

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ANNOUNCING SOULPEPPER'S ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND BAILLIE ARTISTIC FELLOW APPOINTMENTS

Toronto, ON – February 9, 2021: Soulpepper Theatre Company is thrilled to share that two tremendous artists will be joining the Company's Artistic team. Working with Artistic Director Weyni Mengesha, and Executive Director Emma Stenning, will be **Luke Reece**, appointed as Soulpepper's **Associate Artistic Director**, and **Matthew MacKenzie** joining as the **Baillie Artistic Fellow**. Within their new positions, Associate Artistic Director Luke Reece and Baillie Artistic Fellow Matthew MacKenzie will make meaningful contributions to all aspects of the Company including strategic planning, leadership, and artistic counsel. They will contribute to distinct areas of the Company's work at local, national, and international levels, while also further developing their own artistic practices within Soulpepper.

"I am thrilled to be welcoming Luke and Matt to Soulpepper. They have both worked tirelessly to champion new voices and emerging artists on stages across Canada. They have also been invested and active in challenging and enriching our Canadian theatre ecology on a systemic level. These are artists who care deeply about how we move forward as a sector and whose work and leadership will be a great asset to the Company," said **Weyni Mengesha**, Artistic Director.

The role of **Associate Artistic Director** is an exciting next step for **Luke Reece** following his departure from Obsidian Theatre Company after over five years. In addition to his portfolio of work as Obsidian's producer, Reece is an award-winning spoken word poet, and playwright (*Notice – 21 Black Futures*). Through his work as an educator and leader, he advocates for engaging and nuanced storytelling that challenges audiences. He is one of Toronto's most decorated slam poets with multiple wins nationally, and has represented Canadian poets internationally. The position of Associate Artistic Director is made possible by generous support from the TD Ready Commitment.

"The national theatre community has given me so much love and support over the years, and really, I just want to give it back. I want to give it back in the form of art, opportunity, and continued dedication to changing the game. When we next gather in theatres, it's not going to be the same, we know that. This time is about doing better, and being better. Nothing less. I'm ecstatic to be joining Weyni, Emma, and the entire talented team at Soulpepper," said **Luke Reece**.

The multi award-winning playwright (*Bears, After the Fire*) and Edmonton's Punctuate! Theatre Artistic Director, **Matthew MacKenzie** (Métis), is joining the Company as the **Baillie Artistic Fellow**, adding new reach to Soulpepper's national artistic footprint. Dubbed one of Canada's most compelling writers, and winner of the Toronto Theatre Critics Outstanding New Canadian Play Award, the Carol Bolt National Playwriting Award, and Dora Awards for Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Production, MacKenzie brings fresh talent, perspective, and energy to the Company. The Baillie Artistic Fellowship was established by long-time supporters of the company, Charles and Marilyn Baillie, and is a position that brings with it a focus on artist training, and nurturing new voices within the community.

"The fight that artists like Weyni Mengesha are leading to transform our national theatre ecology is one I want to be a part of. I am deeply grateful to be given this opportunity to dream, work to disrupt, and create under the Soulpepper umbrella," said **Matthew MacKenzie**.

Soulpepper is extraordinarily excited to have Luke and Matthew join the Company and share the with audiences the unique contributions they make in their new roles.

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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.

MEDIA RELEASE



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. 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. 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 Arts Training Fund, and Sylvia Soyka.

Soulpepper is grateful for the major and lead support of: Scotiabank; The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation; CIBC; TD Bank; Sun Life Financial; BMO Financial Group; Diane Blake & Stephen Smith; and Sylvia Soyka.

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