
- Some of the best international breaking stars heading to the Paris 2024 Olympics come to Toronto to compete in an adrenaline-pumping, head-to-head breaking competition at the **Rock Harder Breaking Competition**, sure to leave spectators on the edge of their seats;
- Audiences can be part of a creative work unfolding on stage with **Why Black Women Whisper**, a live, poetic spoken word piece that explores the pain of what Black women go through when they speak up and what happens when they can't. Directed and produced by Harry Jerome Award of Excellence in Entertainment and Bob Marley Day Award recipient **Anne-Marie Woods**.

"At TD, we believe in the transformative power of storytelling through the arts. It can share lived experiences, connect people from diverse backgrounds and spark meaningful conversations about the past, present and future," says Robyn Small, Senior Manager, Philanthropy, Sustainability & Corporate Citizenship, TD Bank Group. "One of our goals through the TD Ready Commitment, our corporate citizenship platform, is to support organizations and initiatives that foster a sense of belonging and amplify diverse voices in the arts and culture sector. We're so proud to support Harbourfront Centre's KUUMBA 2024 in celebrating Black and Afro-Canadian artists across disciplines and inspiring the next generation of talent that will help shape the arts industry for years to come."

KUUMBA takes place at various venues at Harbourfront Centre **February 1–29**. Registration and tickets are available at [HarbourfrontCentre.com](https://harbourfrontcentre.com), in-person or by calling the Harbourfront Centre Box Office at (416) 973-4000. For more information and programming updates, visit [HarbourfrontCentre.com](https://harbourfrontcentre.com).

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**About Harbourfront Centre**

Harbourfront Centre is a leading international centre for contemporary arts, culture and ideas, and a registered, charitable not-for-profit cultural organization operating 10-acres on Toronto's central waterfront. Harbourfront Centre provides year-round programming 52 weeks a year, seven days a week, supporting a wide range of artists and communities. We inspire audiences and visitors with a breadth of bold, ambitious and engaging experiences. We champion contemporary Canadian artists throughout their careers, presenting them alongside international artists and fostering national and international artistic exchange between disciplines and cultures.

**About KUUMBA**

Harbourfront Centre's KUUMBA, presented by TD Bank Group, is Toronto's largest and longest-running Black Futures Month festival. Since 1995, KUUMBA has been a vital platform for celebrating Black history and Black futures, embodying joyful expression and exploration through the vibrant integration of artists, creators and audiences via music, theatre, spoken word, dance, visual arts and more. This month-long festival, taking place annually in February, transcends historical narratives of trauma and repression, uniting communities and sparking exchange around the creative and intellectual achievements of the Black diaspora. Cultivating an inclusive atmosphere that centres on meaningful dialogues and celebration, KUUMBA recognizes the paramount contributions of Black creators who are shaping the future of art, culture and society.

**About The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery**

The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery is Canada's leading public gallery devoted exclusively to contemporary visual art. It is a vital forum for the advanced artistic culture of our time and offers exceptional facility and professional support to diverse living artists while also engaging equally diverse audiences. The Power Plant pursues its activities through exhibitions, publications, and public programs that incorporate other areas of culture when they intersect with visual art. For more information, please visit [thepowerplant.org](https://thepowerplant.org).

**KUUMBA 2024 FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING**

## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### **Find. Your. Voice**

Angie Thomas (USA)

February 1 at 7pm, Harbourfront Centre Theatre

Through an evening of inspired words and laughter, author of the highly acclaimed #1 *New York Times* bestseller *The Hate U Give* Angie Thomas invites the audience into an intimate conversation on the power of finding your voice. Thomas gives context to the culture, politics and movement that motivates her, inspiring the next generation of community changemakers and cultural pioneers. After the keynote, audiences are invited to a Q&A with the literary icon, followed by a book signing.

## MUSIC

### **Jully Black and opener Aqyila** (Ontario)

February 17 at 7:30, Harbourfront Centre Theatre

With a voice that can “boom like a canon,” JUNO Award winner Jully Black headlines this year’s KUUMBA Festival, bringing her trademark groove, soul and R&B sounds that have made her a platinum-selling recording artist and one of the CBC’s “25 Greatest Singers Ever.” Audiences can expect a clutch of her Canadian Top 40 singles and popular songs, like “Rally’n,” “Seven Day Fool” and “Sweat of Your Brow,” including new tracks from her latest album, *Three Rockets and a Slingshot*.

## BREAKING COMPETITION

### **Rock Harder**

Breaking Canada (Canada, United Kingdom, USA)

February 3 at various times, Lakeside Terrace and Brigantine Room

In this head-to-head breaking competition, international breakers heading to the Paris 2024 Olympics are coming to Toronto to compete for cash prizes and to win the top titles at Harbourfront Centre’s first-ever Rock Harder Breaking Competition. Participating competitors will first take part in the Preliminaries earlier in the day, moving to the all-out Rock Harder Final Battles later that evening. Prepare to be electrified as the world’s most talented B-boys and B-girls come together on the floor for an adrenaline-pumping showcase of one of the world’s fastest-growing sports.

## SPOKEN WORD

### **KUUMBA 365**

Randell Adjei, Dwayne Morgan, Paulina O’Kieffe-Anthony (Ontario)

February 1-29, South Hallway and online

Three artists respond to The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery’s Fall 2023 exhibitions in a video for the inaugural edition of KUUMBA 365. Artists Randell Adjei, Dwayne Morgan and Paulina O’Kieffe-Anthony chose one or more works and responded through the Black cultural lens using spoken word. Their creative process was documented through diary entries and personal interviews.

### ***Why Black Women Whisper***

Anne-Marie Woods (Ontario)

February 4 at various times, Fleck Dance Theatre

*Why Black Women Whisper* is a poetic, multi-genre piece performed in spoken word, combining storytelling and performance with a backdrop of African rhythm and drums. The story confronts the impact of racism and

the systemic barriers placed on the voices of Black women and the efforts instituted to silence them. How does that affect relationships, love, identity and belonging? The title is a metaphor that speaks to the pain of what Black women go through when they speak up and what happens when they can't.

## VISUAL ARTS

### ***(Screaming)...into the void***

Aaron Jones (Canada), Tiffany J. Sutton (USA)

February 1–29 at various times, Marilyn Brewer Community Space

*(Screaming)...into the void* is a compelling visual arts exhibition that explores themes of Black identity, the complexities of existence and the depth of shared human experience through lens-based media. Using interwoven and multilayered images, photography, collage and portraiture, each artist will present intimate works that offer a narrative of collective identity, each piece contributing to an ongoing dialogue on the complexities of existence in a dismissive world, inviting viewers to engage with art that transcends traditional boundaries.

### **...into the void**

Aaron Jones (Canada), Tiffany J. Sutton (USA)

February 3 at 1pm, Marilyn Brewer Community Space

Join a roundtable with award-winning multidisciplinary artists Aaron Jones and Tiffany J. Sutton amongst their work in the exclusive KUUMBA exhibition, *(Screaming)...into the void*. This dynamic panel discussion and Q&A offers an opportunity for audiences to hear directly from the artists on their inspirations and motivations behind their unique visual art works, where Jones and Sutton will speak on their Black-centred artistic expression and the power of creative interpretation as a medium in addressing social and cultural dilemmas.

## WORKSHOPS

### **Be a B-girl**

Breaking Canada (Canada), Bgirl Roxy (United Kingdom)

February 4 at 1pm, Lakeside Terrace

Interact and learn from some of the world's greatest female breaking athletes! Start with the basics while safely increasing your confidence with the support of master breakers. This workshop is perfect for beginners and those looking to up their basic breaking skills, from classic toprock, downrock to power moves and freezes. Get ready to get down on the floor and we will see you in the circle!

### **Be a DJ**

Breaking Canada (Canada), DJ Fleg (USA)

February 4 at 2:30pm, Lakeside Terrace

Ready to spin? Learn how to craft your unique sound on the tables with one of New York City's best music producers and DJ's, DJ Fleg. Fleg has shared the stage with artists Talib Kweli, Grandwizard Theodore, Crazy Legs, Rich Medina and many more. Aspiring DJs will learn the fundamental skills and how to pull from different musical influences to layer and mix your sound.

### **Be a B-boy**

Breaking Canada (Canada), Bboy Profo (USA)

February 4 at 5:30pm, Lakeside Terrace

Interact and learn from some of the world's greatest breaking athletes! Start with the basics while safely increasing your confidence with the support of master breakers. This workshop is perfect for beginners and

those looking to up their basic breaking skills, from classic toprock, downrock to power moves and freezes. Get ready to get down on the floor and we will see you in the circle!

### **Crafting Chapters and Verses** (Canada, Jamaica)

February 10 at 1pm, Miss Lou's Learning Centre

A Jamaican poetry workshop facilitated by Maurice Gordon and Marsha Laylor, inspired by the words and style of Jamaica's beloved Mother of Culture, Miss Lou. Participants will read, translate, interpret and perform poetry written by Miss Lou to then create and perform their own poetry written in her trademark style.

### **Meet the Poetic Playwright**

Amani (Ontario)

February 24 at 2pm, The Lookout

Amani will explore our use of language and the importance of words through poetry, music and storytelling as an introduction to drama. Oral storytelling, a prominent tradition in African cultures, can be used to develop language skills with young students or adult participants, helping to develop their listening skills, vocabulary, grammar and understanding of stories and narratives.

## FILM SCREENINGS

### ***The Hate U Give*** (USA)

February 2 at 7pm, Studio Theatre

Join us for a special screening of *The Hate U Give*, a gripping and timely cinematic adaptation of Angie Thomas' powerful novel. Explore the themes embedded within this critically acclaimed film for an evening of reflection, dialogue and community. This coming-of-age teen drama stars Starr Carter, a young teen who must find her voice and decide to stand up for what's right.

### **The Evolution of Breaking** (Canada, USA)

February 3 at 3:30pm, Studio Theatre

Three films offer an authentic glimpse at the heart and soul of a global athletic movement, captivating audiences and educating people on the journey of breaking from street dance to an organized sporting body. You'll gain a deep appreciation for the passion, dedication and innovation that has shaped this dynamic art form into the growing global sport today.

### ***Chevalier*** (USA)

February 10 at various times, Studio Theatre

Step back in time with a screening of *Chevalier* and follow the extraordinary untold story of Black French maestro Joseph Bologne – the first classical composer of African descent to attain widespread acclaim in Europe. This important film puts Bologne, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, in the middle of the cultural conversation, refuting the idea that classical music was long the sole domain of white European males.

### **Strange and Familiar** (United Kingdom, USA)

February 17 at 2pm, Studio Theatre

An evening of cinematic magic, shown through *The Last Tree* and more films. These films have been carefully curated to showcase the power of storytelling and we invite you to immerse yourself in the emotions and experiences they offer.

### **Short Film Fest** (Canada, United Kingdom)

February 18 at various times, Studio Theatre

Join us for an unforgettable evening of cinematic storytelling as we present a series of remarkable short films that will take you on a captivating journey of emotions. From heartwarming tales to thrilling adventures, this screening promises to be a rollercoaster of feelings that will leave you inspired and moved.