



News Release

Common Boots Theatre and Bad New Days are presented with the annual Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant

Toronto, May 28, 2024 – The **Ontario Arts Foundation (OAF)** and the **Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)** are delighted to announce that [Common Boots Theatre](#) and [Bad New Days](#) are this year's recipients of the annual \$25,000 **Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant** for their production of *Last Landscape*. This annual grant recognizes advances in theatrical design and the promotion of environmental sustainability in live theatre. The grant was presented today during the press conference announcing the nominees for the *44th Annual Dora Mavor Moore Awards presented by the Romano D'Andrea Foundation*, held by the TAPA at Meridian Hall in Toronto.

About *Last Landscape*

Last Landscape is an experiment in large-scale puppetry for 7 performers and 1 musician, with sustainability at the core of both its form and content. It explores the relationship to the natural panorama that surrounds us, meditating on themes of extinction and interspecies care, and evoking a sense of nostalgia in the face of environmental collapse. The production will receive its world premiere at **Buddies In Bad Times Theatre** in January 2025, as part of their 2024/25 Season.

Common Boots Theatre and Bad New Days

Common Boots Theatre creates original and collaborative theatre for traditional and non-traditional theatrical spaces. They tell diverse and inclusive stories through comedy, physicality, and play. Their goal is to make theatre accessible for artists and audiences, starting with the rehearsal and creation process through to closing night.

Since 2014, **Bad New Days** has established a unique presence in Canadian theatre creating visually bold and physically innovative theatrical works that explore the complexity of the human condition through a volatile blend of lightness and gravity, drawing from the theatrical traditions of the past and re-imagining them in a contemporary aesthetic context.

Assessment

Common Boots Theatre and Bad New Days' grant was selected by an assessment committee comprised of **Indrit Kasapi** (CHAIR) - Artistic Producer, Theatre Passe Muraille, TAPA Board member; **Anthony Garoufalidis-Auger** - The Climate Emergency Unit, SCALE-LeSAUT Mission Circle; **Denyse Karn** – Executive Director, Associated Designers of Canada (ADC); **Shawn Kerwin** – Independent Stage and Costume Designer; and **Lisa Lambert** – Estate of Raymond M. Ferris.

The committee was unanimous in their choice of Common Boots Theatre and New Day Days as this year's recipient of the Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant. They said:

"This proposal stands out for its groundbreaking approach to sustainability, demonstrating innovation by incorporating elements like real grass and plants into set design. Moreover, they emphasize a

holistic integration of sustainability throughout every aspect of their project, including its thematic content. The jury applauds their proposal and is excited to see the impact of their work in reshaping perceptions of sustainability within our industry."

About the Grant

[Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant](#) is open to Toronto-based theatre companies who successfully demonstrate a proposal for improved sustainability practices in an upcoming production. Advances can be considered, but not limited to, the creation of unique methods of delivering a narrative in live theatre; the development of new and sustainable processes in the construction and striking of a live theatre production; and transforming non-traditional or underused spaces into theatrical venues.

Successful grant recipients will provide a written report following the conclusion of their production, detailing how the grant was used to further sustainability practice in the performing arts, elaborating on elements that worked well and others that require additional consideration. The report will be presented to the TAPA membership with goal of building upon best practices in the industry.

The Ontario Arts Foundation manages the endowment that funds the award. The Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts is responsible for the selection process and convenes a jury to review applications and make deliberations.

About Ray Ferris

This grant is made possible through a generous gift from the estate of Raymond M. Ferris, Toronto artist, mathematician, and statistician. Ray earned a Master of Science degree and early in his career and was on the team of NASA rocket scientists responsible for the successful return of the astronauts from the moon landing. In the mid-1980s, Ray started his own business in Toronto, R.M. Ferris Research Consultants. With advances in technology, he began experimenting with digital art and developed techniques to integrate his love for art, mathematics and computer technology and he collaborated with local musicians, combining art forms. Ray loved the theatre and was an enthusiastic supporter of Toronto's scene.

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To nurture an environment in which theatre, dance and opera may flourish and play a leadership role in the vitality of the City of Toronto. The [Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts \(TAPA\)](#): unites the disciplines of theatre, dance, and opera to celebrate and strengthen the performing arts in Toronto; promotes and advocates on behalf of a large and diverse membership of professional performing arts practitioners to legislators, public and private sector funding bodies, and to the general public; and provides marketing opportunities and professional development services to its membership.

Established in 1991, the [Ontario Arts Foundation \(OAF\)](#) is passionately committed to building long-term support for the arts in Ontario. In 2022-2023, the OAF paid \$4 million in endowment income and \$450,000 in awards and scholarships.

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