

For Immediate Release: November 1 to December 1, 2007
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THEATRE DIRECT CANADA presents

**LETTERS TO AFRICA:
A Creation and Arts Education Residency
with Kent Senior Public School
November 12 to December 1, 2007**

Artistic Director Lynda Hill

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Student Performances for the Community

Saturday, December 1, 2007 at 3:00 and 4:00 p.m.
Admission is by donation, *Reservations Required*
Kent Senior Public School, 980 Dufferin Street, Toronto
Reservations: 416-537-4191 ext. 224

Radio Coverage on CKLN 88.1 FM

Art on Air, hosted by residency artist Darren Copeland
Featuring artist interviews and radio art created by Kent PS students
Thursday, November 22 and 29, 2:00 to 2:30 p.m.
Listen live at www.clkn.fm

Theatre Direct Canada, one of the country's leading theatre companies for young audiences, brings its second annual Creation and Arts Education Residency experience to a local school and its community.

On **World AIDS Day**, December 1, 2007, grade 7 and 8 students from **Kent Sr. PS** at Dufferin and Bloor in Toronto will present the culmination of three weeks of work. **LETTERS TO AFRICA** is a multi-disciplinary arts expression inspired by the stories and experiences of young people orphaned by HIV/AIDS in Malawi and Zambia, drawn from the acclaimed non-fiction book by **Deborah Ellis**, ***Our Stories, Our Songs: African Children Talk About AIDS***.

ABOUT THE RESIDENCY

For three weeks a team of artists from Theatre Direct will work closely with an ensemble of students, while engaging the entire school, to explore how the power of art and the voice of youth can affect change in the local and global community. Throughout the process a number of guests will visit the school to make presentations, including representatives from **UNICEF**, **Free the Children**, **Grandmothers for Grandmothers** and the author Deborah Ellis.

Theatre Direct is pleased to announce the artists in residence for this project who will share their experience and creative vision with young people: **Mxolisi Welcome Ngozi** (African music and dance), **Junia Mason** (Drama, movement and Spoken Word), **Darren Copeland** (Radio Art), **Monique Stewart** (Visual Arts) and **Ben Lawrence** (Video Art).

The **LETTERS TO AFRICA** project complements the development of ***Binti's Journey*** by Marcia Johnson, an adaptation of Deborah Ellis' acclaimed novel ***The Heaven Shop***, scheduled for its World Premiere at the Tarragon Theatre Extra Space in February/March 2008.

Response to the 2006 residency *The Carpet*, at Dovercourt Junior Public School, an international collaboration with the Akademie Schloss Solitude (Stuttgart, Germany):

"The students involved forged new friendships, gained more self-confidence in themselves as artists, and clearly achieved success as performers. [The] satisfaction shown by the performers and the reaction from all those watching from the sidelines prove to me that this collaboration was a great success for Dovercourt and the community." Principal of Dovercourt Jr. Public School, Linda Conetta

LETTERS TO AFRICA is generously supported by the Ontario Arts Foundation's **Arts Education Partnership Initiative** funded by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, and **TD Bank Charity Auctions**. **Binti's Journey**, the production which complements the residency, is supported by the **TDSB** through the Dance and Drama office and **Janice Wright**, patron of *Binti's Journey*.

ABOUT THEATRE DIRECT CANADA

For over 30 years, Theatre Direct has engaged young people through compelling, inventive and uncompromising professional theatre for children and youth. Since its inception in 1976, the company has produced and toured over 85 productions throughout Ontario and across Canada, reaching as many as 45,000 young people annually, and garnering numerous nominations and awards including the Dora Mavor Moore Award, The Chalmers Award and the Canada Council Prize.

Milestone productions include: *Flesh and Blood* by Colin Thomas, one of the first plays dealing with HIV/AIDS; *A Secret Life* by Ed Roy, presented in an innovative environmental staging; *Toronto at Dreamers Rock* by Drew Hayden Taylor, exploring the perspective of Aboriginal youth which toured across Canada; *The Buncha' Young Artists Festivals* 2002 and 2004 which premiered 8 new emerging playwrights and their work for young adults; *And by the Way Miss...* by the interdisciplinary collective URGE for girls between 12 and 14 years old; and the dance/theatre piece *Beneath the Banyan Tree* by Emil Sher which explored the immigration experience of a South Asian child.

Our work is driven by a belief that young people deserve truth not diversion, that they have a cultural right to meaningful content and compelling, relevant theatre. We view our audience as thinking, feeling, complex individuals, not a market, not just future audiences but our present audience that needs and demands theatre that engages all their faculties and feelings.

Our audience inspires us to tackle big questions in the same way children and youth ask them, honestly, directly, courageously and passionately.

Theatre Direct Canada gratefully acknowledges the on-going support of the **Toronto Arts Council**, **Ontario Arts Council** and **Canada Council for the Arts**. Theatre Direct is a member of **Creative Trust**, and a participant in the **Arts Endowment Fund** established by the Government of Ontario.

ABOUT THE GREEN ARTS BARNS PROJECT

In the Fall of 2008, Theatre Direct Canada will open the doors to its new home at the Green Arts Barns, a project of Toronto Artscape, in the heart of the St. Clair West Village.

In an intimate performance space, young people and families will experience an exceptional program of live theatre and performing arts events. Through quality and accessible education programs, children and youth will discover, create and stretch their imaginations all year round.

Visit www.theatredirect.com to find out how Theatre Direct is establishing Toronto's first west-end theatre for young people.

Theatre Direct Canada's transition to the Green Arts Barns is supported by the **Metcalf Foundation**.