



## MEDIA RELEASE

# SOULPEPPER EXPANDS ITS THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE WITH NEW COMMUNITY CONVERSATION SERIES

TORONTO, ON – January 21, 2020 – Soulpepper Theatre Company is pleased to announce the launch of the **Community Conversations** Series, a post-performance discussion that will accompany each Mainstage production. Building on the success of last year’s pilot event, *Community Conversation: How She Leads* (March 2019), this ongoing series will include a conversation featuring leaders from various sectors and cultural communities, offering a timely dialogue with the civic issues in each play.

This event series demonstrates Soulpepper’s commitment to present ground breaking stories that explore topics and issues through a contemporary lens. Community Conversations are presented once per production and are free for ticket holders attending that performance. These events will be recorded for sharing purposes.

*“One of the elements that inspired me about taking this job was creating a space for a deeper dialogue, not only with our audiences, but with the larger city. I want to offer audiences a chance to engage with the ideas brought forth by writers and artists on our stages. By inviting experts and community leaders to join the conversation we hope to make that dialogue provocative, enriching and inspiring. These community conversations are a way of continuing to open our space to many voices,”* said **Weyni Mengesha**, Artistic Director.

The first edition of the **Community Conversation Series** will include:

### COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: WHEN SHE LEADS

**January 28** - following the performance of *Mother’s Daughter* by Kate Hennig

Playwright Kate Hennig reimagines the historical Mary Tudor (‘Bloody Mary’) as the original Brené Brown – a woman challenging the power structures of her time. Four incredible women who have changed the face of leadership in our city will participate in an insightful and frank conversations about their journeys to success, the progress they have witnessed, and obstacles that will still be encountered. Media trailblazer **Denise Donlon** will moderate a conversation featuring **Jill Andrew** (MPP Toronto-St. Paul’s ); **Sarah Bay-Cheng** (Dean of the School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design at York University); and **Dr. Samantha Nutt** (Founder and Executive Director of War Child Canada).

### COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: STAGING JUSTICE

**February 4** - following the performance of *Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train* by Stephen Adly Guirgis

*Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train* takes us inside Rikers Island and asks the audience hard questions about justice, punishment, and redemption. Artistic Director **Weyni Mengesha** moderates a post show conversation with those on the frontlines of Canada’s justice system, including **Annamaria Enenajor** (founder Cannabis Amnesty and Partner at RSED); **Faisal Mirza** (criminal trial lawyer with Mirza Kwok); and **Emily Lam** (Partner, Kastner Lam LLP).

Additional participants and events to be announced. Media interested in attending these events are invited to contact Soulpepper.

The Community Conversations series complements Soulpepper’s ongoing audience enrichment activities, including Pre-Show Chats, Talkback Tuesdays, and Matinee Mornings.

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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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