GRAND ONSTAGE
PLAYBILL



Svāhā!

About The Company

Nova Dance is a defining presence in Canadian contemporary performance, creating ambitious, genre-defying works that celebrate the power of dance to arouse the imagination. Founded in 2008 by Nova Bhattacharya, the Toronto-inspired company brings together artists, movement traditions and lived experience from the diaspora. From intimate solos and interdisciplinary collaborations to large-scale ensemble productions and land-based activations, Nova Dance crafts experiences that invite audiences into worlds of wonder, beauty, and possibility.

Renowned for technical virtuosity, vivid storytelling, and emotional resonance, the company's critically acclaimed works have been presented across Canada and internationally. Nova Dance's repertoire celebrates the complexity of contemporary Canada while expanding the artistic canon, bringing diverse dance forms into dynamic conversation, fostering connection across communities, cultures, and generations, and affirming the capacity of art to cultivate empathy, deepen connections, and manifest more compassionate futures.

novadance.ca
/novadanceca
/novadancetoronto

Nova Bhattacharya,

Artistic Director

Nova Bhattacharya is an award-winning choreographer, performer, and cultural leader whose work has helped redefine the possibilities of contemporary dance in Canada. Known for her distinctive movement language and rigorous physicality her work emerges from diasporic experience, intercultural exchange, and a belief that dance can function simultaneously as ritual, rebellion, gathering, and care. Since founding Nova Dance in 2008, she has created more than 30 original works and collaborated with artists across disciplines and generations with Bharatanatyam serving as a vital thread throughout her work. Through her artistry and leadership, Bhattacharya has become an influential figure in shaping a more expansive vision of Canadian performance. Bhattacharya's impact lies beyond the work itself in the ecosystems she has built around it. Through mentorship and curatorial practice, she has helped cultivate new generations of artists and audiences who see hybridity, cultural specificity, and multiplicity as central to the future of Canadian performance



Svāhā!

Conceived and choreographed by Nova Bhattacharya, ***Svāhā!*** is a rallying cry for unity, and a celebration of life itself. A high-energy spectacle, this rich work fuses nearly 30 distinct dance traditions – from Bharatnatyam to Butoh, Jazz to Salsa – into a singular, joyful experience. A cast of 17 vibrant performers lend their individuality to an intricate and expansive choreography, creating a communal experience that answers the isolation and societal fractures of our times with jubilant defiance. ***Svāhā!*** is an event teeming with life, bursting with color, and centering the compassion of shared humanity. Its original score by tabla virtuoso Ed Hanley and dynamic lighting design by Simon Rossiter heighten the experience, making ***Svāhā!*** a compelling call for community, diversity, and collective wonder.

I am inspired by the eloquence of the human body and the intelligence of the senses. The potential for dance to stimulate people emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually drives my commitment to creating work that exalts the human spirit and expresses ideas that words cannot.

***Svāhā!** is deeply inspired by Toronto, the city where I learned to become an artist; a city with a breathtaking diversity of movement traditions and communities finding ways to express themselves through dance.*

***Svāhā!** emerged from my fascination with ritual and evolved into a love letter to dance: its ability to create community, inspire wonder, and remind us of our shared humanity. The word **Svāhā!** is an exclamation, calling attention to an offering and this work is an offering to the dancers, to the audience, and ultimately to this land where I am honoured to make art.*

***Svāhā!** occupies an important place in our repertoire because it embodies many of the ideas I have been exploring for decades. Bringing together artists from an extraordinary range of dance traditions and celebrating the distinct histories, cultures, and lineages each artist carries. Rather than asking dancers to leave differences behind, **Svāhā!** invites them to move toward one another, creating a new collective language and, perhaps, a new "we."*

Nova Bhattacharya,
Artistic Director

Credits

Produced by Nova Dance in partnership with **Citadel + Compagnie**, with support from the **National Arts Centre National Creation Fund, TO Live, Dancehouse, Indian Summer Festival, SFU Woodward's Cultural Programs, Canada Council for the Arts, Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, Government of Canada's Canada Summer Jobs, Metcalf Foundation, The National Ballet of Canada's Open Space Program, Theatre Direct's Balancing Act,** and **The Theatre Centre.**

2026 Rehearsal Partners**: TO Live's Making Space Program** and **Canada's National Ballet School.**

CITADEL + COMPAGNIE

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS
NATIONAL CREATION FUND FONDS NATIONAL DE CRÉATION

TO Live

Creative Team

Choreographer
Nova Bhattacharya

Original composition and musical direction
Ed Hanley

Sound design John Gzowski
Lighting and set design Simon Rossiter
Costume design Sage Paul & Nova Bhattacharya
Additional Styling and construction Val Calam
Rehearsal Director Anisa Tejpar
Rehearsal assistant Rachana Joshi
Stage Manager Marianna Rosato
Assistant Stage Manager Adele Downie
Creation support Bonnie Kim, Louis Laberge-Côté, Tedd Robinson, Anisa Tejpar
Producer Carolina Rojas

Cast

Nova Bhattacharya
Rajvi Dedhia
Christina de la Cruz
Sofi Gudiño
Mel Hart
Neena Jayarajan
Ern in Motion
Rachana Joshi
Candace Kumar
Nyda Kwasowsky
Victoria Mata
Nivedha Ramalingam
Swadhi Ranganee
Kiru Ratnasingam
Eilish 미정 Shin-Culhane
Irma Villafuerte
Purawai Vyas

Nova Dance Staff

Artistic Director Nova Bhattacharya
Artistic Producer Mel Hart
Financial and Administrative Coordinator Rajvi Dedhia
Mission Control Coordinator Kalaishiga Kalaichelvan

Board

Alysha Addetia, Sumana Collins, Carola Jaque, Carole Logan (Treasurer), Laurie Maher, Sutapa Majumdar, Ross Paton (Secretary), Kiru Ratnasingam (Chair) and Ballu Thakur.

Music Credits

Original composition and musical direction
Ed Hanley

Instrumentation:
Parmela Attariwala, Nova Bhattacharya, Larry Graves, Justin Gray, Ben Grossman, Ed Hanley, Mel Hart (cultural consultant, cypher), Gurtej Hunjan, Shri Madurai R. Muralidharan (Nattuvanga Jatis in Adi Tala), Santosh Naidu, Ben Riley, Purawai Vyas.

Vocals:
Mushtari Afroz, Nova Bhattacharya, Ed Hanley, Neena Jayarajan, Rachana Joshi, Shanthini Kangesan, Bonnie Kim, Judy Luo, Supriya Nayak, Atri Nundy, Suba Sankaran, Malavika Santhosh, Sukruti Tirupattur, Yui Ugai.

Press Quotes

Excerpts of Michael Crabb Special to the Toronto Star

“In the hour that separates it's rousingly cacophonous opening from its joyously freewheeling finale, choreographer Nova Bhattacharya's new work ***Svāhā!*** takes audiences on an imaginative journey into the heart of dance as a transformative experience and a way of bringing people together.”

Indian Summer Festival

“***Svāhā!*** resonated with life, love, and the sheer pleasure of movement, leaving us spellbound and deeply moved. In a world seeking wholeness and abundance, this extraordinary performance provided a beacon of hope and renewal.”

Peggy Baker, Artistic Director, Peggy Baker Dance Projects

“***Svāhā!*** moved me to tears and laughter. The choreography is magnificent in its detail, specificity, virtuosity, tenderness, rawness and musicality...”

The City of Kingston acknowledges that we are on the traditional homeland of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat, and thanks these nations for their care and stewardship over this shared land.

Presented by Grand OnStage and the City of Kingston Arts & Culture Services Department.

Learn more about Grand OnStage at KingstonGrand.ca.

This project has been made possible thanks to funding from the Government of Canada.

The City of Kingston recognizes IATSE Local 471 as the exclusive bargaining agent for stagehands working at Kingston Grand Theatre.
