



2606-545 Sherbourne Street  
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[StJamesTownCommunityArts.org](http://StJamesTownCommunityArts.org)

# SJTCA Article for Church SPSS

## February 2023

On Friday, February 24th, 2023, St. James Town Community Arts held its very first Black History Month event at the Church of St. Peter and St. Simon-the-Apostle, curated by student intern Malia Kim, from Humber College's Faculty of Social and Community Services. Thanks to the Church of SPSS's support and generosity, we were able to present a beautiful event, complete with meaningful pieces to celebrate Black History, Black Excellence, and Black artists through performances from our senior dance class, drumming ensemble, drama class, and choir.

Many at the Church of SPSS may remember our organization as "Reaching Out Through Music", which had its early beginnings at the Church. Since then, our organization has expanded to include arts education in drama, dance, and musical theatre, along with our regular music classes and ensembles, hence the new name - "St. James Town Community Arts". In these new creative settings, we have seen our students thrive and take their artistic abilities to new heights.

In our drama classes, students began writing their own [mini "mockumentary" series](#) in our drama class with Toronto actor/producer Khadijah Salawu. With drumming instructor, Mackenzie Read, students as young as 5 years old are learning to play synchronized rhythmic patterns with their percussion ensemble. Our advanced dance students performed a stirring [interpretive dance piece](#) to commemorate Black activists and movements, committing fully to the significance of their performance. They have been invited to collaborate with the [National Ballet of Canada](#) and the [Luminato Festival](#) for a project called "[Walk With Amal](#)".

Our choir, which rehearses on a weekly basis at the Church of SPSS and accommodates the majority of our students with ages ranging from 5-16, performed with the [Canadian Children's Opera Company](#) and the [Art of Time Ensemble](#) in a holiday concert at the Harbourfront Performing Arts Centre. Recently, our choir has begun taking on more challenging repertoire (with 3-4 part harmony and some lower voices even singing the bass and tenor parts). It has been so rewarding to see some of our older students mentoring the younger students who are new to choral singing.

*MUSIC, DRAMA, ART, DANCE*



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Most notably, last summer, our Summer Arts Camp presented a production of “Seussical the Musical”, which was a roaring success. Students memorized lines and music, took on challenging blocking and choreography, and gave an outstanding, professional [performance](#). Students raved about how much fun they had over the course of the 2-week camp and overwhelmed us with their [positive feedback](#).

The positive impact that these programs have had on our students is amazing. We have received an outpouring of gratitude from parents/guardians who have noticed a significant increase in confidence and improvement in social and communication skills in their children. It is thanks to the goodness of groups such as the Church of SPSS that we are able to continue doing our work of providing free and accessible arts education to children and youth in the community. Our students, their families, our board members, and our artistic staff are immensely grateful for the opportunity to work and create in the wonderful space that the Church of SPSS has provided for us over the years. As a small non-profit organization that relies solely on donations and grants, every ounce of generosity goes a long way and we look forward to future collaborations with the Church. Perhaps a collaborative music recital featuring some members of the Church and congregation may be in the cards...

SJTCA thanks the Church of SPSS once again for their many years of kindness and support. For more information about our organization, please feel free to visit us at the following links: [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [donations](#).

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*(See below for photos and captions)*

*MUSIC, DRAMA, ART, DANCE*



Students from our senior dance class performed a beautiful and meaningful interpretive dance piece to the song “Glory”, by John Legend. The choreography by dance instructor, Erin Burgess, acknowledged Black activists such as Rosa Parks and monumental events such as the Ferguson protests. The audience was deeply moved by the performance and the focus and dedication demonstrated by the students.



Our drumming ensemble performed a cover of Stevie Wonder’s “Don’t You Worry ‘Bout a Thing”, with our fearless drumming instructor, Mackenzie Read, leading the way. With synchronized playing, our students highlighted the groovy rhythms in the piece on their sticks and bucket drums. They had our audience tapping their feet and moving along to the beat all the way through!

*MUSIC, DRAMA, ART, DANCE*



The St. James Town Children's Choir sang the classic Oscar Peterson composition, "Hymn to Freedom". Our choir accommodates students aged 5-16, making it the program with the widest age range.



Drama students performed poems by Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes, selected by our drama instructor, Khadijah Salawu. Through their work in learning these poems, our students became inspired to write their own poetry to reflect on what Black History Month meant to them. We are so proud of our students' commitment to creative expression and learning.

**MUSIC, DRAMA, ART, DANCE**



Student intern, Malia Kim, who is with us this term as part of her placement through Humber College's Social Work program, planned and curated this wonderful event.

*MUSIC, DRAMA, ART, DANCE*