

## **FEMFEST 2018 SHOW CONFRONTS POLICE VIOLENCE AND RACISM**

**Winnipeg, August 27, 2018** – The featured artist at this year’s FemFest is acclaimed playwright/performer Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, a.k.a. Belladonna the Blest. She will be performing her own one-woman show, *Sound of the Beast*, facilitating workshops and presenting a lecture on her important work to increase diverse representation in theatre.

Donna-Michelle St. Bernard is an emcee, playwright and agitator. She has twice been nominated for the Governor General’s Award in Playwriting. Notable works for the theatre include *Cake*, *They Say He Fell*, *A Man A Fish*, *The First Stone*, *Roominhouse*, *Salome’s Clothes*, and *Gas Girls*. She has rhymed onstage at CMW, NXNE, WCMA, Urbanfest, Under the Volcano and Scream in High Park. DM is Artistic Director of New Harlem Productions, playwright in residence at lemonTree creations and emcee in residence at Theatre Passe Muraille.

*Sound of the Beast* is a powerful combination of spoken word, storytelling, and hip-hop inspired by the Tunisian emcee Weld-El 15, who was jailed for his song *Boulicia Kleb (The Police Are Dogs)*. The show calls out police violence, particularly against people of colour, from Tunisia to Toronto. It makes the audience ask themselves questions in the most intelligent way. *Sound of the Beast* is part of St. Bernard’s project to write one play inspired by each of the 54 countries in Africa.

Lynn Slotkin’s review states that “Donna-Michelle St. Bernard tells a gripping, compelling story that is happening all over the world. Her stories and their telling are not clichéd into sameness. Each one is perceptively drawn, calmly told, clearly illuminated and will make you suck air for all the right reasons. She is a compelling presence who tells a vital story.”

There are just three opportunities to see the show at FemFest from September 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. One performance of *Sound of the Beast* will be a matinee targeted at high schools. It will be followed by a talkback to discuss the issues that the show presents. A public lecture by Donna-Michelle St. Bernard will be held on September 19<sup>th</sup> at 12:30pm.

FemFest 2018: Staging Resistance runs from **September 15-22, 2018** at the **Asper Centre for Theatre and Film** (at the University of Winnipeg, 400 Colony Street). Tickets are \$15-\$20 for single shows and a full festival pass is available for \$50. FemFest welcomes everyone to join this celebration of transformative theatre. For more information, please visit [www.femfest.ca](http://www.femfest.ca).

**About Sarasvati Productions:** *Founded in Winnipeg in 2000, Sarasvati Productions is experimental and transformative theatre that presents significant social issues; engages in community collaboration; and supports emerging artists. FemFest has been up and kicking since 2003 and to date has showcased hundreds of artists!*