

Soulpepper

PIPELINE

DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU



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Welcome to our 2022 Season. It is truly a pleasure to welcome you back to the theatre. Planning our 25th season during a time when theatres were closed across the globe made me reflect on what truly makes what we do essential. We are honoured to be a place that brings us all back together, side by side, to share collective experiences again. We wanted to plan a season that celebrates all that we are, and all the artists who have been waiting to share their stories. So we have programmed some of the most exciting contemporary writers in our country and beyond, including a long awaited new play from our beloved alum, *Kim's Convenience* writer Ins Choi, *Bad Parent*.

We also return to a Shakespeare with *King Lear*, helmed by one of our most exciting Canadian directors Kim Collier. It is paired with a provocative new play called *Queen Goneril*, which takes us to the setting of *King Lear*, but seven years earlier, to imagine the world experiences through the eyes of his daughters, written by another force of the Canadian theatre, playwright Erin Shields.

I really can't wait for you to see the next two shows up in our season, *Where the Blood Mixes* and *Kamloopa*, both Governor General award winning plays by Kevin Loring and Kim Senklip Harvey. *Where The Blood Mixes* is both incredibly moving and vital to further understanding the history of this country, and *Kamloopa* is an irreverent and fearless story that invites audiences on a hilarious soul-searching adventure.

I am very proud to be opening the season with Dominique Morisseau's *Pipeline*. This is one of the few plays that we held on to from our previously planned season that was cancelled. When we first programmed this play in 2019 the widespread collective conversations that came out around the murder of George Floyd had not happened yet. Though these conversations have started to give many of us an understanding of the realities that uphold biased systems, this play takes us to the centre of a lived experience, a personal story that is at once searing and full of heart. It is led by another wonderful Soulpepper alum Akosua Amo-Adem in the title role.

Welcome to Gideon. I'm also very pleased to welcome my brilliant new collaborator, Soulpepper's new Executive Director, Gideon Arthurs. This is his first show with us, and I'm thrilled to have his thoughtful leadership at the Company. I hope you will have a chance to get to know Gideon in the coming months.

Gideon and I want Soulpepper to be the place that helps us discover the connections that make us stronger as a community. We are opening our doors back up, inviting as many people as possible into our theatres, offering relaxed performances and other access initiatives, Community Conversations that dive deeper into the themes of our work, and continuing our successful Free 25 & Under program.

We are so grateful to our staff, board and the many artists who have worked with us through the past trying two years, ensuring that we re-emerge energized with purpose and passion, and we are especially grateful to you, for being here to support live theatre! We invite you to explore the season and join us again soon so we can all continue the celebration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Weyni Mengesha'.

Weyni Mengesha
Artistic Director



WELCOME BAAAAACK!!!

Thank you so much for coming out to the theatre today!
You have no idea how much I have missed you!!!!

I have been waiting two whole years to share *Pipeline* with you! When I first read this play, I connected deeply with the character Nya and understood all too well the pain, fear, and exhaustion that comes with having to advocate for young Black bodies to be treated with the same dignity as everyone else in their schools. Although I am not a mother (yet), I am a sister to a large six-foot-four Black man named Junior. Junior is the kindest, most gentle man I know. A man who could have easily fallen down the 'Pipeline' when he was in school because of the negative stereotypes and preconceived notions about his intelligence that are associated with the way he looked. Fortunately, Junior had a diligent big sister in me, who was willing to advocate on his behalf. But not every child has this.

I hope this play provokes more questions and conversations about our educational system and the Black body. How can we do better as a city to ensure that all our young Black kids have a chance to reach their potential in the space where they spend the most amount of time.

Thank you again for coming. I hope you enjoy the show!

Akosua Amo-Adem

Nya in *Pipeline*

Cast

Akosua Amo-Adem
Nya

Mazin Elsadig
Dun

Kevin Hanchard
Xavier

Tony Ofori
Omari

Kristen Thomson
Laurie

Chelsea Russell
Jasmine

Creative Team

Weyni Mengesha
Director

Lyon Smith
Sound Designer & Composer

Laura Baxter
Assistant Stage Manager

Lorenzo Savoini
Set & Projection Designer

Luke Reece
Assistant Director

Kelly McEvenue
Alexander Coach

Ming Wong
Costume Designer

Sean Baek
Fight Director

Kimberly Purtell
Lighting Designer

Robert Harding
Stage Manager

Production

Andy Devries
Head Carpenter

Lisa Nighswander
Head of Props

Ashton Vetter
Lighting Op

Bill Stahl
1st Carpenter

Janet Pym
Head of Wardrobe

John Shisko
Sound Op

Paul Boddum
Head Scenic

Greg Chambers
Props Builder

Dalton Villeneuve-Marini
Deck Op

Sara Admadiehrad
Scenic Painter

Carly Beamish
Cutter

Andrew Watt
Video Op

Nina Hartt
Scenic Painter

Emma Zulkoskey
Dresser

Generously supported by:



P.A. voiced by Karen Robinson, Carolina Valdez voiced by Visaree Bradshaw-Coore. Additional vocal improvisations by Chelsea Russell. Projection design photography by Trevlyn Kennedy.

Pipeline is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com Originally produced by Lincoln Center Theater in 2017, New York City. *Pipeline* was commissioned by Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago; Martha Lavey, Artistic Director, David Hawkanson, Executive Director. *We Real Cool* by Gwendolyn Brooks. Used by Consent of Brooks Permissions.

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BACKGROUND NOTES

Believe me, I loved you all. Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I loved you All.

– The Mother.

These words of the great African American poet Gwendolyn Brooks are apt, not only because you will hear one of her poems tonight, but because they express how we feel as we welcome you back to our theatre. We've missed you! Thank you for being here to experience our first show in two years.

Pipeline is a ride. Playwright Dominique Morisseau tackles an urgent subject with clarity, a wide-open heart, and sharp humour. She wrote Audience Rules of Engagement for this play, and the first one is: *You are allowed to laugh audibly.*

The play's title refers to what has been called the school-to-prison pipeline, the way school discipline can lead young people directly into the criminal justice system, a trajectory that disproportionately affects Black children. Research conducted by the Toronto District School Board recently revealed that for every suspended White student, there were 3 suspended Black students. These suspensions can begin as early as the age of six. What does this systemic animus do to students of colour? To their parents? How can families help their children avoid 'becoming the expectation,' as one of the play's characters puts it?

If you're Nya, the poorly paid high school English teacher and divorced single mother at the heart of this story, you teach at a public high school, but you send your son to private school as part of your ongoing effort to subvert those expectations. Your son is one of only a handful of students of colour in this privileged environment. How will you protect him if he collides with the unacknowledged but pervasive racism there?

What does it take to protect a vulnerable, headstrong Black boy in this world? A young man who is full of feeling, still finding his way. Gwendolyn Brooks describes the tumult of adolescent emotions in *Boy Breaking Glass*:

“I shall create! If not a note, a hole.
If not an overture, a desecration.”

Full of pepper and light
and Salt and night and cargoes.

There are no easy answers. However, the last of Morisseau's Rules of Engagement emphasizes the humanity of her theatrical vision: *Exhale together. Laugh together. Say amen, should you need to. This is a community. Let's go.*

Playwright Biography:

Dominique Morisseau is a playwright, actress, and creative force. Her plays include *The Detroit Projects*, a trilogy (*Detroit '67*, *Paradise Blue*, *Skeleton Crew*) set in her native city. Named one of the 20 Most Produced Playwrights in the U.S. in 2016, her accolades include an August Wilson Playwriting Award and a 2018 MacArthur “Genius” Grant. She co-wrote the “exuberantly entertaining” (Tony Award nominated) jukebox musical *Ain't Too Proud: The Life and Times of the Temptations* in 2019. Ms. Morisseau was a co-producer and story editor on the Showtime television series, *Shameless*.

Background Notes by Paula Wing.

Running Time:
1 hour and 40 minutes
with no intermission



AKOSUA AMO-ADEM was born in Ghana West Africa and raised in Toronto, ON. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline*. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** *Streetcar Named Desire* (2019), *Innocence Lost* (2018), *Idomeneus* (2018), *For Colored Girls...* (2017), *Father Comes Home I, II, III* (2016), *The Crucible* (2012). **OTHER THEATRE:** *Venus' Daughter*, *School Girls...* (Obsidian Theatre); *The Middle Place*, *Domesticated*, *Tartuffe* (Canadian Stage); *The Assembly* (The NAC); *The Home Project* (The Howland Company). **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Frankie Drake Mysteries*; *21 Black Futures*; *In The Dark*, *Most Dangerous Game*; *American Gods*; *Kim's Convenience*. **OTHER:** Graduate of the Soulpepper Academy (2012). Akosua is a published author with an article called *See Me* in *Intermission* online magazine and is currently in the process of developing her first full length play!



SEAN BAEK works mainly as an actor, based in/out of Toronto, ON. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Fight Director: Pipeline*. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** *Fight Director: Kim's Convenience*. **OTHER THEATRE:** Acting: Several seasons with the Stratford Festival (following the Birmingham Conservatory for Classical Theatre training); Belfry Theatre; GCTC; Factory Theatre; Theatre Passe Muraille; YPT, and more. **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Killjoys* (5 seasons); *Vicious Fun* (Feature Film); *The Expanse*, *Nurses*, *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Blood and Water: Fire and Ice*, *Utopia Falls*, *The Art of More*, among many others; also works as a Voice actor. **OTHER:** Sean dreams of recording select group of songs he has written some day.



LAURA BAXTER was born in Grimsby, and raised in Kingston, ON. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline*. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** *Jitters*, *Dirt*, *27 Club*. **OTHER THEATRE:** *Sweat*, *Love and Information*, *Venus in Fur*, 8 seasons of *Dream in High Park* (Canadian Stage); *Oslo*, *My Name is Asher Lev*, *My Night With Reg*, *You Will Remember Me*, *God of Carnage* (Studio 180); *Black Boys*, *Arigato Tokyo*, *Obaaberima*, *The Maids* (Buddies in Bad Times Theatre); *Actually* (Obsidian/ Harold Green); *The Story*, *Tails From the City* (Common Boots Theatre); *Trout Stanley*, *Little Pretty and the Exceptional* (Factory Theatre); *11:11*, *Elle* (Theatre Passe Muraille); *Soliciting Temptation* (Tarragon Theatre). **OTHER:** Laura is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada, 2005. Thank you to my amazing wife Shawn and our baby Amari for your unconditional love and support.



MAZIN ELSADIG was born in Chicago, IL and raised in Toronto, ON. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline*. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** *The Brother's Size* (2019). **OTHER THEATRE:** *Riot* (Renaissance Canadian Theatre Company); *Pass Over* (Obsidian Theatre Company); *Byhalia*, *Mississippi* (Cue6 Productions). **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Brother*; CBC's *Four in the Morning*; *We Are Disorderly*. **OTHER:** *The Brother's Size* earned a Dora win for Best Play and Mazin was nominated for Best Actor. That same year, he performed in *Pass Over* for the Obsidian Theatre Company, which won a Toronto Theatre Critics award for Best Ensemble.



KEVIN HANCHARD was born in Yallahs, St. Thomas Jamaica, but raised on the mean streets of Mississauga ON. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** *August Osage County*(2019) **OTHER THEATRE:** *House: The Isolation Version* (Factory Theatre); *Lear* (Groundling Theatre); *The Mountaintop, TopDog/UnderDog* (Obsidian Theatre/Shaw Theatre); *Miss Julie: Freedom Summer, Blue/Orange* (Canadian Stage). **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Hudson & Rex; The Porter; Orphan Black; Ginny & Georgia; The Expanse; Suits*. Kevin has been honoured with three Dora nominations and three Canadian Screen Award nominations including a win for his work on *Orphan Black*. Love 2 Chris and the kidz.



ROBERT HARDING was born and raised in Lewisporte, NL. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline, King Lear, Queen Goneril*. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** Production Stage Manager 2015 - 2019. Stage Manager credits include: *Almighty Voice and his Wife, Rose: A New Musical* (2019); *Bed and Breakfast, La Bête* (2018); *Waiting for Godot, Spoon River, Of Human Bondage* (2017); *It's a Wonderful Life, The 39 Steps, The Anger in Ernest and Ernestine* (2016); *Marat/Sade, Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (2015). **OTHER THEATRE:** *Once on this Island* (Musical Stage/Obsidian); *Clybourne Park, Stuff Happens* (Studio 180/Mirvish Productions); *The Best Brothers, Communion, A Beautiful View* (Tarragon Theatre).



KELLY MCEVENUE is the preeminent Alexander Technique teacher for classical repertory theatre. She has spent many happy years with the Soulpepper Theatre Company since their inaugural season in 1998: coaching shows and being on the faculty of the Soulpepper Academy. A member of the Stratford Festival coaching team for 38 seasons, as well as teaching with the Birmingham Conservatory. She has been a mentor for the Canadian Film Centre Actor's Conservatory. She has been a movement consultant for numerous films and television series. Throughout her teaching career, Kelly has trained hundreds of young actors at several college theatre programs. Kelly has assisted renowned voice teacher Patsy Rodenburg in several International workshops and is an associate faculty for the Patsy Rodenburg Academy. Kelly McEvenue's book, *The Actor and the Alexander Technique* was first published 2001.



WEYNI MENGESHA was born in Vancouver, BC, and raised in Scarborough, ON. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** Director: *Pipeline, Queen Goneril*. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** Director: *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train, A Streetcar Named Desire, Father Comes Home From the Wars (Parts I, II, III), A Raisin in the Sun, Kim's Convenience*. Artistic Director of Soulpepper and Soulpepper Academy Graduate (2008). **OTHER:** *Power of Sail* (Geffen playhouse- L.A); *Duchess Duchess Duchess* (Steppenwolf - Chicago); *Breath of Kings* (Stratford Festival); *Seven Spots on the Sun* (Rattlestick theatre - NY); *Bars and Measures* (Boston Court - Pasadena); *Butcher* (Why Not/Mirvish productions); *Lungs* (Tarragon); *Small Room at the Top of the Stairs* (Tarragon); *da' kink in my hair* (Theatre passe Muraille/Mirvish Productions).



TONY OFORI was born in Toronto Ontario and is a graduate of Humber College & York University. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline*. **OTHER THEATRE:** *Bunny, Copy That* (Tarragon Theatre), *Actually* (Obsidian Theatre), *Serving Elizabeth* (Western Canada Theatre). **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Supergirl, A royal Queens Christmas, Amazing Grace*. Upcoming 2022: *Ghostwriter, The Boys, Coroner*.



KIMBERLY PURTELL is a Toronto based lighting and set designer for theatre, opera, dance and musical theatre. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline, Queen Goneril, King Lear*. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** *A Streetcar Named Desire, Mother's Daughter, Sisters, The Goat, or Who is Sylvia, The Virgin Trial, The Last Wife, Twelve Angry Men, Crash, Happy Place, Accidental Death of an Anarchist, Glengarry Glen Ross*. **OTHER THEATRE:**

Mirvish Productions, Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Canadian Stage Company, Soulpepper Theatre, National Arts Centre and the National Arts Centre Orchestra, Pacific Opera Victoria, Opera Philadelphia, Arena Stage, Edmonton Opera, Theatre Calgary, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Citadel Theatre, Place des Arts, among many others. **OTHER:** Recipient of three Dora Mavor Moore Awards, the Pauline McGibbon Award, a Montreal English Theatre Award, a Toronto Theatre Critics Award, an Ottawa Critics Circle Award and an Elizabeth Sterling Award. Kimberly is the Vice President of the Associated Designers of Canada.



LUKE REECE is an award-winning Toronto-based playwright, producer and poet, currently the Associate Artistic Director of Soulpepper Theatre after spending five years working for Obsidian Theatre. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** Producer: *Oratorio: a Theatrical Mixtape* (with Obsidian). Dramaturg/Adapter: *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Writer: *1851: Spirit and Voice* (with Myseum) Associate Artist: *Bad Parent*. **OTHER**

THEATRE: Writer/Performer: *The Toronto Pigeons* (Factory Theatre). Upcoming: Writer Performer: *B.R.w.T.T.* (Theatre Passe Muraille). Writer: *The Wonderful* (Caravan Theatre). **FILM & TELEVISION:** Writer: *Notice* (Obsidian & CBC Arts). Writer/Performer: *Nobody Nose* (Bad Hats Theatre). **OTHER:** He is one of Toronto's most decorated slam poets, and has represented the country internationally. He helped to establish the Black Shoulders Legacy Award, providing financial support for Black theatre artists developing their craft.



KAREN ROBINSON played Ronnie Lee in the multi-award-winning comedy *Schitt's Creek*. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline*. **OTHER THEATRE:** *Prince Hamlet* (WhyNot Theatre) and *Bang Bang* (Factory Theatre). **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Pretty Hard Cases* (CBC); *A Million Little Things* (ABC); and the upcoming *Echoes* (Netflix). **OTHER:** She has received a

Dora Award (*Riot*), a Sterling Award (*Doubt*), NAACP (*Da Kink in My Hair*), and SAG (*Schitt's Creek*) Ensemble Awards, a CSA (*Mary Kills People*), and the Salento International Film Festival Best Actress award (*Ghett'a Life*). Upcoming: David E. Kelley's *The Missing* directed by Barry Levinson.



CHELSEA RUSSELL was born in Barbados, raised between Barbados and Jamaica. She has been living and working in Toronto. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** *Pipeline*. **OTHER THEATRE:** *Judas Noir* (2018), *Bella Donna* (2019). **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Skymed, 21 Black Futures Rebirth of the Afronauts, See, Woman Meets Girl*. **OTHER:** Chelsea

has been nominated as of 2022 for a Canadian Screen Award for Best Supporting Performance in a Web Performance or Series. She would like to thank her mother Maxan Russell. Chelsea is also pursuing a career in music.



LORENZO SAVOINI SOULPEPPER 2022: Set & Projection Designer: Pipeline.

FOR SOULPEPPER: Lorenzo has designed over 40 productions for Soulpepper. Notable credits include: Set Designer: *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Set, Lighting & Projection Designer: *Rose* (Dora Award). Set & Lighting Designer: *Of Human Bondage* (Dora Awards). Co-Creator & Production Designer: *Cage*. Set, Projection & Lighting Designer: *Idomeneus*. Set & Costume Designer: *Eurydice*. **OTHER THEATRE:** Stratford Festival, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, Joffrey Ballet, Nacional Ballet de Cuba, The Grand Theatre, Crow's Theatre, Musical Stage Company, Canadian Stage, and many theatres across the country. **OTHER:** Graduate of the Soulpepper Academy.



LYON SMITH was born and raised in Toronto ON. **SOULPEPPER 2022:** Pipeline.

FOR SOULPEPPER: *A Christmas Carol* (2006-2019). **OTHER THEATRE:** *The Millennial Malcontent* (Tarragon); *Liv Stien*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *the Taming of the Shrew*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Comedy of Errors*, *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Venus in Fur* (Canadian Stage); *Mary's Wedding*, *in the Wake of Wettlaufer* and *Truth be Told* (Blyth Festival). *Prairie Nurse* (Factory Theatre); *Venus' Daughter* (Obsidian Theatre); *9 to 5* and *Stupefaction* (Morro and Jasp); *the Canadian* (Thousand Islands Playhouse); *Life in a Box* (Bad Hats). **OTHER:** Lyon has won one DORA award and received multiple nominations for his sound work.



KRISTEN THOMSON SOULPEPPER 2022: Pipeline. **FOR SOULPEPPER:** *The Guardsman*

(2009); *Uncle Vanya* (2001 & 2008); *The Chairs* (2006); *Mirandolina* (2004); *The Bald Soprano* (2001); *The Lesson* (2001); *The School for Wives* (2000); *Streetcar Named Desire* (1999). **OTHER THEATRE:** *Every Brilliant Thing* (Canadian Stage); *The Wedding Party*, *Someone Else*, *I, Claudia* (Crow's Theatre); *I, Claudia*, *The Patient Hour*, *The Memory of Water* (Tarragon). **FILM & TELEVISION:** *Cardinal*; *I, Claudia*; *Away From Her*; *I Shout Love*; *The Matthew Shepard Story*. **OTHER:** Kristen has received 5 Dora Awards, 2 ACTRA Awards, 2 Canadian Comedy Awards, a Genie, a Gemini, and a Canadian Screen Award.



MING WONG is a Toronto costume designer, stylist, and wardrobe technician. She has worked on a variety of projects ranging from dance, theatre, film, and television.

SOULPEPPER 2022: Costume Designer: Pipeline. **OTHER THEATRE:** *Is God Is* (Canadian Stage/Obsidian/Necessary Angel); *Hamlet 911* (Stratford Festival); *Orphans for the Czar* (Crow's Theatre); *Trouble in Mind* (Shaw Festival); *Hansel und Gretel* (Canadian Opera Company); *Julius Caesar* (Crow's Theatre/Groundling Theatre). **DIGITAL:** *Alice in Wonderland* (Ross Petty Productions); *New Monuments* (Luminato/Canadian Stage); *Savitri* (Against the Grain); *Alice in Wonderland* (Bad Hats Theatre/Soulpepper). **OTHER:** Winner of the 2021 Virginia & Myrtle Cooper Award in Costume Design.

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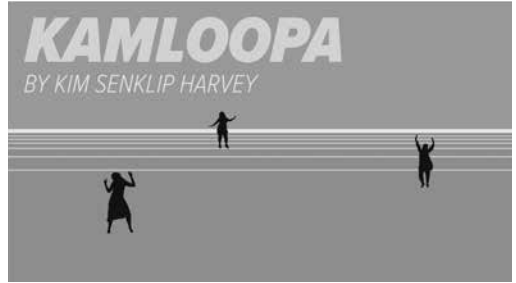


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Donor support allows Soulpepper to offer employment to artists, to cultivate an environment of creation and exploration, and to enrich the community with great theatre.

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