



Hamilton, ON: July 8, 2025 - After a nationwide search, the **National Centre for New Musicals (NCNM)** at **Theatre Aquarius** is pleased to announce the selections for 2025/2026.

In the development stream are ***The Danish Guest*** with book by **Steven Gallagher**, and music and lyrics by **Anton Lipovetsky**, and ***The Blue Castle*** with book and lyrics by **Saleema Nawaz** and music by **Scott Christian**. In the incubation stream is ***My Beef with Beef***, with book, music, and lyrics by **Srutika Sabu**.

Launched in 2024, NCNM at Theatre Aquarius is a bold initiative dedicated to developing original Canadian musicals in Hamilton, Ontario.

A national curatorial team of sixteen theatre professionals was assembled to read and evaluate all first-round submissions. Representing a wide range of artistic disciplines and diverse backgrounds, this team ensured that the selection process was thorough, inclusive, and reflective of Canada's vibrant creative community.

The advisory committee completed the final selection process, led by co-chairs **Michael Rubinoff** (Olivier Award-winning and Tony-nominated producer who conceived the longest-running Canadian musical in Broadway history, *Come From Away*) and **Lily Ling** (Broadway: *Hamilton*, *Hell's Kitchen*, *How to Dance in Ohio*, *Moulin Rouge!*), along with Theatre Aquarius Artistic Director **Mary Francis Moore** (*MAGGIE* by Johnny Reid and Matt Murray; world premiere at Theatre Aquarius, and American premiere at Goodspeed Opera House, world premiere of Tom Wilson's *Beautiful Scars*, and the forthcoming *Robin Hood: A Very Merry Family Musical* at Canadian Stage), **Sean Mayes** (Broadway: *Hadestown*, *MJ: The Musical*), and producer **Jenny Weisz**.

Moore is delighted with the outcome of the inaugural season and is eager to develop the new works chosen for this season. "Our inaugural season was a huge success, and we're thrilled to welcome these gutsy, beautiful new works to the National Centre for New Musicals. *The Danish Guest*, *The Blue Castle*, and *My Beef with Beef* each bring such distinct worlds to life — from Victorian London to early 1900s Muskoka to a modern kitchen haunted by a ghost cow. These stories are witty and deeply human, and they remind us of the power of musical theatre to illuminate our history, our dreams, and the heartbeats of our families."

With the leading support of the **incite Foundation for the Arts**, in addition to corporate and private donors, including support from **RBC Foundation**, NCNM has selected three new musicals to support and develop over the upcoming year.

Development Stream: Projects with a developed or partially developed script and/or score — including those with previous presentations, which support creators ready to break open, advance, and draft new versions of their work through exploration and collaboration during an in-person development period in January 2026.

The Danish Guest

Book by Steven Gallagher, Hamilton, ON

Music and Lyrics by Anton Lipovetsky, Vancouver, BC

In 1857, during a chaotic five-week visit to Charles Dickens, Hans Christian Andersen unsettles Dickens's home life and exposes the cracks in his marriage, yet this unexpected encounter reignites Dickens's creativity, as Andersen's unique charm and childlike perspective inspire a literary rebirth that will profoundly impact both men for the rest of their lives.

The Blue Castle

Book and Lyrics by Saleema Nawaz, Toronto, ON and Montreal, QC

Music by Scott Christian, Toronto, ON

Based on Lucy Maud Montgomery's timeless romance and set in early 1900s Muskoka, *The Blue Castle: The Musical* is the story of a woman reclaiming her power and gaining the courage to live life on her own terms – and finding purpose, friendship, and love along the way.

Incubation Stream:

Early-stage projects seeking further to develop their ideas or drafts with dramaturgical support. Ideal for those with a concept or first draft who are ready to continue writing and refining their work.

My Beef with Beef

Book, Lyrics and Music by Srutika Sabu, Toronto, ON

Two timelines, one forbidden beef curry: a South Asian couple's past collides with their vegan daughter's future in this hilarious and heartfelt journey about food, identity, and a talking ghost cow.

For more information and to arrange interviews, contact:

Neal Miller

Director of Marketing and Communications

905-522-7529 ext. 235

nmiller@theatreaquarius.org

NCNM supports projects at various stages in the development continuum – from early-stage concepts to previously workshopped or showcased work. Guided by a distinguished Advisory Committee comprised of celebrated theatre practitioners, NCNM will actively cultivate and strengthen new and diverse voices by ensuring that artists and creators are provided with mentorship and consultation to maximize their potential for success in the genre.

Theatre Aquarius is located on the territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek, and the Between the Lakes Purchase, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Theatre Aquarius is recognized as a leader in Canadian theatre. A registered not-for-profit, Theatre Aquarius produces work of the highest quality, premieres new plays, develops the skills of professional artists, invests in youth and families, and contributes to the quality of life in this region. Now entering its 52nd season, Theatre Aquarius is a gathering place to create and share stories that provoke, delight, inspire, and transform.