

MEDIA RELEASE

TRANSFORMING THE YOUNG CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS INTO A COMMUNITY HUB FOR ALL WITH A \$100,000 OTF GRANT

Toronto, ON – October 13, 2021: In 2019, **Soulpepper Theatre Company** and the **Young Centre for the Performing Arts** received the good news that they had received a \$100,000 Capital grant from the **Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)** that has supported a vital and transformative upgrade to the performing arts venue in the Distillery Historic District. The upgrades removed physical access barriers for patrons of the theatre, and have transformed the Atrium a more inclusive, accessible, and welcoming space to all.

“Non-profit theatres like Soulpepper and the Young Centre enrich our community with interesting and exciting affordable programming. As a long-time advocate for people with special needs and disabilities, it is wonderful to see this grant used to make this venue even more accessible. This is another vital step toward making our province fully accessible to all,” said MPP **Chris Glover**.

Soulpepper is eagerly contemplating the return to the stage following a long period without audiences due to the pandemic, and is thrilled that soon, as patrons are welcomed back into the theatre for live performances, the community will be met with a transformed space. The upgrades, supported by OTF, have been completed while the Young Centre’s doors have been shut to the public, and will improve the experience of coming to the theatre for years to come.

The upgrades to the Young Centre for the Performing Arts include a second automatic public door, rebuilding the Young Centre Café counter and the Will Call welcome counter, and reconfigurations to the Atrium lighting and furnishings. The addition of a second automatic door to the East doors of the main entrance provides handsfree, accessible access to the Atrium from the entrance nearest to the Wheel Trans drop-off site. To serve the community better while at the theatre, the Young Centre Café and the Will Call welcome counters have been redesigned and lowered for patrons using mobility devices. The final transformative element that ties the necessary accessibility upgrades together is the reconfiguration of the Atrium, designed by Jade Lee Hoy, making Soulpepper’s lobby a creative hub for the community to gather at and enjoy.

“The impact of this Ontario Trillium Foundation grant cannot be underestimated – this grant has allowed for necessary upgrades that Weyni and I have been dreaming up since we began working at the Company. Soulpepper’s home, the Young Centre for the Performing Arts, is now completely accessible for audiences. As we contemplate the upcoming return to the stage – stay tuned – we can see how we will be able to serve the Toronto theatre community, making Soulpepper and the Young Centre a vibrant community hub,” said **Emma Stenning**, Executive Director.

Soulpepper and the Young Centre for the Performing Arts are committed to preserving the space and ensuring that it remains accessible as a community hub for artists and audiences. Spaces at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts can be rented for events, or artistic projects, to enquire about the space visit youngcentre.ca/rentals.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada’s leading granting foundations. Last year, nearly \$112M was invested into 1,384 community projects and partnerships to build healthy and vibrant communities and strengthen the impact of Ontario’s non-profit sector. In 2020/21, OTF supported Ontario’s economic recovery by helping non-profit organizations rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Visit otf.ca to learn more.

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Located in its multi-venue home, the Young Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto’s Distillery Historic District, Soulpepper is Toronto’s largest not-for-profit theatre company. Founded and guided by artists, Soulpepper has an integrated mission which includes: industry-leading youth and community outreach initiatives; artist training and mentorship programs; and a year-round diverse repertory season which is grounded in the classics and committed to the creation of new works, new forms, and innovative practices.

The artists and staff of Soulpepper and the Young Centre for the Performing Arts acknowledge the original caretakers and storytellers of this land - the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinaabe, and the Wendat First Nations. We commit to honouring and celebrating their past, present and future. Soulpepper believes all people have a right to express their individuality, to experience creative freedom, to feel safe at all times, and to be treated with dignity and respect.

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Tickets are available at soulpepper.ca. All ticket prices include a Young Centre facility fee, service charge and HST. Pricing is subject to change.

Soulpepper gratefully acknowledges annual operating support from the Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. Soulpepper is pleased to recognize the donors of transformational gifts to its Creative Capital Campaign: The Slight Family; The Government of Ontario; and Kevin and Roger Garland.

Support for the Soulpepper Academy is provided by the RBC Emerging Artists Project, the Government of Canada through the Arts Training Fund, Sylvia Soyka and the Kingfisher Foundation.

Soulpepper is grateful for additional major support from Scotiabank and The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation; and additional lead support from; the TD Ready Commitment; Sun Life; and BMO Financial Group; and Diane Blake & Stephen Smith.

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