

Dance in Vancouver:  
3rd Annual Re-Centering/Margins Creative Residency Studio Showing  
Program - November 27, 2021 @ 4pm  
Scotiabank Dance Centre

*Program notes below, artist and host bios follow*

## Jennifer Aoki

*In the Woods* (working title and work-in-progress)

Choreography & Dancer: Jennifer Aoki

Composer & Musician: Cait Nishimura

Mentor: Mariko Tanebe

Writer: Carolyn Nakagawa

This explorative journey between two Japanese Canadian artists uses technology to collaborate in real time despite being on opposite sides of the country and in two different time zones. They are working together to establish a shared artistic language through which they are deepening their relationships with their local forest, each other, and themselves. Despite the distance, their remote collaborative sessions feel intimate, vulnerable, and inspired as the creative energy flows freely back and forth.

The creative process involves excursions to the forests in BC and Ontario for the purposes of engaging in Shirin-Yoku, a Japanese tradition of forest bathing. The artists share their observations and express their experiences through their respective art forms and respond to each other in real time through a series of improvisations. Feeling the dynamic energy of the forest from one of the last remaining old growth cedar trees to the tiny fungi appearing on the forest floor. Expanding their awareness of surroundings and exploring this expansion through sound and movement. As they support each other through collaborative improvisation, they also challenge each other to spend time in the unfamiliar sensations, movements, and sonic realms.

## Nick Miami Benz

*Pluma*

Music: Jezebel by Sade

Mentor: Sparkle Plenty

Writer: TBA

This is a piece with three separate dance works, and spoken word inspired by feathers.

## Sophie Dow

Choreography & Interpretation: Sophie Dow

Text & Sound Design: Sophie Dow  
Mentors: Olivia C Davies & Cole Alvis

Projections: Connie Oreamuno & Fezz Stenton  
Film/Videography: Vitantonio Spinelli & Sophie Dow  
Editing: Sophie Dow

A window into portions of a creative process for parasol chapter x; a new solo by Sophie Dow.  
Narratively, parasol chapter x is:

Somewhere in a space between the present living world and a reconciliation of past reality, we meet character q.

q is seemingly booted into a purgatory of sorts. Illustrated as an over-the-top red-washed universe, an epic adventure unfolds prior to q's physical death. Overtaken by passion, lust and desires that appeared in the fullness of the life q just lived, we witness a journey through vignettes, memory, obstacles and dance macabre, symbolic of both windows into lived experience and hints of a larger continental genocide.

Steeped in metaphor, identity and historical inklings, this chapter activates reflection on how far one is willing to go in obtaining certain statuses, releasing sets of attributes and preparing for the death of a body and an era.

Special acknowledgements

Maarsii for the generous support for research, mentorship and work-in-progress offerings from:  
Nightwood Theatre - 2021 Ontario Arts Council Recommender Grant  
O'Dela Arts - Matriarchs Uprising Harvest Moon Showcase  
Raven Spirit Dance Collective Choreographers Residency Program 2021

### **Re-Centering/Margins Creative Residency, 3rd Annual**

*Re-Centering / Margins* Creative Residency aims to increase opportunities and professional development for emerging dance artists of colour to create contemporary works with mentoring support that helps more fully realize their artistic visions. This project also supports Dance West Network's mission by strengthening emerging contemporary dance artists in Vancouver for future engagements locally and provincially. Produced by Jane Gabriels, Ph.D. , Executive Director, and supported by project coordinator, Juolin Lee. [dancewest.net](http://dancewest.net)

Thank you to funders: RBC Foundation, City of Vancouver's Art, Culture and Community Services Department, and BC Arts Council.

### **Dance West Network**

The roots of Dance West Network (formerly Made in BC - Dance on Tour) connect BC through dance. Our new name allows the work to reach even further by supporting our efforts to be more inclusive, to centre dance, to facilitate connections between communities and dance artists sharing vibrant practices and experience, and to create collaborations that work towards greater equity for historically excluded dance artists and audiences, offering opportunities for people from all over BC to learn about the arts, express themselves creatively and celebrate a shared humanity through dance. [dancewest.net](http://dancewest.net)

## **Artist Bios:**

**Jennifer Aoki** is a Japanese Canadian dance artist who is grateful to be living and working on the traditional and unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples. She completed her formative dance studies through SFU, receiving a BFA in Dance. Jennifer's work has been presented across Canada, as well as in Seattle, Amsterdam, and Berlin, including Dancing on the Edge, Nah Drahn, 12 Minutes Max, Vines Arts Festival, and Fringe Festivals. Jennifer is Artistic Co-Director of Voirelia and The Body Orchestra.



Photo Credit: Michelle Moore

**Cait Nishimura - Jennifer Aoki's musical collaborator** - is a Canadian composer, musician, and educator based in Waterloo, Ontario. Known for writing nature-inspired, programmatic music, Cait has quickly established herself as a prominent voice in the concert band community. With influences from minimalism and pop music, her work is full of simple yet lush harmonies and themes that linger in listeners' minds. As a lifelong environmentalist, she not only draws inspiration from the natural world but also uses her platform to advocate for conservation awareness and action.

### **Nick Miami Benz**

Nick Miami Benz shapeshifter, storyteller, self. A dancer at heart with their practice centred on how Afro, Indigenous and Latinx cultures express themselves kinaesthetically. Liberation exists in fearless expression of one's self allowing storytelling to be medicine for the mind, body and community. Nick specializes in holistic exercise coaching, using Pilates, Gyrotonic(R) and Yamuna(R) Body Rolling.

Photo Credit: Kristine Cofsky



### **Sophie Dow**

Winnipeg-born Sophie Dow is a multi-disciplinary creative, inspired by dance, music, collaboration and Métis-Assiniboine + settler roots. An avid adventurer, Sophie has a passion for busking, yoga and traveling on top of holding a degree in Dance Performance and Choreography. With a unique list of credits deeply impacting personal process and vocabulary, Sophie's had the great fortune of working with some of Turtle Island's wonderful dance innovators, including Chimera Dance Theatre, Kaeja d'Dance, O.Dela Arts, Carol Anderson & Jeanette Kotowich.



Photo Credit: Raham Isador

Hosts and Facilitators of post-perf conversation

### **Co-Project Lead Bios:**

**Alyssa Amarshi**- Having parents from Tanzania, and of Indo-Ismaili heritage, **Alyssa** has always been interested in diverse types of cultural expression, especially movement and intermodal art. Her passion for performing and expressing grew while she was working with Bollywood dance companies as a preteen. In high school, her friends from the West Indies exposed her to Dancehall and STEP (a form of percussive dance), both of which she continued to explore while completing her BA in Psychology at McGill University. After moving to Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (**Squamish**), Səlilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (**Tsleil-Waututh**) and xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (**Musqueam**) lands (colonially known as Vancouver), she trained with *SOULDiers Dance Company* and *Ketch Di Vybz* where she further fortified her understanding in street dance and love of Dancehall. She has graced the stage with artists such as *A Tribe Called Red*, *Kimmortal*, and *Nanya Music*. She has also creative directed, choreographed and performed in pieces for Vines Festival, Indian Summer Festival, and Vancouver International Children's Festival. Alyssa has also sat on panels for the City of Vancouver and the Reach Gallery. Her vision, through her collective "Her Tribal Roots" is to create more opportunities for artistic expression, rooted in symbiotic collaboration, compassion, and play.

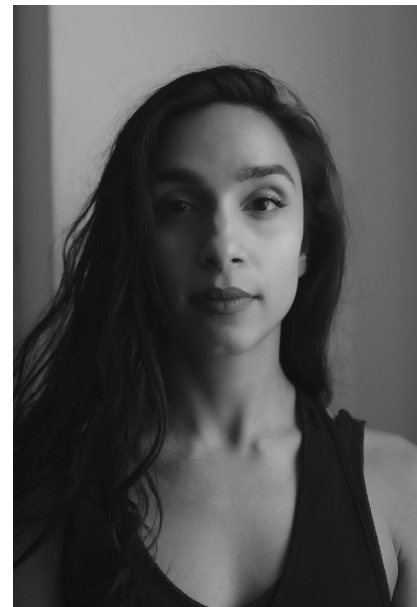


Photo Credit: Emmanuel Etti

**Angela Cooper (Poundmaker)** - I am a fourth-year student at Royals Roads, completing my Bachelor of Arts in Professional Communications. I am a working actor and performing artist. As an Indigenous student in the academic field, I value the opportunities Royal Roads has offered me to empower and strengthen my voice as an Indigenous woman in the communication field.

As an actor represented by Premier Talent Management, I value the support and recognition that my brand has given to Indigenous representation. As a minority, I work hard to create equity and diversity in places where BIPOC members do not feel seen, heard, or safe. I believe any opportunity granted me is an opportunity to shine light and support back to my community.

I value storytelling and authenticity. I believe that empathy is our greatest resource in places of work and play; and listening to understand is more valuable than listening to speak next.

My latest passion is building my intercultural communications. I value empowering holistic dialogue and interaction between cultures. As an Indigenous visitor on unceded Musqueam territory, I believe we are all Treaty people, and we will grow exponentially together when we call each other in compassion, integrity, and honor.

My hope is to recenter the margins and democratize the arts. Everybody create!

All My Relations,  
Angela Cooper

