

The Soulepper Academy presents...

THE 2024 SHOWCASE



AUGUST 29-30, 2024

dear village



d'bi.young
anitafrika



Thank you for being with us as we celebrate the culmination of our Biomyth journey with you. Over the past six weeks, we have been immersed in a Decolonial Performance Praxis and Biomyth Making Module guided by the Anitafrika Method. Decolonial Performance Praxis seeks to challenge and disrupt the normative structures and conventions of performance by interrogating the colonial assumptions and biases that underpin them. This approach encompasses the themes, narratives, and perspectives brought to life in performance, as well as the methodologies and practices employed in its creation. The course stands at the intersection of storytelling, decolonial theory, and transformative processes of self and collective. Its primary aim is to reshape the contours of dramatic practice, moving away from entrenched neocolonialist influences and reframing it within a decolonial, intersectional, and liberatory perspective rooted in the African philosophy of Ubuntu—"I am because you are because we are."

The pedagogical foundation of this course is the Anitafrika Method, which focuses on selfhood, creative expression, and community embodiment. Developed over fifteen years and central to my PhD research, the Anitafrika Method is a transformative, decolonising approach to performance and pedagogy.

I created this framework to systematize the socio-political consciousness inherent in the theatre training I received from my mother, Anita Stewart, and other Black womxn theatre mentors, including Amah Harris of Theatre in the Rough, ahdri zhina mandiola of b current theatre, Djanet Sears of the AfriCanadian Playwright's Festival, and Alison Sealy-Smith of Obsidian Theatre. Inspired by my mother's drama school thesis—Dubbin Theatre, and grounded in Black feminist thought, the method aims to transform how theatre practitioners are trained, how they understand their craft, and how they relate to society through their craft.

The culmination of this module is the creation of Biomyths, a multi-disciplinary form of storytelling that mythologizes aspects of personal biography while integrating various elements of theatre to craft a unique narrative for community sharing. This process demands a reflexive, critical, and imaginative engagement with personal histories, mythologies, and social consciousness. It challenges artists to channel their creativity, personal experiences, and societal insights into a foundational work that fosters self-expression, collective understanding, and Ubuntu.

To Ru, Belinda, Ben, Alicia, and Haneul: You are each uniquely and profoundly courageous! Thank you for mentoring me in the ways of living over these past six weeks. Thank you also for reminding me of the boundless possibilities of being human and being a storyteller. To Rohan, Sofia, Taylor, Dalton, Gunes, Patricia and Barry: Your presence and creative collaboration were invaluable in this process. Thank you for your generosity and brilliance. To my mother Anita, my sons Moon and Phoenix, and my brother Johari: Thank you for being my family. And to Weyni Mengesha: Your vision is radiant! Ase Ancestors, Orishas, Spirit Guides, and Mentors.

In kindness

d'bi.young anitafrika

Lead Faculty & Curriculum Designer

Decolonial Performance Praxis & Biomyth Monodrama Making Using the Anitafrika Method



About *The Academy*

The **Soulpepper Academy** aims to develop highly skilled theatre artists who are equipped to make significant contributions in rehearsal halls and to the cultural landscape of Canada. Following the program's re-launch in 2021 under Artistic Director Weyni Mengesha's leadership, the Academy has focused on an inclusive and care-based approach to artistic training. Past faculty members have included some of Canada's leading artists: d'bi.young anitafrika, Ins Choi, Ravi Jain, Kim Collier, Gregory Prest, Guillermo Verdecchia, and Artistic Director Weyni Mengesha, who have helped Academy artists develop their artistic voice with original creations throughout the 26-week paid training program.

This year's Academy is focused on musical storytelling and creation. Academy members were chosen for their unique musical talent and their skills as collaborators in musical creation and performance. The Academy curriculum will be taught through rehearsals, classes, studio intensives, and workshops, led by renowned artists such as Ins Choi, d'bi.young anitafrika, and the Bad Hats theatre ensemble.

The cohort will also headline Soulpepper's mainstage production of **Alligator Pie**, a joyous and musical family show based on the celebrated children's poems of Dennis Lee. Originally created by Academy alumni Ins Choi, Raquel Duffy, Ken Mackenzie, Gregory Prest, and Mike Ross, the return of this beloved holiday show will feature new contributions from the 2024 Soulpepper Academy.

Artistic Director Weyni Mengesha, a graduate of the inaugural class, and Executive Director Gideon Arthurs, a notable leader in Canadian artistic training (National Theatre School) continue to champion the renewed principles of the Soulpepper Academy. Soulpepper's ambition to be a civic leader and provide a supportive home for all artists is brought into focus through the Academy, and it has played a significant role in the development of generations of Canadian artists and arts leaders since 2006.



The Evening's Schedule!

**RUARIDH
MACDONALD**

Brain Eating Amoeba

BELINDA CORPUZ

Tandaan - Remember

BEN KOPP

Alien Jazz

INTERMISSION

ALICIA BARBAN

La Ragna

HANEUL YI

The Language We Speak

TALKBACK

Credits

STORYTELLERS, COLLABORATORS, & CAST

Alicia Barban • Belinda Corpuz • Ben Kopp • Ruaridh MacDonald • Haneul Yi

FACULTY & DRAMATURG

d'bi.young anitafrika

CREATIVE TEAM

STAGE MANAGERS

Taylor Cumming & Sofia Di Cicco

SOULPEPPER TEAM

ADMINISTRATION

Weyni Mengesha - Artistic Director & Faculty

Gideon Arthurs - Executive Director

Rohan Kulkarni - Director of Education & Community Engagement

Luke Reece - Associate Artistic Director

Ahlam Hassan - Education Coordinator

Jacqui Arntfield - Community Activator

PRODUCTION

Patricia Vinulan - Production Manager

Leslie Hernandez - Technical Director

Rhett Costin - Assistant Technical Director

Nick Beardsley - Assistant Technical Director

Jasmine Knox - Senior Production Manager

Special thanks to all Soulpepper and Young Centre staff for their support of the Soulpepper Academy.

House and Stage technicians employed by the Young Centre for the Performing Arts are represented by Local 58 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

Ruaridh MacDonald



Ruaridh MacDonald is a multi-disciplinary Theatre Artist and Musician. He was born and raised on Treaty 4 Land in Regina, Saskatchewan. He was born 2 weeks late, with a half finished face. He continues to cultivate that initial energy to this day. He has worked as an actor, music director, sound designer, composer, writer, set designer & personality hire since he graduated from Sheridan College's Honours Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance Program in 2017. His antics have been appreciated at Globe Theatre, Persephone Theatre, Caravan Farm Theatre, Victoria Playhouse Petrolia, Musical Stage Company, and underfunded indie theatre spaces all over the country.

SHOW INFO:

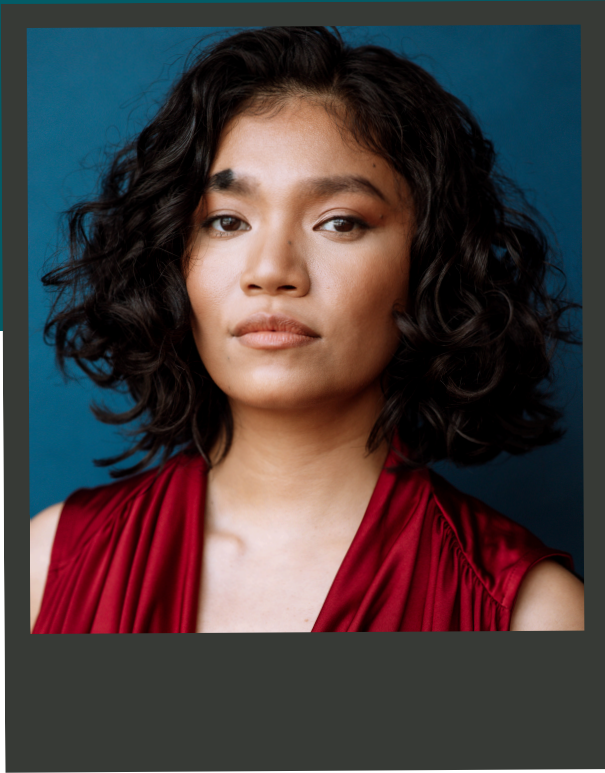
Brain Eating Amoeba

a local actor struggles to find meaning in the midst of creating a solo piece.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

My practice is rooted in the mission to entertain and educate simultaneously. My work is driven by a desire to awaken humanity to itself and the world around us - which tends to wake me up in the process. The Anitafrika Method emphasizes freedom through self-exploration and interpersonal engagement which has profoundly reshaped my perspective, urging me to bring my entire self into the creative process. I've come to realize that what I once perceived as imperfections are, in fact, my superpowers. This work has challenged the conventional notion of professionalism that often demands the exclusion of personal aspects from artistic work. Instead, it celebrates the integration of our whole selves, encouraging a more authentic and inclusive practice.

Decolonizing my theatre practice has had me confronting and rethinking the social conditioning that has shaped how I engage with art making and capitalistic expectations. It involves a conscious effort to dismantle these inherited frameworks and create art that genuinely reflects a multitude of perspectives and experiences—especially those that we may have been conditioned to abandon. My creative process is guided by a commitment to doing what feels right rather than what might be expected or commercially viable. Theatre, as I see it, is inherently a collaborative art form. Building a show is akin to assembling an ensemble, a reminder that we, as the human race, are an ensemble ourselves.



Belinda Corpuz

Belinda Corpuz is a Filipina-Canadian multidisciplinary artist based in Toronto. Her EP, *All I Am*, has garnered national radio-play, including features on CBC Radio. She is a member of multi-award-winning group, Tita Collective. She was featured in ACTRA's 2024 Asian Performer Showcase. She is thrilled to be a part of the 2024 Soulpepper Academy cohort. Belinda holds a BMus in Performance - Jazz Voice from the University of Toronto. Selected Acting: *Dear Rita* (Tweed & Co), *Ms. Titaverse* (Tita Collective), *Ursa: A Folk Musical* (Tweed & Co, Uncommon Folk Collective), *As You Like It* (Canadian Stage), *Tita Jokes* (Tita Collective), *Lady Sunrise* (Factory), *Hilot Means Healer* (Cahoots), *Prairie Nurse* (Factory/Thousand Islands Playhouse); *Lola's Wake* (Canadian Film Centre). Upcoming: *Alligator Pie* (Soulpepper)

www.belindacorpuz.com / [@belindacorpuz](https://www.instagram.com/belindacorpuz)

SHOW INFO:

Tandaan - Remember

(pronunciation: Tan-da-án)

What does it mean to remember? To sort through the roots and branches of your memories and being, to try to understand yourself - who are you, where you come from, how you came to be, where you are now, and where you are going?

These are the questions Manang tries to navigate as she navigates healing within an unexpected loss. Sorting through the liminal space of her memories, Manang moves through worlds and states of being, both familiar and unfamiliar, flowing through a non-linear journey of remembering. In hopes of rediscovering connection once more with herself and the world she lives in, to find a path towards healing.

Trigger Warning: This piece explores themes of loss, grief, and colonialism.

Written by Belinda Corpuz

Dramaturgy by d'bi.young anitafrika

Additional credits and contributions:

Alia Rasul - Cultural Consultation
Malcolm Connor - Bass Loop Compositions

Additional music and sounds:

- Unnamed Sacred Ibanang Chant, sung by Paulina Corpuz (2020 Archive)
- "Clouds" by Reservoir
- Maria Ressa, Filipina Journalist, Activist and Nobel Prize Winner
- Ben Corpuz, my father, Activist and Community Organizer (2023 Archive)
- Archival recording of Cardinal Jaime Lachica Sin from the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution
- Original poem by Belinda Corpuz, translated & recited by Paulina Corpuz (2018 Archive)

ARTIST STATEMENT:

My name is Belinda Corpuz. I am a multidisciplinary artist - actor, singer, musician, writer, and theatre creator. I am Filipina of Ibanag and Ilocano descent, and member of the Filipin* Canadian diaspora. I was born in Manila, grew up in Scarborough, and now live in Tkaranto - all these places inform who I am and how I move through the world.

Currently my arts practice is driven by curiosity, compassion, and a deep yearning to learn from and connect with the world I live in, and the community of people and living beings of whom I live alongside.

As I continue to grow and evolve, I root myself in the core values of integrity, honesty, and humility, returning to them as I navigate creating art from a place of decoloniality, intersectionality, oppression-awareness and trauma-informedness. In the pursuit of community-building, and fostering connection through collaboration, I strive to actively listen, learn from, and give space to everyone I collaborate with. To ensure that we are empowered to safely play and expand with reciprocity, equity, and togetherness.

My creative process grounds itself in my cultural lineage as a Filipina and member of the Filipin*-Canadian diaspora. It informs my exploration of self and the stories I share. The diverse communities and intersectionalities of my culture and diaspora continually shape who I am, making me accountable to how I thoughtfully honour them in my arts practice.

Creating within the Anitafrika Method has allowed me to grow and expand, to be brave and rigorous in my practice, while being kinder and softer to myself within the process. It has expanded my capacity for art-making. It has inspired me to reimagine the way I tell stories, how to ground myself and my storytelling in a liberatory practice. One that does not shame, but rather uplifts and empowers.

In this journey I am reminded that we are all interconnected. Although my piece is a monodrama performed in solo form, it was created within community, and with community in mind. Because without community, I would not be the artist I am today.

As I grow as a human and artist, I am understanding that to decolonise is to honestly challenge the oppressive systems that have conditioned our ways of being and creating. To practice sharing power with others, instead of having power over. Of being aware of how you may cause harm (even if it's unintentional), to be accountable if and when you do, to learn from this and to work to prioritise the safety and equity of others. To deconstruct what colonialism has taught us, so we may be closer to what it means to be liberated.

I hope to cultivate an arts practice that truly grounds itself in decolonization, because that is absolutely urgent and sacred, especially in the world we live in today.

Maraming salamat, thank you:

- To d'bi.young anitafrika for your boundless generosity, support and guidance throughout this transformative process. Thank you for reminding me to trust myself and my work.
- To my family, for your love and belief in me. This is for you.
- To my partner, Malcolm Connor, for listening and holding me throughout this process. Thank you for allowing me to use your beautiful bass compositions in this piece.
- To Alia Rasul, for your generous guidance and cultural consultation in the use of the malong throughout this piece. Maraming salamat mare.
- To my mares, the Tita Collective - you inspire me everyday. Thank you for your sisterhood and love.
- To my ancestors, everyone who came before me and will come after, thank you for guiding me and leading me here - in remembering you, I remember myself
- To Weyni, Rohan, Luke, Robyn, Julia, Frank, and everyone at Soulpepper for this dream of an opportunity to grow and expand. Thank you for believing in me.
- To Alicia, Ben, Haneul, Ru - thank you for your friendship, compassion, humour and empathy. Thank you for listening, for holding even the most vulnerable moments with incredible care. I'm so grateful to be on this journey alongside such amazing people and artists.

Dedication: To my mother, Paulina Jocelyn Balisi Corpuz. I am here because of you. Salamat. Mahal Kita.

Ben Kopp



Ben Kopp is a composer, actor, and musician originally from London, Ontario. He is a 2019 graduate of the Toronto Metropolitan University BFA Acting program. After the success of his original musical, *Over Again*, Ben wrote the music and lyrics to *Killing Time: A Game Show Musical*, which earned three Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations, including Outstanding New Musical.

SHOW INFO:

Alien Jazz

"Alien Jazz" follows Ben after he has left Earth, performing the blended genre of alien jazz elsewhere in the universe. Through an old VCR that Ben uses to remember, he visits old stories, characters, and songs, all while insisting that he doesn't miss home.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Over the last six weeks I really feel like I have sort of just...arrived at this. And that makes me really happy.

So much of theatre making to me was thinking of "big ideas", or "strong concepts". Basically, what do I think would make a good show? What do I think makes good art? Going through this process with d'bi has been liberating in taking that intellectual pressure off. Because there's a lot of pressure in that. You could have the greatest concept for a show in the world (maybe a world where The Beatles never existed and you're the only one who remembers them, just spitballin' here), and when you write it, it's absolutely soulless.

This work really comes from the inside out, but it doesn't stop there. We started in a place of looking inwards and connecting your creations to your own personal experiences, but what I love about the anitafrika method is how you then take your own personal experiences and mythologize them, expand upon them, and use your imagination with them. To unite the personal and the imaginary in this way has been extraordinary, and a new way of creating that I will carry with me forever.

I hope today you connect with my piece, even in the smallest way. I have really put my love for music, the piano, and the other-worldly at the forefront. I hope it's surprising to you, and even a little familiar. If you leave thinking "I wonder if Dairy Queen is still open" that's OK too. I won't be hurt, I love a Blizzard™ as much as the next guy.

Endless thank yous to d'bi anitafrika for being such a kind and illuminating leader. Thank you to Belinda, Alicia, Ru and Haneul for their inspiring work. Thank you to my sisters, my parents, and my Grandpa Jack. Most of all, thank you Margot, my everything.



Alicia Barban

Alicia Barban is a theatre artist originally from Ottawa. As the daughter of ex-diplomats, Alicia has lived, worked and travelled all around the world. After being exposed to arts & culture on a global scale, she is especially passionate about Canadian Theatre and the voices of Canadian artists. Alicia has collaborated as a performer on many new Canadian pieces, including Charlotte Corbeil-Coleman & Hawksley Workman's 'Almost a Full Moon' at The Citadel Theatre, 'Dead Reckoning' by Lezlie Wade & Scott Christian, and most

recently, 'Beeautiful' by Brett Dahl & Qasim Khan with Bad Hats Theatre. Alicia is also a proud arts educator and has been teaching voice, creative development, music and theatre for over a decade, to students of all ages. Other credits include Bessie in 'The Drowning Girls' (Guild Festival Theatre), Dyanne in 'Million Dollar Quartet' (Mayfield Theatre); Rizzo in Grease (Wintergarden Theatre); The NewsRevue Sketch Show (London, UK); Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' (Sentosa Theatre, Singapore); Hope in 'Urinetown' (Assembly Theatre, Edinburgh).

SHOW INFO:

La Ragna

Lately, I've been looking to connect with a younger version of myself: one who knew no bounds to her own creativity, and who had little understanding of fear. Fear is learned. And I've spent years limiting myself, and my art, because I was scared.

Inspired by the hours I spent with my imagination in my childhood backyard, this piece centres around a folktale, but it also examines self-perception & perfectionism, our relationship with risk, and how sometimes when you look to accept yourself - warts and all - your eczema heals on its own.

I hope that this story sweeps you up with a magical sense of play, but can also remind you that by liking what you see in the mirror, you'll see others more clearly, too.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

My name is Alicia Barban. I'm an actor, musician, theatre maker and arts educator. But I also love to draw, to dance and to cook.

I was encouraged to be creative from a young age, whether it was painting on shells in my basement, writing speeches about beaches on my box computer, or crawling around like Gollum and scaring my grandmother. I'm lucky - my parents also shared their love of consuming art with me: frequent gallery visits and seeing the Lion King musical four times, reading books voraciously, and listening to Billy Joel over and over until we knew all the lyrics to 'We Didn't Start the Fire.' And ever since, making and consuming art has always felt magical.

When I was little, I wished to be a witch more than anything - to have magical powers, to heal, to awe, to transform. Years later, on the cusp of entering the professional industry, an educator told me I'd only ever play witches. And look, she wasn't half wrong. I've loved playing complex characters, whether they're antagonistic or not, but the comment stung at the time, especially as a young woman, who wanted to be valued in a very specific way, in a very specific world...

My career as a professional performer has been varied and unique, for which I'm grateful. I've explored plenty of styles of expression and forms of performance. I've worked all over the world, and consumed art on a global scale. I've produced theatre in development, and have been an arts educator for years, working with other young professionals - looking to understand the practice of art making from many angles. I purposefully put myself in spaces with incredible risk takers, and have had the great pleasure of collaborating on amazing new pieces. But I wasn't always brave enough to put my own creations out there. I didn't have much faith in myself. I made a very convincing case that I was just an interpreter and I didn't have anything unique to say - I didn't have the ability. This slowly turned into a need to please other people, to make foolhardy attempts at perfection, and to fit myself into other-people-shaped holes. And when that wasn't achieved, I'd hide. I was scared.

The little version of myself - the one who wanted to be a witch? - she wasn't afraid of anything. She had complete faith in herself, and celebrated all her uniquenesses - she could be a princess one day, and a goblin the next. In recent years, I've been looking to embrace that version of myself: the creative, curious, nine-year-old weirdo. I'm trying to be braver, to get it wrong, and to get back up and try it again. Not only has this approach allowed me to harness a more creative self who boldly shares her voice with others, but I've become a better collaborator, educator and interpreter as well.

I said earlier that I like to cook. It's the Italian blood - we love to eat, and to share food with others. And any good host makes their guests feel welcome, whether accommodating dietary restrictions or curating a comfy atmosphere, or giving the space for people to be themselves, together. My Nonna was an excellent cook, and a natural storyteller. And not for the purpose of making 'art,' but to share in a moment with others, to recount a memory, to give advice, to make someone laugh. I think about her all the time, and especially while I'm making things. Those kinds of human experiences feel like magic, don't they? I want to practice art like that...

And when I look at what I create, I see an eclectic combination of music, visuals, movement and story. I'm drawn to natural inspirations and whimsical aesthetics. I like observing things from multiple angles, in the light and the dark. And I hope to be honest when I show and share myself, so that other people can feel seen, too.

When I really think about it, if making art is just practising magic... then I got my wish.

Haneul Yi



Haneul Yi (he/him) is a Korean-Canadian actor-musician, music & vocal director. As a performer/MD, he loves to veer away from the Western piano-centric sound and focus on an earthy, rhythmic, guitar-centric sound. His music is his language, integrity & honesty. Recent Performing credits include *A Year With Frog & Toad* (Capitol Theatre), *Alice In Wonderland* (Bad Hats), & *Once* (Thousand Islands Playhouse). MD'ing credits include new works *Noche Buena* and *Kabilang Buhay*.

SHOW INFO:

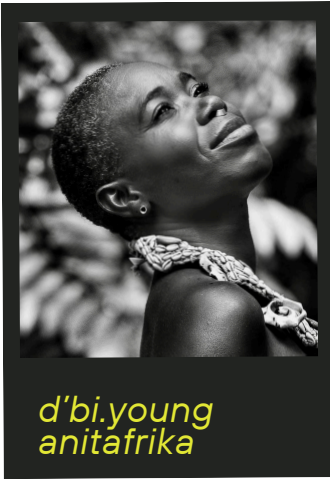
The Language We Speak

'The Language We Speak' examines the inability to express oneself at times in life. In those times, we come back to the common denominator of the community: breathing, music, emotions. We resonate and 'ring' with each other through the fear, hope, guilt & love.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Haneul Yi (he/him) is a Korean-Canadian actor-musician, scholar, son, husband, music & vocal director. As a performer/MD, he loves to veer away from the Western piano-centric sound and focus on an earthy, rhythmic, guitar-centric sound. His music is his language, integrity & honesty. It is led from a place of joy and play. Joy is his guiding compass in all creativity and permeates through all of his life. As a Korean, his heritage is a well of creative and cultural offerings. Veering away from Capitalistic and unconsciously common approaches, focusing on what is urgent & sacred in his personal life and culture is what he wishes to focus on in the upcoming years.

FACULTY BIO



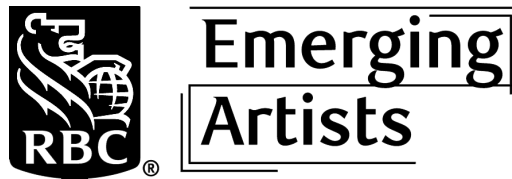
d'bi.young is a playwright-performer, director-dramaturge and activist-educator, who creates, embodies, and teaches decolonial praxis. Culminating their PhD in Black womyn's theatre at London South Bank University (LSBU), their research centres on the emancipation of the oppressed self, through theatre making. d'bi.young developed the Anitafrika Method—a nurturant Black-queer-feminist pedagogy of transformation—offering arts practitioners globally, an intersectional framework of knowing, doing and being. A widely anthologised Siminovitch Playwright Prize finalist, three-time Dora award winner, and founding Artistic Director of Watah Theatre, Spolrusie Press and Ubuntu Decolonial Arts Centre in Costa Rica, d'bi.young has authored twelve plays, seven albums, and four poetry collections—headlining poetry & literary festivals, theatre seasons, and academic conferences globally.

Most recently they have held lectureships at Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance and LSBU as a decolonial theatre practice, leadership & education specialist. Utilising the Anitafrika Method, they design courses that reframe playwriting, devising, acting, performance, directing, dramaturgy, theatre design & curriculum development from an African-Xaymacan epistemological, ontological, cosmological, ethical, & aesthetic perspective. d'bi.young is lead faculty at Soulpepper and Obsidian's theatre training programs and lectures in the theatre department at the University of Victoria on the traditional territory of the WSÁNEĆ (Saanich), ləkʷəŋən (Songhees), Wyomilth (Esquimalt) peoples of the Coast Salish Nation.

Support for the Soulpepper Academy

THE SOULPEPPER ACADEMY IS SUPPORTED BY RBC EMERGING ARTISTS PROJECT, POWER CORPORATION OF CANADA, AND THE GENEROSITY OF SYLVIA SOYKA, KINGFISHER FOUNDATION, AND CANADA ARTS TRAINING FUND. THANK YOU!

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