

WELCOME TO THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL'S BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATORY

It is a great privilege to gather and share stories on this beautiful territory, which has been the site of human activity – and therefore storytelling – for many thousands of years. We wish to honour the ancestral guardians of this land and its waterways: the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Attiwonderonk. Today many Indigenous peoples continue to call this land home and act as its stewards, and this responsibility extends to all peoples, to share and care for this land for generations to come.

The Festival is committed to continuously deepening our understanding of equity, inclusion, and anti-racism and we acknowledge that the work of reconciliation is an ongoing journey. The Conservatory seeks to create a respectful environment of learning and exchange where every participant is asked to embrace an inclusive learning experience with an openness of heart and humility and where all those that lead are open to feedback.

The program is actively looking to partner with artists whose talent, energy, commitment and creativity will shape the future of the theatre both at the Festival and across the country.

Call for Submissions

Thank you to everyone who submitted for the 2025 Conservatory. Submissions are now closed and the audition tour has been completed. Callbacks will go out by the end of March. Only those who are invited to a callback will be contacted; if you do not receive an invitation to a callback please feel free to submit again in future.

THE PROGRAM

The Conservatory is a paid two-year intensive which serves as an incubator for artists to flourish and grow alongside and within the professional environment of the Festival's repertory company. It is focused on the development of craft required to tackle text and language-based plays through material rich in character, storytelling, song, dance, fights, and challenging themes. Shakespeare will be at the centre of the exploration, but not to the exclusion of other culturally rich material.

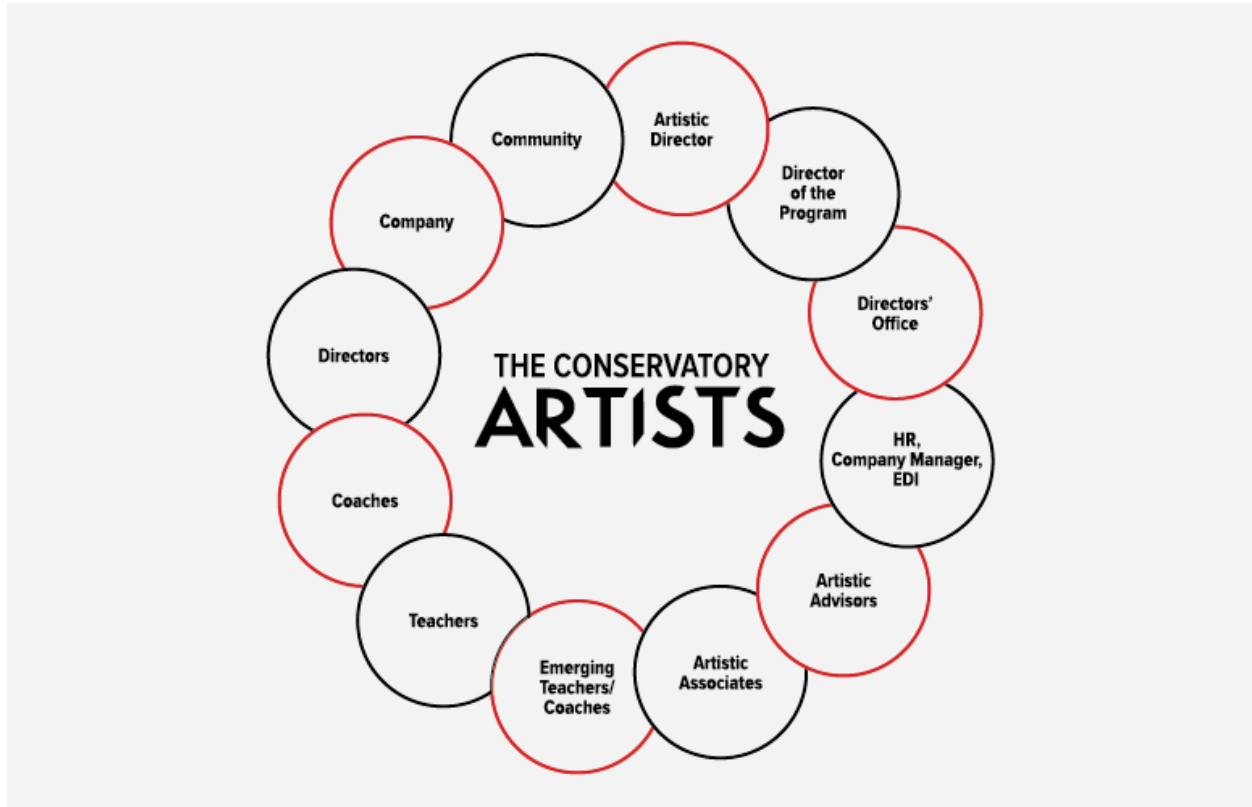
There will also be a focus to support the development of the artist's own voice and work: members of the program will have access to the Festival's numerous resources in the areas of mentorship, as well as archives, the playwriting department, and rehearsal space.

This is not an introductory training program: it is designed for artists who have acquired a foundational training (either from a theatre school, or a non-conventional, experiential learning process) and have professional experience. The ensemble allows for eight participating actors only.

The invitation is such that all artists fully commit to the journey of the training, both in the season and the studio work. Therefore, participants must be interested and available to make the entire two-year commitment as the Festival commits to their development.

CIRCLES OF LEADERSHIP FOR THE 2024 ENSEMBLE

Circles of Leadership support, inform and direct both the content of the program and way the program is delivered. All those participating in the Circles of Leadership (whether directly or indirectly) are involved in supporting the artists of the program.



Artistic Director – Antoni Cimolino

Guides the artistic direction of the Festival, including the vision and direction of the Conservatory

Director of the Conservatory – Janine Pearson

In addition to teaching and coaching, the Director serves as a facilitator to the work of the program

Directors' Office

Works to fulfill the artistic direction of the Festival, including the Conservatory

Anita Gaffney, Executive Director

David Auster, Producer

Heather Cassels, Associate Producer

Natasha Sinclair, Assistant Producer

Jason Miller, Creative Planning Director

Ari Weinberg and Jennifer Emery, Casting Director and Casting Associate

Keith Barker, Director of the Foerster Bernstein New Play Development Program

Franklin Brasz, Director of Music

Esther Jun, Artistic Associate, Planning and Director of the Langham Directors' Workshop

Julie Miles, The Meighen Forum Director

Director of Human Resources, Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and the Company Manager –

Work to create a healthy, safe and inclusive work environment for all Festival members

Director of Human Resources, TBC

Daviorr Snipes, Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Meineka Kulasinghe, EDI Coordinator

Hilary Nichol, Company Manager

Artistic Advisors – Walter Borden, David Latham, Yvette Nolan

These artistic elders have tremendous experience and wisdom. They are resources in teaching, directing and leading conversations regarding the work.

Associate Artists – Keith Barker, Jessica B. Hill, André Sills, Michael Spencer-Davis, Sara Topham

These artists are involved in advising and supporting the leadership and speaking to the direction of the Conservatory, providing feedback on the work, participating in short-term teaching, and mentoring artists in the program.

Developing Teachers and Coaches – tba

These mid-career artists will have the opportunity to develop their pedagogical skills (in specific areas: eg. voice, movement, text) by having the opportunity to work alongside a chosen mentor (who is teaching or directing in the program).

Directors, Teachers and Coaches

A great teacher is a facilitator: one who walks alongside, one who nurtures, not one who wishes to mould the artist in their own image.

Molly Atkinson – *Hedda Gabler*, Director

John Beale – *Le Jeu*

Eric Charbonneau – Choral singing

Antoni Cimolino – *London Assurance*, Director

Rebecca Cuthbertson – coaching on *Romeo and Juliet*

Paul deJong – Co-Head of Coaching; coaching on *London Assurance*

Martha Farrell – Voice

Donna Feore – *Something Rotten*, Director

Dean Gabourie – Folio work

Jane Gooderham – coaching on *Something Rotten*, *The Diviners*

Adrienne Gould - Period Dance and Movement

Krista Jackson with Geneviève Pelletier – *The Diviners*, Directors

Esther Jun – *Cymbeline*, Director

Josue Laboucane – Neutral Mask

Cathy MacKinnon – Co-Head of Coaching; coaching on *Twelfth Night*, *Cymbeline*

Kelly McEvenue – Alexander Technique

Seana McKenna – *Twelfth Night*, Director

Lucy Peacock – onstage work

Janine Pearson – program director; coaching on *Hedda Gabler*

Jennie Such – Singing

Tim Welham – Text and Understudy

Sam White – *Romeo and Juliet*, Director

Jonathan Ullyot – theatre scholar

Company

The company (actors, stage managers, crew, artisans, etc.) all play a role in nurturing and supporting the Conservatory artists.

Community

The community and surrounding area provide the program with an opportunity to explore and participate in experiences outside of the Stratford Festival.

LOOKING to 2025-2026

This condensed program outline is subject to change

First Year - 2025

February (pre-season)

There will be an Intensive prior to the beginning of rehearsals, providing an orientation to the Festival and the community, and to introduce training in voice, movement, music, text, and stage combat.

March – October

During the first season actors will have a role(s) and understudy roles. They will also receive individual and group instruction in voice, movement, the Alexander Technique, singing and text. Training goals in these disciplines will be driven by the artists.

October

Close of the Festival season.

November – December

At the end of the season, artists return to the studio (the rehearsal hall) for six weeks, during which time they will rehearse and present a play.

December – January

Three to four weeks away from the Festival

Second Year - 2026

January – February

Artists return to studio training after a month away from the Festival. During this six-week period, the artists will rehearse and present a play.

March – October

In the second season, artists will be cast in two productions and will once again receive individual coaching throughout the repertory season.

October

Close of the Festival season.

The primary focus of the studio training is centred on the foundational work of voice (including singing), movement and text work which will be delivered in both individual tutorials, group classes, scene study and in-studio production exercises.