

Soulpepper

TRIA Theatre

King Gilgamesh and the Man of the Wild

By Jesse LaVercombe,
Seth Bockley, & Ahmed Moneka

Directed by Seth Bockley

Performed by Jesse LaVercombe & Ahmed Moneka



Photo of Waleed Abdulhamid, Ahmed Moneka, Jessica Deutsch, and Jesse LaVercombe by Dahlia Katz.



The oldest story in the world, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, is about an unlikely and epic friendship between two men. A king and a beast-man find meaning in life by finding each other, and teach each other about strength and vulnerability.

We developed this production organically over several years, exploring and

incorporating our own bond that transcends differences of language, skin color, and religion.

This project is a testament to international collaboration, and it is the story of Toronto itself, the meeting place we call home.

We are honored to share the stage with Ahmed's Juno-nominated Arabic jazz band, whose musicians hail from Turkey, Greece, Sudan, and Canada. We could not be more grateful for these musicians' artistry and spirit.

Friendship is sacred. It is as vital as romance. It helps us become our truest selves. Friends are our memory-keepers, our tough-truth-tellers, our witnesses in the journey of life.

Thank you for joining us on this epic journey.

Seth Bockley, Jesse LaVercombe, and Ahmed Moneka
TRIA Theatre

THE STORY OF *THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH* - Spoilers Ahead!

The Epic of Gilgamesh is an ancient Mesopotamian poem that recounts the adventures of Gilgamesh, the legendary king of Uruk. The epic is divided into several sections, each capturing different aspects of Gilgamesh's journey. The story begins by portraying Gilgamesh as a tyrannical ruler who oppresses his people. In response to their cries for help, the Gods create Enkidu, a wild man, to challenge and eventually befriend Gilgamesh. The two embark on a series of epic quests, including defeating the monstrous Humbaba and encountering the divine Bull of Heaven. However, tragedy strikes when Enkidu dies, sending Gilgamesh into a deep grief and existential crisis. He sets out on a quest for immortality but ultimately learns the value of living a meaningful life and accepting mortality. The epic concludes with Gilgamesh returning to Uruk, transformed by his experiences and leaving behind a legacy that endures through his city and the written account of his epic tale.

Jesse LaVercombe

Roberto Riverón
Bass (Alternate)

Max Senitt
Drums & Percussion

Raha Javanfar
Violin (Alternate)

Guillermo Verdecchia
Dramaturg

Emilie Aubin
Stage Manager

Evan Reid
Apprentice Stage Manager

Adam Royce
A1, Sound Mixer

Dalton Villeneuve-Marini
Deck Hand/A2

Claudia Matas
Assistant Head of Wardrobe

Shae Norris
Lighting Operator

Content Warning: mature language and sexual content



90 minutes no intermission



WALEED ABDULHAMID is a Canadian Multi-instrumentalist; Composer; Vocalist, Music and Film Producer, known for his striking vocals, and virtuosic ability to play 20 instruments. He has been an active member of the Toronto music scene since his arrival, in 1991, from Sudan. He is currently a faculty member in the music department of the University of Toronto. He has recorded, performed and toured with celebrated artists including David Clayton Thomas of the Grammy Award winning band Blood, Sweat & Tears and Motown legends, The Drifters. He is most proud of his role as a mentor to acclaimed younger artists such as D'bi Young, Ngozi Paul, and Zaki Ibrahim.



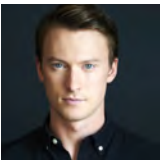
EMILIE AUBIN is a stage manager for theatre and live performance based in Tkaròn:to. SOULPEPPER 2025: King Gilgamesh. FOR SOULPEPPER: Table for Two (2025); Billie, Sarah, & Ella: Revolutionary Women in Jazz (2024); Three Sisters (2024); Art (2019). OTHER THEATRE: Is God Is (Obsidian Theatre / Necessary Angel / Canadian Stage); Made in Italy, 2 Pianos 4 Hands (Marquis Entertainment / Mirvish); Cast Iron (Obsidian Theatre / Factory Theatre); 21 Black Futures, Pass Over, School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play, hang (Obsidian Theatre); Come Home: The Legend of Daddy Hall, Cockroach 勾撒 (Tarragon Theatre); Century Song, Infinity (Volcano Theatre).



SETH BOCKLEY is a director, playwright and producer based in New York. He specializes in literary adaptation, new play development and site-responsive works. SOULPEPPER 2025: King Gilgamesh. OTHER THEATRE: 2666 (Goodman Theatre; from the novel by Roberto Bolaño); Rip van Winkle (Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival); Jon and CommComm (from short stories by George Saunders); Basetrack Live and Wilderness (En Garde Arts). Current projects include a musical about chatbots of the dead and a road-trip stoner theater/film hybrid Don Quixote. sethbockley.com



JESSICA HANA DEUTSCH is an in-demand violinist, vocalist, arranger and composer in Toronto's music scene. She is incredibly versatile, sounding equally comfortable in Afro Cuban, Klezmer, Brazilian, classical, and Arabic music. Classically-trained from the age of 3 and a three-time national finalist in the Canadian Music Competition, Deutsch studied with Mark Skazinetsky (assistant concertmaster of the TSO). She has a new project with Tyler Emond called Hush, in which she sings and co-writes adventurous indie pop music. She also leads and composes the music for her band Ozere, which mixes classical chamber music with world folk styles. She has worked with many artists, including Leif Vollebekk, Tyler Shaw, Sarah Slean, Jayme Stone, Tara Moneka, Ventanas, and Beyond the Pale. She also played fiddle in the hit Mirvish musical Come From Away.



JESSE LAVERCOMBE is a screenwriter, playwright and actor from Minnesota. Screenwriting credits include: Float (Lionsgate), Code 8: Part II (Netflix); playwrighting credits include: Love Me Forever, Billy H. Tender (Videofag); film & TV acting credits include: Violation (Toronto ACTRA Award, Canadian Screen Award nomination), Honey Bunch (TIFF 2025), Murdoch Mysteries (four seasons); stage acting credits include: Letters From Max (Necessary Angel), Post-Democracy, Bunny, Hamlet, Sequence (Tarragon), Beautiful Man (Factory), Copenhagen (National Arts Centre), The Wickhams, Miss Bennet (The Jungle Theater - Minneapolis). Training: National Theatre School of Canada, Canadian Film Centre.



AHMED MONEKA arrived in Toronto from Baghdad six years ago and has since collaborated with many artistic institutions including the Canadian Opera Company, Tarragon Theatre, Aga Khan Museum, Tafelmusik, Driftwood Theatre Group, Toronto Jazz Festival, Koerner Hall, Modern Times Stage, Jabari Dance Theatre, Toronto Laboratory Theatre, Theatre Centre, and TRIA Theatre. He is one of the founders of the band Moskitto Bar and is the creator and leader of Moneka Arabic Jazz – a 2019 Stingray Rising Stars Winner at the Toronto Jazz Festival.



DEMETRI PETSALAKIS Originally from Athens Greece, Demetri Petsalakis is a Toronto based musician performing in a variety of styles with a focus on Greek and Middle Eastern lutes. Influenced by the rich cultural diversity of Canada, Demetri incorporates musical elements from different traditions in order to create a contemporary sound that represents both his heritage and the community that he is a part of. An active member of the Toronto world music scene Demetri has composed for, recorded and performed with many groups including Kune, Niyaz, Tafelmusik, Sultans of Strings, Ventanas, Near East Trio, Zephyr, Turkwaz, Moneka Arabic Jazz and Moskitto Bar. In 2020 Demetri was appointed the musical director of Kune, a Royal Conservatory world music orchestra with members from eleven different countries. During his musical studies Demetri has been fortunate to learn from many great teachers including oud masters Bassam Bishara, and Christos Tsiamoulis as well as master of the Cretan Lyra Astrinos Zaharioudakis and renowned jazz guitarist Lorne Lofsky. Demetri has a Master of Music degree in jazz guitar performance from the University of Toronto, and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from York University.



LORENZO SAVOINI SOULPEPPER 2025: King Gilgamesh FOR SOULPEPPER: Over forty productions, most notably set and lighting design for De Profundis: Oscar Wilde in Jail (2024), A Street Car Named Designer (2019/2024), set and lighting for Rose (2019), Idomeneus (2018) OTHER THEATRE: Set for Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, set and costumes for Forgiveness (Stratford Festival); set for Wait Until Dark (Shaw Festival); set for Mahabharata (Why Not Theatre, Shaw, Lincoln Centre, Barbican); set and lighting for Winter Solstice (Necessary Angel/Canadian stage) OTHER: Lorenzo is the recipient of five Dora Awards for outstanding design and is a member of the Associated Designers of Canada. www.lorenzosavoini.com



MAX SENITT Juno Award winning Drummer/Percussionist Max Senitt is a highly regarded and in-demand freelance musician specializing in music from all around the world. A proud member of Moneka Arabic Jazz band, Max can also be seen performing frequently with Cheikh Ibra Fam, Kazdoura, Avataar, WAPAMA, and several other highly acclaimed Grammy and Juno award winning artists such as: Josh Groban, Alex Cuba, Kiran Ahluwalia, Quique Escamilla, and Hilario Duran. As an educator, Max teaches privately, has conducted masterclasses around the world, and was a faculty member at Centennial College for 10 + years in Toronto, Canada where he lives.



ADRIAN SHEPHERD-GAWINSKI Hi, I'm Adrian. I'm a Dora Award-winning sound designer, writer, composer and actor based in Toronto. This past summer you may have seen me in Lighthouse Festival Theatre's Pinkerton Comes to Prospect. This fall, I'll provide sound design and score for CHILD-ish new work premiering at Tarragon Theatre and King Gilgamesh for which I shared a Dora Award with Moneka Arabic Jazz Band, when it returns to Soulpepper. I'm a part of the audiobook cast of Reconciling History by Jody Wilson-Raybould and Rohan Danesh, available now from Penguin Random House Canada.



SELCUK SUNA born in Istanbul, Turkey in 1981, Selcuk from a family of musicians. He currently resides in Toronto, Canada, where he is a freelance musician. His most recent album "Turkish Standards / Non-standard" is out now. While living in Turkey, Selcuk played a weekly late-night show (Beyaz Show) for 13 years; he also played for numerous Turkish pop-stars (Ajda Pekkan, Kayahan, Mustafa Ceceli etc.) Now, he performs traditional Turkish music with Istanbul Band throughout Toronto. Selcuk is a member of the Royal Conservatory's New Canadian Global Music Orchestra, KUNÉ; and has played with many well known groups such as Sultans of String and Ahmed Moneka Arabic Jazz.



EVAN REID was born and raised in Toronto, Ontario. SOULPEPPER 2025: A Strange Loop, King Gilgamesh OTHER THEATRE: Dear Mrs. Kitt (Hardbitten Productions); Freezing: A Holiday Pantomime (Burloak Theatre Group); Uncovered: U2 and The Rolling Stones (The Musical Stage Company); Boy Boy and The Magic Drum (Toronto Fringe 2024); Mary Poppins, Sweeney Todd, Jesus Christ Superstar, In Studio: The Words and Music of Britta Johnson, Happy End (Theatre Sheridan); The Calling (Random Noise Theatre) OTHER: Evan is a graduate of Sheridan College's Technical Production program and is a member of the 2025 Musical Stage Company Apprentice Program.



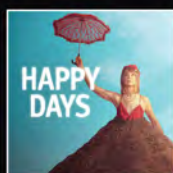
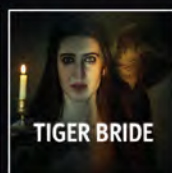
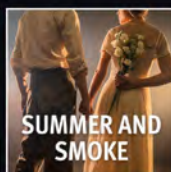
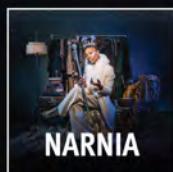
FOTE VASILEVSKI (owner of QTMEDIA) is highly experienced producer/sound engineer with extensive knowledge in live events and broadcast production. Throughout the career, Fote has been involved in over 5000 events that provided him to develop excellent project management, technical and team leadership skills from early design to final project stages. Always striving for perfection and passionate about the audio-visual industry, looking forward to expand his knowledge, learn and try new things.



GUILLERMO VERDECCHIA SOULPEPPER 2025: King Gilgamesh (dramaturge). FOR SOULPEPPER: English (co-director); The Royale (director); Animal Farm; Fronteras Americanas; Of Human Bondage (dramaturge); Queen Goneril (dramaturge); The Parliament of the Birds (playwright; Around the World in 80 plays). Other Theatre: Feast (playwright; Tarragon Theatre) Versus (co-creator with Adam Lazarus: Theatre Centre); The Mountain and the Valley (dramaturge); El Terremoto (director: Tarragon Theatre); King Gilgamesh and The Man of the Wild (dramaturge: Jungle Theatre); The Jungle (director: Tarragon Theatre); The Orchard (dramaturge: Shaw Festival); The Art of Building a Bunker (co-creator with Adam Lazarus: Factory Theatre). Other: Recipient of the Governor-General's Award for Drama for his play Fronteras Americanas. Recipient of four Chalmers Awards for Outstanding Canadian Play. Jury Chair of the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre. He teaches at the University of Toronto and the National Theatre School. George Brown Theatre School will present The Parliament of the Birds (directed by Soheil Parsa) in their 25/26 season.

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Aghāti



New Songs 10 anniversary Ahmed Moneka

Location: Souleppper Theatre

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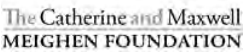
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I.T. Systems Administrator

Building Operations

Greg Poulin

Manager of Building Operation
& Production

Cole Vincent

Building Operator

Niamh Cunningham-Closs

Building Supervisor

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Andres Castillo-Smith

Dalton Villeneuve-Marin

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Thank You!

Young Centre

Thanks to our wonderful legion
of Young Centre volunteers
for their continued support!

Young Centre Facilities Funding:



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All front of house staff – floor captains, patron service representatives, baristas and ushers - working for the Young Centre for the Performing Arts are represented by Local B-173 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

House and Stage Technicians employed by the Young Centre for the Performing Arts are represented by Local 58 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

Ahmed and Jesse met during the “cabin week” of Driftwood Theatre’s summer season, after Ahmed sang and played a daf drum around a fire. Back in Toronto, the two met in a coffee shop, where Ahmed told Jesse the story of The Epic of Gilgamesh. Then over Skype (this was in ancient times), Ahmed and Jesse met with Seth Bockley, the American theatre director and literary adaptor, who asked them to interview each other about themes in Gilgamesh like sex and death. Eight years later, with the artistry and generosity of many collaborators, including the members of Ahmed’s band, we’ve shared King Gilgamesh with audiences in Chicago, Minneapolis, New York City, Halifax, but we are incredibly happy to be back in our home, Toronto.

STAFF

Seth Bockley

Jesse LaVercombe

Ahmed Moneka

Alexander Weiditch



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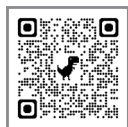


Photo of Ahmed Moneka and Jesse LaVercombe by Dahlia Katz.

The artists and staff of Soulpepper, TRIA Theatre 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.

Playbill Graphic Design: lightupthesky.ca