

For Immediate Release

YOUNG PEOPLE'S THEATRE ANNOUNCES

ROOM FOR IMAGINATION

\$10.5 MILLION EXPANSION PROJECT

**Campaign has been increased to \$13.5 million*

Toronto, ON, April 14, 2021 — Celebrating its 55th anniversary, **Young People's Theatre (YPT)** is proud to announce the launch of the **Room for Imagination** expansion project. With the purchase of a fully accessible, multi-use building at 161 Frederick Street, only steps away from its historic Front Street East theatre, YPT will expand its footprint with 12,000 additional square feet. The theatre company's 123-year-old Heritage building will also undergo extensive renovations. With this ambitious project, YPT will now anchor the corner of Front and Frederick streets in downtown Toronto with two buildings united in vision, creating Canada's largest state-of-the-art theatre complex for young people.

The *Room for Imagination* campaign has raised 50% of its approximately \$10.5 million goal, thanks to some important pledges: YPT's 450-seat Mainstage theatre has been named the **Ada Slaight Stage** in recognition of a generous leadership gift from **The Slaight Family**. Additionally, major pledges have been made by BMO Financial Group, TD Bank Group, David & Susan Scandiffio, the Kingfisher Foundation, and a host of additional committed donors. The remaining \$5 million still to be raised from private and public sources will support the renovation of both the theatre, and the newly-purchased building. This project will create accessible and innovative spaces that truly support YPT's vision of providing educational programming and award-winning theatre for the more than 100,000 young people it serves annually.

"With this expansion, YPT is investing in the future and opening its doors even wider to young people, schools, artists and the community," said **YPT Board Co-Chairs David Scandiffio and Jenine Krause**. "*Room for Imagination* is our commitment to creating spaces that inspire the best in programming, education and engagement, and one that will position YPT as an international leader in theatre for young audiences."

At a time when arts institutions are facing many challenges, YPT continues to look forward with the recent appointment of **Herbie Barnes** as the next Artistic Director, who, alongside **Executive Director Nancy Webster**, will guide the company's vision as a vital and progressive theatre hub for young people.

"YPT is bursting at the seams," said Ms. Webster. "We have been focused for more than 10 years on a capital plan to build a new YPT. With performing arts venues now temporarily closed, we've been offered the time — and now the space — to re-imagine and plan for growth, with great support to take us there. With this launch, we encourage our corporate community and the public to help us make this important project a reality."

ROOM TO EXPAND

With the purchase of 161 Frederick Street, YPT will offer purpose-built spaces for its ever-expanding arts education initiatives, community programs, and its 51-year-old Drama School, whose alumni include Drake, Kiefer Sutherland and Giacomo Gianniotti. Situated in the historic St. Lawrence neighbourhood, YPT will occupy a three-story commercial space below a small condominium, with a leased café on the street level. Extensive renovations will feature fully accessible studio-classrooms, a Mainstage-size rehearsal hall, an expansive wardrobe workshop, administrative offices and rental space for community use.

ROOM TO REFRESH

Across the road at 165 Front Street East, YPT's historic theatre venue will see its first major renovation in more than three decades. The venue, which has been the company's permanent home for 44 years, once housed the horse stables of the Toronto Street Railway Company in the late 19th century. In 1977, the renowned architect Eberhard Zeidler converted the landmark building into a theatre complex that now houses a Mainstage theatre and a 115-seat Studio theatre. With this expansion, Kohn Shnier Architects continue to honour Zeidler's award-winning design with interior renovations that will enhance the venue's accessibility features, creating lobby areas of double the size, and upgraded box office and concession spaces, increasing the ability to social distance. Behind the scenes, the project will usher in upgraded and more spacious, accessible dressing rooms, and larger production workshops. The Studio, which currently operates as a theatre, a rehearsal hall, a Drama School classroom, and sometimes even a paint shop, will now function primarily as a theatre. Renovations to the Ada Slaight Stage and three lobbies will offer much enhanced accessibility for patrons using wheelchairs. Lighting and sound systems will be upgraded, vastly reducing YPT's environmental footprint.

Renovations commence summer 2021 with the anticipation of doors opening on Front Street in 2022.

ROOM TO CELEBRATE – THE ALLEN MACINNIS LEGACY CAMPAIGN

YPT celebrates the 19-year-legacy of outgoing Artistic Director Allen MacInnis with the launch of the **Allen MacInnis Legacy Campaign**. A newly created educational space will be named in Mr. MacInnis's honour, in recognition of his remarkable impact as a visionary artist, educator and leader in the Theatre for Young Audiences community. The longest-serving Artistic Director in the company's history, Mr. MacInnis will step down at the end of the 2020.21 season.

For more information about *Room for Imagination* and how corporate partners and members of the public can get involved, please visit youngpeoplestheatre.org/room-for-imagination.

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 55 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, 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. With this season's new online drama-based programming, YPT continues to support the needs of educators, students and families by creating innovative opportunities for online learning. Visit youngpeoplestheatre.org to learn more.

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