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MEDIA RELEASE

SOULPEPPER'S NATIONAL CIVIC THEATRE INITIATIVE & CREATIVE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Toronto, ON – June 2, 2015: Today **Soulpepper Theatre Company** celebrated its 2014 season at its annual general meeting (AGM), and announced a five-year strategic initiative to expand the scope of the company's mission to build a National Civic Theatre. To support Soulpepper's future growth in activity and programming, the company has launched a \$10 million Creative Capital Campaign to foster innovative investment in artistic growth. The company also announced a series of major transformational gifts towards this campaign, including a leading \$3 million gift from the Michael Young Family Foundation, \$1.6 million from the Slight Family, \$1 million from Gail Drummond and Bob Dorrance, and \$450 thousand from Richard Wernham and Julia West. Recent funding and previously announced gifts being ear-marked for the campaign put Soulpepper at 77 per cent of its fundraising goal as of today.

SOULPEPPER 2014

As part of Soulpepper's AGM, results of its 2014 season were shared. Under the leadership of **Artistic Director Albert Schultz** and **Executive Director Leslie Lester**, the company had a record-breaking year, presenting over 800 theatre, music, dance, and festival events. With an operating budget of \$9.7 million, Soulpepper provided employment to 230 artists and 73 full-time and part-time staff.

Results for 2014 reflect an 11 per cent increase in performance revenue and the highest home box office in Soulpepper's history, \$3.6 million. Expanded programming of the inaugural Family Festival drove increased ticket sales. The successful national tour of *Kim's Convenience* travelled to four cities, delivering increased touring revenues. Through the generosity of Soulpepper's individual, corporate and foundation donors, the company also saw its highest level of philanthropic support. Soulpepper posted an operating surplus, as it has regularly done over the past five years.

Critical acclaim was also notable, with 21 Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations and nine wins, including seven for the world premiere commissioned adaptation *Of Human Bondage*. Five Toronto Theatre Critics Awards were divided between *Angels in America* and *Of Human Bondage*, and four different productions landed on multiple Best of 2014 lists. **Soulpepper Founding Member Diana Leblanc** was named the Dora's Silver Ticket Award Winner for outstanding contribution to the stage, and Schultz received the prestigious National Arts Centre Award by the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Foundation and was appointed as a Member of the Order of Canada.

After 17 years of innovation and excellence and 10 years in the Young Centre, Soulpepper is poised for its next chapter of growth.

BUILDING A NATIONAL CIVIC THEATRE

"Over the past 18 months, Soulpepper leadership has been strategizing with artists, staff and board volunteers on the future direction of this company," said Schultz. "What became clear in those discussions was that we were defining an aspirational vision for the role we want to play in our community and in our country. The ideas and plans put forward are ambitious and far-reaching. Soulpepper is building a **National Civic Theatre**. This goal represents the ambitious benchmarks against which we wish to be measured."

"A National Civic Theatre is a place of belonging for artists, audiences, and aspirants. We believe such an institution must deliver cultural enrichment, organizational innovation and civic engagement, and it must have the capacity to train theatre artists from the ground up. It should also strive to present an eclectic repertoire that looks to our collective cultural inheritance while focusing on the creation of original work. It should create seasons that listen to the world while focusing on our national voices, including the voices of our First Nations and the myriad cultures that have collectively defined the vibrant artistic life of this country."



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“A National Civic Theatre needs to be committed to taking its work to national communities large and small, and to represent Canada on the world stage. It also needs to make a serious commitment to sharing its work with the nation through broadcast and digital platforms.”

“That is what being a National Civic Theatre means to Soulpepper. Over its short history we have achieved many goals, but we still have lots of room to grow, and over the next five years we will take all of our platforms to new heights.”

“As we move boldly into the future it is vital that we recognize two issues that are at the centre of the national cultural conversation: Gender Diversity and Cultural Diversity on our stages. These are issues that we constantly think about as an organization, and both are issues we have strived to address. But, if we are honest we have to say that we have not done enough and what we have done we have done too slowly. It is time that this organization takes a meaningful leadership role in addressing the social imperatives that lie behind both of these issues. On behalf of this entire organization I am promising that as of this moment Soulpepper will embrace this opportunity for leadership on these issues. I promise that they will be addressed in four ways: the training of artists; the creation of original work; the provision of artistic opportunity; and the institution of collective artistic leadership.”

“The greatest thing that Soulpepper can do for itself, the city and the country is to become a company that is as great as the city in which we live and work. The most direct and fruitful path to the manifestation of that potential is the company’s ability to deliver into the ears and eyes of our city the same thrilling synthesis of diverse voices and perspectives that strike us as we stand at the corner of Yonge and Dundas.”

CREATIVE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Soulpepper today publically launched a **\$10 million** Creative Capital Campaign to secure the resources necessary to support the company’s mission and growth over the next five years. In support of the launch, four **transformational gifts** were announced.

The Young Family Pledges \$3 million to the Creative Capital Campaign

Today, David and Robin Young announced a \$3 million gift from the Michael Young Family Foundation towards the creation of The Young/Schultz Venture Fund at Soulpepper. Over the next 10 years, this innovation fund will provide support for bold new initiatives and pilot projects, allowing Soulpepper to realize new opportunities across the organization. The Fund will also support a new artistic residency at Soulpepper: **Soulpepper Resident Designer Lorenzo Savoini has been appointed as the inaugural Young Director of Design.**

“This Fund is the first of its kind in North America and will usher in an exciting new chapter for this company. It is designed to plant many ideas and to invest in the seeds that take root,” said Schultz. “It takes individuals with the leadership and vision of David and Robin to realize the arts need to invest in research and development just like any business, and that is what this gift will allow us to do.”

“In 2003, we invested in helping Soulpepper build a home, with the Young Centre and the Michael Young Theatre,” said David Young. “It was a huge privilege to have participated in building the ‘hardware’ of Soulpepper, and was the best investment we’ve ever made. Now is the time to invest in the ‘software’ – the people, plays and creative forces that will transform the future of this wonderful theatre company. It is an even greater privilege and we feel truly blessed.”

The Slight Family Commits \$1.6 million to Music Programming and Youth Outreach at Soulpepper

In 2014, the Slight Family made an extraordinary five-year, \$1.1 million contribution to Soulpepper to support its music initiatives. These initiatives ensure the vitality of music at Soulpepper through the exploration and expansion of musical enrichment in all its programming.



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Led by the inaugural **Slaight Family Director of Music, Mike Ross**, the Slaight Family Music Program has engaged some of Toronto's most acclaimed musical talents in the expansion of Soulpepper's use of music as a powerful storytelling device. This transformational gift has already led to the creation of Soulpepper's highly successful theatrical concerts, and the popular weekly Cabaret Series, as well as the creation and production of the original musical *Spoon River*. The Slaight Family gift has also ensured that music is a key component of all outreach, education and community building activities for audiences of all ages.

Today, Ada Slaight announced the commitment of \$500,000 towards **The Ada Slaight Youth Link Program at Soulpepper**. The Ada Slaight Youth Link Program will allow the company to continue growing and fostering its community-based youth outreach programs which connect alumni of Soulpepper youth programs (Youth Link Artists) with Soulpepper Artists and community-based partner organizations. Together, they will continue to develop long-term relationships with youth in Toronto through workshops, mentorships and performance experiences.

"The foundation of a National Civic Theatre is creating a place of belonging," said Schultz. "The Slaight Family have been committed partners in creating a space for young people and the city's diverse music community in our building."

"My mother, Ada, has always been an advocate for supporting young people in the arts and giving them the tools and confidence to have their voices heard," said Gary Slaight. "We are proud to continue that support. We are also excited by the new opportunities Soulpepper has created for Toronto's diverse musical artists to collide and collaborate in new and exciting ways."

Gail Drummond and Bob Dorrance pledge \$1 million to Soulpepper's Artistic Development

Gail Drummond and Bob Dorrance today announced a pledge of \$1 million towards the establishment of the Drummond-Dorrance Family Artistic Development Fund. Over the next five years, the fund will support the creation of Soulpepper's signature productions and unique artistic identity by providing dedicated resources to artistic risk-taking and innovation. The fund will support the residencies of three artists every year whose presence at Soulpepper will be to influence the artistic development of the company through their exploration of process and form. Of these positions, two will be Resident Artists to the Soulpepper Company and one will be a leading international artist.

"The most important thing that Soulpepper can do at this point in its development is invest in the ongoing Artistic Development of the company and its work," said Schultz. "Our Artistic Identity is going to be the single greatest differentiating factor in a crowded marketplace. We are thrilled to have partners like Gail and Bob who understand that great art needs a place to take risks to thrive and grow. Their gift has allowed Soulpepper to create a space to take those artistic risks."

"With its entrepreneurial spirit, Soulpepper has achieved so much over its short history. They've always delivered," said Gail Drummond. "Bob and I are proud to play a role in giving the company the artistic freedom to embrace its creative spirit and boldly pursue excellence at a global level."

Support for Soulpepper Touring

Albert Schultz shared that Soulpepper has also received dedicated support towards the company's touring initiatives. Details around this partnership will be announced at a later date. This funding will allow Soulpepper to build on the success of recent touring projects by reaching new audiences, strengthening its organizational capacity, and sharing Soulpepper's award-winning productions.



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Richard Wernham and Julia West Support Soulpepper Audio Projects

As previously announced, a generous \$450 thousand gift from Richard Wernham and Julia West launched a multi-year project to create live-performance audio recordings of plays and musical performances with the Soulpepper ensemble. Completed audio programs, professionally recorded and mastered, will be made available by either digital subscription or as individual downloads, and on CD. The Soulpepper Audio Project recordings represent the creation of a new and dynamic digital stage for Canadian writers, composers and performing artists. It also represents a ground-breaking recording agreement between Canadian Actors' Equity Association, ACTRA and Soulpepper. Its first completed project, a cast recording of *Spoon River*, sold out its first run of printed CDs, and remains for sale as an online digital download. The gift also supports the **Wernham/West Director of Audio Programming at Soulpepper, and its inaugural resident artist Gregory J. Sinclair**.

"The generosity of Richard and Julia has encouraged Soulpepper to imagine new ways of telling stories and sharing our work with future generations," said Schultz.

"We are thrilled that our support of Soulpepper will result in having their productions so artfully captured and made available to audiences locally, nationally, and around the world," said Wernham and West.

SOULPEPPER PROGRAMMING AND NEW INITIATIVES

Soulpepper has defined six interconnected platforms through which it realizes its mission: **In the Community** (Civic Engagement and Outreach Programs); **In the Future** (Artist Training, such as the Soulpepper Academy); **In the Pipeline** (New Work Development); **On the Stage** (Plays, Presentations and Music events); **On the Road** (Touring provincially, nationally and internationally); and **In the Air** (Dissemination through digital and broadcast media). These platforms allow the company to find new and meaningful creative opportunities for an ever-growing ensemble of artists and present a wide array of offerings to audiences.

"We have set ambitious goals for Soulpepper over the next five years as we strive to build a National Civic Theatre," said Schultz. "Through the generosity of our partners we are well on our way to achieving those goals. In the months ahead we will be announcing exciting new initiatives across all of our mission platforms. We invite our audiences, donors, and partners to join us in this exciting next chapter for Soulpepper."



Tickets to Soulpepper productions at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts are available by calling the Young Centre Box Office at 416.866.8666 or by visiting soulpepper.ca.

Located in its multi-venue home, the Young Centre for the Performing Arts in Toronto's Distillery Historic District, Soulpepper is Toronto's largest theatre company. Founded and guided by artists, under the leadership of Artistic Director Albert Schultz and Executive Director Leslie Lester, Soulpepper has an integrated mission which includes: industry-leading youth outreach initiatives; the Soulpepper Academy, Canada's only multi-year paid professional training program for theatre artists of all disciplines; 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.

Soulpepper gratefully acknowledges annual operating support from the Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Support for all Music Programming is provided by the Slight Family through the Slight Family Music Program. Mike Ross is the inaugural Slight Family Director of Music. Lead Support for the Soulpepper Academy is provided by the Michael and Karen Vukets Family Foundation, with additional support from the RBC Foundation and Hal Jackman Foundation and the Canada Arts Training Program at the Department of Canadian Heritage.



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