

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 19, 2009

20th Annual The Word On The Street Toronto
Sunday, September 27, 2009 - Queen's Park
11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Free Admission
www.thewordonthestreet.ca

**The Word On The Street offers an eclectic experience at the
Diaspora Dialogues Tent**

(Toronto) – **The Word On The Street** is proud to present readings and more from the **Diaspora Dialogues Tent** at this year's 20th festival, featuring a diverse array of emerging and award-winning writers.

The **Diaspora Dialogues** annual mentorship program discovers Toronto's best new talent and matches them with some of Canada's finest writers. Join them for a sampling of their city-focused stories and poetry. Between 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., enjoy the works of budding Canadian writers **Tanya Bryan, Kearie Daniel, Chang Liu** and **Leslie Shimotakahara**, alongside award-winning writers **Marjorie Chan, Emma Donoghue, Lee Maracle** and **Shyam Selvadurai**.

Toronto Mash-Up, cultural remix at its most eclectic, will take place between 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. For this special initiative, Diaspora Dialogues handed over stories, poetry and plays from its anthology series *TOK* to actors, performers, dancers and opera singers to reinterpret through their own artistic mediums. Come experience the creative energy that is unleashed when text meets re-interpretation – hear the original content read and then witness the transformation.

This segment will feature performances and readings by dub poet **Afua Cooper**, performance artist **Archer Pechawis**, spoken word artist **Amani**, author **Martha Baillie**, performers **Fides Krucker** and **Nik Beeson**, Dora Award winner **Waawaate Fobister**, actor and

playwright **Leah-Simone Bowen**, actor **Peter Bailey**, spoken word artist **Donna-Michelle St. Bernard** and more.

Art, Revisited: Exploring Re-interpretation, a panel discussion, takes place between 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. In the age of audio and video remixes, mash-ups, YouTube responses and altered texts, this panel will question if original context matters. Does re-interpretation enrich and enlarge a text? Or does it merely bastardize it? What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of different art forms in expressing the same story? Join **Archer Pechawis**, **Stacey May Fowles** and other Toronto Mash-Up writers and performers in a fascinating discussion about the nature of re-interpreted work. Moderated by **Helen Walsh**, president of Diaspora Dialogues, the discussion will feature live illustrations created by **Jibola Fagbamiye**.

Amani is an actor, producer, spoken word artist, educator and creative consultant, by way of London, England and Nova Scotia. Known as “the Contemporary Blues Poet,” she has been performing spoken word since 1995.

Peter Bailey is a graduate of the Humber Theatre Performance Program. His theatre credits include *Angelique* (Hart House Theatre), *A World Without Shadows* (Blyth Festival), and *Come Good Rain* (Black Theatre Workshop).

Martha Baillie has been published in Canada, Germany and Hungary. Her latest novel, *The Incident Report*, was released in spring 2009.

Nik Beeson is a com-poser of tall tales. He confabulates comfortably in poetry, prose, songs or soundscapes. He especially enjoys collaborative confabulation.

Leah-Simone Bowen divides her time between directing, playwriting, improvising and acting. She is the Community Liaison for Native Earth Performing Arts.

Tanya Bryan is a writer and poet based in Toronto. She is currently working on a book of poetry for children.

Marjorie Chan is a theatre artist based in Toronto. She is the recipient of a Dora Award in performance as well as the prestigious K.M. Hunter Artists' Award.

Afua Cooper is a celebrated poet, author, historian, curator, performer, cultural leader, lecturer, academic and recording artist.

Kearie Daniel has worked as a journalist in Canada and the UK for six years. She has been writing since childhood and is currently working on her first novel.

Emma Donoghue is a novelist, playwright and literary historian from Ireland, currently living in London, ON. She is best known for her historical fiction, including *Slammerkin* and *The Sealed Letter* (long-listed for the Giller).

Jibola Fagbamiye is a self-taught illustrator who was born and bred in Nigeria. His most recent work is a three part graphic novel called *Dante: Last Son of the Apocalypse*.

Waawaate Fobister is a Dora Award-winning actor and playwright. He is also a choreographer, dancer, producer and a proud Anishnaabe from Grassy Narrows First Nation.

Stacey May Fowles is the publisher of *Shameless Magazine*. In fall 2008, she released an illustrated novel, *Fear of Fighting* and staged a theatrical adaptation of it with Nightwood Theatre.

Fides Krucker is a leading performer of contemporary vocal music in Canada and abroad. Krucker's expertise in teaching groups has taken her from Whitehorse to Tel Aviv.

Chang Liu is a long-time resident of Toronto and of Chinese/French background. When he isn't tilling his poems or printing out tomato sprouts, he might be seen giving his joints a tune-up before a dance performance.

Lee Maracle, from the Sto:Lo nation, is currently Aboriginal Writer-in-Residence for First Nations House and Instructor in the Aboriginal Studies department at the University of Toronto.

Archer Pechawis is a media-integrated performing artist, New Media artist, writer, curator, teacher and dad. He has been creating solo performance works since 1984 and his practice investigates the intersection of Plains Cree culture and digital technology.

Shyam Selvadurai is the author of three novels, all of which have been published to wide acclaim. His latest novel, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*, was short-listed for the Governor General's Award. Shyam was born in Sri Lanka.

Leslie Shimotakahara recently moved back to Toronto to return to her first love, creative writing. She works as a scope writer for Waterfront Toronto and is Japanese-Canadian.

Donna-Michelle St. Bernard is the current General Manager of Native Earth Performing Arts. Her latest play, *Gas Girls*, can be seen this fall at Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace under the direction of Philip Adams.

Helen Walsh is President of Diaspora Dialogues.

About The Word On The Street

Every year on the last Sunday of September, in Vancouver, Kitchener, Toronto and Halifax, The Word On The Street unites the country in a national celebration of literacy and the written word. Annually attracting more than 200,000 visitors to its Queen's Park location, The Word On The Street in Toronto is the largest book and magazine festival in Canada. The 2009 edition is set for September 27, 2009.

Please add this information to your listings. Images are available upon request.

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