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OUTSIDE THE MARCH TO DEVELOP **FOUR BRAND NEW IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES** THROUGH ***FORWARD MARCH***

Program receives almost **250 applications**; Canada's leading immersive theatre company sets sights on developing: **a ritualistic cult musical**; **a chamber piece set in a tattoo parlour**; **a verbatim look at Toronto's big box stores**; and **a puppet examination of baseball and Jewish folklore in the style of a graphic novel.**

Toronto, ON – Outside the March, the award-winning theatre company behind such landmark immersive productions as ***Terminus***, ***Mr. Marmalade***, ***Mr. Burns*** and ***Vitals***, is charging full steam ahead with ***Forward March***. Through this new program, OtM will develop four brand new, large-scale immersive experiences, from five exceptional and eclectic artists: ***A Gathering in Memory of Dr. Gordon P. Silver*** (Britta Johnson and Anika Johnson - Toronto), ***Now We Are*** (Gillian Clark - Halifax), ***A Community Target*** (Robert Motum - Waterloo) and ***Deep in the Count*** (Marcus Jamin – Toronto).

The projects will be developed through exciting partnerships with a range of Canadian theatre artists and companies, including **Mitchell Marcus** and **Acting Up Stage**, **Ravi Jain**'s **Why Not Theatre**, and **2b Theatre**'s **Christian Barry** and **Anthony Black.**

Outside the March created a stir in the Canadian artistic community this past fall, when it released a national call for project submissions. The response was thunderous, and the company received **241 applications**, from artists of various disciplines, from across the country. This prompted OtM to select four pieces for development, as opposed to three as had been originally intended.

"I was truly blown away, not only by the wealth of interest, but by the ingenuity, passion and daring of the submissions," says OtM Artistic Director

Mitchell Cushman. "If the scope of imagination in the proposals is any indication, then the future of Canadian theatre is in very good hands."

All the applications were submitted anonymously, as a way to ensure an equal playing field for artists of all levels of experience. "We wanted the selections to be purely based on the strength of the ideas," explains OtM Literary Manager and *Forward March* facilitator **Katherine Cullen**. "We received a wealth of positive feedback from applicants about the blind submission process, and it's definitely something we will continue to use in the future."

The **2016 *Forward March*** projects-in-development are:

A Gathering in Memory of Dr. Gordon P. Silver
Created and Composed by **Britta and Anika Johnson** (Toronto)
Co-Developed by ***Acting Up Stage***

A sung-through ritual set in a Toronto church, which aims to "cross the audience over" to the other side. The audience is invited to attend a memorial service for the recently deceased cult leader, Dr. Gordon P. Silver. An interactive meditation on life and death, fusing musical theatre, religious ritual, electronica and trance.

Now We Are
Written by **Gillian Clark** (Halifax)

A story about youth, ephemerality and permanence, staged inside a functioning tattoo parlour. We follow the story of 17 year-old PJ as he gets his first tattoo. A mash-up of sorts of A.A. Milne, J.M. Barrie and Youtube stick 'n poke tutorials—with the option for audience members to get inked as part of the show.

A Community Target
Created by **Robert Motum** (Waterloo)
Co-Developed by ***Why Not Theatre***

An examination of the 'still-unfolding' story of Target's short foray into Canada, derived from interviews with former employees of the megastore. This immersive documentary performance will transform the space of an

abandoned Target location by presenting this commercial property with a new type of commerce – based on an exchange of ideas, stories, and personal histories.

Deep in the Count
Created by Marcus Jamin (Toronto)

A puppetry based project that explores Jewish culture and the unique relationship it shares with the sport of baseball. An attempt to capture the grand moments and subtle nuances of baseball through puppetry, while wrestling with questions of identity, race, anti-Semitism, belonging, hope and hopelessness. Inspired by the historical events of Toronto's Christie Pits Riots, as well as James Sturm's acclaimed graphic novel *The Golem's Mighty Swing*.

As a core part of the ***Forward March*** development program, each project has been paired up with a Co-Conspirator—an artist with directorial and dramaturgical experience, who will work with the creators to steer their immersive project towards production. *Forward March*'s 2016 Co-Conspirators are **Mitchell Cushman**, **Why Not Theatre**, **Christian Barry** and **Anthony Black**.

Each creator will also be teamed up with a Design Dramaturge. These partnerships will allow the script and production concept for each project to be developed symbiotically, similar to the creation process for **OtM**'s 2014 Dora Award-Winning production of ***Vitals.*** Participating designers include **Anahita Dehbonehie**, **Ken Mackenzie, Lindsay Junkin** and **Nick Blais.**

Forward March represents an increased investment in the creation of new immersive work on the part of **Outside the March**, with initial commissioning fees for the five creators totaling **$15,000**. OtM is excited to be partnering with **Acting Up Stage** to support ***A Gathering in Memory of Dr. Gordon P. Silver***, and with **Why Not Theatre** to support ***A Community Target***. Additional support for this endeavour comes from the **Canada Council for the Arts**, **The Bulmash-Siegel Fund** and an anonymous donor.

Stay tuned for news about *The Pop-Up Experience*—a first public peek of each of these new projects, in the summer of 2016.

If you'd like to stay up-to-date on all things *Forward March*, you can sign up for OtM's mailing list by visiting www.outsidethemarch.ca.

***Forward March* Selection Jury:** Ishai Buchbinder, Katherine Cullen, Mitchell Cushman, Sébastien Heins, Amy Keating, Rosamund Small.

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More About the FORWARD MARCH Creators:

Gillian Clark is an interdisciplinary Theatre Artist, residing in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her work has been shown across Canada, the U.K and India. *Let's Try This Standing*, (her newest solo show with Keep Good Theatre Company) directed by Anthony Black, is set have its world premiere in January 2016. Most recent acting credits include: Dylan in her solo show *Understudy* (audience choice award at QueerActs Theatre Festival), Puss in Greg MacArthur's *Girls! Girls! Girls!*, and Evergreen in Michael McPhee's *Heroic*. She is currently the emerging artist-in-residence with 2b theatre company.

Marcus Jamin is an award winning puppet designer and puppeteer. Recent credits include: puppet designer for *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (PANAMANIA) and *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* (Outside the March). His puppetry work has been featured at Theatre Passe Muraille, the SummerWorks Performance Festival, the Fresh Ideas Festival, the Lab Cab Festival and Les Trois Jours de Casteliers in Montreal. He has had the privilege of acting as the Workshop Assistant to Ronnie Burkett on his productions of *Penny Plain* and *The Daisy Theatre*. Marcus is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada.

Britta Johnson is a composer, lyricist, playwright and performer. Most recently, she penned the music and lyrics for *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* (Young People's Theatre) and *Brantwood* (Theatre Sheridan; Dora Mavor Moore Audience Choice Award 2015) alongside her collaborator (and sister) Anika. She wrote music and lyrics for *Stupidhead*! (Summerworks 2015; Contra Guys Award for Best Performance Text), Music Directed *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* (Outside the March) and premiered the role of Margaret Cunningham in *Living in the Spaces* (Globe Theatre, Regina). Britta has written 5 full-length musicals including *Big Box Story* (Stratford Festival gala performance) and *Alligator Tears* (commissioned by the Blyth Festival). Upcoming, her new work with her collaborator Sara Farb will be premiered as part of Reframed at the Art Gallery of Ontario in collaboration with Acting Up Stage Company. Her musical *Life After* recently won the inaugural Paul O'Sullivan Prize and will be presented as part of the Toronto Fringe Festival this summer.

Anika Johnson is a writer/composer and performer based in Toronto. Writing credits include – with Barbara Johnston: *Blood Ties* (SummerWorks/Edinburgh Fringe/featured on BBC America's Orphan Black), *Summerland* (with Suzy Wilde; commissioned by Wexford School for Performing Arts; 2015 Toronto Fringe), and *Elly's Emotions* (2015 Dora nominee, Outstanding TYA Production); with her sister Britta Johnson: *Brantwood* (Sheridan College; Audience Choice Dora award winner) and *Jacob Two Two Meets the Hooded Fang* (YPT). Performing credits include international touring with CORPUS DanceProjects, seasons at the Stratford Festival and Drayton Entertainment, and appearances across North America as Sporty Spice in Wannabe, Canada's premier Spice Girls Tribute Band.

Robert Motum is an artist-researcher interested in site-specific performance, devised art, and immersive theatre. He recently completed his Masters in Practicing Performance at Aberystwyth University, Wales. During his MA he had the opportunity to assist on two devised productions with Manchester-based company, Quarantine. Notably, *Wallflower* has recently toured to the Dublin Theatre Festival and the Noorderzon Arts Festival in the Netherlands. Robert's directorial experience includes *Transience* (a site-specific performance staged on an active city bus), *Dis/Connected* (a one-on-

one performance between a performer in Wales and a participant in Kitchener, ON), *Titus Andronicus* (Synchro Theatre), and *Single and Sexy* (uWaterloo).

About Outside the March:

Founded in 2009, Outside the March is led by Artistic Director **Mitchell Cushman**, Managing Producer **Katherine Devlin Rosenfeld**, and Core Artistic Team **Amy Keating**, **Sebastien Heins**, **Katherine Cullen** and **Ishai Buchbinder**.

Past productions include: ***Mr. Burns*** (2015 Toronto Theatre Critics Award for Best Production); ***Vitals*** (2014 Dora Award for Outstanding Independent Production); ***Mr. Marmalade*** (2013 Dora Award for Outstanding Independent Production); ***Terminus*** (National Tour, 2012 Toronto Theatre Critic's Award for Best Production); and ***Passion Play*** (2013 Dora Award for Outstanding Ensemble).

Since 2009, we've invited our audiences to play with us in kindergarten classrooms, parade with Queen Elizabeth along the Danforth, tinker in garages, congregate in churches, venture out on a 911 paramedic call, weather the apocalypse with us in an abandoned adult movie theatre and to join us up onstage at the Royal Alexandra Theatre.