

# MEDIA RELEASE



*For Immediate Release*

## Calgary Poet Laureate Wakefield Brewster Leads Showcase of Local Genre-Defying Black Artists in Black History Month

**January 17, 2024 - CALGARY** – Showcasing a lineup of groundbreaking local talent challenged to flex their creative muscles by curator and Calgary Poet Laureate Wakefield Brewster, Arts Commons Presents unveils the second installment of this season’s TD Amplify series. Bringing together M’Kayla Kongnetiman, A.N., Okechukwu Nnamchi, and Dizzy Walka, ***Wakefield Brewster Presents, Pt. 2*** combines a spectrum of artistic disciplines to create a live show that’s vivid and fresh in celebration of Black History and Black Futures. Join **Arts Commons Presents February 9 & 10, 2024 at 8pm** for the TD Amplify series performance of ***Wakefield Brewster Presents, Pt. 2***, live in the underground **Engineered Air Theatre at Arts Commons**. Learn more at [artscommons.ca/amplify](https://artscommons.ca/amplify).

In Part 1 of *Wakefield Brewster Presents*, kicking off the 2023-24 season of the TD Amplify series this past November, Brewster established an inventively collaborative approach to the cabaret format, fusing dance, classical flute and violin, spoken word and jazz performers. Audience members called it “beyond expectations” from an “outstanding selection of new artists.” *Wakefield Brewster Presents, Pt. 2* offers an entirely new roster of performers to illuminate the Black experience in Black History Month like only a live performance can. Audiences will have a front row seat as dance and music intersect with poetry and spoken word.

*Wakefield Brewster Presents, Pt. 2* features performances by ballet, tap, and jazz dancer M’Kayla Kongnetiman, a first generation Canadian from Suriname, the smallest country in South America, musician and award-winning journalist A.N., fiery spoken word artist Okechukwu Nnamchi from Enugu, Nigeria, and breakthrough Hip-Hop artist Dizzy Walka moved to Calgary from Botswana in 2020. Dizzy has sold out beloved venues like The Ship & Anchor, Broken City, and Commonwealth Bar & Stage. And of course, Wakefield Brewster himself will perform in his newest music and poetry mash-up, *PoeThree*. Born and raised in Toronto by parents originally from Barbados, Wakefield moved to Calgary in 2006 to continue to pursue his artistic career within the hotbed of Calgary’s tightly knit cultural community.

The performers of the TD Amplify series are members of the TD Incubator artist development program, which provides performance and exhibition opportunities in addition to networking, professional development, and mentorship. Each season of TD Incubator is guided by the leadership of the program Fellow(s) with past Fellows including Jae Sterling and Contra, and Sargeant x Comrade. Arts Commons is thrilled to continue this outstanding artistic leadership of the program with Wakefield Brewster, alumnus of the TD Incubator program himself in addition to being the 2022 – 2024 Calgary Poet Laureate.

*“I’m hoping they will utilize this time, on the stage and off, to share a different hue of light than what originally drew us to bring them into the TD Incubator program. A hue that will show off their growth since they came to us,”* says Brewster. *“And in the spirit of the month, I’m looking for the Black artists of TD Incubator to do new things to create awareness, elevation, and celebration of the artistry and contribution of Black artists in our city.”*

Calgary audiences are coming to the TD Amplify series to be among the first to experience where the next wave of Calgary’s arts and culture scene is breaking, to be part of the energy in the underground Engineered Air Theatre lobby afterparty. Artists featured in the series are selected from TD Incubator, an artist mentorship program that focuses on developing local talent and providing them with opportunities to share their powerful art forms with new audiences.

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*"The power of seeing these artists build each other up is undeniable. There is an indescribable thrill I feel when you can see them bring you and the audience around you to a place only attainable through those around them pushing, questioning, playing – it's addictive, it's life-affirming, and it's my most favourite part to share with our audiences because it can't happen without them and it's indeed ALL for them,"* says Joshua Dalledonne, Associate Director of Creative at Arts Commons.

This spring, Arts Commons Presents is thrilled to host two more installments with **Wakefield Brewster Presents, Pt. 3 featuring Noreen Demeria, Kamika Bianca Guerra-Walker, Sandra Sutter, and Fatemah Tara Vahab** on April 26 & 27, 2024 and the final showcase, **Wakefield Brewster Presents, Pt. 4 with Jeremy Furlong, John Gerrard, Kaja Irwin, and Chloe Stankowski** on June 7 & 8, 2024. Learn more at [artscommons.ca/amplify](https://artscommons.ca/amplify).

Arts Commons Presents wishes to express our sincere appreciation to Naming Partner TD Bank Group as well as our friends at the Canada Council for the Arts.

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**Arts Commons** is the steward of the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada located in the heart of downtown Calgary. For over 35 years, it has been a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians. It is home to six resident companies, including Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary. It houses six gallery spaces, five theatres, and the Jack Singer Concert Hall, and promotes local, national, international, emerging and established artists with a focus on inclusion, diversity, accessibility, and equity.

**Arts Commons Presents** invites you to discover the transformative power of the Arts. As the programming arm of Arts Commons, the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada, Arts Commons Presents is one manifestation of this mandate, achieved through the programming and presenting of our in-house series: BD&P World Stage, Classic Albums Live, National Geographic Live, TD Amplify series, as well as special presentations and our outdoor pop-up series, ArtsXpeditions. Through this work, we are able to do our part to further enrich our city, as well as create opportunities for Calgary-based artists to perform, exhibit, reach new audiences, and grow on a multitude of levels.

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