

For immediate release April 25, 2023

Announcing the “Playable” World Premiere of Sébastien Heins’ Innovative and Intimate *NO SAVE POINTS*

Outside the March teams up with **Starvox Entertainment**, **Modern Times** and **Hilltop Studios** for form-busting, video-game-infused theatre experience

OUTSIDE
THE MARCH

STARVOX
ENTERTAINMENT



Running June 6th - 25th
Tickets go on sale April 27 10AM



This June, **creator/performer Sébastien Heins** invites Toronto to a joyous, high-octane, deeply personal adventure story, all experienced at the touch of a button. Video games, theatre and memoir collide as **Heins places the control(er) in the hands of the audience**, entrusting them to pilot his performance using state-of-the-art motion capture and haptic technology. Intimate and innovative, the piece is inspired by the real-life story of Heins’ mother being diagnosed with Huntington’s Disease, a rare genetic illness. ***No Save Points*** is crafted **for gamers and theatre-lovers alike**, and explores the universal question: “what do we do with the time that we have?”

No Save Points is propelled by Heins’ virtuosic performance as he becomes a video game character before our very eyes. A select group of audience members will sit onstage in the “Player’s Pen” where they’ll use a wireless controller to direct Heins’ actions by sending signals to receivers located on his body. Later in the show, dozens more patrons will get to take their turn playing on the buttons, and by the end of the evening the whole audience will take control of the performance. Throughout it all, they will help our hero negotiate medieval

court intrigue, save citizens as a caped crusader, side-scroll across a mysterious island and, ultimately, find himself anew on the dark side of the moon. So be sure to bring your A-B game.

A veteran and audience-favourite of the Toronto theatre scene since his debut at age 10 in Julie Taymore's *The Lion King*, Heins has spent three seasons as a performer at the Stratford Festival, and played leading roles for Soulpepper, Factory Theatre, Buddies in Bad Times, Theatre Passe Muraille and Canadian Stage. His previous award-winning solo show *Brotherhood: The Hip-Hopera* has toured festivals around the world, from New York City to Mumbai.

"As a child, games were my avenue of escape," says Heins. "Years later, when my family learned about my mother's diagnosis, once again I wanted to escape. This show is about the confrontation between my imagination and reality... the chasm of coping that exists between fantasy and truth... and the whimsical imperative to live."

Heins is the **Associate Artistic Director** and a founding member of **Outside the March**, one of Canada's leading immersive theatre companies. Since 2010, OtM has premiered more than two dozen landmark and innovative productions including *Trojan Girls*, *Lessons in Temperament*, *The Tape Escape*, *Dr. Silver*, *TomorrowLove™* and the international pandemic phenomenon *The Ministry of Mundane Mysteries*. OtM is **led by multi-Dora Award winning Artistic Director Mitchell Cushman**, who co-directs *No Save Points* in collaboration with Heins. The show is produced by **Managing Producer Katherine Devlin Rosenfeld**, who has overseen all of the company's most complex site-specific creations.

"What excites me most about *No Save Points* is the way in which it captures the parallel tracks that immersive theatre and video games have been on these last numbers of years", says Cushman. "Theatre has been working to become more interactive, to make the audience's presence more essential to the live experience—just as video games have been deepening their emotional resonance and narrative ambitions. Sébastien has found a breathtaking way to marry both mediums, in order to share his family's unique and powerful story."

The show's series of distinct playable worlds have each been co-conceived by a different acclaimed cross-disciplinary creator: **Damien Atkins, Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, Rouvan Silogix, Aylwin Lo** and **Kemi King**, with dramaturgical support from Dora award-winning playwright **Rosamund Small**. "Sébastien is a force of nature" describes Atkins. "When he told me the gift that he wanted to craft for the audience, for his mom, for himself—I was astounded."

Continuing Outside the March's long tradition of remarkable immersive design, the many worlds of *No Save Points* are all contained inside of an **enormous, 15 foot-tall**

Gameboy-like structure, dreamt up by multi-Dora Award-winner and long-time OtM resident designer **Anahita Dehbonehie**. “This piece tackles a deeply human and emotional story while giving in to gameplay, virtuosity and pure fun” says Dehbonehie. “And it’s felt that way to design it as well, starting with an eye to what will be a joy to experience, even as we work to break the audience’s heart wide open.”

The production’s custom-built controller system was co-engineered by Heins and **Creative Technologist Stephen Surlin**, and is inspired by SMS buzzes, remote control cars and drone technology. One sequence lets the audience play as a digital 10-year-old boy, animated live by Heins wearing a “Shadow” motion capture suit. Another sequence lets the entire audience control the events of a single day with a live voting system developed in partnership with Sheridan College’s **SIRT Centre**. These systems were conceived in collaboration with **David Rokeby** and the **University of Toronto’s BMO Lab**, a transdisciplinary hub for intersections between performance and emerging technologies, and a contributing partner on *No Save Points*.

The production’s versatile and international design and technical team also includes Netflix’s *The Umbrella Academy* storyboard artist **Alex Lyons** (illustrator), **Melissa Joakim** (lighting), **Heidi Chan** (composition and sound), **Laura Warren** (video) **Tori Morrison** (production management), and recent OtM Artistic Accomplice design mentorship graduate **Niloufar Zaiee** (costumes), working alongside lead game developer **Aidan Wong** and 3D Graphic Modeler **Youil Samara**.

No Save Points is presented by **Starvox Entertainment** at **Lighthouse ArtSpace at 1 Yonge St.** (*Immersive Van Gogh, Immersive Disney Animation*). “We are thrilled to continue our association with Outside the March to bring this innovative theatrical experience to Toronto” adds **Starvox Entertainment President and CEO Corey Ross**. “Outside the March creates unforgettable encounters – redefining the experience of theatre for a new generation of audiences. *No Save Points* bridges the real and the digital with a deeply human story. This immersive theatrical presentation is something I have never seen before”.

The production is produced in association with **Modern Times Stage Company** (*Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*). “Modern Times is excited to engage in imaginative, theatrical-form defying & exploring work, especially those that empower important and necessary Canadian voices.” says **Modern Times Artistic Director Rouvan Silogix**. “Sébastien’s work is all this and more, and we couldn’t be prouder to share this beautiful piece with the world!”

It is also produced with support from the University of Toronto’s **BMO Lab** and from **Hilltop Studios**, an innovative Toronto start-up exploring intersections between digital storytelling, gaming and multimedia spheres.

Throughout the run, *No Save Points* will be raising funds for the **Huntington's Society of Canada**, an organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for those affected by the fatal hereditary brain disorder by facilitating support services, providing access to educational resources, increasing awareness, advocacy, and investing in research. Says Heins, "The HSC has helped my family and we want to help theirs."

***No Save Points* opens June 13th for a limited engagement**, with select preview "Playtest Performances" available as of June 6th. Tickets are on sale for performances through to June 25th.

For more information and tickets:

<https://outsidethemarch.ca/the-experiences/no-save-points/>

Ticket Prices:

Preview playtest performances:

Artsworke/under 30 - \$29.99

General Admission - \$44.99

All performances:

Artsworke/under 30 - \$29.99

General Admission - \$44.99

General Admission (Friday and Saturday night) - \$54.99

VIP - \$69.99

VIP (Friday and Saturday night) - \$79.99

Presale begins April 25 for Outside the March, Starvox Entertainment and Modern Times email subscribers. Audiences can sign up for OtM's eblast and get access to a 48hr 20%-off presale here: <http://eepurl.com/gC1EKv>

Sébastien Heins is an artist whose titles include actor, writer, producer, and newly, director. As an actor, Sébastien starred alongside the late great Martha Henry in the Stratford Festival's *The Tempest*, and for three seasons in *The School for Scandal*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Breath of Kings* (Stratford). He starred in the Canadian premieres of *Bang Bang* (Factory, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, The Belfry) and *Wedding at Aulis* (Soulpepper), and has thrilled audiences in immersive stage productions of *Trojan Girls*, *The Ministry of Mundane Mysteries*, *Mr. Burns: A Post Electric Play*, and *Mr. Marmalade* (Outside the March). He caught the bug for acting at age 10 when he starred as Young Simba in the original Toronto cast of Julie Taymore's *The Lion King* (Mirvish). As a multidisciplinary creator, he wrote, composed and performed his first one-man show, *Brotherhood: The Hip Hopera* (b Current), which won him the Best Emerging Artist award at NYC's United Solo

Festival, and went on to tour extensively across Canada, including to the Stratford Festival Forum, and overseas in India, to Mumbai and Bangalore. Acting for the screen, his credits include *Ghosts of Christmas Past* (Lifetime), *The Listener* (CTV), *Cracked* (CBC), *The Drip*, and *Darknet* (Super Channel). During the pandemic, he sang the McDonald's musical ad campaign "Steal My Fries," which won bronze at the Clio Awards for advertising. He is an acting graduate of the *National Theatre School of Canada* and *The School at Steppenwolf* in Chicago. He is a first generation Canadian of mixed German-Jamaican heritage.

Outside the March creates unforgettable immersive encounters—redefining the experience of theatre for a new generation of audiences. We are one of Canada's leading immersive theatre companies and a registered charity. Since 2009 we've welcomed our audiences to over 20 critically-celebrated, award-winning productions that seek to embody our values of Curiosity, Care, Thrills, Connection and Immersion. *The Toronto Star* describes OtM as "one of the most interesting and successful theatre companies in our city." We've invited audiences to play with us in a Parkdale kindergarten classroom, parade with Queen Elizabeth along the Danforth, venture to Roncesvalles on an EMS call, follow a piano-tuner into living rooms across the city, weather the apocalypse in an abandoned Leslieville movie theatre, infuse a Davisville funeral home with love, unlock mysteries in a beloved Annex VHS video store, and place a call to our eccentric private investigator service. Past immersive experiences include: *The Ministry of Mundane Mysteries*, *Trojan Girls & The Outhouse of Atreus*, *The Flick*, *The Tape Escape*, *Dr. Silver*, *The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale*, *Jerusalem*, *Lessons in Temperament*, *TomorrowLove™*, *Mr. Burns*, *Vitals*, *Passion Play*, *Terminus* and *Mr. Marmalade*.

Starvox Entertainment was founded by Corey Ross in 2005 and has seen it rank on Profit Magazine's list of Canada's top growth companies for five years running – the only live entertainment company ever to place on the list. He has grown the business to a multinational group focused on the production, marketing and distribution of live entertainment, festivals and events. Mr. Ross produces three shows with Caesars Entertainment in Las Vegas – *The Wow Show* at the Rio and *Extravaganza* and *Potted Potter* at Bally's. He has also produced *Tropicana de Cuba* in Moscow and the *Mormon Tabernacle Choir* at Carnegie Hall. Other productions have featured such star-power talents as Woody Harrelson, Annie Lennox, Alicia Keyes and Andrea Bocelli. His theatrical productions include Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* as well as *Forever Plaid* and *Sherlock Holmes* starring David Arquette. He premiered Trey Parker's *Cannibal: The Musical* and presented the North American premiere of *Bend it like Beckham: The Musical* in Toronto. Since 2012, Starvox has produced the touring West-End hit show *Potted Potter: The Unauthorized Harry Experience*. In 2018, Corey created a new division devoted to exhibitions – Starvox Exhibits. This division produces the remarkably successful *The Art of Banksy*. In 2019, Corey Ross, Svetlana Dvoretzky and Slava Zheleznyakov formed a new company, Lighthouse Immersive, which has created over 20 unique art spaces in North America and expanding to Asia, Europe and South America, devoted to presenting

immersive exhibits, such as the world-wide hit *Immersive Van Gogh*, and other innovative events, seen by more than 6 million visitors worldwide. The latest presentation, *Immersive Disney Animation*, celebrates the greatest films of Walt Disney Animation Studios. Currently open in 12 North American cities and Tokyo, this next world-wide hit is set to open around the globe in the coming year.

Modern Times Theatre Company is committed to exploring, imagining and creating exciting, radical, performing arts, while empowering voices that have been historically and presently marginalized. We are an organization that creates original Canadian art, re-imagines classic work, and adapts plays in different languages and contexts to bring holistic and innovative forms to our contemporary and diverse Canadian audiences. We are the only Ontario based theatre organization that primarily prioritizes immigrants, newcomers and refugees as part of our core artistic and professional base. We have been nominated for 60+ Dora Awards in our 31 years of existence. We believe that individual voices, experiences and backgrounds can unite in a common vision and create theatre that expresses the essence of a shared human spirit. We believe that human identity is multi-layered, so our theatrical aesthetic draws from many styles of theatre. Modern Times was established by Soheil Parsa and Peter Farbridge in March 1989. In 2022, award-winning theatre creator and artist, Pakistani-Tanzanian Rouvan Silogix, was appointed as Artistic Director.

Crediting

No Save Points

An Outside the March Production
Presented by Starvox Entertainment

In Association with Modern Times Stage Company

With support from Hilltop Studios and the BMO Lab

CREATIVE TEAM

Sébastien Heins - Creator/Performer/Co-Director

Mitchell Cushman - Co-Director

Anahita Dehbonehie - Set Designer

Heidi Chan - Sound Designer

Melissa Joakim - Lighting Designer

Laura Warren - Video Designer
Niloufar Ziaee - Costume Designer
Rosamund Small - Dramaturg
Alex Lyons - Illustrator
Stephen Surlin - Controller Designer
Aidan Wong - Lead Game Developer
Sébastien Heins - Level Designer
Youil Samara - 3D Modeler/Rigger/Animator
David Rokeby - Consultant/BMO Lab Director
Duncan Davies - Additional Music/Composition

Donna-Michelle St. Bernard - Co-Conspirator
Damien Atkins - Co-Conspirator
Rouvan Silogix - Co-Conspirator
Aylwin Lo - Co-Conspirator
Kemi King - Co-Conspirator

PRODUCING TEAM

Katherine Devlin Rosenfeld - Producer
Laura McCallum- Associate Producer
Griffin McInnes - Marketing Director
Allie Wood - Communications Designer
Suzanne Cheriton - Publicist

PRODUCTION TEAM

Tori Morrison - Production Manager
Farnoosh Talebpour - Stage Manager
Cindy Dzib - Audience Concierge

STARVOX ENTERTAINMENT

Corey Ross - President and CEO
Jessica Johnston- Producer and General Manager
Lee Widerick - Production Manager
Carla Selzer - Director of Marketing
Greg Jukes - Director of Digital Advertising

Poster design by Alex Lyons. Photography by Dahlia Katz.

LEAD SUPPORTERS

Canada Council for the Arts

Richard Rooney and Laura Dinner

Jim and Sandra Pitblado

David Daniels and Kate Alexander Daniels

Josh Hellyer & Audrey S. Hellyer Foundation

Andrew and Hillary Cumming

Bulmash-Siegel Foundation

Tamara Zielony

Emerald Foundation

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

Bramble Theatre Company - *No Save Points* (previously called *The Itinerary*) was workshopped in 2020 by the ensemble of Bramble Theatre in Chicago, Illinois

Kick & Push Festival - *No Save Points* (previously called *The Itinerary*) was workshopped as a part of the 2020 Kick & Push Festival in Kingston, Ontario

Theatre Gargantua - *No Save Points* (previously called *The Itinerary*) received the support of an OAC "Recommender Grant for Theatre Creators" in 2020 from Theatre Gargantua

VIDEO GAME CONSULTANTS AND SUPPORT

BMO Lab for Creative Research in the Arts, Performance, Emerging Technologies and AI and David Rokeby & Pia Kleber

Hilltop Studios Support and Artiom Komarov & Scott Christian

Sheridan's SIRT Centre and Wlad Bronowicki, Jason Hunter, James Rowan & Mike Darmitz

Matthew Koscic, Nick Dobrijevic, & Alec Brady