

## AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 PLAYS EIGHT-WEEK GUIDED TOUR OF THE GLOBAL THEATRICAL CANON

**Toronto, ON – February 26, 2021:** Soulpepper Theatre Company is incredibly pleased to announce the release of a new collection of artistic programming: ***Around the World in 80 Plays***, an eight-week global adventure of audio dramas, in-depth documentaries from CBC Ideas, and cultural celebrations. Audiences across the country, and around the world, are invited on a rich theatrical global guided tour with works from Canada, Russia, Italy, Argentina, India, Iran, Jamaica, and Nigeria. *Around the World in 80 Plays* departs April 21, 2021, landing in new destinations weekly. Subscription passports, single tickets, and information available at [soulpepper.ca/80plays](https://soulpepper.ca/80plays).

*“All around the world and throughout history, humans have acted out the stories that are significant to them, the stories that are central to their sense of who they are, the stories that have defined their communities, and shaped their societies. When we talk about classical theatre we want to explore what that means from the many perspectives of this city. This is a celebration of our global cannon.”* said **Weyni Mengesha**, Artistic Director.

The eight-week global adventure begins April 21, starting at home here in **Canada** with Margo Kane’s inspiring play ***Moonlodge***, a story of self-determination, resilience, and the colonial tragedies that shape our society today, directed by Jani Lauzon. From there audiences are transported to **Russia** to enjoy Anton Chekhov’s masterpiece, ***The Seagull***, which was just weeks away from premiering at Soulpepper this time last year, once again directed by Daniel Brooks. Moving through Europe, audiences are invited to **Italy** to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the World Premiere of Luigi Piandello’s metatheatrical play ***Six Characters in Search of an Author***, directed by Daniele Bartolini. From **Argentina**’s fearless playwright Griselda Gambaro comes ***The Walls***, directed by Beatriz Pizano, to warn audiences about the dangers of turning a blind eye in the fight for justice. Travelling onward to **India**, in a piece produced in association with Why Not Theatre, Girish Karnad’s witty play ***Hayavadana*** fuses ancient mythology with contemporary sensibilities, directed by Miriam Fernandes. From India, audiences are transported to **Iran** for the World Premiere of ***The Parliament of Birds*** by Guillermo Verdecchia, directed by Soheil Parsa, adapted from the Persian poem, *The Conference of the Birds*, by Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar. Travelling next to **Jamaica**, playwright, director, and performer, d’bi.young anitafrika fuses memoir, music, and myth while embodying Jamaica’s decolonial traditions of African-storytelling-derived dub poetry and dubbin theatre in ***She Mami Wata & the PxyssyWitch Hunt***. Reaching the final destination of **Nigeria** on June 9, audiences are invited to experience Wole Soyinka’s Nobel Prize-winning play based on true events, ***Death and the King’s Horseman***, produced in partnership with the Stratford Festival, and directed by Tawiah M’Carthy.

Toronto is uniquely poised to celebrate the rich tapestry of stories and cultures that make up this city, and *Around the World in 80 Plays* will celebrate over 60 artists coming together to share their stories, their culture, and their art. Each audio drama features a full cast, original sound design, and is recorded and produced by award-winning audio producer Gregory Sinclair (CBC Radio, Audible).

To complement the eight productions, Soulpepper is pleased to collaborate with CBC Ideas to release eight documentaries that explore the cultural and historical context from these countries and celebrate how they intersect with contemporary Canadian multiculturalism. Additional Extend Your Stay offerings will deepen the audience’s cultural understanding, including film recommendations by TIFF Artistic Director **Cameron Bailey**, artistic highlights from the **Art Gallery of Ontario**, and food recommendations from **Toronto Life magazine**.

The **Around the World Passport** is your all access pass to experience every moment of this exciting journey, available for \$80 beginning today, Friday, February 26. Individual destination tickets go on sale on World Theatre Day, March 27, 2021 and will be Pay-What-You-Choose \$5 ; \$10 ; \$15 ; \$20. As with all stage productions, Soulpepper is pleased to offer tickets to members of our Free 25 & Under program.

***Around the World in 80 Plays*** is generously supported by Soulpepper’s Major Sponsor and Community Engagement Partner, Scotiabank, with additional support from: James O’Sullivan & Lucie Vallée, Karrin Powys-Lybbe & Chris von Boetticher, Sylvia Soyka, Kathleen & Bill Troost.

## AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 PLAYS

From the CREE & SAULTEAUX NATIONS representing CANADA

### **MOONLODGE**

By Margo Kane

Directed by Jani Lauzon

**Hope, healing, and hitchhiking.** Taken from her family by the government, Agnes grew up away from the support of her community. Unable to change her past, Agnes follows the voice inside her, journeying across America to where the women gather, helping her find herself, her history, and her family. An inspiring story of self-determination, and the colonial tragedies that shape our society today.

*Moonlodge* is performed by Samantha Brown. Sound Design and Composition by Wayne Kelso.

Content Warning: This play contains scenes of sexual violence and distressing situations.

***Moonlodge* premieres April 21, 2021.**

*“Margo Kane’s play Moonlodge was written at a time where there were very few, if any, stories by Indigenous writers on our stages. This is a story of Indigenous children torn from families, stripped of cultural understanding and identity, searching for answers, navigating the harmful and stereotypical images of in popular media, but mostly it’s a story of resilience and the incredible mothers, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers who continue to survive with humour, dignity, and honour so that our children have a future,”* said **Jani Lauzon**, Director.

From RUSSIA

### **THE SEAGULL**

By Anton Chekhov

A New Adaptation by Simon Stephens

Directed by Daniel Brooks

Associate Directed by Frank Cox-O’Connell

**Unrequited love. Creative jealousy. Guns. Vodka. Art.** A summer weekend at a lakeside estate falls apart when celebrities come to visit. Switching effortlessly between the ridiculous and the profound, this masterpiece of the modern era examines the burning need to create art and the destructive power of love.

*The Seagull* is performed by Ghazal Azarbad, Oliver Dennis, Raquel Duffy, Hailey Gillis, Stuart Hughes, Alex McCooeye, Dan Mousseau, Gregory Prest, Paolo Santalucia, Kristen Thomson, Sugith Varughese. Sound Design by Thomas Ryder Payne.

***The Seagull* premieres April 28, 2021.**

*“Chekhov’s characters are enslaved in their own identities. Each life is a calamity, as each character, promoting their own misery, clings fiercely to whatever identity they have concocted for themselves. Everyone has someone to blame as they cast about for meaning, and never realize that the real meaning and force of life vibrates in the bonds that exist between us all. A beautiful play for these times,”* said **Daniel Brooks**, Director.

From ITALY

### **SIX CHARACTERS IN SEARCH OF AN AUTHOR**

By Luigi Pirandello

Translated by Edward Storer

Directed by Daniele Bartolini

**The curtain rises on stories left unfinished.** During a routine rehearsal, six strangers show up unannounced declaring themselves characters who would like a word with an author. Finding humour in the absurd, their family drama unfolds in a conflict between illusion and reality. Pirandello’s metatheatrical masterpiece navigates the human search for meaning and the personal desire for control.

The cast includes Beatriz Pizano, Diego Matamoros, Hannah Miller, Moya O'Connell, Gregory Prest, Anand Rajaram, and Tom Rooney. Sound Design by Matteo Ciardi. Dramaturgical adaptation on translation by Daniele Bartolini and Luke Reece, in collaboration with the cast.

**Six Characters In Search Of An Author premieres May 5, 2021.**

*"Precisely one hundred years ago, in a theatre in Rome - Teatro Valle - a theatrical event occurred, remembered as probably one of biggest flops of all time, after which theatre will never be the same: the world premiere of Six Characters in Search of an Author by Luigi Pirandello. After one hundred years I decided to look at this play not for historical commemoration but as a reminder for theatre not to be "a cup of camomile tea" and that authentic innovation is not always saluted with hurrahs and standing ovations. It is a masterpiece of theatrical engineering, creating an endless spiral in the eternal tenzone (duel) between reality and fiction, authenticity and artifice. With a thick theatrical instinct, Mr. Pirandello offers us a great canvas in which we can display an exchange about theatre in Canada in 2021"* said **Daniele Bartolini**, Director.

From ARGENTINA

## **THE WALLS**

By Griselda Gambaro

Translated by Marguerite Feitlowitz

Directed by Beatriz Pizano

**Walls exist to keep the truth out.** A young man is placed in a room without trial, interrogated by mysterious figures as his humanity is stripped away. Argentina's most fearless writer holds a mirror to state terrorism that still echoes today. One of the most important female playwrights in Latin America, Gambaro inspired a generation of writers to use theatre in the fight for social justice.

**The Walls premieres May 12, 2021.**

The cast of *The Walls* includes Augusto Bitter, Carlos González-Vio, Diego Matamoros. Sound design by Thomas Ryder Payne.

*"It is an honour to try and scrape the surface of Gambaro's first play, a piece that foretold the terrible violence that Argentina would experience during the years of the Dirty War. Her work is extremely complex, risky and truthful. In The Walls she warns us about the dangers of turning a blind eye, of denying the truth that is in front of us, of those things that we cannot see but that we know exist. My life in the theatre has also been about exposing the injustices, inequities, racism, violence and human rights violations that I see around me. Directing this audio play has been a masterclass in political theatre. I am forever grateful to Gambaro,"* said **Beatriz Pizano**, Director.

From INDIA

## **HAYAVADANA**

By Girish Karnad,

In association with Why Not Theatre

Directed by Miriam Fernandes

**Love is imperfect, identity can be deceiving, and perfection is dangerous.** Padmini is in love with two friends, Devadatta, a poet, and Kapila, a blacksmith, but the familiar love triangle is turned upside down when the men's bodies are mysteriously switched. One of India's most popular plays of the 20th Century, *Hayavadana* reinvents an iconic myth into a powerful search for wholeness.

*Hayavadana* is performed by Nadine Bhabha, Sehar Bhojani, Sharada Eswar, Ravi Jain, Sarena Parmar, Ellora Patnaik, Nadeem Philip, Anand Rajaram, and Navtej Sandhu. Sound Design by Debashis Sinha and Artistic Collaboration by Sharada Eswar.

**Hayavadana premieres May 19, 2021.**

*“During this “great intermission” from live theatre, I find myself constantly coming back to mythology. I have always loved the big, universal questions that myths ask of us and the magic they invite into our lives, so the chance to work on Girish Karnad’s Hayavadana has been such a joy. Inspired by an 11th century myth, Hayavadana takes all the ingredients of a great story; love, friendship, jealousy, the gods, comedy, tragedy, and weaves them into an irreverent and poetic reflection on the theme of identity. What a gift to be able to share this story with an audience right now,”* said **Miriam Fernandes**, Director.

From IRAN

## **THE PARLIAMENT OF THE BIRDS**

by Guillermo Verdecchia

Freely adapted from Farid Ud-Din Attar’s *The Conference of the Birds*

Directed by Soheil Parsa

**Believing better is possible is the first step.** When the call goes out the birds of the world – all sizes, colours, and abilities – gather as one great flock, and embark on an epic journey in search of self, enlightenment, and truth. The beloved allegorical poem by Persian poet Farid al-Din Attar comes to life in a new adaptation filled with hope, that is both timeless and sits firmly in the present.

***The Parliament of The Birds* premieres May 26, 2021.**

The cast includes Raoul Bhaneja, Augusto Bitter, Oliver Dennis, Christef Desir, Liz Peterson, Arsinée Khanjian, Jani Lauzon, John Ng, Beatriz Pizano, Bahareh Yaraghi. Sound Design by Thomas Ryder Payne.

*“Based on a twelfth-century Sufi poem, The Parliament of The Birds is an allegorical journey in search of enlightenment and truth. At its center, there is a longing for understanding and peace in a world troubled by hypocrisy, corruption and inhumanity. This play shows how storytelling can bridge differences by emphasizing our shared hopes, dreams and struggles,”* said **Soheil Parsa**, Director.

From JAMAICA

## **SHE MAMI WATA & THE PXSSYWITCH HUNT**

By d’bi.young anitafrika

Directed and performed by d’bi.young anitafrika

**Bathed in the heat of the feminine erotic and the glow of the Caribbean sun**, one of today’s most compelling performers, d’bi.young, tells the story of four friends and their entangled lives in Jamaica. Fusing memoir, music, and myth, this virtuosic performance journeys through love, loss, love and the magic of liberation. A sizzling drama that explores the intersection of identity, sexuality, gender, religion, and (de)colonization.

*She Mami Wata & The PxssyWitch Hunt* is performed by d’bi.young anitafrika. Sound Design by Mohammed Rowe.

***She Mami Wata & The PxssyWitch Hunt* premieres June 2, 2021.**

*“Through storytelling, we are radically transforming oppressive colonial practices that continue to subjugate people. She Mami Wata is urgent because it centres queer Black love as a potent force within that process of transformation; challenging patriarchy, misogyny, racism, classism, and homophobia through the experiences of characters we see ourselves in,”* said **d’bi.young anitafrika**, Performer, Writer, Director.

From NIGERIA

## **DEATH AND THE KING’S HORSEMAN**

In partnership with The Stratford Festival

By Wole Soyinka

Directed by Tawiah M’Carthy

**When an individual's actions shake a world off its axis, how is honour restored?** When a Yoruba King (Alafin) dies, the King's horseman (Elesin) is required by tradition to accompany him into the afterlife. But this sacred ritual is interrupted, resulting in an unforeseen tragedy. Based on actual events in British-occupied Nigeria, Wole Soyinka's Nobel prize-winning play shares the story of a community striving to uphold its culture in the face of colonial power.

The cast includes Khadijah Roberts Abdullah, Maev Beaty, Déjah Dixon-Green, Ijeoma Emesowum, Peter Fernandes, Patrick McManus, Pulga Muchochoma, Wole Oguntukun, Amaka Umeh, Micah Wood. Sound Design by Debashis Sinha and Compositions by Kobena Aquaa-Harrison, Dialect Coaching by Oyin Oladejo.

***Death and the King's Horseman premieres June 9, 2021.***

*"Death and the King's Horseman is a loud, Black, and proud celebration of the interconnectedness of each of our unique contributions to our communities. Wole Soyinka reinforces the importance of listening to women and honouring their leadership. He also reminds us to be deliberate in the pursuits of our divine purposes, and to take only what we truly need along the way to our final end,"* said **Amaka Umeh**, Actor.

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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 and Concerts start at \$25. Tickets are available by calling the Young Centre Box Office at 416.866.8666 or by visiting [soulpepper.ca](http://soulpepper.ca). All ticket prices include a Young Centre facility fee, service charge and HST. Pricing is subject to change.

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