

Recap of Festival TransAmériques' 18th Edition Weaving Solidarities

“Festival TransAmériques kicked off with a bang this year, serving up sensational performances with sharp sociopolitical commentary. The audience was not spared from the fallout—physical or emotional—whether inside or outside the theatre. It’s also a triumph of hybrid art forms: dance, song, theatre, and media arts intertwine to form a brilliant programme with topical themes.”

— Caroline Coicou Mangerel, *Revue JEU*, May 24, 2024

Montreal, Thursday, June 13, 2024 – For 15 days of excitement and exhilaration, 20 dance and theatre shows brought together over **226 artists from 15 countries** and enthusiastic, passionate audiences at 17 venues across the city. The 18th edition of Festival TransAmériques, which took place from May 22 to June 5, 2024, attracted almost **36,000 spectators**, with a venue occupancy rate of **94%**. There were **43** sold-out performances, and in addition, **12,000** people attended free shows in public space. This exceptional edition of the Festival—the third curated by Martine Dennewald and Jessie Mill—was eagerly supported by the public and received substantial media coverage at both the national and international levels.

“You have to tip your hat to the overall audacity and quality of Festival TransAmériques’ programming, which shone this year thanks to both its consistency and the broad range of productions that were presented.”

— Hadrien Volle, *Scène Web* (France), May 30, 2024

The Festival’s artists created unique spaces that revealed powerful poetic languages and new worlds, exploring a realm of the senses beyond what the eye can see and engaging in dialogue with the more-than-human: ancestors, trees, flowers, landscape, technology. Several shows acted as sounding boards for various forms of contemporary discontent, showcasing long-marginalized voices and bodies in all their glory. Provocative works sought to shake up our collective apathy with the impact of their images, stories, and music, insisting that audiences fully engage with issues related to colonialism, the environment, and justice. On opening night, Lebanon’s Ali Chahrour delivered a work of mourning, love, and healing in ***Told by my mother***, which resonated powerfully with the current devastation of Palestine.



Du temps ou ma mère racontait
© Pierre Gondard

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Multitud © Vivien Gaumand



Spectacular Alliances

At the start of the Festival, a hundred Montrealers took part in *Multitud* by Uruguay's Tamara Cubas. Mostly non-professionals, these lovers of dance and motion learned to move together, to negotiate the rules of playing and living together, and to trust each other. At dusk on three evenings, this horde descended on the Place des Festivals in the Quarter des Spectacles to embody a series of powerful visual tableaux, microcosms of humanity and its impulses. This major free show at FTA 2024 alone attracted over 7,000 spectators.

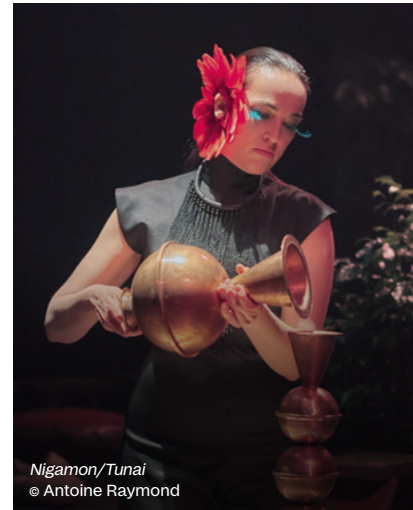
Born of the transnational friendship between Émilie Monnet and Waira Nina, *Nigamon/Tunai* highlighted the connections between the energy transition in the northern hemisphere and the destruction of land in the southern hemisphere, set in a magnificent forest of voices and songs created in Colombia and Quebec. Revolving around trees in peril and a moving mountain, Emily Johnson's *Being Future Being: Inside/Outwards* sought to nurture relationships between beings. The Decolonial Ecology Day at this year's FTA explored the forest as a place that is essential to the development of living creatures, cultures, imagination, and resistance.

Uncompromising Theatre

"FTA was created 39 years ago to offer fans of theatre and dance this kind of galvanizing work from abroad [*Catarina and the Beauty of Killing Fascists*]. Let's hope there are many more to come in the next 39 years."
— Stéphanie Morin, *La Presse*, May 27, 2024

Two major shows from Europe gave festivalgoers a profound jolt. The audience reacted loudly to Tiago Rodrigues's political-philosophical fable *Catarina and the Beauty of Killing Fascists*, breaking the fourth wall at each performance. Spectators gave a rapturous reception to the Black actresses who exploded stereotypes in *Carte noire nommée désir* by Rébecca Chaillon. Two masterful works from Quebec told stunning tales of liberation: *Au cœur de la rose*, featuring the distinctive voice of Pierre Perrault, was adapted by Jérémie Niel and performed by an extraordinary cast, while *Sur tes traces* was a fascinating reciprocal love letter between Dany Boudreault and Gurshad Shaheman.

The Cloud, a theatrical piece with a singular comic sensibility by Atom Cianfarani, Alexis O'Hara, and their dog Brutus, took a tender look at planetary collapse. *asses.masses*, a wild collective experience combining theatre and gaming, enabled audience members to guide each performance, taking turns determining the fate of a horde of revolutionary donkeys. This seven-hour adventure with eating breaks offered a new approach to experiencing theatre.



Nigamon/Tunai
© Antoine Raymond



Catarina and the Beauty of Killing Fascists
© Joseph Banderet

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Carte noire nommée désir
© Christophe Raynaud de Lage

Radiant Women

Powerful words spoken by women were heard throughout the Festival. In *Surveillée et punie*, a choral work of healing directed by Philippe Cyr, Safia Nolin demonstrated remarkable dignity by picking up her guitar and using music to answer the bile spewed at her by online trolls. On the stage of the Monument-National, the divas of *Prophétique (on est déjà né-e-s)*, choreographed by Nadia Beugré, struck a powerful emotional chord with the audience as they revolted against their destiny, refusing the roles assigned to them by others. The rich personal cosmogony revealed in Amrita Hepi's *Rinse* captivated and excited the audience with its many nods to the history of colonization and of dance. In *Gorgeous Tongue*, Lara Kramer and Jeanette Kotowich achieved a powerful act of transmission via an artistic language both subtle and profound.

The Reconstruction of Heritage

While building a small wooden house in a park or other public space with spontaneous assistance from passersby, Sonia Hughes initiated sensitive discussions about the notion of "home" and the question of roots in *I Am from Reykjavik*. The chosen family gathered by Elena Stoodley and Kamissa Ma Koïta in *Survival Technologies* sought a rhythm in the words of their elders and the sound of the drum to which they could dance wildly, without inhibitions, to shake off systems of oppression.

The Circulation and Transmission of Desire

Set against the magnificent backdrop of the Cité-des-Hospitalières chapel, Sébastien Provencher's *Floreus* engaged in dialogue with the works of visual artist Zachari Logan, moving back and forth between the sacred and a radiant eroticism. Surely Clara Furey's most intimate and captivating work to date, *UNARMoured* gave free rein to the erotic and celestial power of bodies, generating a sensory tidal wave. *ODE*, the latest triumph from choreographer Catherine Gaudet, dissected love and false pretenses with mechanical precision, humour, and virtuosity. The Festival's closing work was *Weathering*, a masterful living sculpture, all fluid and skin, whose "sensual cataclysm" made a lasting impression on the audience.

Adapting to the Needs of the Moment

The 18th edition opened in unforeseen circumstances, as the Festival's Headquarters, located in the Agora of UQAM's Cœur des sciences, were surrounded by the encampment of the Université populaire Al-Aqsa, which was established by students in support of Palestine. Through regular communication between the Festival, the protestors, and UQAM, everyone was able to co-exist peacefully during the event. Some FTA Playgrounds activities, particularly the Decolonial Love Circle organized by Amel Zaaza and Karla Étienne, brought occupants of the encampment and FTA audience members together.



Kickstarting Conversations

Providing a hub of discussion for 15 days, the Festival's Headquarters welcomed close to 6,000 people this year. Following the opening ceremony attended by Quebec's Minister of Culture, there were a number of vital conversations about the future of the performing arts: the RQD invited the dance sector to meet with Michèle Chawla, director and chief executive officer of the Canada Council for the Arts, and a meeting between various artistic communities addressed the future of the Grande Mobilisation des Artistes du Québec.

The Playgrounds activities enabled participants to explore the programming in depth and open up other ways of thinking. Two major public talks connected FTA with leading francophone festivals: Tiago Rodrigues, director of the Festival d'Avignon, and Guy Régis Jr., director of the Festival Quatre chemins in Port-au-Prince, spoke about the sense of urgency and ambition that drives them. There was a passionate discussion between Rébecca Chaillon and author-director Amandine Gay, moderated by Marilou Craft. The Festival's HQ also moved to the beat of 17 DJs, both inside and outside, once again enabling festivalgoers to experience memorable nights of music and performance.

This year, FTA welcomed 195 national and international programmers. The Festival's drawing power is increasing, confirming its position as an integral part of the global performing arts ecosystem. It has established itself as an essential space for discovering, thinking about, and promoting artistic work and as a key platform for exporting dance and theatre from Quebec.

FTA IN NUMBERS:

- 71 performances of 20 shows from 9 countries (Australia, Canada, Colombia, France, Lebanon, Portugal, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay)
- 226 artists from 15 countries
- 10 shows created in 2024, including 9 FTA co-productions (*Gorgeous Tongue*, *Floreus*, *UNARMoured*, *ODE*, *Survival Technologies*, *The Cloud*, *Au cœur de la rose*, *Nigamon/Tunai*, *Sur tes traces*)
- 6 world premieres
- 48 Playgrounds activities involving almost 7,000 people (a 14% increase over 2023)
- 195 presenters and programmers from 34 countries
- 202 journalists covering the Festival 67 of whom were accredited
- 1 553 hotel stays generated directly by the Festival's activities
- Over 700 students from 24 schools and universities attending the Festival

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Join us from May 21 to June 5, 2025,
for the 19th edition of Festival TransAmériques!



Festival TransAmériques thanks its partners for their generous support.

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I Am From Reykjavik
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