

small
world
music
incubator
2025





Andrea Kuzmich



aniqa dear



A.V.E.



Ajhani Azure



Bahar Atish



David Park



Fedor Bondar



Mir Kashif Iqbal



Lina Cao



Ori Chacón



Radhika Baskar



Saghi Farsijani



Sam-r



Shalva - Lucas



Sonic River



Tarek Funk



Tarek Kabbani



Yalda Ehsani



XOCÔ

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Cohort

Incubator Leads



Neda Mohamadpour



Paula Sofía Morales

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program's
sessions &
facilitators

Getting the gig ready

Alice Sellwood

Alice Sellwood is the Programming Manager at Koerner Hall & The Royal Conservatory of Music where she works closely with RCM's Executive Director of Performing Arts to curate the annual "Royal Conservatory Presents" concert season. Alice began her career as the Toronto Blues Society's Office Manager in 2013 where she oversaw TBS's administrative operations and co-coordinated the annual Maple Blues Awards, Women's Blues Revue, and biennial Blues Summit. In 2016, Alice was promoted to TBS's General Manager, taking on a larger role in operational oversight and became the lead coordinator for the Maple Blues Awards. After four years at TBS, Alice moved to Small World Music, before stepping into the role of Concert Manager at Koerner Hall in 2018.



Revising our material: EPKs Stage plots and bios

Vanese Smith

Based in Toronto, Canada, originally from the Washington, DC area, Pursuit Grooves (Vanese Smith) started producing music as a teenager to accompany the lyrics she was writing. She has been obsessed with sound ever since. She makes music that is sonically adventurous, oscillating between moments of jittery tension and silky release, in order to create a beautiful balance of light and dark, fragility and toughness, seamlessly blending deep machine soul, dismantled hip-hop instrumentals and heavy hitting, genre-bending dub.



Reza Moghaddas

Reza Moghaddas is a Toronto-based record producer, sound engineer, musician, and educator with nearly three decades of experience. In the 1990s, Reza played a pivotal role in Iran's underground music scene. He moved to Canada in 2005, bringing his Bamahang Studios with him, and became a key figure in Toronto's music community. He has collaborated with international artists like Zakir Hussain, Angelique Kidjo, and Tory Lanez, and contributed to over 50 film and theatre projects.



Thao Nghiem

Thao Nghiem has a passion for marketing and project management. She is the Founding Director of the Vietnam Music Industry Network (VMIN), host of the annual Vietnam Music Week (VMW), and co-founder of The OMAs - the annual music award in Durham Region, Ontario. Her professional work includes Associate Brand Manager at Unilever, and Label Licensing and Royalties Liaison at the Canadian Musical Reproduction Rights Agency. A Music Business Administration graduate of Durham College, she also holds a Professional Communications degree from RMIT University.



Grant Landscape

Umair Jaffar

Chief Executive Officer at SWM

Umair brings two decades of experience working in the arts, heritage and culture sector. Since immigrating to Canada in 2014 he has worked in curatorial and management roles at the Aga Khan Museum and Harbourfront Centre. He is a fellow at Toronto Art Council's Cultural Leaders Lab and Business / Arts Executive Leadership program. He has an MBA from University of Adelaide and a MSc Cultural Anthropology from the University of Oxford. He serves as a board member for Canadian Association for the Performing Arts (CAPACOA), North York Arts and MusiConnect Asia.



Demistifying Grants

Rudrapriya Rathore

Rudrapriya Rathore manages the Literary Arts and Music Operating portfolios at the Toronto Arts Council. She's also a writer and administrator with several years of experience in the education and cultural sectors. She has previously worked as a college program advisor and a bookseller, and managed administration and production at The Glenn Gould Foundation, where she collaborated with many music organizations to bring concerts and digital programming to Toronto audiences. She is deeply interested in the politics of mentorship and expanding access to creative collaboration for artists and organizations.



David Parsons

Music Officer at the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) since 2000, David Parsons previously worked with a variety of music organizations, including as a consultant with Mythmakers in Toronto, and as Ontario Regional Director for the Canadian Music Centre. At OAC, David is responsible for granting programs for many different types of music organizations as well as programs serving individual musicians, ensembles, and music creators. Trained as a flutist and composer, he has composed for diverse media such as opera, orchestra, chamber ensemble, choir, and television, and he is the recipient of several national composition awards.



Emma Barnett

Emma Barnett has over 30 years' experience across multiple spheres of the music economy, including event promotion and as artist consultant in marketing, funding, and strategic planning. As Programs Administrator at FACTOR, Barnett assists organizations contributing to the growth and development of the Canadian-owned music industry.



Building Authentic Relationships

Nora Rahimian

Nora is a creative consultant who helps entrepreneurs achieve success on their terms, without giving up creative control, financial freedom, or personal integrity. #CultureFix is a global network of artists, activists, and entrepreneurs who use their platforms for social impact, and she produces an annual hip hop festival dedicated to giving independent musicians a meaningful platform.



Understanding Venues

Reza Moghaddas

Reza is a Toronto based record producer, sound engineer and musician. During his 27 years of studio work he produced, recorded and mixed over 1500 albums and single tracks. Reza is a board member and co-founder of Godot Art Productions, one of Toronto's leading multi-disciplinary art foundations. Since 2008 he has worked as the lead technician with some of major live venues and festivals in Toronto such as Small World Centre, Tirgan Festival, Harbourfront Centre and Aga Khan Museum where he worked with artists like Zakir Hussain, Angelique Kidjo, Tory Lanez, Kayhan Kalhor, and many more.



Booking: Festivals and Venues

Mercedes Caxaj

Mercedes Caxaj is the Artistic Co-Director for Sunfest-London Committee for Cross Cultural Arts, which presents thoughtful, innovative global arts programming in London, Ontario, and works collectively with national and international organizations to promote global music.



Josh Grossman

Josh Grossman is Artistic Director for Toronto Downtown Jazz, producers of the annual Toronto Jazz Festival, one of Canada's largest international music festivals. His extensive arts administration experience includes time as Performance Manager for The Glenn Gould School at The Royal Conservatory; Manager for the High Park Choirs of Toronto; Operations Manager for Continuum Contemporary Music; and Artistic Director for the Markham Jazz Festival.



Diana Webley

Diana Webley is a Manager at Harbourfront Centre. She specializes in artistic direction, planning, programming, development and producing in Toronto and creating pathways for producing abroad. She has worked extensively in the North American market to build mentorship, networking, collaborations, and is currently working to expand to global markets.



Education Landscape

Vanessa Smith

Vanessa is currently the Director, Education and Community Engagement for the Corporation of Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall, where she's spent the past eight years building up an almost entirely new slate of programming. Vanessa strives to create and facilitate authentic experiences for all participants, and is passionate about strong community partnerships and the power of the arts to transform individuals and connect us all to one another. She previously served on the Music Advisory Committee for the Children's Album of the Year category for the JUNO Awards, and the Board of Directors for the Arts Education Network of Ontario.



Maria Williams

Maria Williams has been the Executive Director of Prologue Performing Arts since 2020. She joined the organization during COVID and helped launch a digital platform that allowed artists to continue performing in classrooms across Ontario digitally and reaching over 500,000 youth between 2020 and 2021. Since joining the organization, Maria has developed the Leadership Through the Arts program, empowering youth to become arts leaders in their communities. She has worked for some of Toronto's largest arts organizations including Canadian Stage, The Toronto Symphony Orchestra, The Stratford Festival, Dancap Productions and Harbourfront Centre.



Dhaivat Jani

Dhaivat Jani is a Toronto-based, award-winning drummer, tabla player, and composer originally from Ahmedabad, India. Trained in Indian classical music from the age of five, he earned his tabla Visharad with three gold medals by sixteen before completing a Bachelor of Music at Humber College. In 2023, he released his debut album Sum // Parts with his contemporary jazz ensemble, Dhaivat Jani PLUS, earning praise from outlets such as All About Jazz and Jazz.FM91. A versatile collaborator, Jani fluidly bridges drums and tabla across genres, while engaging in innovative cross-disciplinary projects.



Administration Landscape

Anne Frost

Anne Frost has worked in arts management for several decades, in every medium except film, which omission she's now remedying through a consulting project with the Yellowknife International Film Festival. Anne has worked on the not-for-profit side of the music business, leading the Ontario operations of Youth & Music Canada. She coordinated/taught in the graduate program in Arts Administration – Cultural Management at Humber Polytechnic, until recently, and has also taught arts management at the University of Toronto Scarborough, Sheridan College, and Centennial College. Anne's consulting practice, through Young Associates includes revenue development, strategic and tactical planning, Board governance, financial management, and mentorship.



Nidhi Khanna

Nidhi Khanna is a dynamic nonprofit executive and social impact strategist with over two decades of experience driving program development, operations, and inclusive community development across Canada. As Vice President of Program Operations at Skills for Change, she leads a team of 60+ to deliver over 25 community-based programmes that annually serve almost 20,000 immigrants, refugees, and under-served groups nationally.

A proud daughter of first generation immigrant parents, Nidhi's lived experience fuels her commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and creating spaces of belonging. Her leadership is rooted in trauma-informed, culturally responsive programs that centre equity, access, and psychological safety.



Laura Holtebrinck

Laura (she/her) is the Manager, Communications & Sponsorships at Music Publishers Canada (MPC). Laura is proud to be involved in MPC's many initiatives, especially its Women In The Studio National Accelerator, which offers women, gender fluid, non-binary and gender non-conforming participants a series of curated workshops, educational sessions, and networking opportunities with music industry leaders as well as NXTGen, MPC's membership tier building community for the next generation of music publishers.

In addition to her work with MPC, Laura is also the Manager, Communications at the Canadian Private Copying Collective (CPCC), advocating for making Canada's private copying regime tech-neutral.



Tara Kannangara

JUNO-nominated artist, Tara Kannangara is a second-generation, Sri Lankan-Canadian force of nature, giving you music that is deeply personal, genre-bending and culture blending. All this, encompassed by wild trumpet melodies, searing guitar lines, lush synths, and piercing lyricism will make you turn your head and listen.



Creative Negotiation

Michael Bridge

“A wizard of the accordion” (CBC), he’s a virtuoso performer—appearing on stages from the “Snowcastle” in Yellowknife, NWT, to The Metropolitan Opera. Bridge’s concerts capture both the energy and panache of stadium rock with the elegance and discipline of chamber music.

Dr. Bridge received his DMA in accordion performance from the University of Toronto in 2023. He gives 90+ concerts annually as a soloist, member of Bridge & Wolak and Landom Ensemble and with his partner, violinist Yolanda Bruno. He gives lectures and masterclasses at North American and European conservatories, and he teaches Music Business at the University of Toronto.



Branding & Marketing for Artists

Ala Staciuk

Alicja (Ala) Stasiuk is a Toronto-based marketing and communications professional with a passion for connecting people through art, culture, and storytelling. She has worked with leading cultural organizations including Massey Hall and Roy Thomson Hall, the Toronto Jazz Festival, Small World Music, and the Royal Conservatory of Music, and currently oversees key marketing and communications initiatives at Luminato Festival.

Outside of her work in the arts, Alicja curates her own events under Bracia and Sestry and founded Ciellesne, a digital platform created to raise awareness about human rights violations in Eastern Europe. She also co-founded the Polish folk band Polky and previously taught marketing at Seneca College's Independent Music Production program.



Creatively sharing our brand

Mahdis Abbaszadeh

Mahdis Abbaszadeh is a multidisciplinary graphic designer, art director, and founder & creative director of AROUND Toronto, a platform that connects like-minded individuals through art, culture, and shared experiences. With over a decade of experience in branding, user interface, and user experience design, she has worked with artists, musicians, cultural institutions, exhibitions, and established brands across various industries, blending strategic insight with refined craft to create bold, human-centered brand systems.



Daily Meneses

Daily Meneses, a digital strategist and communicator working at the intersection of culture, creativity, and strategy. She's spent the past 8 years moving fluidly between corporate brands, cultural nonprofits, and grassroots projects, helping each of them tell their identity with more clarity, emotion, and intention. From running digital growth systems for e-commerce companies to shaping campaigns for music festivals and arts organizations, her work blends structure, numbers, and strategy with soul.



Roham Abtahi

He creates tangible impact by mobilizing communities. Art, media and shared experiences are his catalysts. Through a dynamic multi-media approach, he crafts experiences that inspire action, celebrate heritage, and leave a lasting mark.



Differentiating Agents & Managers

Nicole Rochefort

Nicole Rochefort is the owner/founder of **AIM Booking Agency**, a leading independent agency dedicated to building sustainable, long-term touring careers for artists across Canada and beyond. Over two decades, Nicole has played a vital role in strengthening Canada's touring circuits, representing award-winning musicians and performing artists at festivals and performing arts centres across the country.



Amie Therrien

Amie Therrien leads the MMF Canada team, supporting managers and self-managed artists with professional development, networking and mentorship opportunities, and advocacy.

Amie also ran Balsam Pier Music, an artist management and development company where she primarily worked with folk, roots, and Americana artists. She is a member of the Toronto Music Advisory Council, served nine years on the Folk Music Ontario board, worked for Coalition Music, Folk Alliance International, and is an alumnus of the Artist Manager Program with Canada's Music Incubator.



Booking & Management in action

Elise Roller

Elise Roller is the founder and CEO of multi-award-winning Misfit Music Inc., a Winnipeg-based artist development and management company, and umbrella of the newly launched Odd Doll Records.

Actively involved in the global music scene since 2008 as an artist, tour manager, stage manager, Pride festival stage producer, and Industry Development Coordinator at Manitoba Music, Roller excels at fostering artist development and building strategic industry connections. She's a social butterfly, master networker, and has an innate ability to connect with anyone and everyone.



Natasha Roldán

Colombian-Canadian singer-songwriter Natasha Roldán travels through the landscapes of Latin American folk and jazz with an alternative touch. Her music explores themes of migration, revolution, and love. The delicacy of her voice carries undeniable strength, breaking language barriers and creating emotional connections with audiences. Her latest self-produced record *Ya No Estoy Aquí (I'm No Longer Here)* spent 10 weeks in the Top 20 of Colombia's National Radio and was nominated for Album of the Year at the Latin Awards Canada.



Leen Hamo

Leen Hamo is a Syrian-Canadian artist, singer, and songwriter. Music is her safe space—a source of strength and a powerful tool for self-expression. Her emotional lyrics draw inspiration from her personal experiences, exploring themes of identity, belonging, loss, and nostalgia. Her main project is called “Kazdoura”, a fusion modern Arabic. she is also part of Canadian Aabic Orchestra and few other projects as well as her solo project “Leen”. Leen has been recognized with the Newcomer Artist Award and the Space Award from the Toronto Arts Foundation.



Grant Paley

Grant Paley has spent more than two decades shaping Canadian music, first as the frontman of award winning funk outfit Moses Mayes, and later as a trusted agent at Paquin Artists Agency. In 2020, he co-founded Midnight Agency to build a more artist-first, independent model for live representation. Named Agent of the Year by the Canadian Live Music Association in 2023, Grant leads with a deep belief in collaboration, inclusivity, and long-term artist development.



Copyright, Royalties & Registration

Zara Abbasi

Zara Abbasi is a seasoned music industry professional with experience in management, record labels, and publishing. Her expertise lies in rights and royalties. She is dedicated to navigating this complex landscape to ensure that artists, producers, writers and all rights holders are compensated fairly. Currently, Zara is the VP of People & Client Experience at Sub Management Group, where the Rights Management Division administers rights globally, prioritizing transparency and autonomy to empower artists in managing their creative pursuits and maximizing revenue.



Contracts & Agreements

Byron Pascoe

Byron Pascoe is an entertainment lawyer and partner with Edwards Creative Law. Byron focuses on music law and works with recording artists, producers, managers, music service businesses and festivals. Before law school, he was a television and new media producer. Based in Ottawa, Byron works with clients across Canada. He is also a board member of CityFolk, and member of Music BC and CARAS. Byron was awarded the Impact Award at the inaugural Ottawa Music Awards.



Conference World

Tina Wroblewski

Tina Wroblewski, Colombian-born, Toronto-based Producer and Cultural Promoter, is the International Coordinator at the International Indigenous Music Summit (IIMS) The Export Development Program Coordinator (EDP) for Folk Music Ontario(FMO) Folk Canada (FC) responsible for connecting partners and the Outgoing work around Folk music Ontario Conference, IIMS and other international projects. She has served as a jury for awards, including the JUNO Awards, as well as a consultant, curator, and artist liaison for a variety of festivals and conferences around the world.



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Spotlights

Spotlight on

Misha Artebyakin

From the dorms of U of T to the outskirts of Moscow, Misha has thrived as an entertainer in every place they've lived. After opening Drom Taberna in 2018 with a merry band of misfits and now running close to 100 shows a month, Misha stepped up as Master of Ceremonies for Toronto's most cherished/chaotic live music living room.



Camille Neirynck-Guerrero

Camille Neirynck-Guerrero is a Belgo-Colombian photographer and arts organizer with a passion for capturing and cultivating live music. Since moving from Belgium to Toronto in 2020, she has been documenting the city's music scene through her lens, while also shaping it behind the scenes. As Booking Manager at DROM Taberna, she uses her strong administrative skills to orchestrate the chaos behind the magic, ensuring artists and audiences connect seamlessly.



Shaunt Raffi

Shaunt Raffi is an Armenian music curator, DJ, musician and producer based in Toronto. Shaunt is the founder of some of Toronto's iconic community hubs for artists including Antikka and the Oud & the Fuzz. He has now turned his attention to his newest venture, Tapestry, which functions as a music venue in the heart of Toronto's Kensington Market. Shaunt has dedicated himself to simultaneously developing his own artistry while always providing space for others to shine and grow.



Sarah Greene

Sarah Greene is a songwriter, writer and former music journalist (for NOW Magazine, Exclaim!, The Coast and other publications) from Toronto. Sarah is the Director of Residency Programs at Tranzac, a not for profit venue in Toronto; as well as program coordinator for Folk Canada's Folk In Film Festival and the Bloor Annex BIA's Summer Music Series. Greene released two recordings as the front woman of mid-2000s indie-folk band The Pickups before putting out her debut solo album, Toronto Blues, in 2011. Her sophomore album, Being Real, is due out later this year.



Spotlight on

Jonathan Campell

Jon's career is rooted in the decade (2000-2010) he spent in Beijing's music scene as performer, promoter, producer, writer, and more. His work has served organisations large and small including Toronto International Film Festival, Harbourfront Centre, Aga Khan Museum, Folk Alliance International, Folk Canada, and more. At Small World Music (2019-2024) he helped create and lead SWM's signature programs – the Incubator artist-development program, the Global Toronto conference, and the Going Global export project while supporting public programming, outreach, fundraising, and partnership efforts.



Kousha Nakhaei

Kousha Nakhaei is a multi-instrumentalist, music educator, and co-director of Sarv Music Academy. Having focused his studies on Western classical music on the violin and Iranian traditional music on kamanche (spiked fiddle), he has appeared on stage with various artists such as Loreena McKennitt, Sepideh Raissadat, and toured with Sarv Ensemble, an Iranian music ensemble he co-founded in 2010. He has appeared as a guest teacher of Iranian music at the University of Toronto, Axis Music, World Fiddle Day, and Earl Haig Secondary School.



Jesse McDougall

Jesse McDougall is a Performing Arts Coordinator at the Aga Khan Museum managing the weekly TD Pop-Up Series. Originally from Vermont, Jesse graduated from U of T in 2023 with a degree in Political Science and a National Community Radio Award for his show, Tracks From Abroad. Jesse is passionate about global music, teaching, and language learning.



Roham Abtahi

He creates tangible impact by mobilizing communities. Art, media and shared experiences are his catalysts. Through a dynamic multi-media approach, he crafts experiences that inspire action, celebrate heritage, and leave a lasting mark.



Spotlight on

Sara Khajeh

Sara is a cultural producer with over 15 years of experience in event production and community engagement. Toronto's vibrant multicultural environment ignited her passion for cultural and volunteer work and deepened her commitment to community building. She holds a degree in Business Management and Entrepreneurship from Toronto Metropolitan University. Since joining Small World in 2022 as Volunteer Coordinator, she has grown into her current role as Producer.



Barry McCluskey

Barry McCluskey has been a full-time professional photographer for three years. He markets himself as a photographer of "anything that brings people together" because he feels there is nothing better creatively than being in the same space as others when they want to be where they are. His work covers sports, theatre, music, engagements, weddings, book launches, private galas, behind the scenes, commercial production--are there people together because they love someone or something? Sounds perfect.



Jaclyn Tam

Jaclyn Tam is a collaborative leader with over 20 years of experience in Toronto's music and cultural sectors. She brings people together—artists, grassroots organizations, for-profit businesses and policymakers—to build a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable creative landscape. At the City of Toronto's Music Office, Jaclyn leads programs that support local talent and strengthens Toronto's reputation as a global music city. Her work bridges cultural policy, programming, and partnerships, always with a focus on amplifying diverse voices and supporting meaningful artistic expression.



Julia Bissessar

Julia is a Neurologic Music Therapist & business owner at Hamilton Music Therapy. Photographing concerts and live events since February 2024. Worked with local and international artists performing in and around Toronto. Interview coordinator, operations management & contributor for Karma! Magazine, Photographer & editor for DIVEBOMB Motorsport. She's Passionate about the arts, connection, and community.



Spotlight on

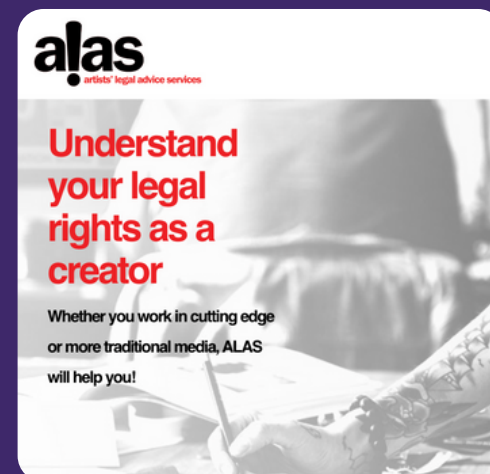
Pratishtha Kohli

Pratishtha is deeply invested in equity in the performing arts, having explored decolonizing paradigms in community engagement and spaces during their Master's studies, and founding her own performing arts collective, The Tawoos Initiative. She has worked with performing arts organizations across the city, engaging in programming and curation across music, film, and visual arts. Her curatorial projects and festivals have included collaborations with the Aga Khan Museum, Music Gallery, Small World Music, the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, Weengushk Film Festival, the Hot Docs Canadian International Film Festival, and the City of Toronto.



ALAS

ALAS is a volunteer-run legal clinic that offers free summary legal advice to creators and artists of all disciplines — from visual arts to music, performance, design, and beyond. We operate in partnership with entertainment and IP lawyers, law students, and fellow creatives.



Martín Añón

Martín Añón / Anxxon is an Argentine-Canadian music producer and manager based in Toronto Canada. A Manuel de Falla Conservatory graduate, he is the Director of Artists and Partnerships Relations at 8 Til Faint Artist Management. In addition to his music career, Martín co-founded Speaking Non-English, a nonprofit dedicated to developing industry initiatives that identify, develop, and export untapped Latin-Canadian.

