

## Rungh. Means. Colour: an interview with our Community Partner



Photo courtesy of: Rungh Archive

Rungh came onto the scene in the early nineties, as a quarterly magazine that held its focus on South Asian **Culture, Comment and Criticism**. It provided an outlet for marginalized communities to express their opinions, experiences and art and held space to challenge dominant narratives. 26 years on, *Rungh* has relaunched as an online platform that continues to challenge diversity in the arts and create conversations that encourage cultural growth within Canada. We spoke with co-founder and editor of *Rungh*, Zool Suleman, to learn more!

### Can you tell us a little bit about *Rungh*, for those who may not have heard of it yet?

*Rungh* is a word which means "colour" in many languages. Our new tag line is "Rungh. Means. Colour". If you speak one of the languages (Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Farsi, and more) you will know! *Rungh* started as a non profit society and a print magazine in 1992. *Rungh* also hosted and produced arts events like readings, workshops, creative productions, and fostered a variety of conversations. *Rungh* also protested against how Canada's arts institutions worked. We still do that! From 1992-1999, *Rungh* had a print publication which you can still see on our site in the Archives section, or at the Simon Fraser University Digital Library site. *Rungh* was relaunched as a cultural web platform in 2017. 26 years old and also, brand new.

### What inspired you to create the first issue, all those years ago, back in 1992?



Photo Credit: Ali Kazimi

*Rungh* was inspired by an absence of voices in Canada's cultural landscape. These voices today are referred to as IBPOC (Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour) – this term, also, does not do justice to the range of absences which exist. *Rungh's* relaunch is committed to looking at the intersectional conversations that need to be had on the Canadian arts scene be they defined by race, gender, sexuality, geography, class, power and otherwise.

### How, would you say, the conversation in the arts has changed over the last thirty years?

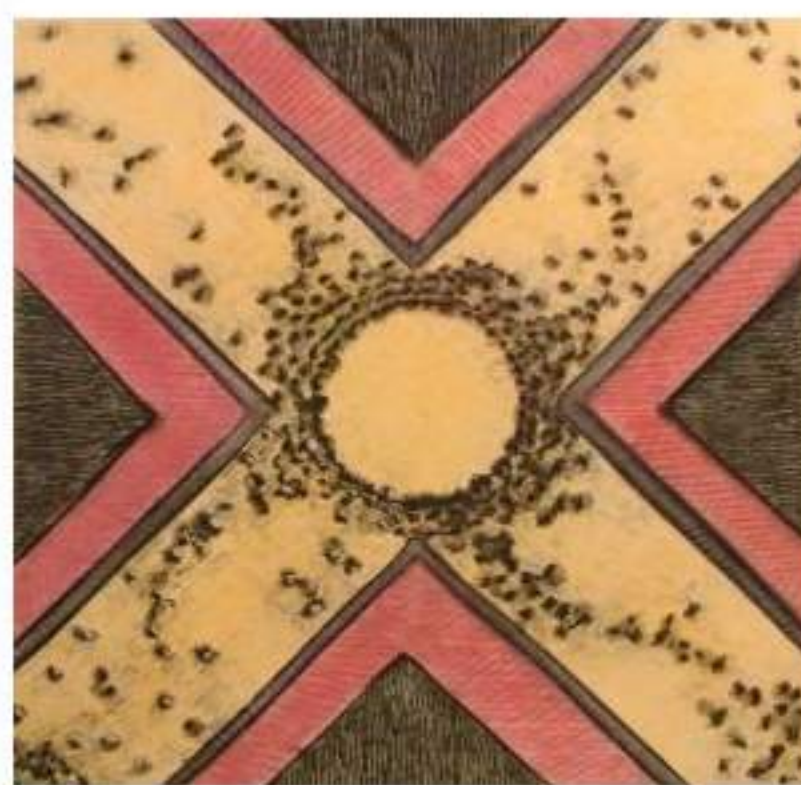
In many ways, the conversation has not changed, sadly. But, in other ways, the conversation now tries to include and centre Indigenous voices. *Rungh* is an incubation partner with a new set of conversations which are taking place under the heading of Primary Colours/Couleurs Primaires. The focus of PC/cp is to centre Indigenous voices in the middle of the Canadian art system. *Rungh* is a part of that journey and has published several pieces on this journey. In the future, more content focusing on this necessary transition within Canada's art systems will be found in *Rungh*.

### Have you seen any firsthand accounts of how *Rungh* has impacted its audiences?

*Rungh* has played a vital role in creating and documenting conversations, and creative work around ideas of "multiculturalism", "race", "belonging" and more over the past 25 years. I put these terms in quotation marks because the terms themselves are sites of contestation. A significant part of *Rungh's* mission, with it's relaunch, has been to activate it's archive. Records of what racialized and otherwise marginalized voices have contributed to the Canadian art system continue to be lost, if they are kept at all. These histories are vital and *Rungh* is working to secure and foster work founded on *Rungh's* archive but also to help other similarly situated communities to do so. Our notions of who makes "art" and "culture" in Canada, need to change.

### What are your thoughts on the diversity within Vancouver's theatre community, as it stands at the moment? Have you seen an improvement in the last few years?

*Rungh* is about to publish a conversation with Rohit Chokhani, Jiv Parasram, Kathleen Flaherty, Rahul Varma, and Zahida Rahemtulla. If you do not know who they are, look them up. Between them, they encompass different generations, different geographies, and differing views about what we call "theatre". In terms of what



Artistic credit: David Garneau

could be called "South Asian theatre in Canada", this is only one slice of an ongoing conversation. My sense, as the person who asked the questions, is that the ethic of how work is produced about/by/within South Asian communities continues to evolve. The production scenes in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, are quite different. There are many voices wanting to be heard. Avoiding generalities and providing cultural specificity in theatre/performance works about "South Asians", might be of more use in defining conversations. I urge the readers to read the interview in *Rungh* when it is published. Join our free mailing list at [www.rungh.org](http://www.rungh.org)

