

For Immediate Release

Allen MacInnis, Young People's Theatre Artistic Director, to Retire After 19 Successful Seasons

Toronto, ON, February 26, 2020 — Allen MacInnis has announced that he will step down as Artistic Director of Toronto's **Young People's Theatre (YPT)** at the end of the 2020.21 season, after 19 outstanding years. He is the longest-serving Artistic Director in the theatre's 54-year history as North America's oldest – and Canada's largest – professional producer and presenter of theatre for young audiences.

"YPT's staff, board, and patrons will miss Allen's passionate and compassionate leadership of this company. He has truly inspired and motivated everyone with his vision for theatre and education. Thankfully, a 'long good-bye' will allow for a smooth transition into the company's next chapter with a new artist at the helm," said Executive Director Nancy Webster.

Since joining YPT in 2002, Mr. MacInnis's artistic vision has focused on the emotional, social, and intellectual development of young people – a mission that has influenced all of his artistic choices, as well as the company's core values. "YPT has such a clear purpose and audience. And that's a gift for someone in my position," Mr. MacInnis said. "It has taught me that my job is all about maintaining an authentic relationship with young people and the people who care about them."

Together with Ms. Webster, Mr. MacInnis established YPT's innovative Education & Participation Department (E&P), connecting every element of YPT's educational work with the company's professional productions. This wide range of programming includes YPT's Drama School, workshops in the community with newcomer agencies and SickKids Hospital, Indigenous programming, in-depth work in school classrooms, professional development programs for teachers and arts educators, as well as volunteer and internship opportunities.

"We've grown YPT to a point where it's impossible to separate the educational work that we do from the professional theatre that we create. Learning is reflected in everything we do," said Mr. MacInnis.

During his tenure, YPT has presented more than 30 world premieres, established collaborative relationships with international theatre companies, artists, and arts educators from Great Britain to Australia to Nigeria, and received over 40 Dora Mavor Moore Awards. His outstanding direction for individual productions has also been recognized, including a directing award for one of his personal favourites, *Seussical*. "I am endlessly inspired by Seuss's phrase 'a person's a person, no matter how small'," said Mr. MacInnis. "I think those are words to live by."

The importance that Mr. MacInnis has placed on the experiences of theatre's youngest audience members, including babies, has influenced the theatre beyond measure. YPT is at the forefront of Canadian theatre's exploration of stage work for infants, and now serves children from the ages of 3 months to 18 years.

Mr. MacInnis's 40-year career, half of which he has devoted to YPT, includes:

- Work in creative communities across Canada, including: Belfry Theatre, Victoria; Globe Theatre, Regina; Alberta Theatre Projects, Calgary; Shaw Festival, Ontario; Grand Theatre, London; Centaur Theatre, Montreal; and Neptune Theatre, Halifax.
- Directing YPT productions such as *Hana's Suitcase*, *Blue Planet*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *You and I*, *The Secret Garden*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Would You Say The Name Of This Play (nggrfg)?*, *Cinderella – a RATical retelling* (2013 Dora Award for Outstanding Direction), *A Year With Frog and Toad* (in which he also co-starred), *Touch the Sky*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Seussical* (2007 Dora Award for Outstanding Direction), *Bunnicula*, and *The Princess & the Handmaiden*.
- Teaching and directing at the National Theatre School of Canada, University of Alberta, George Brown College Acting School, Artstrek Summer Theatre School, and BC Festival of the Arts.
- Eight years as Artistic Director of Winnipeg's Prairie Theatre Exchange before his tenure as Artistic Director of YPT.

Mr. MacInnis will program YPT's 2020.21 season (its 55th year), as well as direct. The Board of Directors' search for his successor commences Feb. 28, 2020 (at which point the job posting will be [available online](#)), with the intention of securing an incoming Artistic Director by late Fall. During this transitional season, the Artistic Director Designate will program the 2021.22 season.

Says Mr. MacInnis: "I have loved every minute, but I have felt for a couple of years that it isn't enough anymore for me to make space for emerging artists or to share power – it's time for someone like me to get out of the way for a new generation, especially those who face barriers to accessing leadership roles." While stepping away from YPT, he looks forward to future work as a director, performer and educator.

"In his time at YPT, the work Allen has generated on its stages has been revelatory," said Board Co-Chair Jenine Krause. Her Co-Chair David Scandiffio adds: "Allen's success as a communicator, an educator, and developer of great ideas has been at the core of his brilliance as a theatre artist, and as a pioneer of theatre for young audiences."

About Young People's Theatre

Young People's Theatre (YPT) is North America's oldest – and Canada's largest – professional producer and presenter of theatre for young audiences. Over the past 54 years, YPT has staged many of the most important plays that form the canon of work for youth in our country. YPT continues to develop new work and create partnerships with theatre companies across the country and around the world. The enriched learning experiences of YPT's Education & Participation Department provide young people with opportunities to develop their whole being. Through Drama School programs in four locations throughout the city, workshops in community shelters and agencies, educational initiatives in Toronto classrooms, and training and apprenticeship opportunities, we place learning at the centre of everything we do. Visit youngpeoplestheatre.org to learn more.

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