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Panamania – the Pan Am Games' culture festival – will bring 27 arts projects to Toronto in 2015

By J. Kelly Nestruck

Organizers of Panamania, a 35-day festival to accompany Toronto's Pan Am Games, have commissioned \$1.4-million in new works

World premieres from Robert Lepage, Veronica Tennant and Vancouver's Electric Company Theatre will be a part of Panamania, a 35-day arts and culture festival set to accompany Toronto's Pan Am Games in the summer of 2015.

Don Shipley, head of the Arts and Culture component of the Games, announced \$1.5-million of commissions from across artistic disciplines on Tuesday morning – 27 projects in total that will be displayed or staged from Nathan Phillips Square to the Power Plant to the Distillery District. "Every commission is a leap of faith," Shipley said. Here are the five most likely to pay off.

887 (working title)

Celebrated Quebec director Robert Lepage will have the premiere of his latest one-man show as part of Panamania. This work-in-progress is slated to be a meditation on memory and will star Lepage himself, in the way of previous shows such as *The Far Side of the Moon* and *The Andersen Project*. From Toronto, it will go on to tour the world.

Betroffenheit (working title)

Choreographer Crystal Pite and the Electric Company Theatre first collaborated on the popular play *Studies in Motion* in 2006. Now they reunite for *Betroffenheit*, inspired in part by the national conversation on post-traumatic stress disorder. (The title is a German word meaning the state of shock that follows a violent event.) Electric Company actor Jonathon Young (Hamlet at Vancouver's Bard on the Beach last summer) will star and provide the words, while Kidd Pivot – Pite's company – will supply the dance. The collaboration is already set to travel internationally after Panamania, with a stop scheduled at Sadler's Wells in London.

Niágara

Prima ballerina Veronica Tennant is involved in this piece, inspired by an 1824 ode to Niagara Falls written by Cuban exile José María Heredia, who has been called "the first poet of the Americas." It's part of a stream of water-themed

programming including *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, a theatrical adaptation of Jules Verne's underwater adventure co-created by Rick Miller of *MacHomer* and *Bigger Than Jesus* fame; *The Watershed*, a new docudrama about the freshwater crisis by Crow's Theatre and Porte Parole; *Watercolour*, for which the Textile Museum of Canada will commission 41 customized sails from artists from different Pan American countries; and *Water's Edge*, an outdoor exhibition of photographs by six fine-art photographers from the Americas, including Edward Burtynsky.

Tom Longboat sculpture

Tom Longboat, a runner from the Six Nations of the Grand River, became world famous at the Boston Marathon in 1907, when he beat the race's record by more than five minutes. His record stood for more than 20 years – and a new statue of Longboat set to be erected on the Toronto Islands is planned to stand for much longer. A competition is being launched to find an aboriginal artist to design the statue.

Love, Dishonor, Marry, Die, Cherish, Perish

Studio 180 Theatre will adapt Canadian-born *This American Life* contributor David Rakoff's posthumously published verse novel for the stage. Other Toronto theatre companies working on new pieces for Panamania include David Ferry's Appledore Productions, which will stage a story about Toronto's first African-Canadian postman on front porches around the city; Ravi Jain's Why Not Theatre, which will stage an adaptation of the Three Little Pigs called *Gimme Shelter*; and bluemouth inc. and Jennifer Tarver's Necessary Angel, who will collaborate on a new site-specific play written by up-and-comer Jordan Tannahill.