

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Harbourfront Centre and DanceWorks Present Arresting New Work Exploring the Immigrant Experience and Cultural Understanding in *Deciphers***

***Toronto's Naishi Wang and London's Jean Abreu examine cultural identity in the pair's collaborative Torque 2023/24 series debut***

Toronto, ON – Harbourfront Centre and DanceWorks present the Ontario premiere of the thought-provoking dance/theatre hybrid *Deciphers*, performed and choreographed by independent dancemakers **Naishi Wang** and **Jean Abreu**, on stage **February 8–10, 2024 at 7:30pm at Harbourfront Centre Theatre, as part of its 2023/24 international contemporary dance series, Torque**. This contemporary duet is an intensely physical cultural exchange between dancers, investigating post-colonial histories, the migrant experience and the transcendent nature of human identity.

“We are delighted to present the debut of two visionary dance artists, Naishi Wang and Jean Abreu, for our 2023/24 season of Torque,” says Nathalie Bonjour, Director, Performing Arts at Harbourfront Centre. “As part of Harbourfront Centre’s Technical Residency program, we had the honour of supporting the development of this timely new work, which demonstrates the extraordinary use of the body as a tool of linguistic expression to fuel cross-cultural understanding and meaningful dialogue in our increasingly complex and globalized world.”

Pairing elements of traditional Chinese and Brazilian dance styles with spoken word, *Deciphers* explores the complexities of communication across cultural divides, drawing from Wang and Abreu’s unique and lived immigrant experiences. Wang grew up in China and trained in martial arts and Chinese classical and folk dances before emigrating to Toronto in 2004 to study dance at the Dance Arts Institute (formerly School of Toronto Dance Theatre). Abreu was raised in Brazil before moving to London, UK in 1996 to study at the Trinity Laban Conservatoire for Music and Dance. Together, the pair explore their dual cultural experiences and vocal traditions in the folk music of their birth countries.

In development since 2020, the 60-minute work is the culmination of virtual and in-person exploratory sessions between the collaborators, resulting in a signature dance/theatre hybrid. Pairing fluid movement and energetic rhythm sequences – a nod to their foundational training in folk dance, Chinese classical and Brazilian traditional dances – the choreography is countered by streams of bilingual spoken word and a minimalist stage design, evoking a raw emotional vulnerability.

*Deciphers* includes lighting design by Lucie Bazzo, visual design by Ivy Wang, sound design by Olesia Onyklenko, dramaturgical advice from Guy Cools and outside eye Ginelle Chagnon.

Following its Ontario premiere, *Deciphers* will be performed in Montreal at MAI (Montréal, Arts Interculturels) from February 14–17 and in Ottawa at the National Arts Centre from February 22–23.

Wang and Abreu will participate in a post-show Q&A on February 9.

To purchase tickets and for more information about *Deciphers* and the complete Torque 2023/24 season,

please visit [HarbourfrontCentre.com](http://HarbourfrontCentre.com).

### **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 DanceWorks**

DanceWorks is an artist-centred choreographic presentation platform based in Tkaronto, colonially known as Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Established in 1977, and led by Founding Dance Curator Mimi Beck until 2023, the organization's artistic vision is now stewarded by Co-Executive Artistic Producers, Dedra McDermott and David Norsworthy. We curate vigorous and intentional choreographic performances that weave skillful physicality with a dedication to artistic practice and research; foregrounding a diversity of thought and expression.

### **About Torque**

Torque is Harbourfront Centre's international contemporary dance series, inviting audiences to immerse themselves in the world of exceptional contemporary dance performed by artists from both international and Canadian backgrounds. Since its inception in 2018, Torque has been presenting an annual season featuring five to six performances, taking place from October to May. These performances are thoughtfully curated to showcase the talents of internationally diverse and Indigenous choreographers. Torque further extends its support to Toronto choreographers through commissions, residencies and presentations, nurturing the creation of new dance works. Through the expressive medium of dance, Torque initiates meaningful conversations surrounding our histories, lands, cultures and traditions.

### **LISTING INFORMATION**

**Harbourfront Centre presents *Deciphers*, performed and choreographed by Naishi Wang and Jean Abreu**

Dates: February 8-10, 2024 at 7:30pm  
Ticket Prices: \$29-\$79  
Address: Harbourfront Centre Theatre, 231 Queens Quay West  
Box Office: [HarbourfrontCentre.com](http://HarbourfrontCentre.com)  
Website: [HarbourfrontCentre.com](http://HarbourfrontCentre.com)

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