

“Disney Put on Ice” in Outside the March’s spin on Lucas Hnath’s play about the man, the mouse, the legend

A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney
comes to Soulpepper this April

Fresh off the heels of Disney’s 100th anniversary, two of Toronto’s leading theatre companies Outside the March (*Jerusalem*, *The Flick*) and Soulpepper (*Sizwe Banzi is Dead*, *The Seagull*) are teaming up to ‘reanimate the Head of Disney.’ A true joyride of a play, **A Public Reading of An Unproduced Screenplay about the Death of Walt Disney** is by **Obie Award-winning playwright Lucas Hnath** (*Dana H.*, *A Doll’s House Part 2*), one of the funniest and most formally daring playwrights of our moment. The production stars **Canadian theatre titan Diego Matamoros** as Walt like you’ve never seen him before, and is directed by OtM’s Artistic Director **Mitchell Cushman** (multi Dora-Award winner for *Jerusalem* and *Sweeney Todd*). True to form for Outside the March, the intimate and immersive production will offer a radically different experience of Soulpepper: the entire audience will sit up on stage, with a very limited seating capacity.

“a blackly comic inversion of the public Disney persona”
- The New York Times

A 70-minute, intricately orchestrated merry-go-round written in a style akin to a “hypercaffeinated David Mamet” (*The New York Times*), the piece will receive its Toronto premiere just as the original 1928 Mickey Mouse animated short “Steamboat Willie” has entered the public domain. Hnath’s play toys with such far-fetched concepts as: what if a powerful billionaire pursued his own immortality at the expense of the world around him? What if Elon Musk could doodle? And what if a melting world is no place to keep a frozen head from thawing?

“The play riffs off the tantalizing urban legend that Walt Disney had his head cryonically frozen,” shares Cushman. “It’s ultimately about fear of mortality, I’d say, and those ultra wealthy among us who, when faced with the finitude of life, would rather dive deep into cryonics, or blast off into space, than pay any of it forward. **We’re describing the production as a ‘fantasia for the Age of Succession’**, and it’s very much cut from the same cloth as that HBO show—hilarious, scathingly dark, and un-look-away-able from.”

Toronto theatre lovers will be familiar with **Matamoros from his dozens of critically-acclaimed leading turns at Soulpepper—where he is a founding member**. In **70 roles over 22 seasons** he’s tackled Shakespeare, Beckett, Chekhov and Ibsen, among many others. He also recently made his UK stage debut playing Gloucester in *King Lear* at The Globe Theatre. But he’s never tackled

a role quite like Disney.

“Hnath has created the most subversively comic portrait of this iconic figure” offers Matamoros. “Walt as an all-too-frail, self-centered daydreamer who infantilizes the world in order to keep his mind from facing its harsher realities. Beautifully surreal. Dali would have loved this play.”

Matamoros stars alongside a powerhouse cast of **Katherine Cullen** (*Stupidhead!*, *Trojan Girls*) **Tony Ofori** (*WILDWOMAN*, *Pipeline*) and **Anand Rajaram** (*Uncle Vanya*, *Mustard*).

Following up on their Dora Award-winning and sold-out collaboration last season on Haley McGee’s *The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale*, Outside the March and Soulpepper Theatre once again join forces for a hilarious and thought-provoking experience that promises to be one of the performance events of the year.

Designed for **an extremely limited capacity of fewer than one hundred people**, audience members will enjoy the intimate experience of journeying behind the curtain and **sitting up-on-stage at the Baillie Theatre**, mere inches away from the action. This continues OtM’s long history of creating some of Toronto’s most memorable theatre experiences by radically transforming familiar venues, including The Royal Alexandra (*Terminus*), Crow’s Theatre (*Jerusalem*, *The Flick*) and Factory Theatre (*Trojan Girls*).

“We are excited to partner with Outside the March again on this provocative play by Lucas Hnath—one of the most adventurous playwrights working today,” says **Soulpepper Artistic Director Weyni Megesha**. “It seems fitting that this play is matched with Outside the March’s immersive audience approach to theatre, **the design for this show transforms our main stage in a way our audiences have never seen**. I am excited to offer them this intimate and unique experience.”

The production is designed by an award-winning cohort of Outside the March and Soulpepper collaborators: **Anahita Dehbohone** (Set), **Nick Blais** (Lighting), **Heidi Chan** (Sound) and **Niloufar Ziaee** (Costumes). And in a nod to Disney’s “Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow” (EPCOT), the production features a stage that is continuously revolving throughout the experience. This innovative design concept was developed through a unique partnership with **Humber College’s Theatre Arts Technical Production** program.

Early Bird tickets are now on sale until February 20 at 11:59pm, featuring **\$25 tickets (that’s up to 55% off!)** to the first five performances. In fact, those are the only performances available for purchase until **all performances April 13 - May 5 go on sale at regular prices on February 21, 2024**. More ticketing information available below.

Outside the March's 2023-28 Strategic Plan

A Public Reading... About the Death of Walt Disney anchors an ambitious 2024 slate of activities for Outside the March, which also features a five city tour of their long-running hit *Lessons in Temperament*, and **the release of the company's new five year strategic plan**. Additional artistic programming plans for the year will be announced over the coming months.

"This is a watershed moment for our company," says **Managing Producer Katherine Devlin Rosenfeld**. "Our new strategic plan takes a responsive, values-based approach to planning grounded in our newly-articulated core values. Our last strategic plan propelled our company through significant growth, a pandemic, and some of our most impactful immersive experiences. We believe this plan will be just as transformative."

The plan can be read here in its entirety: outsidethemarch.ca/strategicplan_20232028

CREDITING

A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney
by Lucas Hnath

Presented by Outside the March and Soulpepper Theatre

Cast

Diego Matamoros
Katherine Cullen
Tony Ofori
Anand Rajaram

Creative Team

Director - Mitchell Cushman

Set Designer - Anahita Dehbonehie
Lighting Designer - Nick Blais
Sound Designer - Heidi Chan
Costume Designer - Niloufar Ziaee

Assistant Director - Lucy Coren*
Production Manager - Tori Morrison
Technical Director - James McCoy
Stage Manager - Jeff Soucy

*Supported by the Metcalf Foundation's Performing Arts Internship

Design concept developed in partnership with Humber College's Theatre Arts Technical Production Program.

Lead Production Supporters

Laura Dinner and Richard Rooney

OtM Leading Season Supporters

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Government of Canada
Inspirit Foundation
Metcalf Foundation
Hilary & Galen Weston Foundation
Rama Gaming House and Charitable Gaming
TD Ready Commitment
Koskie Minsky

TICKETS

[Outside the March Production Page](#)

[Young Centre Box Office](#)

EARLY BIRD SALE

For a limited time OtM and Souleppper are offering **Early Bird pricing on the first five performances!** Until Tuesday, February 20 at 11:59pm ET, audiences can get **\$25 (all-in) tickets.**

In fact, until our Early Bird sale wraps, these are the **ONLY performances on sale:**

Previews: April 13 + 14 + 16. Early Bird: \$25. That's 30% off!

Regular Performances: April 18 + 19. Early Bird: \$25. That's 55% off!

Regular pricing for all performances April 13 - May 5 go on sale February 21.

REGULAR TICKETS

Previews: April 13 + 14 + 16

Regular Performances: April 18 - May 5

General Admission - \$55 (Previews \$35)

Reserved - \$75 (Previews \$55)

Artswoker/Underwaged* - \$35 (available with code CRYO at checkout)

*Limited number available for each performance

Pay-it-Forward Program

Outside the March has limited tickets available for audience members in financial need. Just email adriano@outsidethemarch.ca to request a single ticket, no questions asked. Or donate to the program "caffè sospeso"-style and give a stranger the gift of an evening at the theatre!

Details at www.outsidethemarch.ca.

PRESS CONTACT

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[Press Kit \(including poster and actor headshots\)](#)