

THE GINA WILKINSON PRIZE



Collaboration is all. – Gina Wilkinson

The Past 10 Recipients

How has Gina's Prize supported your theatre practice?

Leadership can be lonely and it is possible to lose your faith. To get the "twisties," to borrow a term from the gymnasts. Where am I in time and space? Have I lost my way? Does what I am doing even matter?

The gift of Gina's Prize is recognition that one's work is visible and valued, and maybe, just maybe, contributing to making change in the world. Being recognized with Gina's Prize has reminded me that everything we do, and how we do it, matters.

- **Yvette Nolan**, Saskatoon, Treaty 6 Territory, and the homeland of the Métis | 2021

Gina's Prize has come to mean many things to me. Receiving this prize was an affirmation of the many years of training and dedication put towards deepening my craft as a theatre artist. Especially in a time where theatre practitioners have been wrestling with the designation of "non-essential", this prize is a reminder that we must invest in artists to ensure a future for the performing arts. Not only did this prize help me to reflect on my own core values and what I can give back, it introduced me to a cohort of astonishing arts leaders that I can connect with. Being a part of Gina's legacy is to carry her values forward and her spirit of community building, mentorship, and trailblazing.

- **Jasmine Chen**, The unceded and ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations | 2020

The Gina Wilkinson Prize has provided me with the space to deepen my practice and to seek out additional learning opportunities that continue to strengthen my craft. It has given me the confidence to embrace my own artistry as a creator and director so that I am able to lead with strength and compassion.

- **Anita La Selva**, Toronto | 2019

In a very personal way Gina's Prize granted me a way to be seen in exactly the way I wanted to see myself. The Prize named my aspiration to have my hands on the wheel of my own creativity. It helped identify me as a leader, as one who conducts her work with an open heart, and speaks her ideas with courage.

It also tied me to a sense of purpose towards women everywhere, and their aspirations.

- **Tanja Jacobs**, Toronto | 2018

As a mid-career actor, my theatrical existence was precarious at best - the earth under my feet never firm - because of the tensions between who I am and what was and is on the majority of stages. I sought another land where I would engage with the ever-shifting ground as a dance and less like evading quick sand. This land was Directing.

Practically speaking, Gina's Prize allowed me to pursue a significant seven-month learning opportunity as a young-in-craft director, as it prevented me from going into debt as I would be making a fraction of what I made as an established actor.

This is what Gina's Prize represents to me - a bridge from a woman's established theatre practice to another - and the courage to not only cross that bridge but to build it, and to dare to imagine and create the new land on the other side.

- **Kimberley Rampersad**, Winnipeg, Treaty 1 Territory | 2017

I've always felt like knowing Gina a little, and watching her make the shift I longed to make, was already a win for me. I thought, if I could just borrow a little of her courage, I could do this. I know I'm not alone in feeling inspired by her. To be acknowledged with a prize in her honour felt like affirmation that I was on the right path. To make room for a directing practice, I needed to find the courage to say no to a few paid opportunities to work onstage, and yes to a few opportunities to direct for "a share of the box office." That was an easy choice for the creative heart to make, but it absolutely presented practical challenges. Gina's Prize came to me in a moment when I really needed it.

- **Kelli Fox**, Vancouver, the traditional land of the Qayqayt First Nation, in the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples | 2016
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*The Gina Prize has supported my theatre practice in so many ways. Receiving the award has given me the confidence to double down in pursuing my goal of directing in regional theatres across Canada. I have since directed twice for Theatre Calgary and am invited back for a third go directing *Steel Magnolias* in the spring of 2022.*

I sincerely think that being honoured with this award paved the way for those opportunities. I have gained invaluable experience as a director from those opportunities that I bring back to my community as well as my students as I teach at the University of Calgary. Gina would have been proud, I think.

- **Valerie Planche**, Calgary, Treaty No. 7 Territory | 2015
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Gina's Prize was a transformative moment for me. I had started directing but hadn't found my feet. It was a practice I felt at once at home in, and likewise terrified by. I was excited by the possibilities, but I lacked confidence. The prize came at the exact right moment. I remember receiving words of congrats from folks across the country and I was touched and encouraged. I stood a little straighter, channeled a little more confidence and committed to continuing on this path. No regrets. Much gratitude.

- **Christine Brubaker**, Calgary, Treaty No. 7 Territory | 2014
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Gina was a generous mentor to me and many of us as both an actor and director. There is seldom a show I work on where she is not brought into the room; usually by a fellow artist telling a story about her, or me sharing a piece of her wisdom, or asking myself at a crucial moment What would Gina do? The honour of Gina's Prize propels me to try and work from a beginner's mind, to be brave, open, curious, humble, specific and to have fun in the process. Holding her prize is a constant reminder that leading is giving.

- **Krista Jackson**, Winnipeg, Treaty 1 & the homeland of the Métis | 2013

I was the inaugural recipient of Gina's Prize. It altered the course of my life quite significantly actually. I felt like it was a public confirmation that I should keep directing theatre, and keep striving to lead projects. It also shifted how I viewed my work, suddenly I felt I was part of a national conversation and it lifted my gaze to the rest of the country of female directors. I connected with more directors, more companies, and over the years I've gotten to know some of the other recipients of the Prize. All very rich new relationships. I still feel immensely proud that I received this recognition and believe that it matters a great deal to those who receive it.

- **Ann-Marie Kerr**, Halifax | 2012