



News Release

Guild Festival Theatre presented with the annual Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant

Toronto, May 28, 2025 – The **Ontario Arts Foundation (OAF)** and the **Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA)** are delighted to announce that the [Guild Festival Theatre](#) is this year's recipient of the \$25,000 **Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant**. 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 *45th Annual Dora Mavor Moore Awards presented by the Romano D'Andrea Foundation*, held by TAPA in the Richard Bradshaw Amphitheatre at the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto.

Project Description

Guild Festival Theatre's grant will fund an innovative and environmentally sustainable approach to enhancing the audience journey by introducing a free, immersive shuttle service from major public transit hubs (Guildwood GO Station and Kennedy Subway Station) to their summer performance venue in Guild Park & Gardens, Scarborough. This project will transform the audience's commute into a mobile theatrical prologue, complete with integrated design elements, character performance, and immersive narrative framing. These on-shuttle experiences will extend and enrich the audience's connection to the storyworld before they even arrive at the venue, making their journey part of the show.

The shuttle will run three days a week (Fri-Sun) during the six weeks of our mainstage programming, for a total of 18 shuttle trips, taking as many as 200 cars off the road from patrons who would otherwise drive to Guild Festival Theatre, reducing GFT's overall carbon impact by up to 800 kg of emissions.

Guild Festival Theatre

Guild Festival Theatre is Scarborough's only professional theatre company. Since 2011, tens of thousands of patrons have been enchanted by GFT's contemporary takes on theatre classics at the iconic Greek Theatre in Guild Park & Gardens. Presenting plays, concerts, and special events throughout July and August, GFT is committed to expanding the conventional definition of theatre classics by highlighting stories and artists that reflect the diverse, multicultural community that we call home.

Assessment

Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant recipient was selected by an assessment committee comprised of **Indrit Kasapi** (CHAIR) - Artistic Producer, Theatre Passe Muraille; **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 Guild Festival Theatre as this year's recipient of the Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant. They said:

"The Ray Ferris Innovation and Sustainability Grant Committee is extremely excited by this proposal. GFT is not only addressing sustainability with this project, but we loved the creativity they are using to problem solve the issue of travel for their audiences. As a group, we truly appreciate GFT included research from their previous season, and we found their commitment to consider ways they can make this project replicable for other organizations extremely powerful."

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 2023-2024, the OAF paid \$4.6 million in endowment income and \$500,000 in awards and scholarships.

Ce document existe également en français.