

Tapestry Opera, Nightwood Theatre and over 70 other artists and arts organisations asked to leave the Distillery

Nightwood Theatre and Tapestry Opera are deeply disappointed to share the news that the lease for our offices and The Ernest Balmer Studio in the Distillery Historic District will not be renewed, after operating out of the Distillery for almost 20 years. As of March 2022, and five months in advance of the signed lease, Nightwood Theatre's offices will need to be vacated and as of August 2022, Tapestry Opera's offices and The Ernest Balmer Studio will need to be vacated. This is despite a letter from Artscape in 2018 confirming a five-year tenancy to undertake studio renovations and upgrades, funded by a grant from the Trillium Foundation.

Tapestry Opera and Nightwood Theatre are founding tenants of Artscape in the Distillery, along with Dancemakers. We are proud of our contribution to establishing the Distillery as a destination for artists and audiences, and as a space to create vital Canadian works. During our time in the Distillery, both organizations have experienced unprecedented growth: dozens of Canadian world premieres, Juno nominations, and award-winning productions that have toured nationally and internationally. We have also supported numerous independent projects through space, resource residencies and subsidized rent.

The decision not to renew leases for long-term artistic tenants was done without consultation.

Michael Mori, Tapestry Opera's Artistic and General Director, said: *"We had faith, given the vital impact we have on the culture of the Distillery District, that the arts would continue to have a home here. In addressing this reality, we are faced with finding a new venue in a city that has already seen numerous small venues and venue operators closed down, threatening the survival of independent dance, theatre, music and opera."*

We're heartbroken that the loss of yet another artistic space in Toronto will impact the many artists and arts organizations who rely on our affordable space to create. We're also distressed at having to interrupt our organizations' seasons at this key time of returning to live productions after almost two years of COVID-19."

Andrea Donaldson, Nightwood Theatre's Artistic Director, said: *"Without the unique presence of artists, the Distillery will become all sheen, no substance. While we are powerless in this situation, we hope that this gross example of cultural extraction offers a cautionary tale, and that Torontonians will begin to assert their will against the decimation of cultural presence, rendering the city we love inhospitable. A change in city policy may be the only thing that can truly address the challenges for a sustainable arts scene in Toronto."*

Both Tapestry Opera and Nightwood Theatre are in discussions with Artscape about alternatives within their venue portfolio, but nothing has been confirmed at this time. Our boards and executive leadership are working together on plans for future facilities that include all possible options. Despite the instability of our studio space, Tapestry Opera and Nightwood Theatre have clear plans forward for this season, and a robust commitment to powerful theatre and opera for Toronto.

Tapestry Opera and Nightwood Theatre request for Toronto residents to consider contacting their city counsellors to help address the ongoing venue crisis in Toronto. An email template, and information about how to find the contact information for your city councillor, is available on Tapestry and Nightwood's websites.