

MEDIA RELEASE

Stuart Hughes and Joseph Ziegler reprise their Dora Award-Winning roles in *The Time of Your Life* Directed by Albert Schultz

Toronto, ON – February 17, 2011 – **Albert Schultz**, Founding Artistic Director of Soulpepper Theatre Company, today announced that the company's production of *The Time of Your Life* will preview on March 16, 2011 and open on March 18, 2011 at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts.

William Saroyan's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *The Time of Your Life* returns to the Soulpepper stage with **Stuart Hughes** and **Joseph Ziegler** reprising their 2008 Dora Award-winning roles. As well, celebrated Canadian jazz pianist and vocalist **Denzal Sinclair** will play the role of Wesley and score the show live. A nostalgic and open-eyed love letter to an America-that-might-have-been set in a late-1930s San Francisco honkytonk saloon, Saroyan mixes an intoxicating cocktail of redemption and hope.

Soulpepper Founding Artistic Director **Albert Schultz**, once again, directs Soulpepper Founding Members **Stuart Hughes** as Kit and **Joseph Ziegler** as Joe. The stellar cast includes **Douglas John Alan, Derek Boyes, Kevin Bundy, Ins Choi, Tatjana Cornij, Oliver Dennis, Lyndon Hanrahan, John Jarvis, Trish Lindström, Jeff Lillico, Alyson MacFarlane, Abena Malika, Toby Malone, Krystin Pellerin, Gregory Prest, Karen Rae, Brenda Robins, Mike Ross, Michael Simpson, Denzal Sinclair, Jane Spidell, Brendan Wall & William Webster.**

The Time of Your Life previews March 16, 2011 and opens March 18, 2011 at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts, located at 55 Mill Street, Building 49, in the Distillery Historic District. Tickets range from \$28 - \$65 (plus HST) and are available by calling the Young Centre box office at 416.866.8666 or by visiting www.soulpepper.ca. \$22 tickets are available for 21-30 year-olds at www.stageplay.ca. StagePlay is sponsored by TD Bank Financial Group.

2011 Soulpepper Lead Sponsors are: Sun Life Financial, Scotiabank Group and TELUS. Soulpepper gratefully acknowledges annual operating support from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council.

Soulpepper Theatre Company is an artist-founded, classical repertory theatre company with a three-tiered mandate: to present the world's greatest stories in vital Canadian interpretations; to train a new generation of theatre artists; and to inspire and enrich youth through mentorship and access programs.

BACKGROUND NOTES

William Saroyan's intricate, loving, hopeful *The Time of Your Life* won the 1940 Pulitzer Prize for drama, yet is surprisingly little-known today despite the work's strength. At first glance, it is an easy matter to align Saroyan's dream-filled ode to America with Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, and indeed the two plays share settings in a seedy bar filled with figures who dream of another life. The *Time of Your Life* is distinguished, however, by the driving central energy of Joe, the philanthropic, curious, champagne-drinking fixture in the hopefully named "Nick's Pacific Street Restaurant, Saloon, and Entertainment Palace." Where O'Neill's Hickey preaches belief in hope, Joe makes hope happen, and takes subtle, honest pleasure in gestures of kindness, based on his conviction that "Living is an art. It's not book-keeping. It takes a lot of rehearsing for a man to get to be himself." Saroyan's San Francisco is a universe of its own, replete with beautifully constructed figures coming and going, always human, usually vulnerable, and constantly compelling.

Saroyan, an Armenian-American who set many of his other works within that niche community, uses *The Time of Your Life* to toy with what would later be identified as absurdist tendencies. His bar setting is simple, but the stories that enliven it often reach toward outrageous invention, always imbued with pathos, heart, and enough sincerity that we understand why Joe uses his money to help dreams occur. Previous versions of *The Time of Your Life* have included actors such as James Cagney and Jackie Gleason; Toronto audiences discovered in 2008 that Soulpepper offered similarly world-class performances. Joseph Ziegler's portrayal of Joe and Stuart Hughes's version of grizzled "Indian fighter" Kit Carson both won Dora awards, and both return for the 2011 remount.

The Time of Your Life is a beautifully crafted, tender, moving play that unquestionably ranks alongside the great works of Arthur Miller, Thornton Wilder, and Eugene O'Neill to define the middle twentieth-century genre of American drama. Saroyan builds a place in which every figure has a dream of changing their world in some way, and it is the "utterly unknown, but very famous" Joe who has the curiosity to help make that happen. Saroyan urges us all to live to the fullest in "the time of your life ... so that in that good time there shall be no ugliness or death of yourself or for any life your life touches." The figures in *The Time of Your Life* do not all succeed in this philosophy, but it is the beauty of the dream that lingers.

Background Notes

by Soulpepper Associate Artist Toby Malone

ARTIST PROFILE

A regular on the Soulpepper stage, Kevin Bundy has appeared in many productions, including Glengarry Glen Ross, Jitters, A Christmas Carol, King Lear, and Fool for Love. Kevin is a veteran of the Stratford and Shaw festivals, and a graduate of the National Theatre School. He took time from rehearsing to talk about The Time of Your Life and returning to the character of Tom.

Nathan Kelly

You're returning to the role of Tom, has it felt any different coming back to the character? What excites you most about returning to the role, to the play?

Kevin Bundy

It's a little bit like dusting off a favourite old book. I really liked playing this character a lot - it fit like a glove for me. Some roles are harder to get into than others, but this was a really good fit; I understood this guy right away. So it's so great to come back and reacquaint myself with him - it's sort of like shaking hands with an old friend. What excites me about playing Tom is his beautiful warmth and innocence. Saroyan is always talking about the evils of the world; about some people who seem to want to make the world a worse place. Tom simply wants to make the world a better place, and that's what I love about him - that heart and that drive. Coming back to the play itself - I love the writing, I love what it has to say - and being on stage with Joe Ziegler is a real treat.

NK

Most of the original cast has returned for 2011, but a few new actors have joined the ensemble this year. How has it been working with returning actors as opposed to the new artists? Is there a shorthand that develops?

KB

Definitely. Since Joe and I have worked on other shows in the past, we sort of have a shorthand anyway. It's pretty great to go back into the scenes and rediscover the ways we performed certain moments. It's also been wonderful to get the chance to work with the Soulpepper Academy. I've seen the work they've done with the Clown Cabaret, with Oh What a Lovely War, Death of a Salesman, and A Midsummer Night's Dream - and seeing this makes me realize just what a talented bunch of people they are. I know that because they've been here for almost two years that they're warmed up, they're in shape - so to speak - even though they're dropped into this rehearsal process they hit the ground running.

Continued ...

ARTIST PROFILE CONTINUED

NK

In some ways, *The Time of Your Life* is a play about dreams - about longing for a better life. What do you think is your character's dream?

KB

Well like I mentioned, he wants to make the world a better place. He gets asked by Joe's character what he wants to be in his life. If you could do anything, what would you do? And Tom says that he would want to do what Joe is doing - which is sit around drinking champagne and never worry about money. Which is kind of what everyone wants to do, really! Not laze around and be a loaf, but not have to be strained the worries of life. I suppose that ties into the whole notion of the American Dream - to have a home, to raise a family - which is not just the American dream. He just wants to be able to help somebody, like Joe is doing for Tom, and what Tom wants to do for Kitty. So I think ultimately his dream is just to be able to help other people, to make their lives better. Because he was down and out and was helped by Joe - so he doesn't just want his own home or that kind of material dream, he wants to help somebody else.

NK

You're back at Soulpepper now until the end of the season - right through to *Parfumerie*. Which role are you looking forward to the most?

KB

I'm looking forward to playing Stefan in *Parfumerie* because he's such a cad! He's so much fun to play, with Maev Beaty as my supposed girlfriend and having my butt kicked by Oliver Dennis. He just doesn't care about other people and only does what he wants to do!