

SELECTED PRESS CLIPPINGS

Mayor's Lunch for Arts Champions honours emerging, established and innovative artists, including some with a UCalgary connection

By Emily Aalbers, Faculty of Arts

March 20, 2019



University of Calgary alumna Meghann Michalsky BA'14, was among those connected to the university who were honoured at the recent Mayor's Lunch for Arts Champions. *Photo courtesy Meghann Michalsky*

Attend. Promote. Invest. These are the top three things Mayor Naheed Nenshi says we can do to support arts in Calgary. His annual luncheon, hosted in collaboration with Calgary Arts Development, has a long history of bringing together the arts and business sectors. Initially launched in 1993 under the Calgary Professional Arts Alliance, this lunch continues to support emerging, established and innovative artists through seven award categories. Every year the University of Calgary is proud to have connections to a number of recipients, whether they are alumni, students or faculty. As an institution who plays an integral role in training, educating and supporting the arts and artists in Calgary, it is rewarding to see them recognized by this community. Dr. Richard Sigurdson, dean of the Faculty of Arts, says, "The Mayor's Luncheon for Arts Champions is always an outstanding event, highlighting the importance of arts to the life of a city. The economic impact of the cultural community in Calgary is huge, but even more important is the inherent value of culture: life-enhancing, entertaining, defining of our personal and collective identities. "The Faculty of Arts is especially proud that great faculty members, such as Vivek Shraya, and outstanding graduates, like Meghann Michalsky, are able to be celebrated at the Mayor's Lunch for the contributions they make to enhancing our city."

Recipients include:

Vivek Shraya, associate professor in the Department of English, received the ATB Financial Healing Through the Arts Award for her multidisciplinary work creating films, books, and songs that explore and interrogate the complex effects of racism, homophobia, and transphobia on mental and physical health.

Peter Schryvers BA'06, MEDes'10, received the Mamdani Arts Leadership

Award for his work leading the Beltline Urban Murals Project. He has facilitated a dozen stunning murals in the Beltline that have inspired and activated the neighbourhood.

Meghann Michalsky BA'14, received the RBC Emerging Artist award for her incredible level of artistic output, her impressive motivation for growth and change, and her determined and productive investment in the Calgary community.

Michalsky, the first contemporary dancer to be recognized by this award, says she's excited about what this award could mean for contemporary dance in the city: "I hope this recognition helps elevate contemporary dance not only in Calgary, but on the national stage."

She says receiving this award from the Mayor's Lunch and the Calgary community is especially meaningful: "I'm born and raised in Alberta, attended an Alberta university, and continue to spend my time in this amazing city. To be recognized by the Calgary community means a lot to me." When asked what advice she would give to current students Michalsky says, "Success is defined by you, don't let others define it for you."

She Said So | Review by Xstine Cook and Medina Dennie, published Nov 2nd, 2018

A mother-daughter team, and lovers of art go to a show at the Fluid Fest.

We are not dancers. We don't do dance, we have not studied dance, we attend dance when a relative is dancing. "How hard can it be to write a blog about a dance show?" We thought. The answer: hard.

ReAWaken by Meghann Michalsky

Xstine: Wisps of manufactured fog drifts through the space with an oily hue. Medina expresses discomfort with a disparaging sound. She has sensitivity to physical states. The piece begins. 3 Dancers in non-matching costumes that seem to be made from natural fibres, and of muted colors, pulse and breathe and flicker across the stage, staying close, moving not in sync, but as one. At some point, intense red lighting makes my ancient still-in-denial-about-a-prescription eyes cross. Six dancers flicker and pose. Their breath, ragged, percussive, forms part of the music. The choreography is staccato, mechanical, my mind turns to the industrial revolution, the human struggle to tame the earth. The women's bare feet, planted on the ground, as their bodies wave and pulse together. We watch them, cut off from their struggle, which they fight on their own.

Medina: Was very cohesive and in synch with the three dancers. I liked how they styled their hair to look like it was wet and loose.

Dance Notebook: Project InTandem presents thoughtful, new choreography

By Stephan Bonfield, Calgary Herald Published on November 10th, 2017

Young artists like Michalsky and Moquin often bring impressive pedigrees with long lists of teachers and performance experiences. They give us a chance to learn how an emerging generation of artists might view their contemporary culture. Best of all, we get to see how they channel that creative energy into an art piece that suggests the future of dance.

These are youthful works with lots of ideas but are still very mature.



This weekend the Pumphouse Theatres plays host to new works by Sylvie Moquin (Vital Signs) and Meghann Michalsky (Residue), two rising young choreographers who bear scrutiny in a growing Calgary contemporary dance scene. Their Project InTandem involved 15 young artists from various fields, including playwright /dramaturg Matthew Hall, combining their talents to create the new works.

The first piece, Residue, explored individuality and identity in the face of

pressures to conform to the influence of mass media. The work could be more appropriately understood as a struggle simply to escape the isolation some of us feel on social media.

It was a fine narrative and Brenna Heer and Cassandra Bowerman danced it well. They have great core strength, a strong grasp of the movement language and athleticism. Michalsky's ideas start with small movements and then gradually take shape into longer phrases.

Residue co-creator and co-director Matthew Hall provided a thoughtful voice-over, emphasizing the many pressures of conformity at the cost of individuality. He writes with an intensity that both dancers internalized in how they used the stage. Their energy came in contained bursts of athletic movement freedom. They would windmill their arms while moving mostly in diagonal directions throughout. The themes of social smothering in the text seemed to present the dances with a chance to break free by exploring more active movement as the piece continued.

In the end, Bowerman and Heer provided a hopeful conclusion. All our struggles for an authentic identity can only come from great effort in our creative lives.

Calgary emerging dancers step up for tandem performance

By Aaron Chatha, Metro Published on Wed November 08, 2017

To keep emerging talent in Calgary, we must give artists a platform to explore and grow. That's the impetus behind Project InTandem – two back-to-back multi-disciplinary dance performances going up this weekend. Created by a set of artists who have trained and explored the festival scene, the two shows offer a unique eye not only into human connection, but potentially what the future arts stars of Calgary can do on a local stage, without having to take their talents out of province to find work.



Residue

Created by Meghann Michalsky and Matthew Hall, Residue questions one's sense of individuality, identity and perception in a society that demand conformity.

The journey is about connecting with oneself, coming to terms with a fearful future and being okay with sitting and silence and being with yourself.

“Our process and the movement creation came a lot from trying to recreate a cyclic thought that you can't turn off in your mind,” said Michalsky.

“It ends with them finally being able to turn that off.” The piece features two dancers who double as film actors. Footage projected over their performance, along with voice over, to support the narrative.

Emerging artists

The dancers and choreographers involved in the show aren't new – they're on their way up. Hall said there's not a whole lot of platforms for dancers at their level in Calgary – which is why the talent often leaves elsewhere to find work.

With this show, these choreographers hope to add to the scene – convince talent to stay, and show Calgarians that there's some beautiful work being put together that's worth seeing and supporting.

“I believe this show offers a very intimate moment in time,” said Moquin. “Hopefully people will see a little of themselves in both works, and hopefully it will touch a chord for them. They’re showcasing very real, human moments and we want to share that.”

Students and alumni create interdisciplinary piece for Dance Montage

By Aurélie Maerten

Published November 20, 2014

Students and alumni collaborated on the interdisciplinary Dance Montage production of *(Mis)Communication*, choreographed by Meghann Michalsky, directed by Matthew Hall with music composed by August Murphy.



Photos are by Wojciech Mochnej

Last fall, dance student Meghann Michalsky, BA '14, drama student Matthew Hall and music student August Murphy shared the stage in *Aesop's Fables*, the first interdisciplinary performance of the School of Creative and Performing Arts. One year later, the three artists came together on their own to create a new performance piece, called *(Mis)Communication*, that will premiere at Dance Montage 2014 Nov. 20-22.

“*Aesop's Fables* really intrigued me,” says Michalsky. “It showed me how collaboration with other disciplines can add more layers to movement.” When the call for choreographers came, Michalsky contacted Hall. “We always knew we wanted to do a show on our own,” says Hall, who is directing the piece. “Dance Montage offered the opportunity to do this.” Later on, Murphy was approached to

compose the music.

(Mis)Communication (see the video trailer) can be described as physical theatre, a dance piece which includes drama elements and in which the music creates an atmosphere.

The entire process of creating a collaborative work was both challenging and rewarding. The team went back and forth several times juggling ideas, themes and choreographies. “We are all very headstrong in our own fields,” says Michalsky. “Every time we would meet up and discuss the piece, we would really push each other. That was the hardest thing, but it turned out to be the best thing.”

“Because we’re not necessarily familiar with each other’s disciplines, we would ask questions. It really forces you to come up with a solid reason why something belongs in the show,” adds Murphy. “The piece is a lot more cohesive because of that rather than if we had all gone our separate ways and mashed everything together hoping it would work.”

Creating a piece together is more than just collaborating our disciplines. It’s discovering ourselves and each other in new and exciting ways and finding a balance that works for everyone,” says Hall. “There is so much to be learned for actors to be working with dancers and musicians, and vice-versa.” With this collaborative work, the team wants to set an example. They hope to influence more people to create and work together.

“All the resources and opportunities are here. There are so many students with different skills in the school, use each other as outside eyes to create better work,” says Hall. “

“This is just the beginning,” Michalsky says, adding they hope to develop the work further into a full-length performance piece.