



**VERNON & DISTRICT
PERFORMING
ARTS CENTRE
SOCIETY**

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***** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE *****

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VDPAC Announces Winners of 2024 Performing Arts Bursaries

The Vernon & District Performing Arts Centre Society (VDPAC) has announced this year's successful recipients of its annual Performing Arts Bursary Program. The three recipients of **\$2,000 Performing Arts Bursaries** are **Zachary Friesen** and **Madison Irwin** of Vernon, and **Nai'a Fellingham** of Coldstream.

Each year, the VDPAC Society makes available bursaries to Greater Vernon and area Grade 12 students accepted to; or those area students currently enrolled in post-secondary Performing Arts or Performing Arts Management programs; or in a recognized Performing Arts apprenticeship program. Under VDPAC's Bursary Program guidelines, students are eligible to receive a maximum of two VDPAC Performing Arts Bursaries over their post-secondary career.

VDPAC's annual Bursary Program is made possible from the generous donations by Performing Arts Centre patrons, tips collected at VDPAC's coat check and at the bar & concession; as well as specified, personal tax deductible donations; but can also include sponsorships from area businesses and memorial gifts to recognize local artists and longtime Performing Arts Centre supporters and live arts in general. The number and amount of the Society's bursaries relies on funds collected over the previous year and awarded based on the quality and need expressed in student applications.

For 2024, VDPAC Society's board of directors was able to *double* this year's bursaries to \$2,000 each.

"Our goal is to promote and assist as many area students we can in their pursuit of post-secondary education and hopefully, their eventual careers in the performing arts," says VDPAC's executive director Jim Harding. "We also want to continue growing our bursary program with our community partners and increase the number and size of bursaries we can award, because the cost of post-secondary education can often be daunting and we want to help."

Bursary recipients were announced as part of VDPAC's 23rd Annual Birthday Bash pre-show celebrations prior to Ballet Kelowna's SPOTLIGHT Season opening performance of Cameron Fraser-Monroe's *The Cowboy Act Suite & Other Works* on September 18th. Cameron is a native Vernonite, performer, already an acclaimed choreographer, (taking *The Cowboy Act Suite* to New York), and a past two-time VDPAC Performing Arts Bursary recipient.

About the 2024 Recipients: *[See accompanying photos supplied by the recipients, with permission]*

Zachary Friesen, of Vernon, is a graduate of Vernon Secondary School and accepted into the 1st Year of the Degree CIF 2-Year – Music Composition program at the London Academy of Contemporary Music as an International Student in Surrey, England. His "career aspiration is to write music for film and orchestras, creating compositions that enhance storytelling and resonate with audiences".

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Madison Irwin, of Vernon, is a graduate of W.L. Seaton Senior Secondary and in her 4th Year, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Performance at the University of Victoria, studying Acting, Voice & Movement; supplemented by Theatre History and Technical Theatre to finish her 5-Year degree. Maddie will also be working on at least two Mainstage productions for UVic's Phoenix Theatre. Her career ambitions include "becoming a drama teacher; performing whenever the opportunity presents itself; and joining the local Victoria technical theatre union to learn new skills in Lighting, Sound and Rigging".

Nai'a Fellingham, of Coldstream, is a graduate of W.L. Seaton Secondary and in her 1st Year, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre at the University of Victoria, and this year has been the recipient of a number of local scholarships to pursue her post-secondary education. Her goal is to continue performing and to become a drama teacher "and being a role model for new generations of theatre kids like me."

"We are very fortunate to have a very accomplished local community of youth theatre, dance and music programs here, which proves just how important the Performing Arts are to our emerging young artists," says Harding. "We want to continue encouraging them with our bursary program to help them explore and develop their careers. So we will certainly continue to invite our supporters to help build our Bursary Program fund to offer these students that much-needed support."

Guidelines for VDPAC's Performing Arts Bursary Program are available on the Society's website at vdpac.ca and application details will be announced in the Spring of 2025.

For more information to sponsor or donate to the Bursary Program, please contact the Vernon & District Performing Arts Centre (250-542-9355) or by email at: theatre@ticketseller.ca.

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[See Accompanying 3 Recipient Photo files]

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