International Colloquium

The Art & Science of Black Context/ualization

International Black Theatre Festival

July 29–31, 2026

Curator's Statement

The 2026 International Colloquium is designed as a three-day journey through Black theatrical knowledge—moving from remembrance, to reimagination, to responsibility. Together, these sessions ask how Black artists preserve memory, harness emerging technologies, and shape the futures our communities deserve. Rooted in the Akan principle of Sankofa, the colloquium invites participants to look back, engage the present, and carry forward the stories, practices, and possibilities that will define the next generation of Black theatre.

Organizer & Facilitator

Mya Brown is Associate Professor of Acting & Directing, at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Guiding Faculty with Theatrical Intimacy Education. An award-winning director, actor, intimacy choreographer, and current Lloyd Richards Teaching Fellow with the National Alliance of Acting Teachers, Brown's work centers on Black performance traditions, consent-based practice, and cultivating collaborative spaces where artistry, scholarship, and community intersect.

Day One: Remember

Wednesday, July 29 | 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

The Art of Presence: Black Performance as Archive and Witness

Keynote Experience featuring Walter Borden

What if the archive is not only a document, photograph, or script—but a body? Through storytelling, performance, reflection, and audience participation, Walter Borden invites participants into a communal act of witnessing that explores how Black performance preserves memory, resists erasure, and carries history across generations.

Featured Artist(s)

Walter Borden is an internationally acclaimed Canadian actor, playwright, poet, and educator. One of Canada's first openly gay Black public figures, he has spent more than five decades shaping Black Canadian theatre through performance and advocacy. At the 2026 International Black Theatre Festival, he is honored as one of the festival's Living Legend Award recipients.

Day Two: Reimagine

Thursday, July 30 | 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Coding Black Futures: AI, Virtual Production, and Digital Blackness
Interactive Screening & Talkback featuring Melissa Joyner

Following a screening of scenes from Young Thang, Melissa Joyner leads an interactive conversation exploring AI, virtual production, immersive storytelling, and Black imagination. Together, participants will examine how emerging technologies can expand Black storytelling while confronting bias and envisioning digital futures rooted in Black creativity.

Featured Artist(s)
Melissa Joyner is an award-winning director, writer, and immersive storyteller whose work spans theatre, film, virtual reality, and emerging media. As creator and director of Young Thang, she explores how Black narratives thrive through innovative technologies rooted in culture, history, and imagination.

Day Three: Lead

Friday, July 31 | 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Sankofa in the Director's Chair: Looking Back to Stage Black Futures
Interactive Directors' Forum featuring Wren T. Brown, Kathryn Ervin & Nhlanhla Ngema

Inspired by Sankofa, this participatory forum asks how today's directors honor Black theatrical lineages while staging bold futures. Through storytelling and dialogue, panelists and participants explore directing as artistic practice, cultural stewardship, and an act of collective leadership.

Featured Artist(s)
Wren T. Brown is Producing Artistic Director of Ebony Repertory Theatre and recipient of the 2026 International Black Theatre Festival Larry Leon Hamlin Producer Award. Kathryn Ervin is a director, educator, and arts leader recognized for actor-centered storytelling and mentorship. Nhlanhla Ngema is a South African director, playwright, actor, producer, and Artistic Director of K-CAP Theatre Company, internationally recognized for advancing African performance traditions.