

Sarasvati Productions Tackles Youth Gangs and Gun Violence

Wednesday, October 31- Sarasvati Productions' high school tour of *Diss* has been receiving rave reviews from teachers, students and the community. The show launched on October 12th at the Manitoba Student Leadership Conference where it inspired enthusiastic student participation and standing ovations. Bookings are almost full, as the show will be seen by thousands of students as the tour continues until mid-December. This is truly an example of how theatre can transform our community!

Diss tells the story of a newcomer family in a big Canadian city. As they search for belonging and a sense of status, the two kids become entangled in the world of gangs and gun violence. Written by playwright Rex Deverell, *Diss* was originally developed with the Toronto Police Service and youth with gang experience. Deverell adapted the script to a Winnipeg setting after meeting with the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM) in June. As well, the youth of ArtCity have done the scenic art for the production.

What makes *Diss* so unique is that it is performed in Forum Theatre style. Coming from the tradition of Augusto Boal who worked to create dialogue in theatre, this format allows audience members to not only discuss what they are seeing but to stop the action of the play and take the place of a character in order to prevent bad decisions that are being made. Students and teachers alike have responded to this interactive learning opportunity.

"It is amazing to see the ideas that youth bring to the stage, they have clearly lived the characters' experiences and are eager to solve the problems," says director Hope McIntyre. "In fact when we ask after the show for those who have experienced peer pressure to stand so far all our audiences have been standing. It is a powerful thing to be able to get on stage and step up to the characters in the play who are exerting peer pressure."

Diss is hitting Winnipeg and area schools until December 14th and a free show of *Diss* targeted to youth agencies will take place on **Wednesday, November 7th at 6:30pm at the Millennium Library Carol Shields Auditorium (251 Donald Street)**. Admission is free but donations are strongly encouraged and reservations must be made by calling 204-586-2236.

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 space where artists can develop, showcase their skills and celebrate their creativity.

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