

Soulpepper

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



The artists and staff of Soulpepper and the Young Centre for the Performing Arts acknowledge the original caretakers and storytellers of the land on which we are situated - the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishanabek First Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We commit to honouring and celebrating their past, present and future.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC & EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

As we reflect on 2023, it's evident that we truly took a voyage around the world. From Port Elizabeth, South Africa in *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* to New York's Apollo Theater in *Billie, Sarah and Ella: Revolutionary Women in Jazz*, we explored many cultures and creative universes, partnered with a multitude of exciting artists, and offered an astonishing array education, artistic and community programs. Throughout this journey, two things became clear: Soulpepper plays a vital role in the communities we serve, and we have become a dynamic epicenter of culture and creativity that is starting to redefine the role of a theatre in civil society.

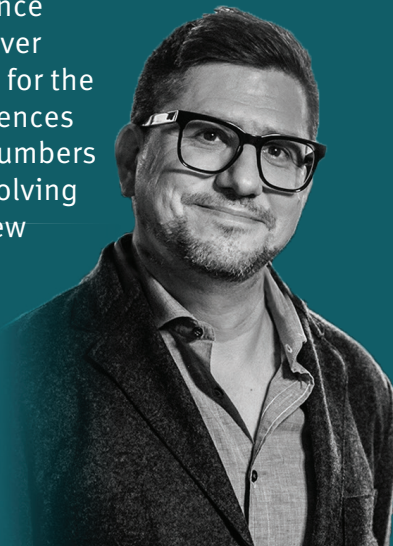
As with so many other cultural organizations, our post-Pandemic recovery has been sometimes circuitous and always challenging. Soaring costs, financial anxiety in our audience and donor base, rapidly changing audience behavior and fierce competition from streaming platforms have exerted enormous pressure on our business model. Most notably, as you will see from our financial statements, Soulpepper has posted a second significant deficit and is now serving an accumulated deficit. But there are also signs of exciting opportunities in this moment of deep change. Since reopening, our audience composition has changed radically, with over 50% of attendees discovering Soulpepper for the first time, and the average age of our audiences dropping from 64 to 42 years old. These numbers indicate that the story of Soulpepper is evolving and that there is untapped potential for new support and excitement as we continue to find our way through this moment of sectoral transformation.

Thanks to the extraordinary hard work of our staff and the support of our dynamic Board of Directors, plans are already in place to retire our accumulated deficit by 2027. Early indications are that 2024 will see ongoing audience growth, and we are looking forward to stabilizing operations and announcing a new vision for the company in late 2024.

In the spring of 2024, Soulpepper received a record breaking 36 Dora Award Nominations, our biggest tally ever. Each and every eligible production in our season was nominated, and we were delighted to take home some of the ceremony's most important awards. These nominations are a testament to the enduring power of our story telling and our unwavering commitment to presenting truly extraordinary productions. Our most sincere thanks to our Board of Directors, Donors, and Partners, without who none of our achievements would be possible.

Weyni Mengesha
Artistic Director

Gideon Arthurs
Executive Director





A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The 2023 season marked my first full year as Chair of Soulpepper's Board of Directors and another exciting year at Soulpepper, as we presented our largest season since 2019 thanks to the extraordinary work of Soulpepper's staff and leadership team, Weyni Mengesha and Gideon Arthurs, who are remarkable in their pursuit of excellence and response to challenges.

I was incredibly proud to see Soulpepper's artistic ambitions thrive while maintaining our commitment to Radical Inclusion. Some stand-out achievements included:

- **Sizwe Banzi is Dead**, which earned performer Amaka Umeh a Dora Award for Outstanding Performance by an Individual;
- **The Seagull**, one of our most popular productions of the year directed by the late great Daniel Brooks;
- **Three new Soulpepper concerts** created through our Slight Music Program;
- The premiere of two productions from the six Women Writing program – **The Guide to Being Fabulous** by Sandra Caldwell and **Wildwoman** by Kat Sandler.

Simultaneously, Soulpepper laid the groundwork for a renewed vision - one that expands our audiences by welcoming new friends and neighbours to the Young Centre to experience the transformative power of art.

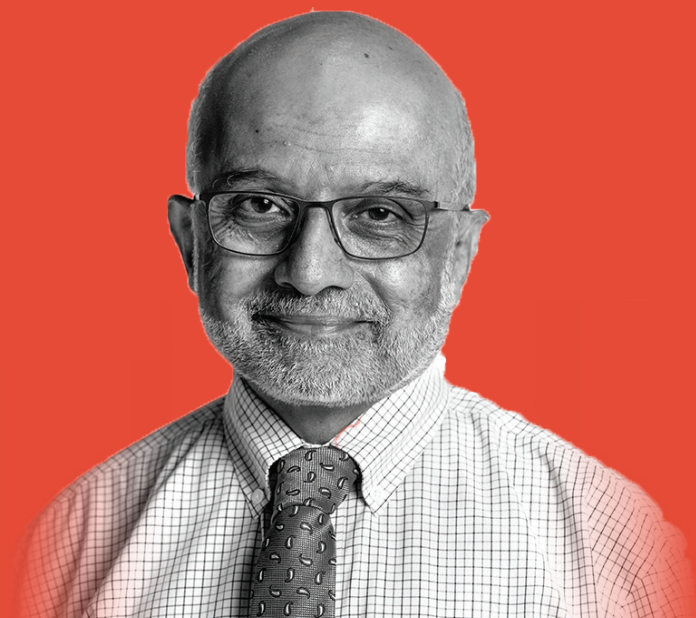
In my role as Chair, I am proud to have worked with Soulpepper's Board and leadership to create

the Vanessa Morgan Volunteer Award, presenting the inaugural award to outgoing Board Chair, Vanessa Morgan. This award is a testament to her longstanding and tremendous support of the company. We will continue to present the award each year to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding volunteerism to Soulpepper.

The year was not without its challenges, as we reckoned with the continued reverberations of COVID-19 shutdowns. With oversight from the Board of Directors, Soulpepper navigated through financial hardships in the last quarter of 2023 and is moving forward with a robust deficit reduction plan that emphasizes both cost reductions and new revenue streams.

As we study the state of the sector and look to the future, we know that we must balance fiscal responsibility with bold ambitions and a refusal to compromise our artistic integrity. The most challenging times breed innovation and I look forward to meeting you at the theatre for Soulpepper's 2024-2025 Season.

Robin Cardozo
Chair, Board of Directors



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The following pages acknowledge the community of people who provide invaluable support to the company in 2023 and make Soulpepper's work on-stage and in our community possible.

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