

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOULPEPPER ANNOUNCES 'SUMMER OF SONG'

ACT II OF SOULPEPPER'S 2023 SEASON FEATURES AN EXCITING SERIES OF MUSIC FROM OPERA TO MOTOWN

Toronto, ON – March 1, 2022: Soulpepper Theatre Company wants to fill your summer with music, fun and good times.

With three mainstage presentations, a brand-new courtyard music series, and a thrilling partner presentation we want to remind people of the magic of live music and shared experiences.

The mainstage programs in Act II begin with a remount of one of Soulpepper's most popular concerts about a famed Montrealer, followed by the Canadian premiere of a hybrid music-theatre experience set in the wilds of Mesopotamia and modern-day Toronto, and finally a celebration of the music that made Detroit history.

You can also experience Soulpepper in a whole new way with our first outdoor summer music series **Live From The Stage Door**. Expect great music and good vibes on Friday nights in the Soulpepper courtyard during July and August.

"Music has been threaded through the fabric of Soulpepper for so many years now, and this summer we're taking it to the next level", said **Mike Ross**, Slight Music Director of Music.

"This is a summer long party bringing fresh new takes on some of the world's most enduring stories" said **Weyni Mengesha**, Artistic Director.

Beyond the walls of Soulpepper we are incredibly proud to be part of the team bringing the world premiere of **Scott Joplin's Treemonisha** to The Bluma Appel Theatre as part of the 2023 Luminato Festival as a producing partner.

ACT II PROGRAMMING

Special thanks to Soulpepper's Major Sponsor and Community Access Partner, **Scotia Wealth Management**, and to the **Slight Family** for helping bring these productions to life:

Kicking off the 'Summer of Song' is a remount of **The Secret Chord: A Leonard Cohen Experience**, a Soulpepper audience favourite. Created by **Marni Jackson**, **Mike Ross** and the 2023 Baillie Fellow **Frank Cox-O'Connell**, the concert celebrates one of Canada's most beloved song writers and performers through story and song.

Fresh from sold out performances in New York City and Minneapolis is **King Gilgamesh and the Man of the Wild**. Created by **Ahmed Moneka**, **Jesse LaVercombe** and **Seth Bockley**, the show is a hybrid theatre-music production using the ancient tale of Gilgamesh and the real-life friendship between Ahmed and Jesse as inspiration. Music is provided by the Arabic-maqam fusion band, Moneka Arabic Jazz.

The final mainstage concert in Act II is the world premiere of **Detroit: Music of the Motor City** created by **Frank Cox-O'Connell, Travis Knights** and **Andrew Penner**. This is our third mainstage concert created by our Slight Music Associates after sold-out runs of **The Golden Record** and **Billie, Sarah and Ella: The Revolutionary Women in Jazz**. The ensemble tells the complicated history of Detroit through its unique sounds from The Temptations to Eminem, and The Supremes to The White Stripes.

Our new outdoor music series **Live From The Stage Door** begins July 14 at 9pm curated by **Frank-Cox O'Connell**. Performers will be announced each week and admission will be \$10 at the 'stage door'. You can expect to see some familiar Soulpepper concert favourites in the lineup.

Alongside these performances our Community Engagement team will be presenting Soulpepper's third **Queer Youth Cabaret** on June 23 and 24, 2023. With a mix of singing, dance, comedy and live music, this annual event shines a light on up-and-coming queer identifying artists in Toronto.

"Summertime feels like the right time for a celebration," said **Gideon Arthurs**, Executive Director. *"and we want to throw open our doors and welcome the community to experience music, art and laughter together."*

In addition to the exciting work at Soulpepper's Young Centre, **Scott Joplin's Treemonisha** is a 21st century reimagining of the sole surviving opera by the "King of Ragtime" and is being directed by Soulpepper Artistic Director **Weyni Mengesha**. The new work combines original source material from Treemonisha (c.1911) with the artistry of major Black artists working today in Canada, the United States and the UK. Presented by Luminato and TO Live this world premiere opera will be produced by Volcano Theatre, in association with Soulpepper Theatre, Canadian Opera Company and Moveable Beast.

All programming details can be found at www.soulpepper.ca.

Single tickets for all three Soulpepper mainstage presentations are available for sale today at www.soulpepper.ca.

Tickets for *Scott Joplin's Treemonisha* are available for sale today at www.tolive.com.

JUNE – AUGUST 2023 MAINSTAGE PRESENTATIONS

THE SECRET CHORD: A LEONARD COHEN EXPERIENCE

Created by Frank Cox-O'Connell, Marni Jackson and Mike Ross

Directed by Frank Cox-O'Connell

Soulpepper's hottest concert is back!

Soulpepper's tribute to one of Canada's most beloved artists returns after several sold out engagements. Leonard Cohen constantly reinvented himself throughout his long career, helping generations of fans understand the changing society around them. His extraordinary life, music, and poetry will be celebrated by a remarkable company of artists.

A Soulpepper Concert Remount

***The Secret Chord: A Leonard Cohen Experience* runs from June 14 - 25, 2023.**

KING GILGAMESH AND THE MAN OF THE WILD

By Ahmed Moneka, Jesse LaVercombe and Seth Bockley

Directed by Seth Bockley

A co-production between Soulpepper and Tria Theatre

The oldest story ever recorded like you've never seen it before.

King Gilgamesh & the Man of the Wild is a hybrid theatre-music production featuring Ahmed Moneka and Jesse LaVercombe alongside celebrated Arabic-maqam fusion band, Moneka Arabic Jazz. A present-day story of friendship interweaves with the ancient Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, and along the way traces Ahmed's real-life journey from exiled Iraqi actor to acclaimed musician in Canada. Featuring themes of art, ambition, sex, fatherhood, mortality and identity, this two-man epic spans centuries, cultures, and continents in a moving, funny, tragic, and ultimately celebratory performance.

Canadian Premiere

King Gilgamesh and the Man of the Wild runs from July 25 to August 6, 2023. Opening Night is July 27, 2023.

DETROIT: MUSIC OF THE MOTOR CITY

By Frank Cox-O'Connell, Travis Knights and Andrew Penner

Directed by Frank Cox-O'Connell

Celebrate the soundtrack of Detroit's history!

Detroit was once called 'The City of the Future'. It was built on the innovation of Henry Ford and later gutted by the collapse of the automotive industry. 20th century Detroit is more than the story of collapse and rebirth, it's also a story about the music that captured the world's attention: 'The Sound of Young America'.

Soulpepper regulars Frank Cox-O'Connell, Travis Knights and Andrew Penner use the many genres of music that came out of Detroit (Motown, Jazz, Hip Hop and Detroit Rock to name a few) to explore the city's history from the assembly line to abandoned factories and the resilient sounds of today's Detroit.

Canadian Premiere

Detroit: Music of the Motor City runs from August 9 - 20, 2023.

SCOTT JOPLIN'S TREEMONISHA

Luminato and TO Live present the world premiere of Volcano's production of *Scott Joplin's*

***Treemonisha* in association with Soulpepper, Canadian Opera Company, and Moveable Beast.**

Directed by Weyni Mengesha

A 21st-century reimagining of the sole surviving opera by the "King of Ragtime". The new work combines original source material from *Treemonisha* (c.1911) with the artistry of major Black artists working today in Canada, the United States and the UK. It will be produced by Canada's international award-winning performance creation company **Volcano**, in association with the **Canadian Opera Company**, **Soulpepper** and **Moveable Beast**.

Led by a Black, majority-female creative team from across North America, Joplin’s visionary tale of community and female leadership, has been reimagined with a new story and libretto by playwright and broadcaster **Leah-Simone Bowen** (*The Secret Life of Canada*), working with Emmy-nominated co-librettist **Cheryl L. Davis**. The show also incorporates expanded musical arrangements and new orchestrations by composers **Jessie Montgomery** (Chicago Symphony Mead Composer in Residence, Sphinx Medal of Excellence), and **Jannina Norpoth** (Grammy-nominated violinist and 1st violin of NYC’s PUBLIQuartet). In the title role, Canadian soprano **Neema Bickersteth** – “an incredible performer” (*The Guardian*) whose “galvanic voice outshines anything else onstage” (*Vancouver Observer, Canada*) – heads an all-Black cast, with an all-Black majority-female, nine-piece chamber orchestra performing on Western and African instruments. Award-winning Canadian stage director **Weyni Mengesha**, and internationally-acclaimed Panamanian-American conductor **Kalena Bovell** helm this ground-breaking version of Joplin’s opera.

World Premiere

Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha* runs from June 10 - 17, 2023 at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts in The Bluma Appel Theatre.

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