

World Premiere of “Breaking Through” Puts Mental Health on Stage

Winnipeg, April 9, 2017: After two years in development, Sarasvati Productions will bring a full production of their latest community-based theatre project to the stage. *Breaking Through* is the culmination of the Mental Health is Everyone’s Health project launched by Sarasvati Productions in partnership with Artists in Healthcare Manitoba, Red Threads Playback Theatre and Selkirk Mental Health Centre. Artists conducted workshop sessions, forums and interviews, hearing from close to 400 individuals. With 25% of Manitobans receiving medical treatment for a mental illness, everyone is touched by mental health issues. The world premiere will take place from May 23-28 at the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film (at the University of Winnipeg).

Breaking Through has been compiled from real stories by Artistic Director Hope McIntyre and co-writer Cairn Moore. The draft script received a stage reading presentation in May 2016 and was also presented to various organizations for feedback. With more than a hundred and fifty written responses, the script has gone through extensive rewrites in the past year. “Most people would not take the time to complete feedback forms or to contact us after seeing a reading, but the rate of response truly shows how invested people are in the topic. It was important for us to create an authentic work but also a strong artistic product. The input from so many people has made that possible,” says writer Hope McIntyre.

McIntyre and Moore, originally collaborated on *Jail Baby* created over a three-year process working with criminalized women. They are both playwrights in their own right but have worked on perfected a model of community-based creation that aligns with Sarasvati Productions’ mandate to use theatre for social change.

Breaking Through follows five characters, each with their own experience of mental health and the systems that surround it. KoKo is a two-spirited youth who has bounced from foster home to group home. Is her depression a mental illness or the result of a difficult life? Molly is trying to manage as a single mother with bi-polar disorder. Stef’s anxiety makes it hard to cope, particularly when feeling judged by the world around her. Val’s eating disorder is the result of our contemporary desire to live the perfect life. And Joe is the seasoned veteran of the system, living with schizophrenia has meant being in and out of institutions for fifty years.

The production will be directed by veteran Winnipeg theatre artist Kevin Klassen. The cast are all locals well-known in the Winnipeg theatre scene – Elena Anciro, Dora Carroll, Richie Diggs, Marsha Knight, Harry Nelken, Spenser Payne and Joshua Ranville.

Breaking Through will take run from May 23 to May 27 at 8pm; May 24 at 1pm and May 28 at 2pm; at the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film (400 Colony Street, at the University of Winnipeg). Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for students/seniors. To purchase tickets and to see show times, please visit www.sarasvati.ca.

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 and showcase their skills and celebrate their creativity.