



DanceHouse Announces 2025 Louise Bentall Biennial Award Winners

Emerging B.C. Choreographer Kaili Che is awarded the 2025 Louise Bentall Biennial Award for her work rooted in grief, food, and family lineage.

The Hawthorne Foundation and DanceHouse announced the winners of the Louise Bentall Biennial Award for Emerging British Columbia Choreographers Friday evening at the Vancouver Playhouse before the final show of the 2024/25 season *Diptych (The missing room and The lost door)* by Peeping Tom (Belgium). Like the inaugural award in 2023, the 2025 award financially supports the winning artist with \$10,000 to research, develop, or produce new work. This year, the jury also awarded a second-place winner, who received a cash prize of \$5,000.

Kaili Che, the 2025 Louise Bentall Award winner, is developing *Molds' Lab-yrinth*, an interdisciplinary research project rooted in grief, food, and family lineage.

Ashvini Sundaram was awarded second place for her solo called *CROSSING DEEP WATERS*, which is currently in development. It explores the layered terrain of identity shaped by what is lost, carried, or transformed across geographies and generations.

The award was created in memory of Louise Bentall, who passed away in 2017 and was a long-serving board member of DanceHouse. Louise spent her life working and volunteering for many dance and theatre organizations, in addition to her numerous charitable activities in support of the performing arts and social justice communities of the Lower Mainland. Compassionate, intelligent, and feisty with a keen attention to detail, she gave back to the community with both her actions and words, and this Award honours her memory by advancing support for Vancouver's dance community.

The award applications were juried by a diverse panel of artists, including multi-disciplinary Indigenous artist Quelema Sparrow, dance artist Lee Su-Feh, and the 2023 Louise Bentall Award winner Livona Ellis.

The 2025 Louise Bentall Biennial Award Winner:

Kaili Che 謝祖弘, is an interdisciplinary artist, emerging choreographer, and movement educator based on the unceded lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, colonially known as Vancouver. Her practice centres collaboration, curiosity, play, and vulnerability, exploring themes of climate justice, community, and Asian heritage. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance (with Distinction) from the University of Calgary and is certified in Healthy Dance Practice. Her work has been shared at the Surrey Art Gallery, New Works, and Expanse Festival, and she has collaborated with companies such as Project InTandem, Cloudsway Dance Theatre, and more.

Kaili is currently developing *Molds' Lab-yrinth*, an interdisciplinary research project rooted in grief, food, and family lineage. The work is created in collaboration with a dedicated and diverse team of dancers, designers, and consultants, with in-kind support from The Dance Centre.

"Molds' Lab-yrinth sparked at a family dinner honouring my guong guong's (maternal grandfather) passing. We sat at his favourite Chinese restaurant, dressed in black, surrounded with the odd yet comforting chatter of strangers. That evening, I became fascinated with questions of impermanence, inevitability, tenderness, intersection of grief and connection, navigation of life and death, rituals, and how food often stood at the centre of all of it." - Kaili Che, Molds' Lab-yrinth project documentation

Second Place Winner of The 2025 Louise Bentall Biennial Award:

Ashvini Sundaram is a Vancouver-based contemporary dance artist specializing in bharatanatyam. Her diverse upbringing as a fourth-generation Indian-Singaporean and first/second-generation Canadian has deeply influenced her creative research on migration, its stresses, and its transformations. Ashvini's collaborative works have been presented by prominent organizations, including Tangente, the Dancing on the Edge Festival, CanAsian Dance, and the Dance Centre, among others. She remains a disciple of the acclaimed bharatanatyam danseuse Rama Vaidyanathan, whose artistry is widely regarded for its spiritual depth and ability to bridge tradition with a transcendent experience. This focus on spiritual resonance and the pursuit of inner truth deeply influences Ashvini's own practice, as she seeks to carry this sacredness into her performances, creating a dialogue between tradition, identity, and personal transformation.

Currently in development, her solo work **CROSSING DEEP WATERS** explores the layered terrain of identity shaped by what is lost, carried, or transformed across geographies and generations.

"[CROSSING DEEP WATERS] is inspired by the infinite tides from the shores of India that swim countless dark secrets from when my great-great-grandmother unwillingly left her Tamil-native land. This work explores the physical and emotional consequences of migration, specifically addressing how memory, identity, and grief are carried in the body through generational memory. The performance reflects on what is lost and what is gained when crossing deep waters, both literally and metaphorically." - Ashvini Sundaram, CROSSING DEEP WATERS project documentation

To download imagery, click [HERE](#).

About DanceHouse (dancehouse.ca)

DanceHouse connects Vancouver audiences and the local arts community to the international world of dance by presenting exceptional companies that are recognized for their excellence, innovation, and international reputation. Since 2008, DanceHouse has presented vibrant and inspiring companies from Canada and around the world. In addition to the performances on stage, DanceHouse offers a suite of engagement opportunities and a chance for the general public and local artistic community to engage with the presented artists and their work.

For further information or to arrange an interview about this project, please contact:

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