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Harbourfront centre

Harbourfront Centre's KUUMBA kicks off with a stacked opening weekend lineup of multidisciplinary events

The New York Times best-selling author **Angie Thomas**, **Breaking Canada's** ultimate breaking competition and a live spoken word performance from visionary artist **Anne-Marie Woods** launch the month-long festival.

Toronto, ON – Harbourfront Centre's KUUMBA, Toronto's largest and longest-running Black Futures Month festival, returns with a stacked line up in **February 2024**.

Presented by TD Bank Group through the TD Ready Commitment, the opening weekend features *The New York Times* best-selling author **Angie Thomas**, who headlines the four-day weekend of celebrations with a special keynote address, inviting audiences to an electric in-person conversation and Q&A on the power of finding your voice (February 1). On Saturday, Feb. 3, **Breaking Canada** brings athletes heading to the Paris 2024 Olympics to Toronto for a head-to-head breaking competition where breakers compete to win cash prizes and top titles and award-winning artist **Anne-Marie Woods** presents her spoken word, multi-genre piece, *Why Black Women Whisper* (February 4).

Audiences can also see famed Nigerian documentary photographer **Stephen Tayo's** first photography exhibition in Toronto, participate in **Bboy and Bgirl breaking workshops** to learn fundamental steps on the floor from professional breakers, enjoy a special film screening of ***The Hate U Give***, the cinematic adaptation of **Angie Thomas'** illustrious novel and take in the stunning visual arts exhibition (***Screaming*...into the void**) co-presented by acclaimed multidisciplinary artists **Aaron Jones** and **Tiffany J. Sutton**, whose works explore themes of Black identity and existence, followed by a dynamic panel discussion and Q&A offering audiences an opportunity to hear directly from the artists.

"We are happy to present programming that captures the spirit of raising the voice, KUUMBA is a celebration for us. It exemplifies all our creative endeavours, long history and hoped-for futures," says Arinola Olowoporku, Lead Producer of this year's KUUMBA.

"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.

KUUMBA 2024 OPENING WEEKEND PROGRAMMING

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Find. Your. Voice

Angie Thomas (USA)

February 1 at 7pm, Harbourfront Centre Theatre

Through an evening of inspired words and laughter, the 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, hosted by award-winning Canadian artist and esteemed poet Britta B., whose work has been featured onstage across North America, such as the Art Gallery of Ontario, CBC Arts, The Walrus Talks, TEDx and The Stephen Lewis Foundation. Following the Q&A, there will be a book signing with Thomas.

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.

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, with 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, who will speak about their joint 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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.