



Robert Merritt Awards

2022

Winner Bio & Thank You



Bradon Kleiman

Outstanding Costume Design

I am so humbled and thankful that the costumes of Controlled Damage have won this prestigious award. It was an honour to bring to life this national hero in 360 degree living colour. Of course, it would not have been possible without the tremendous talents of the wardrobe team at Neptune Theatre and the trust and faith of our director. Thank you again to the Merritt Awards and everyone who believed in this show.



Franziska Glen

Neptune RBC Chrysalis Emerging Artist Award

Franziska Glen is an actor, puppeteer and theatre maker living in Kjiptuk/Halifax. She is co-artistic director of Gale Force Theatre, an emerging company that created A Tale On Two Wheels, a children's show that toured to communities across NS in 2021, and Crypthand, a queer historical coming of age story to be produced in September 2022. After completing three international tours with Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia's show The Rainbow Fish, Franziska spent the summer of 2019 at Bread and Puppet as an apprentice puppeteer to their circus and pageant shows. Recently she has been working with Satellite Théâtre (Moncton), The North Barn Theatre Collective (Antigonish) and Bagel and Balloon (Halifax) to create and develop new work. She is thrilled to be this year's recipient of Theatre Nova Scotia's Emerging Artist award.



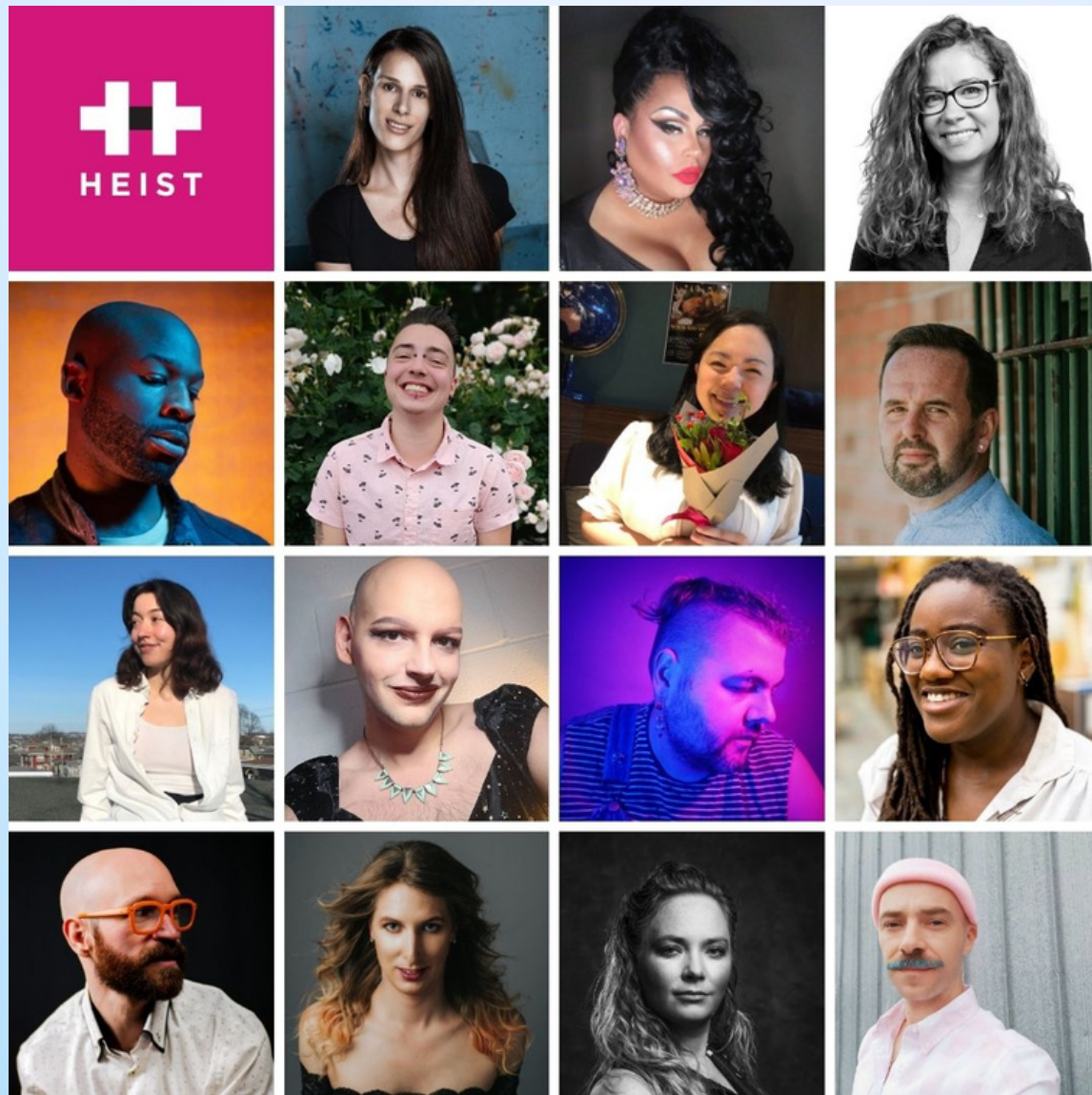
Frequencies, Heist

Outstanding Independent Production

"We premiered the livestream work in February 2021 at the Bus Stop Theatre in Kjiipuktuk Mi'kma'ki / Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the score will be released as an album on November 5th, 2021 in tandem with the National Arts Centre's livestream presentation as part of their Theatre and Physics Symposium. I'm ever grateful to my family and my colleagues at HEIST and beyond. Thank you to my fans who have been "one on one" with me through this, it's an honour to be the guest of your attention."

~Aaron

Play by Aaron Collier with Francesca Ekwuyasi and Stewart Legere



*Aaron Collier with Matthew Downey,
Deonie Hudson, and Lyndsay Labrecque,
Princess' Pride N' Joy, Heist*

Outstanding Projection Design

Princess' Pride 'n' Joy features the beloved character of Princess Edward and her true love Abel T. Suckizone battling a furious cloud of darkness as they attempt to inject a lonely devastated world with a big dose of hope. Told over three separate episodes, this mini-trilogy features special guests, dj and dancing, and a favorite party game to entertain the audience alongside this epic journey!

*Bio from Liveheist.com



Kurtis McAllister

Outstanding Musical Direction

Kurtis McAllister is a composer and multi-instrumentalist who has been heard on stages throughout Canada with his project Kurtis Eugene. Kurtis' first love is composition, and this led him to hone his skills as an audio engineer and producer. He has collaborated with Maritime artists and non-profits to produce everything from full-length albums to podcasts. His passion for improvisation and sound experimentation finds their outlet in his work as a music workshop facilitator and teacher, focusing on the cultivation of creativity and play. The common thread in all of Kurtis' work is in his hope to share the power of music and to inspire a sense of connection, empathy, and joy within our communities.



Rebecca Wolfe

Theatre Nova Scotia Scholarship

Thank you to the jury and TNS for this scholarship, I thrilled and honoured to receive it. This will go toward my Assistant Director internship with Alex McLean and Zuppa Theatre on the final stage of their upcoming show *The Movements*. Thank you to Alex McLean for sitting down for a coffee with fresh-out-of-theatre-school Becca, back in 2019, and inviting her on this project. I've been fortunate enough to work on *The Movements* for the past two years, which has created an invaluable learning experience for me about collaboration, creation and innovation.



Hilary Adams

Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role

Hilary is an actor, based in Punamu'kwati'jk, Dartmouth and feels very blessed to be living in this beautiful province. Hilary is also a singer songwriter that just recently released her debut EP "Ophelia". Hilary is currently in the Stratford Festival Company performing in Hamlet and The Miser. Film credits; Dev (Complusus), Agatha (King & Pawn). Select Theatre credits; Miss Linton Schoolhouse, Malcolm / Third Witch Macbeth (Two Planks), Composer and Snug A Midsummer Night's Dream, Co-Composer As You Like It (Shakespeare Bash'd). Camilla In This Light, Justine Frankenstein by Fire and Penelope In the Ruins, Phebe As You Like It and Company Iliad by Fire (Two Planks). Puppeteer; Old Man and the River (Theatre Direct) The Very Hungry Caterpillar and other Eric Carle Stories, Goodnight Moon and the Runaway Bunny (Mermaid Theatre).



Allister MacDonald

Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role

Allister (Allie) MacDonald is a Queer Cape Breton born Actor based in Toronto. 2020 ACTRA Award Winner for Outstanding Lead Performance for his portrayal of Drag Queen JOAN of Arkansas in the Feature Film Stage Mother (eOne/Momentum), starring alongside Lucy Liu & 2x Academy Award Nominee Jacki Weaver. Theatre Credits (Selected): ROCKY HORROR SHOW as Frank N' Furter (NEPTUNE); ALICE IN PANTOLAND as The Mad Hatter (NEPTUNE); The Cowboy Temptest (Musical Stage Co.); Whale Riding Weather (TheatreOutre); This London Life (The Grand/Morris Panych); Will Shakespeare in Shakespeare In Love (Neptune); Foreign Tongue the Musical (Factory/NSTF); Rope Running Out(Lemon Tree Creations); Kitsault(Price/Pucl); The Weekend Healer(Kazan Co-op)

A very special thank you to Jeremy Webb, the Neptune administration and all of the wonderful artists who helped craft this wonderful musical.



Olivia Rankin

Outstanding Stage Manager

Olivia is a production stage manager based in Kipuktuk/Halifax, NS. She grew up in the Okanagan, BC and upon receiving the YouthVision Scholarship of Canada she moved East to study Technical Theatre at Dalhousie. Olivia has supported award-winning productions and tours across Nova Scotia, and Canada, many of which have been a celebration of female Canadian playwrights and African Nova Scotian history. Beyond theatre she has also produced various short film works, and her short 'Roomies' was selected to be broadcast in CBC's Reel East Coast Series- Season 6. This summer she is happily returning to Shakespeare by the Sea for her second season.



Nigel Shawn Williams

Outstanding Direction

Nigel Shawn Williams is the former Co-Artistic Director of Factory Theatre. He is a four-time Dora Mavor Moore Award winner as an actor and director. His theatre credits as an actor include five seasons at the Stratford and four seasons at the Shaw Festivals, as well as in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver. As a director his productions have garnered critical and artistic success, and he continues to collaborate with theatre companies throughout Canada. Nigel is also heavily active in new play development, either working as an actor, director or a dramaturge. He is also an educator, having taught at York University, University of Windsor, Dalhousie University and the National Theatre School of Canada.



Jordan Palmer

Outstanding Technician

Jordan Palmer ('13) is a Halifax based live audio engineer, working with many live sound companies and theatres including FMAV, Sound Systems Plus, SSi, Neptune theatre and Highland Arts Theatre. Jordan became the Front Of House mix engineer and system tech for the Halifax Jazz Festival in the summer of 2015. He mixes and system techs many other festivals such as the Cavendish Beach Music Festival, Big Red Music Festival, Celtic Colours, Harvest Jazz & Blues (PEI), The Festival of Small Halls, Deep Roots Music Cooperative and the Lunenburg Folk Festival as monitor engineer or A2 for bands like Blue Rodeo, The Tragically Hip, Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings, Hey Rosetta!, Burton Cummings, Simple Plan, July Talk, Stars and Purity Ring, among others. Previously Jordan spent 3 years as head of audio at the Harbour Theatre in Summerside PEI

*Bio from oiart.org



Mauralea Austin

Theatre Nova Scotia Legacy Award

It is a true honour to be the 2022 recipient of the Merritt Legacy award. I am thankful to have had opportunities to create theatre, to bring it to life onstage, to teach what I've gained from my experience and to be part of a vibrant arts community here in Nova Scotia. It is a pleasure to continue to contribute in whatever way I can to the development and practice of theatre.

Mauralea (she/her) has been an actor for over forty years with side excursions into directing, adjudicating and dramaturgy. A major part of her life has also involved teaching acting and voice; twenty years in various programs at Neptune, several years at Dalhousie and Mount St. Vincent and a number of independent workshops, courses and coaching. She is a certified Hatha Yoga instructor and has incorporated that practice into her teaching. As well, she is a CELTA trained teacher for English as a Second Language. She holds an MFA in Theatre and an MA in journalism, and for a while balanced those two careers. Inevitably theatre won and in 1999, she and her family moved to Halifax because it was finally the right time to fulfil her dream of living by the ocean. She co-founded LunaSea Theatre in 2006 appearing in a majority of its productions until 2016, has worked with a number of other theatre companies around the province and is a recipient of three Merritt acting awards.



Peter Sarty

Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role

Thank you for this award. I am thrilled to work in this community and to be rewarded for work that was born from a fresh and healthy working environment. Thank you to those who championed the care and safety of the Fat Juliet rehearsal hall. This is the way we should be working. Prioritizing the health and safety of the entire team. Taking the time to do the necessary work both emotionally and professionally. We can change the way we work and tell beautiful stories warmly and generously. Love you all.



Melanie LeBlanc

Outstanding Performance in a Supporting Role

Thank you to Theatre Nova Scotia and the Merritt Awards panel for this unanticipated award and for recognizing the work done by so many outstanding talents in the theatre industry. I wonder at anyone who created art in the past two years and wholeheartedly applaud all the nominees - I am proud to be among such illustrious colleagues. This award will stand as a reminder of our resilience.

I was part of the most supportive team one could ask for. Ken, thank you for creating space for us and for believing in me. I am honored by your trust. Thank you to everyone on stage and off who brought their beautiful talents to this production. I am truly humbled to be singled out from such an exceptional and meritorious ensemble: Burgandy, Hilary, Matthew, Henricus, Micha, Ursula, Chris, Jeff, Ryan, I admire each and every one of you - playing with you is an award in itself. I am so grateful to be part of the Two Planks and a Passion Theatre family. A part of me will forever be in those fields.

This season presented many challenges, doubts, questions, heart-wrenching moments, bugs (I had never worked with ticks before); it also provided many moments of grace, kindness, vulnerability, breakthrough and inspiring symbiosis. I am a better person and actor because of it. Thank you to everyone who's ever supported me and especially to my partner, for being there and teaching me every day what love is. I have such hope for the future. Let's keep telling stories!



Aaron Collier

Outstanding Original Score or Composition

Thank you to Theatre Nova Scotia and the Merritt Jury for their time, work, and for this recognition. Foremost, I owe much of my success these previous years to my HEIST family Richie Wilcox and Sylvia Bell, you're both powerful and brilliant humans and I'm in debt to you both. To the incredible individuals who've trusted me and given their time and minds to bring our stories to life, your gifts are seen and appreciated. For Frequencies, special thanks to my co-writers Stewart Legere and Francesca Ekwuyasi, and our director Ann-Marie Kerr, dramaturg Richie Wilcox and my special scene partner Sylvia Bell for showing so much love, bravery and care. Extra special thanks to my family; Janet, Lewis, Andy, Chris, and David. For Princess' Pride 'n' Joy, special thanks to the whole digital design team with Matt Downey, Deonie Hudson and Lyndsay Labrecque; you're all beautiful geniuses and the best collaborators one could wish for. Much gratitude and appreciation to the theatre artists and technicians in Nova Scotia who've shared their time, knowledge and talents with me.



Dan Bray

Outstanding New Nova Scotia Adaptation (Playwright)

Dan Bray (he/him) is an interdisciplinary theatre and visual artist, currently living as the caretaker of a spooky mansion just outside Antigonish. He is the artistic director and founder of The Villains Theatre, for which he has written, adapted, and directed many plays. Most recently, his new play *Hänsel und Gretel in: der Garten von Edible Horrors: a Terrible Parable* earned him a 2022 Robert Merritt Award for “Outstanding Adaptation by a Nova Scotian.” He has had the good fortune of working with many of this province’s finest companies, including Two Planks and a Passion, Mulgrave Road, Festival Antigonish, Shakespeare by the Sea, Eastern Front, Phyllis Rising, and Terra Novella. Dan has several new plays in development that are set to premiere shortly across Nova Scotia, but they’re all under wraps for now...!



Kaitlin Hickey

Outstanding Lighting Design

Kaitlin Hickey works with people to tell stories. Recent credits include: Production Manager, Charlotte: A Tri Coloured Play with Music (Theaturtle, European Tour 2019), Set Design, Kiinalik; These Sharp Tools (Buddies in Bad Times), Production Design, Empire Trilogy: Four Sisters (Paradigm Productions), Lighting Design, Empire Trilogy: The Philosopher's Wife (Paradigm Productions), Co-Video Design, Now You See Her (Quote Unquote Collective & Why Not Theatre), Set Design, Noor, (Generous Friend, Aga Khan Museum), Lighting Design, The Children's Republic (Belfry Theatre). She is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada, and holds a B.Sc. from St. Francis Xavier University.

*Bio from volcano.ca



Zomi Tombing

Outstanding Choreography

Thank you to all who showed love to FAT JULIET, and to all who enjoyed the dancing performed by the amazing multitalented cast. Thank you to Stevey for reaching out to me and trusting me to provide my flair for their wonderful play. This was my first time creating for theatre, and the entire experience has been incredible and heartwarming. Thank you Stevey, Peter, Nathan, and Lou for bringing my moves to life, and to Kat and Pat for their guidance, and so many others who have made this job unforgettable. My love for the entire team runs deep! Fat Juliet forever!!



Ensemble, *Schoolhouse*

Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble

The time: 1938. The place: S.S. #1 Jericho School, a one-room schoolhouse in a farming area just outside the fictional village of Baker's Creek. There, a delightful but unmanageable group of children finally meets its match—Melita Linton, an 18-year-old teacher fresh out of Normal School. But Miss Linton soon faces her own challenge in the form of Ewart, a menacing and mysterious juvenile delinquent sent to “straighten out” on a farm after doing time in Battenville Training School. The play chronicles Miss Linton's struggle to connect with a boy cut off from everyone, including himself—and to persuade a cautious and close-knit community to open its arms to this stranger in their midst.

Full of warmth and poignant humour, *Schoolhouse* evokes a way of life shared by generations of rural North Americans, while exploring timeless themes of exclusion, of compassion, of damage, and of hope.

*Bio from valleyevents.ca



Richie Wilcox

Outstanding New Nova Scotia Play (Playwright)

Richie Wilcox is an educator, a fiercely queer artist, and a creative collaborator. He is the founding artistic director of the live art company Heist based in K'jipuktuk/Halifax. In four short years, Wilcox has helped create The Princess Show, Princess Rules, Nature Vs. Nation, New Waterford Boy, FACE and Frequencies. With Heist, Wilcox has also produced and curated the Creative Nova Scotia Awards for the past two years. Wilcox has worked with numerous companies across the Maritimes including Neptune, Festival Antigonish, 2B Theatre, Kazan Co-Op, Opera Nova Scotia and more. Wilcox served as Artistic Associate of Theatre Outre in Lethbridge, Alberta for three years where he helped create numerous original works including the hit play Unsex'd. Wilcox is also currently the artistic director of the 36 year old Ship's Company Theatre in Awokun/Parrsboro. Wilcox is a recipient of the Mayor's Award for Emerging Theatre Artist and a Merritt for outstanding performance in a supporting role.

*Bio from Liveheist.com



Jean-Pierre Cloutier

Outstanding Scenic Design

Graduated from Le Conservatoire d'art Dramatique de Québec in 2009, Jean-Pierre Cloutier collaborated with several theatres and contemporary circus productions in nearly twenty countries in Europe and the Americas as a performer, director and set designer.

In 2016, he directed his french translation of Doug Wright's play Quills, alongside Robert Lepage with whom he also shared the stage as a performer. He co-signed the show's scenography with Christian Fontaine for which they won the Paul Bussière Prize at Prix d'excellence des arts et de la culture de Québec.

Jean-Pierre Cloutier first collaborated with Nova Scotian artists Richie Wilcox and Aaron Collier in 2018. On this occasion, he worked as co-writer, director, set- and lighting designer for Heist Live's production Princess Rules. This delirious queer production later received four prizes and thirteen Merrit Award nominations from Nova Scotia Theatre.

His work stands out by the creation of bold, convertible, and evocative space systems that trigger the audience's sensitivity and creativity.



Jackson Fairfax-Perry

Outstanding Sound Design

Jackson Fairfax-Perry is a composer and saxophonist based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He recently completed a degree in composition under Dr. Jérôme Blais at Dalhousie University, where he also studied saxophone with Chris Mitchell. Jackson has composed for numerous soloists, ensembles and organizations, including percussionist D'Arcy Gray, Vocalypse Productions, and Upstream Music Association. His current projects include a new work for pianist Barbara Pritchard and a piece for the Dalhousie Symphony Orchestra. As a saxophonist Jackson has performed in a variety of styles and with many artists, including Scott MacMillan, Jean Derome, Scott Thomson, Jerry Granelli and the Jubilee Swing Orchestra.

*Bio from quasar4.com



Controlled Damage

Outstanding Production

Analyzing the impact over 70 years later...

The world premiere of Controlled Damage at Neptune Theatre explored the life and impact of Viola Desmond. How her act of bravery in a New Glasgow, Nova Scotia movie theatre started a ripple effect throughout society

*Note from CBC.com