

MEDIA RELEASE

Soulpepper welcomes the new 2009-2010 Academy

Toronto, ON – October 30, 2008 – Soulpepper proudly announces the next 10 artists that have been chosen to form the 2009-2010 Soulpepper Academy.

Selected through an exhaustive nation-wide search, the Soulpepper Academy is comprised of 10 artists who undertake a two year residency to further develop their skills under the guidance of leading theatre practitioners. The artists are involved in Soulpepper productions, teach in the classrooms of the local community, mentor youth and develop a collective creation. The Academy is comprised of directors, playwrights, designers and performers and in many cases, artists that are skilled in more than one area or discipline.

Launched in 2006, the Soulpepper Academy program is divided into two phases. The first year is strongly focused on training and pedagogy, while the second year shifts to performance/production with ongoing training. Mentorship and teaching activities run throughout the two-year program, as does collective creation. Artists participate in workshop showcases during the first year and in the second join the Soulpepper Company on the mainstage.

Since premiering the collectively created *BLiNK* to great acclaim at the Luminato Festival in June, graduates of the inaugural Soulpepper Academy continue to appear onstage and behind the scenes at Soulpepper. They include Michael Blake who is currently featured in the acclaimed Soulpepper/Theatre Calgary production of *A Raisin in the Sun* directed by Academy graduate Weyni Mengesha who last week received the RBC Emerging Artist Award from the Toronto Arts Council Foundation. Next season Sarah Wilson will be appearing in *Travesties* and *Awake and Sing!*, while Stephen Guy-McGrath will be featured in *Glengarry Glen Ross*. The final production of the 2009 season is *Civil Elegies*, an entirely new work inspired by the poetry of Dennis Lee, conceived and created by graduates Mike Ross and Lorenzo Savoini – the foundations of which were began during their time in the Soulpepper Academy. In addition, Weyni Mengesha, Mike Ross and Lorenzo Savoini will return as Soulpepper Associate Artists in 2009.

THE NEW 2009-2010 SOULPEPPER ACADEMY

INS CHOI was born in Korea, grew up in Scarborough and now resides in Toronto. Choi obtained a B.F.A. in acting at York University and gained professional training in the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada. Choi's acting resume includes *Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, *The Odyssey* (Stratford Festival) and film/television roles in *The Terminal* and *Earth Final Conflict*.

TATJANA CORNIJ has worked as an actor, composer and teacher at theatres and schools in Serbia, the U.S. and Canada. Cornij holds an M.F.A. in acting from Brandeis University (Boston, MA), a B.F.A. in acting from the Academy of Fine Arts (Nov Sad, Serbia), and a B.Ed. degree from OISE/U of T.

RAQUEL DUFFY received a B.A. from Dalhousie University and obtained professional training in the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada. She has worked both on stage and on screen including a role on the Gemini Award-nominated television program *Jonovision* as well as performances in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Love's Labours Lost* (Stratford Festival) and *Anne of Green Gables* (Charlottetown Festival).

BRENDAN HEALY hails from Montreal where he began his career as an actor. He has appeared, most notably, in an acclaimed production of Greg MacArthur's *Girls!Girls!Girls!* presented at the Festival de Theatre des Ameriques. Since graduating from the National Theatre School's directing program in 2005, Healy has been recognized as one of Toronto's top theatre artists of 2007 by NOW Magazine and received the Ken McDougall award for Emerging Director.

MATTHEW KABWE was born and raised in Pointe-Claire, Quebec. He spent several years performing with Montreal theatre companies including Repercussion, Village Theatre West and Black Theatre Workshop. He has worked with the Canadian Stage Company and is currently featured in Soulpepper/Theatre Calgary's *A Raisin in the Sun*. Kabwe has also performed voice, television and film work with Galafilm, Muse, Dark Castle, Lion's Gate and the National Film Board of Canada.

KEN MACKENZIE recently returned to Canada from L.A., where he obtained a Masters Degree in Design for the Theatre from the California Institute of the Arts. Some of Ken's recent design credits include: *Fewer Emergencies* (Summerworks), *Lupe: Undone* (Toronto Fringe Festival), *Miss Julie* (Sledgehammer Theater) and *Berlin Blues* (Magnus Theatre).

GREGORY PREST was born and raised in Pictou, Nova Scotia and now splits his time between Toronto and Montreal, since graduating from the National Theatre School in 2004. He has performed at theatres across the country including Centaur Theatre (*Glorious!*, *Tales from Ovid*), Canadian Opera Company (*From the House of the Dead*), LKYPT (*The Man Whose Mother was a Pirate* – Dora Nomination) and UnSpun (*The Tin Drum*).

KAREN RAE is a graduate of Studio 58 in Vancouver. Rae's stage credits include Carole Frechette's *John and Beatrice* (PI Theatre), *Mrs. Spiderlady* (Vancouver Fringe Festival), *Measure for Measure, As You Like It, Love's Labour's Lost, Pericles, A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Bard on the Beach) and *Cabaret* (Studio 58).

JASON ROTHERY is a graduate of University of British Columbia's Creative Writing program. Rothery is the author of *Wedgie, Wilson's Leg, The Space Between Us, The Drop, Re:Generation* and *POLITiK0*. He was the in-house dramaturge at the Vancouver Playwrights Theatre Centre, the creator of the Walking Fish Festival, and was the co-founder and festival director of the 2006 Calgary Fringe Festival.

BRENDAN WALL has lived and worked in Toronto as an actor and musician for the past 12 years where he has obtained a B.F.A. from York University's Theatre program. Productions with which Brendan has been involved include *Letters to Kathleen* (Summerworks Festival – Director, Co-writer); *Death of a Salesman* (Theatre Aquarius) and *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (Canadian Stage).

The Soulpepper Academy is supported in part by the Brian Linehan Charitable Foundation, the Hal Jackman Foundation and Soulpepper's Soul Circle Mentors.

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 provide classical training to a new generation of theatre artists; and to provide access and mentorship programs for young people using theatre as the vehicle.