

A dramatic search for gun solution



By William Doyle-
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A new play, *A Winter Tale*, which takes a look at some of the causes and effects of current gun violence in the city premieres February 1-5, 2006 at Alchemy Theatre, 133 Tecumseth Street, downtown Toronto.

Created and co-written by Frances-Anne Solomon Founder and Artistic Director of multimedia company, Caribbean Tales and Leda Serene Films and Michèle Lonsdale Smith a respected Vancouver-based Theatre Director, *A Winter Tale* is set against a backdrop of unrealized hopes, in a multi-racial, working-class, Toronto community.

It captures an unfortunate winter night as shots ring out and a bullet meant for a local street dealer kills a nine-year-old boy. As the story unfolds, six Black

men come together tentatively to form a support group. They meet in a local Caribbean restaurant in the hope of finding pathways leading to their own salvation and 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.

The Trinidad-born and Montreal raised Lonsdale Smith, 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 - umbrella of the now renowned Lyric School of Acting (where she is the Advanced instructor) and Lyric Stage Company.

Her stage credits include directing *The Mercy Seat* by Neil Labute, *The Night of the Iguana* by Tennessee Williams, *Lion in the Streets* by Judith Thompson, *Sex Drugs Rock and Roll*: Eric Bogosian's one man show and *Blackbird* by Adam Rapp.

The production features some well known Caribbean and Canadian dramatists like Leonie Forbes of Jamaica; Dennis "Sprangalang" Hall, from Trinidad and Tobago and Toronto's own Michael Miller and Anne-Marie Woods.

Others in the case include Peter Williams, Peter Bailey, R.O. Glasgow, P. Barrington, Ryan Ishmael, Lucky Ejim, Mike G. Yohannes, and Valerie Buhagiar.

"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," Solomon explains.

An independent feature-length film version of the play will be shot, with the same cast, in Parkdale, and released in 2006.

Leda Serene Films, is partnership with the Multicultural History Society of Ontario for the film production. Solomon will direct this venture while her colleague Michèle Lonsdale Smith is directing the play.

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