

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOULPEPPER RECEIVES MAJOR GRANT FUNDING FEMALE STORIES FROM THE HILARY AND GALEN WESTON FOUNDATION

Toronto, ON – June 14, 2022: Soulpepper Theatre Company is thrilled to announce the receipt of a major grant from **The Hilary and Galen Weston Foundation** to elevate the voices of female playwrights at Soulpepper and contribute to the advancement of equity in the Canadian theatre canon.

In 2020, Soulpepper launched its *Six Women Writing* initiative, which supports the development of new works by Canadian women and non-binary playwrights. In fall 2021, new works commissioned by the *Six Women Writing* program were presented in partnership with Harbourfront Centre at the first ever *Her Words Festival*. As a principal donor, this generous grant from The Hilary and Galen Weston Foundation allows Soulpepper to significantly expand the scope of both these exciting initiatives, solidifying new commissions, bringing on new creative teams, and undertaking an exciting 'Rising Stars' mentorship program for emerging artists and creators. Audiences will be able to engage with these new works in the 2023 *Her Words Festival* programming, which promises to be an even more exciting event celebrating female playwrights – with staged productions, new work readings, expert panels, and mentorship opportunities for selected artists.

"We are deeply grateful to The Hilary and Galen Weston Foundation for this generous gift that furthers our commitment to the development of stories by women and non-binary artists on stage," said **Weyni Mengesha**, Artistic Director of Soulpepper. *"This includes creating opportunity and a platform to elevate voices which have historically been underrepresented in the plays presented by the performing arts sector in Canada. This September, the first of those commissions, Queen Goneril by Erin Shields, will be presented in repertory with King Lear. As a principal donor, support from the The Hilary and Galen Weston Foundation ensures investment in a continued pipeline of new commissions that will reach our stage and stages across the world, while also providing new opportunities for female directors, actors and production professionals."*

Further programming for the 2023 *Her Words Festival* will be announced at a later date. To learn more about the Six Women Writing program or the Women Centre Stage donor program visit soulpepper.ca/womencentrestage.



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 the land on which we are situated – the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishanabek First Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit. We commit to honouring and celebrating their past, present and future. Soulpepper believes 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.

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 Canada Arts Training Fund, Sylvia Soyka and the Kingfisher Foundation.

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

Support on our Stages comes from: The Slight Family Foundation as Music Program Sponsor including for *The Golden Record* and the complement of Slight Music Residents; Middlefield Group as Production Sponsor for *The Golden Record*; the Soulpepper Board of Directors for *Pipeline*; Diane Blake and Stephen Smith for *Where The Blood Mixes*; Women Centre Stage and Sylvia Soyka for *Queen Goneril*; and Polar Asset Management Partners for *King Lear*.

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

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