

FemFest 2011 Brings Inspirational Work to the Winnipeg Stage

Winnipeg, June 7, 2011– Sarasvati Productions presents **FemFest 2011: *Staging Inspiration***, the 9th annual theatre festival of plays by women for everyone. This year's lineup includes works that are moving, awe inspiring and emotional. **FemFest 2011: *Staging Inspiration*** will take audiences through a journey of discovery with stories of identity, struggles, and for the first time, theatre for young audiences.

This year's **FemFest 2011: *Staging Inspiration*** performance line-up was chosen due to the powerful impact it will have on audiences. The festival will include fully staged plays, readings of new work in development and four touring shows from around the world, as well as skill development workshops and our cabarets featuring artists from multiple disciplines. The workshop of *Jail Baby* is one you won't want to miss. The compelling story about imprisoned women reveals the chilling reality of "the system". On the lighter side two new theatre for young audience plays will be developed, *TopDog* by Janice Salkeld and *Bear and Blue's Adventures Through the Whispering Woods* by Tyler White, with readings for children.

Sarasvati Productions is especially thrilled to welcome Zena Edwards from London, England as the FemFest 2011 artist in residence. She is an award winning poet and musician. Her piece, *Travelling Light* is a combination of spoken word, poetry, visuals, song, movement and blogging.

*there are days when being a woman is tied up
in the weight of her 'knowledge' of the 'way it is'
bombarded with kilos and pounds
of sweet and salt constraints
and she will grow fat
with insecurity, be chained to her present
while the rest of your world moves on*
-Zena Edwards

"Zena Edwards is an amazing artist," says Artistic Director Hope McIntyre. "She has the ability to connect with any audience. Though the festival celebrates female artists, all of our playwrights and performers strive to communicate to a wide community of men and women, and it's fun for the men to get an inside peek at woman's experiences."

FemFest runs at the Canwest Centre for Theatre and Film (at the University of Winnipeg, 400 Colony Street) from **September 17th-24th, 2011**. Tickets are \$10 for single shows with the full festival being available for a \$50 festival pass. FemFest welcomes all audience members to join in a celebration of female artists and experience a taste of the local and national art scene.

About Sarasvati Productions: *Sarasvati Dramatic Theatre Productions and Repertory Inc. (founded in Winnipeg in 2000) seeks to inspire artists and audiences through the use of theatre and to provide a place where artists can develop, showcase their skills and celebrate their creativity.*

About FemFest: *Founded in 2003 by Sarasvati Productions, FemFest presents the work of both established and emerging artists from across Canada. The festival's mandate is to produce one-act plays by women and showcase women theatre artists.*

An Exclusive Sneak-Peek at the FemFest 2011: *Staging Inspiration* Performance Line-Up!

IN-HOUSE PRODUCTIONS

Magpie by Katherine Koller

Directed by Hope McIntyre

Magpie takes in rapists and killers trying to reintegrate into society. She teaches them how to take care of a room, how to get a job and keep it, and...how to bake.

One Night Stand

Coordinated and directed by Cairn Moore

Instant gratification, immediate feedback. Selected readings from new works in progress by Manitoba playwrights. A chance to experience the future of local theatre and answer the question – would you date this play?

READINGS/WORKSHOP PRODUCTIONS

(africanada): a love story by Rose Condo

Does the patch of earth you were born on determine who you are and where you can go? Using traditional forms of storytelling, dance, and drumming, this new script follows a young woman as she explores identity and nationality in lands both near to and far from her home.

Jail Baby by Hope McIntyre and Cairn Moore with Nan Fewchuk and Marsha Knight

In partnership with Elizabeth Fry Society Manitoba After working with women in prisons and researching the criminalization of women, we present this work in progress. Part parody, part human tragedy – find out what really happens to ‘unruly women’ as they revolve in and out of the criminal justice system.

TopDog by Janice Salkeld

Theatre for Young Audiences

With the snap of a kitchen utensil and the flick of a hat four characters use clowning, movement and rhythm to transition from self-absorption to a greater understanding of the world – and their ability to change it!

Bear and Blue’s Adventures Through the Whispering Woods by Tyler White

Theatre for Young Audiences

An accident-prone chipmunk helps an anxiety ridden bear through a forest of fears in their quest

for the honey pot. This children’s play explores overcoming fears and feeling good about yourself.

PRESENTED PIECES

Travelling Light

Written and Performed by Zena Edwards
(London, England)

While unfolding an autobiographical account of her fractious and touching relationship with her mother, and her mother’s reuniting with her own lost mother after over half a century, Zena offers tips for *Travelling Light*. The show takes gritty and moving twists and turns through the crafts of poetry/spoken word, visuals, song, movement, and blogging.

Pyasa

Written and Performed by Anusree Roy

Directed by Thomas Morgan Jones

Lighting Design by David DeGrow

Produced by Theatre Jones Roy (Toronto)

Set in Calcutta, India *Pyasa* is a play that explores the issues surrounding the Untouchable sect of the Hindu caste system. *Pyasa* is the story of an eleven-year old Untouchable girl named Chaya, and her journey from "childhood" to "adulthood", a journey that occurs in ten days.

MonaRita by Shannon Bramer

Directed by Sherry White

Performed by Ruth Lawrence and Sarah Tilley

Produced by White Rooster Theatre and She Said Yes! (St. John’s)

A hilariously surreal story of two close friends at a crossroads. Soon after Mona becomes a mother she finds she has lost herself - now one of the greatest friendships of her life is in danger of being lost as well. Will Mona let Rita go? Can Rita exist without Mona? Isn’t love supposed to last forever?

Ducks on the Moon by Kelley Jo Burke (Regina)

Directed by Michelle Sereda

This stand-up documentary is an unflinching look at one mother’s struggle bringing up her autistic child. Funny, heart-breaking and informative, it is also a tender and courageous biographical story.