



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
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April 10, 2013

For immediate release

**John Murrell to mentor Anita Majumdar as part of
the 2013 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards
Mentorship Program**

Program in new partnership with the Banff Centre for 2013–2014

OTTAWA –The National Arts Centre is proud to announce that acclaimed Canadian playwright **John Murrell** has chosen to mentor actress, playwright and dancer **Anita Majumdar** through the 2013 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Mentorship Program, which is made possible with support from The Keg Spirit Foundation.

The Program allows past recipients of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards, which are Canada's highest honours in the performing arts, to give back to the next generation. Award-winning playwright John Murrell received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement in 2008.

Over the past 40 years, John Murrell has become one of Canada's most frequently produced playwrights, as well as a highly respected arts advocate, mentor, and consultant. His plays have been translated into more than 15 languages and performed in more than 30 countries around the world. Among his best known works are *Waiting For The Parade* (about five Calgary women during World War II), *Memoir* (about the final summer of legendary French actress Sarah Bernhardt), *Farther West* (detailing a prairie prostitute's search for absolute freedom), and *Democracy* (about a meeting between poet Walt Whitman and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson during the American Civil War). His most recently completed works are *Taking Shakespeare*, which is being produced by the Stratford Festival this year, and *Peace In Our Time: A Comedy*, an adaptation of Shaw's *Geneva*, currently in rehearsal at The Shaw Festival.

Anita Majumdar is a classically trained Indian dancer and an award-winning actress who was recently feted for her performance in Deepa Mehta's film adaptation of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. As a playwright, Ms. Majumdar has been part of the Tarragon Theatre Writer's Unit, the Cahoots Theatre Company's Hothouse Playwright's Unit and commissioned by the Playwrights' Theatre Centre in Vancouver. Her first play, *Fish Eyes*, was developed at the National Theatre School of Canada, SummerWorks Festival and Harbourfront Centre Theatre. The play was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore award after its premiere at Theatre Passe Muraille, and has toured extensively across Canada and abroad. Her second play, *The Misfit*, developed through performance at the International PuSh Performing Arts Festival and Harbourfront Centre's HATCH Emerging Artist Projects,

premiered at Theatre Passe Muraille and was nominated for two Dora Mavor Moore awards. Since 2011, Anita has been playwright-in-residence at Nightswimming Theatre where she has been writing her largest work to date, *Same Same But Different*, which will premiere at Alberta Theatre Projects and Theatre Passe Muraille in 2014.

(Full biographies for Mr. Murrell and Ms. Majumdar can be found at the bottom of this release.)

“Anita Majumdar is an accomplished playwright, as well as a noted performer for both stage and film,” said Mr. Murrell. “She was the first person I thought of, when this opportunity for a year of sharing with and learning from another artist was first presented to me. This mentorship program will be travelled as a two-way thoroughfare – a chance for me to share with Anita my approaches to writing, my aims as a communicator, my commitment to live theatrical performance, and my understanding of how one simultaneously lives one’s real life and one’s very different imaginative life – while she likewise shares her own experiences and beliefs with me. I am particularly fascinated by how often Anita has written work which she has then performed herself, and which she has sometimes been involved in directing and producing – in contrast to my own career of creating dramatic text, to be independently brought to life by other sensibilities and skill-sets. On this topic, and on hundreds of others, I know that Anita and I will never be at a loss for challenging territory to explore together.”

“I am so humbled by this display of faith and commitment to my playwriting career,” Ms. Majumdar said. “As a teenager, I watched *Waiting for the Parade* at the Vancouver Playhouse and remember feeling inspired to tell my own quiet, epic stories about Canadian women for the stage. I can think of no greater investment from Canada than the chance to spend the next year in mentorship with a playwright as thought-provoking and awe-inspiring as John Murrell. I am indebted to the National Arts Centre, The Banff Centre and The Keg Spirit Foundation for making all of this possible.”

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 from May 30–June 1, culminating with the star-studded GGPAA Gala on June 1 at the NAC.

This year, the NAC and the GGPAA Foundation are delighted to announce a new partnership with the Banff Centre, Canada’s leading institution for advanced training in the performing, visual and literary arts, film, television, and digital media. Mr. Murrell and Ms. Majumdar will spend time working together at the Banff Centre, known internationally for its creative atmosphere, as well as its outstanding resources.

“It’s been wonderful to partner with the Banff Centre on the Mentorship Program, and exciting to imagine what might be created as a result, whether that means a new piece of work, or simply a highly valued, mentoring relationship between two Canadian playwrights at different stages of their careers,” said Jillian Keiley, Artistic Director of English Theatre at the National Arts Centre.

“We are very pleased to partner with the NAC and the GGPAA Foundation, and to host the very talented Anita Majumdar and the Canadian playwriting treasure John Murrell at the Banff Centre through the Mentorship Program,” said Kelly Robinson, Director of Theatre Arts at the Banff Centre. “We look forward to supporting them in what will be a productive, fulfilling and creative relationship.”

This is the second time the NAC has partnered with a national arts education organization in delivering the Mentorship Program. In 2012, the National Arts Centre worked with Canadian Film Centre, Canada's leading institution for advanced training in film, television, digital media and screen acting, on the delivery of a Mentorship Program that saw past GGPAA recipient Eugene Levy mentor writer and filmmaker Daniel Perlmutter. Mr. Levy also led a workshop with CFC students in the fall of 2012.

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 five consecutive years. Established in 2001, The Keg Spirit Foundation supports organizations that mirror the mentorship that The Keg Steakhouse & Bar has provided to tens of thousands of young staff for over 40 years. In that time, over \$6.3 million has been raised for more than 300 charities across North America.

“In keeping with our Foundation’s mandate to support quality mentorship programs, we are truly honoured to support the mentorship of an artist like Anita Majumdar,” said David Aisenstat, President and CEO of The Keg Steakhouse & Bar, and Chairman of The Keg Spirit Foundation. “I am confident that John Murrell’s experience and guidance through the coming year will be of tremendous value to Anita, and that their collaboration will open new doors and opportunities for the extraordinary body of work she will continue to create through her career.”

Created in 1992, the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards are Canada’s highest honour for the performing arts. This year’s laureates for Lifetime Artistic Achievement are **Andrew Dawes, Daniel Lanois, Jean Pierre Lefebvre, Viola Léger, Eric Peterson** and **Menaka Thakkar**. Two other distinguished national awards are also conferred each year as complements to the GGPAA for lifetime artistic achievement. This year **Jean Pierre Desrosiers** will receive the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts, while **Sarah Polley** is the recipient of the National Arts Centre Award, which recognizes exceptional achievement over the past performance year.

ABOUT THE GOVERNOR GENERAL'S PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS

The Governor General's Performing Arts Awards are Canada's highest honour for the performing arts. The 2013 laureates will be honoured at various events in Ottawa from May 30–June 1. On May 30, the recipients will attend a lunch hosted by the Honourable Andrew Scheer, Speaker of the House of Commons, and be introduced in the House of Commons, followed by a parliamentary reception. On May 31, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, will present the Awards at a special ceremony and reception at Rideau Hall. On June 1, the National Arts Centre will host a sparkling Gala to celebrate the 2013 laureates, a star-studded celebration featuring superb performances, evocative film portraits by the **National Film Board**, and personal tributes by guest stars.

The National Arts Centre is proud to produce the 2013 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 GGPAA Gala.

The National Arts Centre Foundation would like to thank Associate Sponsors **McDonald's Restaurants of Canada Ltd.** for their support of the Inspiration Seats youth section and **Manulife Financial** for its support as our Dinner Sponsor. For the fifth year, the Mentorship Program is supported by **The Keg Spirit Foundation**. National Partners are **Aimia**, **Desjardins Group**, **Onex Corporation**, and **Weber Shandwick Worldwide**, and **The Printing House** is our official Print Sponsor.

The GGPAAF also acknowledges the significant contributions of Regional Partners **Accenture Canada**, **The Alvin Segal Family Foundation**, **The Banff Centre**, **Bell Media**, **BMO Financial Group**, **Cineplex Media**, **Cisco Systems Canada Inc.**, **Globalive Communications Corp.**, **Groupe Germain**, **Invesco**, **The Keg Steakhouse & Bar**, **NBC Universal Canada**, **Norton Rose LLP**, **Pratt & Whitney Canada**, **PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP**, **Rogers Communications Inc.**, **Shangri-La Hotels**, **Vale**, **Venture Communications Ltd.** and **Via Rail Canada**. Impresario Partners include **Aecon Group Inc.**, **Barrick Gold Corporation**, **Cement Association of Canada**, **Holt Renfrew & Company**, **Jessiman Foundation**, **The Ledcor Group**, **McMillan LLP**, **Mackenzie Investments**, **Macquarie Capital Markets Canada Ltd.**, **Mark Motors of Ottawa Ltd.**, **PCL Constructors Canada Inc.**, **Raymond James Ltd.**, **Sun Life Financial**, **Temple Scott and Associates**, and **Trinity Development Group Inc.** Additional in-kind support for the Awards is received from **Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP**, **eccentricarts**, **Llama Communications**, **The Royal Canadian Mint**, media partners **The Globe and Mail**, **The Ottawa Citizen**, **Le Droit**, **Clear Channel**, **The Hill Times** and **Embassy Magazine**.

Grateful thanks also go to the GGPAA Gala's National Committee of volunteers, led by Honorary Chair The Hon. Hilary M. Weston, CM, OOnt, of Toronto; Co-Chairs Susan Glass, CM, and Arni Thorsteinson of Winnipeg; and Vice-Chair Kate Alexander Daniels of Toronto.

Tickets for the **Governor General's Performing Arts Awards Gala** on Saturday, June 1, 2013 go on sale to the general public on Wednesday April 10, 2013 at 10 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time at the NAC Box Office and through Ticketmaster, 1-888-991-2787 or www.ticketmaster.ca.

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BIOGRAPHIES

John Murrell

Over the past 40 years, John Murrell has become one of Canada's most frequently produced playwrights, as well as a highly respected arts advocate, mentor, and consultant. His plays have been translated into more than 15 languages and performed in more than 30 countries around the world. Among his best known works are *Waiting For The Parade* (about five Calgary women during World War II), *Memoir* (about the final summer of legendary French actress Sarah Bernhardt), *Farther West* (detailing a prairie prostitute's search for absolute freedom), and *Democracy* (about a meeting between poet Walt Whitman and philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson during the American Civil War). Both *Waiting For The Parade* and *Farther West* were filmed and have been shown repeatedly on CBC Television. As a translator, Murrell has created acclaimed versions of works by Chekhov, Ibsen, and Sophocles, as well as several plays by contemporary Québec playwright Carole Fréchette. He was the librettist for three operas by Canadian composer John Estacio (*Filumena*, *Frobisher*, and *Lillian Alling*) and for one by conductor/composer Bramwell Tovey (*The Inventor*). All four operas were broadcast on CBC and Radio Canada, and *Filumena* was filmed and telecast by both CBC-TV and by Public Television in the United States. Murrell has served as Playwright-in-Residence at Alberta Theatre Projects and Theatre Calgary, as an Associate Director of the Stratford Festival, as Head of the Banff Playwrights Colony, Head of the Theatre Section of the Canada Council for the Arts, and as Artistic Director/Executive Producer of Theatre Arts at The Banff Centre. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada, a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, a winner of the prestigious Walter Carsen Prize for excellence in the performing arts, an inaugural recipient of the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta's Distinguished Artist Award, and, in 2009, was honoured with the Governor General of Canada's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement. His most recently completed works are *Taking Shakespeare*, which is being produced by the Stratford Festival this year, and *Peace In Our Time: A Comedy*, an adaptation of Shaw's *Geneva*, currently in rehearsal at The Shaw Festival.

Anita Majumdar

Anita Majumdar is an award-winning actress and graduate from the National Theatre School of Canada and holds a degree in English, Theatre and South Asian Languages from the University of British Columbia. She has been in leading roles from the Stratford Festival to the Museum Theatre in Chennai, and as well is a classically trained Indian dancer in Kathak, Bharata Natyam and Odissi. Recently Anita was feted for her performance in Deepa Mehta's adaptation of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, but throughout Anita has been committed to playwriting. She has been part of the Tarragon Theatre Writer's Unit, the Cahoots Theatre Company's Hothouse Playwright's Unit and commissioned by the Playwrights' Theatre Centre in Vancouver. Anita's first play *Fish Eyes* was developed at the National Theatre School of Canada, SummerWorks Festival and Harbourfront Centre Theatre. *Fish Eyes* was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore award after its premiere at Theatre Passe Muraille and has toured extensively across Canada and abroad. Furthermore, *Fish Eyes* has been studied in curriculums at Queen's University, the University of Guelph and the University of Alberta. *The Misfit*, Anita's second play, was directed by Mark Cassidy and developed through performance at the International PuSh Performing Arts Festival and Harbourfront Centre's HATCH Emerging Artist Projects. It premiered at Theatre Passe Muraille and was nominated for two Dora Mavor Moore awards. Since 2011, Anita has been playwright-in-residence at Nightswimming Theatre where she has been writing her largest work to date, *Same Same But Different* which will premiere at Alberta Theatre Projects and Theatre Passe Muraille in 2014. Directed by Brian Quirt, *Same Same But Different* was supported by the 2009 Vancouver Cultural Olympiad and further developed at the Toronto Fringe Festival and Best of Fringe. Currently Anita is working with Nightswimming Theatre to complete her one-woman show trilogy (*Fish Eyes* being the first). The trilogy expresses experiences of teenagers of colour through dance and is based in Anita's hometown of Port Moody, B.C. Having worked on the second play, *Boys With Cars*, at The Banff Centre earlier this year, Anita will work to complete the last play in the series, *Let Me Borrow That Top*.