

ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

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JOE SLABE ANNOUNCED AS RECIPIENT OF THE 2025 HARRY & MARTHA COHEN AWARD

CALGARY, May 20, 2025 – Alberta Theatre Projects and Calgary's theatre community are proud to announce that acclaimed composer, writer, and musical director **Joe Slabe** is the 2025 recipient of the **Harry & Martha Cohen Award**. This prestigious honour is awarded annually to an individual who has made a significant and sustained contribution to the vibrancy and longevity of Calgary's theatre scene.

The award was presented during the final weekend of *Liars at a Funeral* to a full house of Alberta Theatre Projects patrons and friends. The presentation followed the last evening performance of the sold-out production, creating a celebratory and emotional moment shared by Calgary's tight-knit theatre community.

The Harry & Martha Cohen Award celebrates the legacy of two of Calgary's earliest and most passionate arts champions. Their daughter, Cheryl Cohen, was present at the ceremony to speak about her parents' impact and the importance of continuing their legacy through this annual recognition.

A Calgary-based artist with a master's degree in musical theatre from Goldsmiths College of the University of London, Joe Slabe has spent decades contributing to the city's creative vitality. He is the founding artistic director of Forte Musical Theatre Guild and has written or co-created over two dozen original musicals and revues, many of which have earned critical acclaim and numerous awards.

Among his most celebrated works is *Crossing Swords*, which garnered five awards at the New York Musical Festival, and *The Urban Jungle Book*, winner of the Calgary Critics' Award for Most Promising Collaboration. Most recently, his autobiographical musical *Buy Me a Drink*, Joe was honoured with four 2024 Betty Mitchell Awards, including Outstanding Composition and Outstanding Production of a Musical.

Slabe's work as a musical director spans over 60 productions, and his leadership has created countless opportunities for emerging and established artists alike. His passion for collaboration, storytelling, and mentorship has made him a cornerstone of Calgary's musical theatre community.

"Joe's contributions go far beyond the stage," said **Haysam Kadri**, Artistic Director of Alberta Theatre Projects and last year's Cohen Award recipient. "He lifts up everyone around him. Whether he's at the piano, in rehearsal, or creating something brand new, Joe is a generous and fearless artist. This award couldn't be more deserved."

The Harry & Martha Cohen Award is not administered by an organization, but rather by a dedicated group of artists, volunteers and theatre professionals who come together each year to select a recipient whose work has profoundly impacted Calgary's theatre community.

PREVIOUS HARRY AND MARTHA COHEN AWARD RECIPIENTS

Betty Gibb
Grant Reddick
Margaret Bard and Bartley Bard
Joyce Doolittle
Georgie Collins
Blake Brooker and Michael Green
D. Michael Dobbin
Marilyn Potts
Fred Scott

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JoAnne James
Duval Lang
Gillian Dalton
Hal Kerbes and Kathryn Kerbes
Sharon Pollock
David LeReaney
Bob White
Jock Osler
John Murrell
Valerie Ann Pearson
Dianne Goodman
Clarice Evans
Lynn DuFort
Stephen Hair
Doug Curtis
Patricia Benedict
Mark Bellamy
Patti Pon
Patricia Moore and Sherrold Moore
Kevin McKendrick
Terry Gunvordahl
Carol Dann
Christopher Hunt
Denise Clarke
Haysam Kadri

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About Alberta Theatre Projects:

Alberta Theatre Projects has been a cornerstone of Calgary's arts community for five decades, showcasing the best in live theatre and fostering a vibrant cultural hub for audiences of all ages. With a commitment to artistic excellence and community engagement, ATP continues to inspire, entertain, and enrich the lives of theatregoers across the region.

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