

**SOULPEPPER AND THE NFB PRESENT THE CANADIAN PREMIERE OF JORDAN TANNAHILL'S SPELLBINDING VR EXPERIENCE, *DRAW ME CLOSE***  
*AFTER CAPTIVATING AUDIENCES AROUND THE WORLD, THIS ONE-OF-A-KIND IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE COMES TO TORONTO IN WINTER 2021*



(Image provided by the NFB)

*"Mind officially blown... unlike any experience I've ever had."* – Huffington Post

*"Deeply affective... powerful."* – TIME

*"Unlike anything you will have experienced before."* – Evening Standard

October 13, 2021 – Toronto – Soulpepper Theatre Company and the National Film Board of Canada

From November 2 to December 12, 2021, Toronto's **Soulpepper Theatre Company** and the **National Film Board of Canada** (NFB) will present the Canadian premiere of ***Draw Me Close***, a critically acclaimed immersive experience by award-winning playwright and filmmaker **Jordan Tannahill**, co-produced by the NFB and the **National Theatre** (NT) of Great Britain. ***Draw Me Close*** is an exciting return to the stage for Soulpepper. Originally programmed in Artistic Director **Weyni Mengesha's** inaugural season of programming, ***Draw Me Close*** will be the first opportunity for audiences to return to Soulpepper's theatre since the industry shut down.

***Draw Me Close*** blurs the worlds of live performance, virtual reality and animation to create a vivid memoir about the relationship between a mother and her son, charting 25 years of love, learning and loss. A co-production between the NFB's Ontario Studio and the NT's Immersive Storytelling Studio, ***Draw Me Close*** features illustrations by Olie Kay as well as the late Teva Harrison, Toronto author of the graphic novel *In-Between Days*.

This powerful immersive work will be presented at Soulpepper in the Young Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto's Distillery Historic District.

This Canadian premiere of ***Draw Me Close*** in Toronto follows sold-out previews at London's Young Vic Theatre. A work-in-progress version of the piece was also showcased at the Tribeca Film Festival and Venice Film Festival in 2017.

## The experience

***Draw Me Close*** integrates live performance and VR into a seamless narrative, weaving theatrical storytelling with cutting-edge immersive technology. ***Draw Me Close*** allows audience members to take the part of the protagonist, Jordan, inside a live, animated world.

This experience is brought to life through live performance combined with a real-time motion-capture system transforming the environment into a captivating 3D interactive virtual world. The audience member enters the performance space and puts on a VR headset. They enter Jordan's childhood home and move from room to

room, navigating seamlessly through a world that is both physical and virtual. They are guided by Jordan's mother, played by an actress. Her movements are translated by motion capture into the virtual world. What results is a disarmingly intimate and enthrallingly one-on-one performance that charts the lifelong relationship between a mother and her son.

### **Audience safety**

Soulpepper and the Young Centre for the Performing Arts have been awarded the SafeTravels Stamp from the World Travel and Tourism Council. This international symbol recognizes companies that have adopted health and hygiene safety measures that ensure the patron experience is safe.

For the safety of everyone involved in ***Draw Me Close***, proof of full vaccination (two doses plus 14 days) will be required by patrons attending the show, as well as from all artists, crew, staff and volunteers involved. Face masks are required while in the Young Centre and during the VR experience. The VR equipment will be fully sanitized between each audience member's use.

### **The creative team**

Jordan Tannahill is a playwright, author and filmmaker whose works have been produced across Canada and internationally, translated into multiple languages, and honoured with various prizes, including two Governor General's Literary Awards.

This unique collaboration between the NFB and the National Theatre began as a Research and Development Lab in late 2016 to advance the language of creative non-fiction VR. Pushing the boundaries of what is possible with theatrical storytelling, ***Draw Me Close***, produced by David Oppenheim of the NFB and Johanna Nicholls of the National Theatre, and executive produced by Anita Lee (NFB) and Toby Coffey (NT), has emerged from the NFB/NT Lab as a groundbreaking exploration of the storytelling potential of VR and beyond.

### **Quotes**

"I'm grateful for the chance to finally share ***Draw Me Close*** with a Canadian audience, and to be doing so as part of artistic director Weyni Mengesha's first season at Soulpepper. ***Draw Me Close*** marks the final instalment in a loose trilogy of works, which includes my novel *Liminal* and my play *Declarations*, that I have made over the last few years, meditating on my relationship with my mother and mortality," said Jordan Tannahill.

"We couldn't let go of ***Draw Me Close***. We programmed this form-bending virtual reality performance in my first season at Soulpepper and as time has gone on through this pandemic, offering this immersive experience feels more powerful than ever. I am thrilled to invite audiences back into our theatre to share the Canadian premiere of ***Draw Me Close***, an intimate experience uniquely suited for our times," said Soulpepper Artistic Director Weyni Mengesha.

"Working with Jordan Tannahill and the National Theatre on ***Draw Me Close*** has been an incredible journey. Jordan is one of Canada's most innovative artists and what he's created is so powerful—a transformational experience that manages to be both intensely personal and communal. As Weyni and team begin a new era at Soulpepper, we're thrilled to be partnering with them to bring this work to Canadian audiences, in the heart of Toronto," said NFB producer David Oppenheim.

### **Production details**

#### ***DRAW ME CLOSE***

Written and Directed by Jordan Tannahill

A National Film Board of Canada and National Theatre of Great Britain Co-Production in association with the National Arts Centre, with the R&D participation of SIRT. Presented by Soulpepper and the National Film Board of Canada.

After captivating imaginations around the globe, this pioneering work makes its Canadian premiere. ***Draw Me Close*** blurs the worlds of live performance, virtual reality, and animation to create a vivid memoir about the relationship between a mother and her son, charting 25 years of love, learning, and loss. Weaving theatrical

storytelling with cutting-edge technology, the performance allows the audience member to take the part of the protagonist, Jordan, inside a live, animated world.

This is a one-hour individual immersive experience, available in a series of timed admission slots. Please see the website [www.soulpepper.ca/drawmeclose](http://www.soulpepper.ca/drawmeclose) for details.

*Canadian Premiere*

**Draw Me Close runs from November 2 to December 12, 2021. Opening Night is November 4, 2021.**

*Soulpepper Production Sponsor: Polar Asset Management*

### **About the National Film Board of Canada**

The NFB is Canada's public producer of award-winning creative documentaries, auteur animation, interactive stories and participatory experiences. NFB producers are embedded in communities across the country, from St. John's to Vancouver, working with talented creators on innovative and socially relevant projects. The NFB is a leader in gender equity in film and digital media production, and is working to strengthen Indigenous-led production, guided by the recommendations of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. NFB productions have won over 7,000 awards, including 24 Canadian Screen Awards, 21 Webbys, 12 Oscars and more than 100 Genies. To access this award-winning content and discover the work of NFB creators, visit [NFB.ca](http://NFB.ca), download its [apps](#) for mobile devices or visit [NFB Pause](#).

### **About the National Theatre**

The National Theatre makes world-class theatre that is entertaining, challenging and inspiring, and they make it for everyone. The work the NT produces appeals to the widest possible audiences with new plays, musicals, re-imagined classics and new work for young audiences. The NT's work is seen in the West End, on tour throughout the UK and internationally, and in collaborations and co-productions with partners across the country. Through NT Live, they broadcast some of the best of British theatre to over 2,500 venues in 65 countries around the world. The NT's Immersive Storytelling Studio examines how virtual reality, mixed reality and other emerging technologies can widen and enhance the NT's remit to be a pioneer of dramatic storytelling and to enable an audience to stand in the shoes of another. Accenture is the National Theatre's 'Partner for Innovation' and supporter of the Immersive Storytelling Studio. They are providing both financial and in-kind support to enable digital innovation and will use their digital strategy and delivery expertise to help the Studio create unique, immersive theatrical experiences. [nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

### **About the Soulpepper Theatre Company**

Located in its multi-venue home, the Young Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto's Distillery Historic District, Soulpepper is Canada's leading artist-driven theatre company. We believe that vital stories can connect us all and that they can motivate us toward social change. Soulpepper traditionally produces a year-round season of over 500 events, and plays a civic role in our community through free education programs, Community Conversations, artist training, and environmental sustainability initiatives. Soulpepper strives to ensure theatre is accessible to all by offering ASL interpretation, Relaxed Performances, as well as free tickets to frontline workers and those under 25 years old. During COVID, Soulpepper has adapted to digital platforms, offering over 50 hours of free shareable content, including play readings, workshops, interviews, and concerts. To learn more about Soulpepper, visit [www.soulpepper.ca](http://www.soulpepper.ca).

– 30 –

### **Related Products**

Electronic Press Kit | Images, trailers, synopses: [Draw Me Close](#)

### **Associated Links**

[Soulpepper Theatre Company](#)  
[National Theatre](#)  
[Young Centre for the Performing Arts](#)

**Media Relations**

Milusha Copas  
Media & Communications Officer, Soulpepper Theatre,

Jennifer Mair  
NFB Publicist  
C.: 416-436-0105  
[j.mair@nfb.ca](mailto:j.mair@nfb.ca) | [@NFB\\_Jennifer](#)

Lily Robert  
Director, Communications and Public Affairs, NFB  
C.: 514-296-8261  
[l.robert@nfb.ca](mailto:l.robert@nfb.ca)