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**News Release**

**ACTOR AND DIRECTOR ALBERT MILLAIRE TO MENTOR  
QUEBEC PLAYWRIGHT BENJAMIN PRADET IN 2016  
GOVERNOR GENERAL'S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS  
MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

**April 14, 2016 – MONTREAL (Canada)** – Canada's National Arts Centre (NAC) is delighted to announce that the veteran actor, director and arts advocate Albert Millaire has been chosen to mentor the Quebec playwright Benjamin Pradet through the 2016 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Mentorship Program. Made possible with support from The Keg Spirit Foundation, the program allows past recipients of the Governor General's Performing Arts Award, Canada's highest honour in the performing arts, to give back to the next generation.

**Albert Millaire** received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement in 2006 and has made outstanding contributions as an actor and director for six decades. Equally at ease in English and French, he has dazzled audiences across North America and Europe with his brilliant performances in both classic and contemporary roles. Career highlights include five seasons acting and directing at the Stratford Festival, appearing in scores of stage plays and over a dozen Radio-Canada television dramas, and directing numerous operas, plays and musicals. He has served as associate artistic director of Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and artistic director of Théâtre populaire du Québec.

**Benjamin Pradet's** play *80 000 âmes vers Albany*, about the adventures of five elderly friends on a trip to upstate New York, earned him an honourable mention at the 2014 Prix Gratien-Gélinas and was featured at the 2015 Dramaturgies en Dialogue festival, read by Jacques Godin, Andrée Lachapelle, Albert Millaire, Monique Miller and Béatrice Picard. *Des arbres*, his translation of Duncan Macmillan's play *Lungs*, premiered in 2016 at Montreal's Théâtre La Licorne, directed by Benoît Vermeulen.

"I have so much respect for Albert Millaire's work, and I am so thankful that he chose to mentor me through this program. I am convinced that the dialogue with Albert will be very rewarding and will help me grow as a playwright. I would like to thank the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Foundation for this opportunity," said Benjamin Pradet.

"Benjamin Pradet is a hugely talented playwright, and I very much look forward to working with him and exchanging ideas on writing and the theatre," said Albert Millaire C.C., C.Q.

A unique partnership between the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Foundation, the National Arts Centre and The Keg Spirit Foundation, the GGPAA Mentorship Program is designed to offer creative guidance to talented mid-career artists, and serves as an investment in future Canadian artistic achievement. Each year, a past laureate of the Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award is invited to select a professional artist (or artists) to share, learn and grow from the experience and insight of their mentor. In addition to receiving artistic guidance and an honorarium, each protégé is showcased throughout the GGPAA celebrations in Ottawa, culminating with the star-studded GGPAA Gala at the NAC.

The Governor General's Performing Arts Awards and the National Arts Centre Foundation are deeply grateful to The Keg Spirit Foundation, which has generously supported the Mentorship Program for eight consecutive years, and has just pledged its support through to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Awards in 2017. Established in 2001, The Keg Spirit Foundation supports organizations that mirror the mentorship that The Keg Steakhouse + Bar has provided to hundreds of thousands of young staff for over 40 years. In that time, over \$8 million has been raised for more than 300 charities across North America.

“At The Keg, we know first-hand that having a mentor can make an enormous difference to a career,” said David Aisenstat, President and CEO of The Keg Steakhouse + Bar, and Chairman of The Keg Spirit Foundation. “We are thrilled that the legendary Albert Millaire will be working with the enormously talented playwright Benjamin Pradet through the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Mentorship Program in the coming year.”

## **ABOUT THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS**

Created in 1992, the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards are Canada's highest honour in the performing arts. This year's laureates for Lifetime Artistic Achievement are **Susan Aglukark, Marie Chouinard, Ben Heppner, Robert Lantos** and **Suzanne Lebeau**. Two other distinguished national awards are also conferred each year as complements to the GGPAA for Lifetime Artistic Achievement. This year **John D McKellar** will receive the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, while **Michael Bubl ** is the recipient of the National Arts Centre Award, which recognizes exceptional achievement over the past performance year.

The 2016 laureates will be honoured at various events in Ottawa from June 9–11. On June 9, they will attend a lunch hosted by the Honourable Geoff Regan, Speaker of the House of Commons, and be introduced in the House of Commons, followed by a parliamentary reception. On June 10, the recipients will receive their awards at a special ceremony and reception at Rideau Hall. And on June 11, the National Arts Centre will host a star-studded gala featuring superb performances, evocative film portraits by the **National Film Board**, and personal tributes by guest stars.

## PARTNERS

The National Arts Centre is proud to produce the 2016 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Gala in partnership with the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Foundation. The Awards are presented with the support of the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts. The GGPAAF gratefully acknowledges **Enbridge** as Presenting Sponsor of the GGPAAF Gala. Grateful thanks also go to the GGPAAF Gala's National Committee of volunteers, led by Honorary Chair Suzanne Rogers.

## GALA TICKETS

Tickets for the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Gala on Saturday, June 11, 2016 go on sale to the general public on Thursday, April 14, 2016, at 11 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time at the NAC Box Office and through Ticketmaster, 1-888-991-2787 or [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca).

## BIOGRAPHIES

### ALBERT MILLAIRE, C.C., C.Q.

In a career spanning six decades, stage and screen actor, director and arts advocate Albert Millaire (2006 GGPAAF) has witnessed some of the great moments in the evolution of Canadian theatre. His compelling presence and deep, rolling voice have etched him indelibly in the public imagination. Equally at ease in English and French, he has dazzled audiences across North America and Europe with his brilliant performances in roles both classic and contemporary.

Mr. Millaire was born in Montréal in 1935 and studied at Collège de l'Assomption and at the Conservatoire d'art dramatique du Québec. Career highlights include five seasons acting and directing at Stratford, appearing in scores of stage plays and over a dozen Radio-Canada television dramas, and directing numerous operas, plays and musicals. He has served as associate artistic director of Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and as artistic director of Théâtre populaire du Québec.

Besides his busy performing career, he has been actively involved in numerous cultural organizations, including the Académie québécoise du théâtre, Union des artistes, and the Canadian Council on the Status of the Artist, which he chaired. He is a past co-chair of the GGPAAF Foundation.

Still irrepressibly energetic at age 81, Mr. Millaire won two Gémmeaux in 2014 for his role in the Radio-Canada TV series "Mémoires vives." He published an autobiographical book, *Mes amours de personnages*, in 2010.

Albert Millaire is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a Knight of the National Order of Quebec. He holds honorary doctorates from the Université de Montréal and Bishop's University.

## BENJAMIN PRADET

Before graduating from the playwriting program at the National Theatre School of Canada, Benjamin Pradet studied education, then social work. He gave public awareness presentations about depression for the Mental Illness Foundation in Quebec, counselled families in crisis in the Innu community of Matimekosk in northern Quebec, and worked at a Montreal crisis centre.

In 2014 he received a project grant from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec for *Schefferville pendant l'extinction de la race blanche, ou Carnaval indien de l'Orphelinat des Monstres*, a fictionalized account of Maurice Duplessis' last days. His play *80 000 âmes vers Albany*, about the adventures of five elderly friends on a trip to upstate New York, earned him an honourable mention at the 2014 Prix Gratien-Gélinas and was featured at the 2015 Dramaturgies en Dialogue festival, where it was read by Jacques Godin, Andrée Lachapelle, Albert Millaire, Monique Miller and Béatrice Picard.

*Des arbres*, his translation of Duncan Macmillan's play *Lungs*, premiered in 2016 at Montreal's Théâtre La Licorne, directed by Benoît Vermeulen.

Benjamin Pradet lives in the Îles de la Madeleine.

## ABOUT THE NAC

The National Arts Centre collaborates with artists and arts organizations across Canada to help create a national stage for the performing arts, and acts as a catalyst for performance, creation and learning across the country. A home for Canada's most creative artists, the NAC strives to be artistically adventurous in each of its programming streams: the NAC Orchestra, English Theatre, French Theatre and Dance, as well as the *Scene* festivals and *NAC Presents*, which showcase established and emerging Canadian artists. The organization is at the forefront of youth and educational activities, offering artist training, programs for children and youth, and resources for teachers in communities across Canada. The NAC is also a pioneer in new media, using technology to teach students and young artists around the globe by creating top-rated podcasts and providing a wide range of NAC Orchestra concerts on demand. The NAC is the only bilingual, multidisciplinary performing arts centre in Canada, and one of the largest in the world.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

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