



MEDIA RELEASE

SOULPEPPER'S 2019 SUMMER-FALL SEASON – CLASSICS RE-IMAGINED THROUGH NEW LENSES

Toronto, ON – February 20, 2019: Soulpepper Theatre Company today announced the Summer-Fall season, with new artistic programming from July to November 2019. The full line-up of the season, programmed under the leadership of former Acting Artistic Director **Alan Dilworth**, includes a collection of five exceptional plays about identity, friendship, love, and belonging, as well as two Soulpepper Concerts. The season welcomes three directors making their Soulpepper debuts. All programming and casting details can be found at Soulpepper.ca.

“What makes a classic? What is a modern classic? In our hyper-connected, hyper-speed moment how does a work from another time and place speak to us now? These are the questions our season is built on. Our concerts celebrate and re-invent classics. I feel that every play in our season is a modern classic. And in celebration of the multiplicity of truths explored in our modern classical offerings we have brought together a remarkable group of artists to breathe life into these extraordinary works,” said **Alan Dilworth**. “In my outgoing role as Soulpepper’s Acting Artistic Director, I am thrilled to welcome directors **Philip Akin, Jani Lauzon, Andrea Donaldson** in their Soulpepper debuts, and I welcome back the multi-talented, multi-disciplinary **Frank Cox-O’Connell**, and Soulpepper’s celebrated and beloved powerhouse Artistic Director **Weyni Mengesha**.”

“This season offers familiar stories that resonate with our times, but told through new lenses and by new voices. Welcoming artists into our company always opens up new opportunities for collaboration and creative growth, and I’m excited to see what we create together” said **Weyni Mengesha**, Artistic Director.

“Audiences look to Soulpepper for that perfect mix of classic plays, new works, and musicality, and this season is no different. Alan has brought together a rich programme of treats for everyone to enjoy, and we can’t wait to bring it to fruition,” said **Emma Stenning**, Executive Director.

Mainstage programming begins in July with Sam Shepard’s desert drama, *Fool For Love*, directed by Soulpepper Academy graduate **Frank Cox-O’Connell**, running alongside the brand new Soulpepper Concert *The Promised Land: Steinbeck Through Song*, created by Slight Family Director of Music **Mike Ross** and **Sarah Wilson**, joining the poetry of master songwriters and storytellers – Bruce Springsteen, Nina Simone, Sam Cooke, and Bob Dylan – to illuminate the search for the American dream.

“*Fool For Love* clearly speaks to our cultural moment, but what excited me most is how the play subverts its timeliness. Yes, we have this last cowboy standing at the edge of America trying to not take on the sins of the father, and we have his lover trying to forge a new way, free from the past and the cycles of dysfunction – which all feels very relevant. But their way through defies any clear meaning – it’s not aspirational, it’s not cautionary, it’s just... drama – sexy, funny, scary, smart, bloody drama. It’s about how we love, and how we change – it’s people performing open-heart surgery on themselves, during a high-speed chase,” said **Frank Cox-O’Connell**.

In August, Obsidian Theatre Company’s Artistic Director **Philip Akin** directs his first production at Soulpepper with the Tony Award-winning comedy *Art* by Yasmina Reza.

“For me the power of art is expressed uniquely inside each of us. Each new viewer sees something revelatory that ricochets in some fashion and we cannot help but respond. I am pleased to be directing *Art* for my Soulpepper debut,” said **Philip Akin**.

The unravelling of a seven-year affair follows with Harold Pinter’s *Betrayal*, marking Nightwood Theatre’s incoming Artistic Director **Andrea Donaldson**’s directorial debut at Soulpepper.

“*Betrayal* is psychological chess at its finest. It is ruthless, delicious, and intelligent. As a director, I can’t help but love works that demand extreme precision. And what a thrill to work on this play, with such an esteemed company of artists, for such a discerning audience. *Betrayal* is pure pleasure, the highest level of entertainment – a masterwork,” said **Andrea Donaldson**.



Beginning in September, Soulpepper Artistic Director **Weyni Mengesha** directs her first production since taking leadership of the company, with the ageless masterpiece *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams – winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Rounding out the Mainstage productions in the Summer–Fall season is the modern Canadian classic *Almighty Voice and His Wife* by Daniel David Moses. **Jani Lauzon**, who played the character White Girl in the original 1991 production, directs for the first time at Soulpepper in October.

“I had the great pleasure of acting in the World Premiere of *Almighty Voice and His Wife* and fell in love with the play then,” said **Jani Lauzon**. “A few years ago I realized that it was one of the shows I really want to direct. Daniel David Moses has written an extraordinary play – it’s a love story, it’s so beautiful, it’s got historical knowledge, and he’s rolled it into a very moving piece of theatre.”

Finally, in November, the sold-out hit Concert *The Riverboat Coffee House: The Yorkville Scene*, created and led by **Frank Cox-O’Connell** and Slight Family Director of Music **Mike Ross**, returns to the stage for a celebration of stories and songs that made a modest basement in Yorkville the hottest place to be.

The 2019 Summer–Fall season also includes the previously announced World Premieres of two partner presentations, *Welcome To My Underworld* from RARE Theatre Company in the fifth partnership between the two theatre companies and the signed music musical *The Black Drum* from the DEAF CULTURE CENTRE, supported by Soulpepper.

Soulpepper is pleased to offer American Sign Language (ASL) interpreted performances to *Art* on August 25 and 27, 2019 as well as the previously announced ASL performances of *August: Osage County* on June 6 and 8, 2019. ASL Interpreted performances are sponsored by TD Bank Group. After a tremendous first experience of offering Relaxed Performances for shows in the 2018–19 season, Soulpepper will be offering a relaxed performance of *Betrayal* on September 15, 2019. Relaxed performances are intended specifically to be sensitive and welcoming to all patrons who may benefit from a more relaxed theatre environment. For full details about the ASL and Relaxed Performances see soulpepper.ca/access.

Exclusive ticket access to the Summer–Fall programming is on sale to current subscribers as of 1:30 p.m. Public subscriptions sales begin on March 19. Single tickets go on sale April 30.

Soulpepper’s current Mainstage programming continues with: *Little Menace: Pinter Plays* by Harold Pinter, directed by Drummond-Dorrance International Fellow **Thomas Moschopoulos**; *Wedding at Aulis* by Sina Gilani, directed by **Alan Dilworth**; *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn, directed by **Katrina Darychuk**; *The Brothers Size* by Tarell Alvin McCraney, directed by **Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu**; *August: Osage County* by Tracy Letts, directed by **Jackie Maxwell**; and a new concert from Mike Ross and Tom Allen, *88 KEYS*.

For details on all of Soulpepper’s programming, visit soulpepper.ca or call the Young Centre Box Office at 416.866.8666

JULY TO NOVEMBER 2019: MAINSTAGE PROGRAMMING

FOOL FOR LOVE

Sam Shepard

Directed by Frank Cox-O’Connell

Some people you just can’t quit. On the edge of the desert, passions are buried deep, and secrets even deeper. Eddie has come to bring May out of hiding and win her back, no matter who stands in the way. This celebrated work from Sam Shepard combines his characteristic dark humour with a raw energy that won’t let go.

***Fool For Love* runs from July 13 to August 4, 2019. Opening night is July 18, 2019.**



ART

Yasmina Reza

Translated by Christopher Hampton

Directed by Philip Akin

There's no accounting for taste... or friends. Lines are drawn when an extravagant purchase leads three life-long friends to question the bonds they've taken for granted. A sharp comedy about modern friendships.

Tony Award Winner – Best Play

Lawrence Olivier Award – Best Comedy

***Art* runs from August 9 to September 1, 2019. Opening night is August 15, 2019.**

BETRAYAL

Harold Pinter

Directed by Andrea Donaldson

Described as “the greatest of all Pinter’s plays” (*Daily Telegraph*), *Betrayal* charts a compelling seven-year romance, told in reverse chronological order. Witness a love story unravel with poetic precision, rich humour and extraordinary emotional force.

Lawrence Olivier Award – Best New Play

***Betrayal* runs from August 28 to September 15, 2019. Opening night is September 4, 2019.**

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Tennessee Williams

Directed by Weyni Mengesha

As Blanche’s fragile world crumbles, she turns to her sister for solace – but her downward spiral brings her face to face with a brutal, unforgiving reality. Tennessee Williams’ timeless masterpiece is a raging portrayal of what it means to be an outsider, in a society where we’re all desperate to belong.

Pulitzer Prize for Drama

***A Streetcar Named Desire* runs from September 21 to October 13, 2019. Opening night is September 27, 2019.**

ALMIGHTY VOICE AND HIS WIFE

Daniel David Moses

Directed by Jani Lauzon

Romeo and Juliet. Orpheus and Eurydice. Almighty Voice and His Wife. This powerful true story is shaken up and reimagined into an eloquent tale of tragic love and a fully theatrical exorcism of the hurts of history. A modern classic about the role of Indigenous people in Canada.

***Almighty Voice and His Wife* runs from October 11 to November 3, 2019. Opening night is October 17, 2019.**



JULY TO NOVEMBER 2019: SOULPEPPER CONCERTS

Each original Soulpepper Concert revolves around a time, place, or artist crafted by a team of incomparable performers. The Concert Series is led by Slight Family Director of Music **Mike Ross**.

THE PROMISED LAND: STEINBECK THROUGH SONG

Created by Mike Ross and Sarah Wilson

Music Directed by Mike Ross

Bruce Springsteen, Nina Simone, Sam Cooke, Bob Dylan and more – America’s master storytellers and songwriters have captured the struggle to realise the American dream. Join us as we reimagine their music to illuminate the works of famed novelist John Steinbeck and the search for The Promised Land.

The Promised Land: Steinbeck Through Song runs from July 12 to 27, 2019.

THE RIVERBOAT COFFEE HOUSE: THE YORKVILLE SCENE

Created by Frank Cox-O’Connell and Mike Ross

Music Directed by Mike Ross

Directed by Frank Cox-O’Connell

Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Murray McLachlan, and Neil Young – before they were icons, they all played The Riverboat. Opened in 1964 in the basement of a Victorian row house, the Riverboat Coffee House was the launching pad for Canadian singer-songwriters. Soulpepper’s sold-out concert returns with Mike Ross directing a celebration of the stories and songs that made Yorkville the place to be in the free loving sixties.

The Riverboat Coffee House: The Yorkville Scene runs from November 6 to 17, 2019.

PARTNER PRESENTATIONS

WELCOME TO MY UNDERWORLD

RARE Theatre Company

Directed and Dramaturged by Judith Thompson

Nine blazing hot works written and performed by new Canadian dramatists with gate crashing ideas, delicious poetry and unique characters woven into a spectacular journey to the Underworld, in search of the self.

Welcome To My Underworld runs from May 8 to 25, 2019. Opening night is May 9, 2019.

THE BLACK DRUM

By Adam Pottle

Directed by Mira Zuckermann

A young woman’s life is turned upside down when her tattoos come alive and propel her on a fantastical journey in search of her inner voice. Faces, hands, and movements become poetry as a global cast of Deaf actors tell their story through physical theatre, signed music, projection, and motion capture. Audiences are invited to experience this pioneering new work unlike any other.

The Black Drum runs from June 15 to 29, 2019. Opening night is June 20, 2019.

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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.

Tickets for Soulpepper productions start at \$38 and \$35 for Soulpepper Concerts. Tickets are available by calling the Young Centre Box Office at 416.866.8666 or by visiting 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.

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