

**Caribbean Tales to Premiere Gritty and Gripping New Play
A WINTER TALE,
February 1-5, 2006,
Alchemy Theatre, 133 Tecumseth Street, Toronto**

***Latest Project from Acclaimed Multi-Media Company
Tackles Issue of Gun Violence on Toronto Streets***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Toronto, ON December 13, 2005 - Shots ring out one winter night, and a bullet meant for a local street dealer kills a nine-year-old boy. So begins *A Winter Tale*, a new play created and co-written by Frances-Anne Solomon that will premiere February 1-5, 2006 at Alchemy Theatre, 133 Tecumseth Street, Toronto. *A Winter Tale* is set against a backdrop of unrealized hopes, in a multi-racial, working-class, Toronto community. As the story unfolds, six Black men come together tentatively to form a support group that meets in a local Caribbean restaurant in the hope that they will find pathways leading to their own salvation and to the redemption of their community. At times bitter and tragic, at other times hopeful and humorous, the play is firmly rooted in the life of the street, with the city of Toronto itself as a central character.

A Winter Tale is the latest project from Frances-Anne Solomon, Founder and Artistic Director of multi-media company, Caribbean Tales. It stars Peter Williams, Leonie Forbes, Michael Miller, Peter Bailey, Dennis "Sprangalang" Hall, R.O. Glasgow, P. Barrington, Ryan Ishmael, Lucky Ejim, Mike G. Yohannes, Anne-Marie Woods and Valerie Buhagiar, and will be directed by Vancouver-based director Michèle Lonsdale Smith. Tickets are \$15 and are available at the door.

The script was developed through a collaborative workshop process over two years, with the actors, Solomon, and Lonsdale Smith.

"*A Winter Tale* thoughtfully examines some of the causes and effects of escalating gun violence on our communities and the people who live in them," says Solomon. "The actors have brought their own life experiences to developing the characters and stories which grounds *A Winter Tale* in an authenticity true to our present day realities. The script addresses the issues with sensitivity and insight, and ultimately is a stepping stone for helpful—and hopeful—dialogue that will take further steps towards realistic solutions for our City."

An independent feature-length film version of *A Winter Tale* with the same cast will be directed by Solomon, shot on location in Toronto's Parkdale neighborhood, and released in 2006. The film is being produced by Solomon's film company, Leda Serene Films, in partnership with the Multicultural History Society of Ontario. "*A Winter Tale* lends itself very well to translate across the mediums of film and theatre, in line with our other multi-media projects at Caribbean Tales," says Solomon.

In producing the theatre play, Caribbean Tales is partnering with Vancouver-based Theatre Director Michèle Lonsdale Smith, who also co-wrote the script with Solomon. Born in Trinidad and raised in Montreal, Michèle trained in theatre arts at the Lee Strasburg Institute in New York and in Writing and Directing at the New York Film Academy. She is the co-founder and co-artistic director of the Lyric Project in Vancouver. The Project is the umbrella of the now renowned Lyric School of Acting (where she is the Advanced instructor) and Lyric Stage Company. For the stage, she has directed *The Mercy Seat* by Neil Labute, Tennessee Williams' *The Night of the Iguana*, *Lion in the Streets* by Judith Thompson, Eric Bogosian's one man show *Sex Drugs Rock and Roll*, and *Blackbird* by Adam Rapp, among others. Her current writing projects include: *The Dinner Party* (feature film), in development with Leda Serene Films; and *Foolish Dogs* (feature film – in development) for juskuz Films, Vancouver. As a Story Editor, her current screenplay credits include: *Gray Switches* (feature film) by Randy Ross, slated for production

in Whistler and Mexico in February 2006. As an actor, she has worked in film and television in feature roles, most recently on *DaVinci's Inquest*. As an acting coach, she helps to prepare artists for a variety of stage, film and television roles on both American, and Canadian television productions including *Alienated* and the feature film *Six Figures*, which had its premiere in the 2005 Toronto Film Festival.

Filmmaker, co-writer and creator Frances-Anne Solomon studied Theatre Arts at the University of Toronto before moving to Great Britain where she launched her company, Leda Serene Films, so that she could develop and direct her own films. Her credits as a Director include *Peggy Su!* (BBC Films 1997), *What My Mother Told Me* (Channel 4 1995), *Bideshi* (British Film Institute 1994), and *Valentine's Night* (BBC 1993) as well as documentaries *Reunion* (BBC, 1993), and *I Is A Long Memored Woman* (Arts Council of England 1991). During this period she also worked with BBC Single Drama & Films as a Script Editor, Producer and Executive Producer and was responsible for several films and TV movies, including the Black Screen strand (for black writers, producers and directors) and Screen on the Tube (for new feature directors). Here, her productions included *Speak Like A Child*, director John Akomfrah; *Love Is The Devil*, director John Maybury; *The Sixth Happiness*, director Waris Hossein; *Flight*, director Alex Pillai; and *Siren Spirits*, directors Ngozi Onwurah, Pratibha Parmar and Dani Williamson. Before this she worked at BBC Radio as a Drama Producer/Director, responsible for some 35 productions.

Frances-Anne returned to Toronto in 1999 and continues to create, produce and direct film, television and new media projects through her company, Leda Serene Films. In 2003, she was responsible for the groundbreaking sitcom *Lord Have Mercy!* that was broadcast on four Canadian networks and nominated for two Geminis. In 2004, she established Caribbean Tales, the not-for-profit sister partner to Leda Serene Films, in order to produce educational films, videos, and new media that celebrate the rich tradition of Caribbean-heritage storytelling. Currently, the Bravo! Channel is broadcasting *Literature Alive*, a unique 13-part weekly documentary series on Caribbean-Canadian writers. *Literature Alive* is produced by Leda Serene Films in partnership with Caribbean Tales.

ABOUT CARIBBEAN TALES

Caribbean Tales is an innovative not-for-profit multimedia company committed to producing educational films, videos, and new media that celebrate the rich tradition of Caribbean-heritage storytelling—which includes the compelling and provocative documentary and companion audio book series, *Literature Alive*, profiling Canadian-Caribbean authors. Other projects include the CaribbeanTales.org website, a vital anti-colonial history of the Caribbean available on the worldwide web; a quarterly e-newsletter featuring profiles of Caribbean storytellers and cultural commentary, as well as current news and events. For more information visit www.caribbeantales.org

ABOUT LEDA SERENE FILMS

Leda Serene Films is a film, television and new media production company based in Toronto, Canada. The Company produces an impressive range of award-winning programs—from high quality dramas and documentaries to more innovative multi-media projects—dedicated to placing people of colour in front of, as well as behind, the camera and to celebrating the diversity of strong personal stories from different cultural perspectives in the global diaspora.

ABOUT THE MULTICULTURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

The Multicultural History Society of Ontario celebrates, preserves, and documents Ontario's multi-ethnic heritage and culture. The educational programs and publications, exhibits and celebratory events at the Centre in Toronto (Ontario) enliven the history of the many ethno cultural groups—from First Nations to newcomers—who make Ontario unique.

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