



10 YEAR

LUMINATO  
FESTIVAL

# monumental

Contemporary dance and post-rock music from  
The Holy Body Tattoo and Godspeed You! Black Emperor

By your response to danger it is easy to tell how you have lived and what has been done to you. You show whether you want to stay alive, whether you think you deserve to and whether you believe it's any good to act.

— Jenny Holzer

JUNE 14+15 #monumentalTO

8 pm  
MUSIC STAGE  
*monumental* runs 1 hour and 15 minutes with no intermission

CO PRODUCED BY  
National Arts Centre, Ottawa  
PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, Vancouver  
Adelaide Festival of Arts  
Place des Arts Montréal  
Luminato Festival, Toronto  
Edinburgh International Festival  
BAM for the Next Wave Festival

DIRECTION  
Dana Gingras

CHOREOGRAPHY  
Noam Gagnon and Dana Gingras

MUSIC  
Godspeed You! Black Emperor

PERFORMERS  
Caroline Gravel  
Louise-Michel Jackson  
Kim de Jong  
Shay Kuebler  
Nic Lydiate  
Louis-Elyan Martin  
Esther Rousseau-Morin  
Sovann Prom Tep  
Jamie Wright

CHOREOGRAPHIC REMOUNT & REHEARSAL DIRECTOR  
Sarah Williams

LIGHTING DESIGN  
Marc Parent

TEXT  
Jenny Holzer

FILM DIRECTION  
William Morrison

COSTUMES  
Marilène Bastien

COSTUME ASSISTANT  
Chantal Bachand

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR  
Dave Bourdages

STAGE MANAGER  
Claudia Couture

SOUND  
Yann Dupuis

PRODUCER  
Sarah Rogers

PRODUCED BY  
Animals of Distinction

LIVE COLLABORATION INITIATED BY  
David Sefton

PHOTOGRAPHY  
Yannick Grandmont



*monumental* is an explosion of contemporary dance and post-rock music from Canada's The Holy Body Tattoo and Godspeed You! Black Emperor that shatters the façade of capitalist urban culture.

Nine dancers balance on top of illuminated pedestals that resemble a miniature city. A projected backdrop evokes a gritty urban vision. Live music from an eight piece band echoes through the Hearn.

This June, after a 10-year hiatus, the explosive contemporary dance company The Holy Body Tattoo return to the world-tour circuit, reuniting with Montreal's post-rock legends Godspeed You! Black Emperor to bring their epic collaboration, *monumental*, to Toronto. Together, they hold up a mirror to modern life, exposing mass isolation, oppression, repetition, and despair. Movement turns into metaphor and sound into substance as the human need for intimacy and individuality breaks through the noise.

Following a sold-out run in Vancouver and Montreal and performances abroad, this is a rare opportunity to see Godspeed You! Black Emperor, one of this country's most legendary and influential musical acts, live in performance with The Holy Body Tattoo. Rocking the Hearn music stage, and monumental in name and resonance, this show is as violent, beautiful and cathartic as art can get.

## monumental Pre-Show Talk

With Choreographers Dana Gingras and Noam Gagnon

6:45 – 7:30 pm  
June 15  
Side Room

Much has changed in the last decade, but how has *monumental* endured? Choreographers **Dana Gingras** and **Noam Gagnon**, in conversation with Luminato's Artistic Director **Jorn Weisbrodt**, will talk about reviving The Holy Body Tattoo's culminating work 10 years after the fact, and performing with Godspeed You! Black Emperor.

Presented as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Luminato Festival, June 10 to 26, at the Hearn Generating Station

Luminato is Toronto's global multi-arts festival dedicated to performance, visual art, music, theatre, dance, multi-media, magic and more. Each year, the Festival presents a free and ticketed program of local and international artists delivering adventurous art and ideas in adventurous places.

In its first decade, Luminato has become one of the pre-eminent international arts festivals in North America, having commissioned close to 100 new works of art, with more than 3,000 performances featuring 11,000 artists from over 40 countries.

This June, celebrating its first-ever residency, Luminato will #TurnOnTheHearn, temporarily transforming the Hearn Generating Station, an epic decommissioned power plant and one of Canada's most majestic industrial landmarks, into the world's largest cultural and community centre under one roof with a theatre, a music stage, a site-specific performance space, restaurants, bars and more.

[luminatofestival.com](http://luminatofestival.com)

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# A monumental undertaking

After a 10-year hiatus, Vancouver's explosive contemporary dance company The Holy Body Tattoo return to the world-tour circuit, reuniting with Montréal's post-rock legends Godspeed You! Black Emperor to bring their epic collaboration, *monumental* to Toronto. Part of a cross-Canada and international tour with original music performed live, this is the must-see dance show of the year. Jennifer Perras sat down with the show's creators and choreographers Dana Gingras and Noam Gagnon alongside original cast member and 2016 rehearsal director Sarah Williams.

**Jennifer Perras (JP)** Noam and Dana, how did you meet? What drew you to collaborate to form The Holy Body Tattoo?

**Dana Gingras (DG)** We met at an audition for the dance company EDAM in 1997. Immediately, Noam and I became inseparable. We were known as the "terrible twins" and had a serious reputation for reckless abandon and irreverence in the face of what was going on around us. Total *enfants terribles*...

For whatever reason, we both felt a huge need to fiercely and violently push our bodies and selves in a way few people, or the culture around us, could tolerate. Our collaboration really came out of this hunger we shared to make work that would push us beyond any limit we thought we had... and we definitely got what we were looking for!

As a result, we both reached some serious breaking points, physically, artistically and emotionally. Thankfully, I see now that getting to the other side of that made me saner.

**Noam Gagnon (NG)** We shared the same vision, same work ethic, same values to break the rules and push boundaries and create a physical language that met our insatiable desire to push ourselves to the limits.

**JP** Could you tell us about the original production of *monumental*? Why the decision to remount the show a decade later?

**NG** We both love Robert Longo's *Men in the Cities* and this inspired the concept that became *monumental*. I believe the work is even more relevant today, so that factored into our decision to remount it. Cathy Levy from Canada's National Arts Centre was one of the first to endorse this project in the beginning, and it has taken years of preparation (with very fervent believers in the work like David Sefton of the Adelaide Festival and our producer Sarah Rogers for example) to get this monumental work rolling again.

**DG** The original production of *monumental* began as a piece we created in 1993 called *White Riot* (named after the song by The Clash) for seven dancers including Noam and myself. We realized there was a bigger idea there and shelved it until we had more resources and the ability to execute it properly.

We restarted it again in 2003 as *monumental* — the same year that Godspeed You! Black Emperor went on an indefinite hiatus. Because of this, we never entertained the idea that we could do the piece with the band playing live.

By 2010 the band was back together and this opened up the possibility that we could remount the show with live music. Getting from that point to the version of the show currently touring (Vancouver's PuSh Festival, Adelaide Festival, Luminato Festival and more) took almost five years of hard work and logistics.

**JP** What has it been like, coming back to *monumental* after 10 years?

**NG** It's been "monumental" for me but with a BIG "M" this time!

**DG** Information and technology have evolved massively since the piece premiered in 2005, and the way these things are currently shaping the human condition makes the work incredibly timely. Living in the post-consumer internet era, the psychological implications of privileging a consumerist agenda clashing with the individual's aspirations for psychological, social and spiritual fulfillment unfortunately seem even more prescient today than they did when we originally created the piece.

I have always been interested in making choreography that looks at how we might test, express and enhance our human experience in a culture that is increasingly mediated by technology.

It is essential for me to make dance that makes the body present and brings focus back to the physical, as the body's ever more complicated relationship with technology keeps reducing the body's presence in the real.

**JP** What about you, Sarah? Could you tell us about your role with the production?

**Sarah Williams (SW)** Ten years ago, Dana and Noam invited me to dance in the original production. I joined the cast during the last part of the creation process and performed in every show. This time, they asked me if I would direct the remount of the work and be the rehearsal director. Remounting *monumental* was a "monumental" task because there was a new cast and that meant teaching nine different parts. But by physically relearning a good portion of the work, I was able to transmit the choreography to the dancers. And, luckily, an original cast member gave me her movement notes from one of the first versions of the work. I'm excited to be a part of this version of *monumental*. The content is just as relevant today as it was 10 years ago, perhaps even more so. Also, I like the idea of introducing contemporary dance to Godspeed You! Black Emperor audiences and vice versa.

**JP** Do you approach the piece differently as a dancer versus a rehearsal director?

**SW** Yes, the approach is very different for the two roles. As a dancer, I was responsible for the through-line and interpretation of my own role in the piece. As the rehearsal director, I need to keep track of the choreography for each of the nine dancers and make sure their interpretation, movement quality and nuances are in line with the direction of the work. I want each dancer to reach their maximum potential. I also look at all other elements in the piece and offer my opinion and observations to Noam and Dana.

**JP** As you mentioned, Dana, *monumental* was initially performed to a recorded track. Ten years later, it is being performed with a live band. Can you talk about this collaboration with Godspeed You! Black Emperor?

**DG** The original version of *monumental* used a lot of the band's first album — *f#a#∞* — plus some other sourced music and original electronic sections that were not by Godspeed. For this new production, we wanted to make the most of the band performing live so we re-scored the work. The band was very open to letting us suggest a kind of map that respected the original arcs of the choreography and from there we worked out tempo, duration and transitions in rehearsal. The way we rehearse choreography is very different from the way the band normally practices, so it was interesting to bring these two ecosystems together. For this current version we kept some of the original songs from *f#a#∞*, a few of which the band haven't played live for a long time. We also added some parts from *Asunder*, *Sweet and Other Distress* (their recording from 2015) and some material they haven't recorded yet but have been playing live on recent tours. They also worked out a couple of drumming sections that are original for *monumental*.

Each time we get back together, rehearse and perform the work there are subtle developments between the music and choreography making the process very alive and dynamic.

**JP** Sarah, what does performing with a live band mean for the dancers?

**SW** As a dancer, performing *monumental* to live music is exciting and a privilege. It was wonderful to dance to the recorded soundtrack, but there is nothing comparable to performing with a live band. It adds another eight people to the ephemeral element of the performance. Although the dancers have set choreography and the music is composed, all of the performers are individuals so there will always be a uniqueness and humanity in each performance. Having a live band means the dancers have to listen and cannot presume the music will sound exactly the same as the last time. This enriches the connection between music and movement.

**JP** What are the demands of the show on the performers?

**SW** *monumental* is a difficult piece. It takes intense focus for the complete duration of the performance. Dancers are trained to move through space and stay connected to the floor beneath them, but this work is performed on plinths so they need to apply these same ideas but up off the floor and within very confined dimensions. It's also a work that is very much about a group identity, yet the dancers are isolated on their own individual boxes.

**JP** What does it mean to perform *monumental* in a raw, industrial space like the Hearn? How might the environment contribute to the ethos of the piece?

**DG** It is a rare opportunity to show the piece in a setting that deserves the work. The Hearn is a liminal space, outside of the city's core, the kind of space that you rarely see dance in. It is the kind of environment that, since the beginning of my career, has been an inspiration to make from, and a place that in itself has its own power. With its post-apocalyptic, cinematic ambience, it directly speaks to the content of *monumental* and to the dark territories that Godspeed You! Black Emperor embrace in their compositions.

**JP** What do you hope the audience takes away with them when they see the show?

**DG** That's not for me to decide. I hope that they are shaken.

**NG** A powerful, visceral experience that I hope they'll never forget.

The choreographers wish to gratefully acknowledge the creative contribution of the original cast to the choreographic process and development of *monumental*: Ric Brown, Sarah Doucet, David Flewelling, Andrea, Gunnaugson, Day Helesic, Farley Johansson, Blair Neufeld, Sonja Perreten and Sarah Williams.

Special thanks to Jim Smith/Eponymous who produced *monumental* in 2005 and to the National Arts Centre in Ottawa who co-produced and premiered the original version on February 24, 2005.

Thank you to the many people who contributed to this project from its initial inception in 2005 to its current incarnation in 2016: Menno Plukker, Cathy Levy, Justin Evans, Camille Gingras, Steven R Gilmore, Erik Whittaker, The Simons Foundation, Luminergie, Tiago Chasqueira, Guillaume Cavalière.

And the Animals of Distinction Board of Directors: Suzanne Hawkes, Patty Jones, Dianne Kennedy, Patricia Kim, Mike Magee, Marie Brassard, Daniel Canty, Karine Denault, Line Nault, Sonya Stefan and Roger Tellier-Craig.

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[www.animalsofdistinction.org](http://www.animalsofdistinction.org)

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