

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**July 30, 2014**

Nightwood Theatre presents the return of the

## ***NEW GROUNDSWELL FESTIVAL***

**September 8–14, 2014, The Historic Distillery District**

**Festival to include workshop productions by Nicole Brooks and Susanna Fournier, six readings of plays from across the country, and a late-night salon series**

(Toronto)—Nightwood Theatre launches its 2014/15 season with the return of our popular festival of new works, the **New Groundswell Festival**, in The Historic Distillery District from September 8 to 14, 2014. Featuring workshop productions of ***Obeah Opera*** by Nicole Brooks and ***With Individual Desire*** by Susanna Fournier from an original idea by Kelli Fox and Sarah Kitz, the festival also features a **National Play Reading Series**, and late-night **Saloon Salons** on topical themes. The talents of more than 50 women artists will be showcased over the seven days of the festival.

***Obeah Opera***, directed by **Weyni Mengesha** with music direction by **Andrew Craig**, was commissioned by **PANAMANIA** presented by CIBC, the arts culture program of the Toronto 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games, and is presented by **Nightwood Theatre** and **Culchahworks Arts Collective**. In this unprecedented *a cappella* theatrical epic, an all-female cast animates the story of the legendary Salem Witch Trials from the unique perspective of enslaved African women. Following the play's successful outing in 2012 (produced by bcurent and Theatre Archipelago), Brooks went back to the drawing board, developing a deeper narrative as well as new music. The **New Groundswell Festival** marks the first opportunity for audiences to get a peek at the show's brand new libretto, music, and staging.

Directed by **Kelli Fox**, and presented by **LadyParts Theatre**, ***With Individual Desire*** is a lush theatrical imagining of the relationship between famed bad-girl American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and her mother Cora. Fournier's play centres around the two months they spent together in a secluded farmhouse near Dorset after Millay fled Paris with a secret. The two workshop productions are presented in the Dancemakers and Nightwood studios, respectively.

The **National Play Reading Series** in the Michael J. Baker Studio features plays from coast to coast on topics ranging from technology and violence, to the politics behind 'Mammy' culture, to the powerful experiences of the children of the Japanese internment. The series includes ***Well Born*** by **Celeste Percy-Beauregard** (Toronto), ***The Tashme Project*** by **Julie Tamiko Manning** (Montreal) and **Matt Miwa** (Ottawa), ***Leaving Wonderland*** by **Shelley Thompson** (Dartmouth), ***Calpurnia*** by **Audrey Dwyer** (Toronto), ***The Mothers*** by **Nicole Moeller** (Edmonton), and ***Centurions*** by **Sally Stubbs** (Vancouver).

A late-night post-show bar, also in the Michael J. Baker Studio, will be on hand to continue the festivities. The **Saloon Salons** feature a series of impromptu discussions led by a different special guest every night. Salons include **Actors in the Driver's Seat**, **The Rise of the Indie Producers**, and **A Debate: Disparity for Female Practitioners in Canadian Theatre is a Myth**.

Says Artistic Director **Kelly Thornton**, "Nightwood is extremely proud to unleash our 35<sup>th</sup> season's celebrations with this bevy of hot new work by the uncompromising women of the New Groundswell Festival. Sometimes shocking, often hilarious, and always fearless, the Festival promises to be an action-packed week of great theatre!"

## **FESTIVAL SCHEDULE**

### **WORKSHOP PRODUCTIONS**

Tickets to the workshop productions are \$22.60 including HST, general admission, and are available at [nightwoodtheatre.net](http://nightwoodtheatre.net)

For more information about the festival please contact the Nightwood office at 416-944-1740.

#### **Obeah Opera**

a Nicole Brooks vision

Produced by Nightwood Theatre and Culchahworks Arts Collective

Directed by Weyni Mengesha

Music Direction by Andrew Craig

Choreography by Anthony "Prime" Guerra

Starring Amina Alfred, Cynthia Ashperger, Neema Bickersteth, Alana Bridgewater, Nicole Brooks, Sapphire Demitro, Starr Domingue, Macomere Fifi, Michelle Fisk, Nickeshia Garrick, Alexis Gordon, Angelique Lazarus, Abena Malika, Lisa Michelle, Jane Miller, Dana Jean Phoenix, Michelle Polak, Laurel Tubman, Sacha Williamson, and Meredith Zwicker.

#### **Dancemakers Studio, The Historic Distillery District, 9 Trinity St, studio 313**

Sept 11 8pm, Sept 12 8pm, Sept 13 2pm & 8pm, Sept 14 2pm

*Obeah Opera* synthesizes the breadth of Black music into an unprecedented a cappella theatrical epic. An all-female cast animates the story of the legendary Salem Witch Trials, from the unique perspective of enslaved African women.

#### **With Individual Desire**

by Susanna Fournier

From an original idea by Kelli Fox and Sarah Kitz

Produced by Lady Parts Theatre

Directed by Kelli Fox

Starring Sarah Kitz, Steven McCarthy and Jane Spidell

#### **Nightwood Studio, The Historic Distillery District, 9 Trinity St, studio 315**

Sept 10 8pm, Sept 11 8pm, Sept 13 2pm & 8pm, Sept 14 4pm

In the summer of 1922 famed "bad-girl" American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay, left Paris with a secret. She spent the next two months with her mother, Cora, in a secluded farmhouse near Dorset. Filled with fantasy and humour, *With Individual Desire* is a lush theatrical imagining of the complexities between a mother and daughter.

### **INDUSTRY SERIES**

#### **Michael J. Baker Studio, The Historic Distillery District, 9 Trinity St, studio 314**

These events are PWYC at the door, no need to reserve in advance.

## **The National Play Reading Series**

This curated series of play readings from across Canada will showcase six provocative new plays from some of the country's most interesting writers.

### **September 8, 8pm: *Well Born* by Celeste Percy-Beauregard (Toronto, ON)**

Receiving inconclusive prenatal test results, an expectant mother sets out to make peace with her past in order to find the strength to embrace her future. What she uncovers about her birth mother however, does nothing to put her fears about her own pregnancy to rest. A play about abandoning perfection and accepting our "otherness."

### **September 9, 8pm: *The Tashme Project* by Julie Tamiko Manning and Matt Miwa (Montreal, QC & Ottawa, ON)**

*The Tashme Project* is a one-act verbatim theatre piece that traces the history and common experience of the Nisei (2nd Generation Japanese Canadians) through childhood, WW2 internment, repatriation and post-war resettlement east of the Rockies. The piece is made up of 20 interwoven interviews with Nisei from Toronto, Hamilton, Kingston, Vancouver and Montreal, punctuated by commentary by the two performers who, as younger generation Japanese Canadians, offer perspectives on how the internment experience still resonates both with the Japanese-Canadian community at large, and with them personally.

### **September 10, 5pm: *Leaving Wonderland* by Shelley Thompson (Dartmouth, NS)**

Two years ago, Jane, a respected poet, novelist, and university professor, lost her only son in a binge-drinking incident during his frosh week at a distant university. Joey's death has taken its toll on Jane's drive, talent and marriage, leaving her fragile and brittle. When an unlikely relationship develops with Rob, a gifted student, Jane's decisions propel her from the prolonged numbness of despair to a new, unimagined life. However, what rises in the wake of Jane's decisions will change the lives of her colleagues, her husband, and the young man who's been the catalyst.

### **September 11, 5pm: *Calpurnia* by Audrey Dwyer (Toronto, ON)**

*Calpurnia* features Julie Fairbanks, a young Black Canadian writer who is in the middle stages of adapting Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* into a screenplay from the perspective of Calpurnia, the Finch family servant. Her brother informs her that she has no right to write about an African American maid because she isn't Black enough. Julie decides to "do the work". As Julie embodies Calpurnia, she discovers the explosive politics behind Mammy Culture. She tackles race, classism, and privilege while threatening the fabric that keeps her family intact.

### **September 12, 5pm: *The Mothers* by Nicole Moeller (Edmonton, AB)**

A woman whose teenager has committed an unthinkable crime spends yet another sleepless night secluded in her son's now vacant bedroom, confronting her demons and wondering what happened to the special boy she had loved so much. As she confesses her sins and reveals her secrets, the audience learns of her frayed marriage, her struggles with motherhood, her inability to extricate herself from the web of guilt and shame and move forward, as the rest of her family has.

### **September 13, 5pm: *Centurions* by Sally Stubbs (Vancouver, BC)**

Mark is held in a police station and interrogated about a violent crime. He holds his story close. Meanwhile, his secrets are unearthed and illuminated for the audience via Mark's mind and his movies, and it becomes clear that the crime he's accused of committing is inexorably intertwined with another violent act and his obsession with making films. Mark lives most comfortably behind the camera, watching, always watching, and recording.

## **Late Night Saloon Salons**

A late-night post-show bar will be on hand to continue the festivities. The **Saloon Salons** feature a series of impromptu discussions led by a different special guest every night:

September 11, 10pm – Actors in the Driver's Seat

September 12, 10pm – The Golden Ticket: Rise of the Indie Producers

September 13, noon – A Debate: Be it Resolved that Disparity for Female Practitioners in Canadian Theatre is a Myth (ADs vs Playwrights)

## **ABOUT NIGHTWOOD THEATRE**

Led by Artistic Director Kelly Thornton and Managing Director Beth Brown, Nightwood Theatre forges creative alliances among women artists from diverse backgrounds in order to develop and produce innovative Canadian theatre. We produce original Canadian plays and works from the contemporary international repertoire, advocate for women, provide a training ground for emerging talent and engage artists in play development and theatre production. We strive to make theatre that is relevant, awakens a new perspective, and promotes empathy and a deeper connection to our humanity.

## **NIGHTWOOD THEATRE SUPPORTERS**

Nightwood Theatre acknowledges the support of: Canada Council for the Arts, Toronto Arts Council, the Ontario Arts Council and NOW Magazine.

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For more information about Nightwood Theatre productions and artist development activities, visit [nightwoodtheatre.net](http://nightwoodtheatre.net)

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## **For more information please contact:**

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