

Toronto Director Chris Abraham named recipient of 2013 Siminovitch Prize, chooses Mitchell Cushman as Protégé

Monday October 21, 2013, Toronto

Before a packed Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto, **Chris Abraham**, Artistic Director of Crow's Theatre was named recipient of the 2013 Siminovitch Prize. For his protégé he has selected **Mitchell Cushman**, Artistic Director of Outside the March and Associate Artistic Director of Crow's Theatre.

"The quality of the nominees this year serves as irrefutable proof that Canada has a huge number of very, very talented directors for the stage. It is also a welcome sign that we are growing much, much stronger in this area of production and that we all have great things to look forward to," said **Jury Chair John Van Burek**. *"Chris Abraham was, ultimately and after great discussion, the unanimous choice of the Jury because of the vast array of his practice, his remarkable mentorship already, and for the new threshold at his feet as he moves to not only do theatre but to build one as well, with the construction of a new space for Crow's Theatre in east-end Toronto. The first Siminovitchprotégé has proven to be a fine investment in Canadian talent."*

Chris Abraham is Artistic Director of Toronto's Crow's Theatre. He has made a name for himself in both English and French, through his highly successful productions, seen in theatres ranging from the smallest to the largest, the most recent being his stellar production of *Othello* at the Stratford Festival. He is widely acclaimed for his mentorship abilities and he was the first protégé of the Siminovitch Prize, in 2001. Last January, he announced plans to create a permanent home for Crow's Theatre in Toronto's East-End. Next month, he launches a national tour of SEEDS by Annabel Soutar at The Centaur Theatre in Montreal, followed by his production of *Winners and Losers* by James Long and Marcus Youssef (Crow's Theatre in association with Canadian Stage) opening in Toronto on Nov. 14th at the Berkeley Street Theatre.

When asked about his initial reaction to the news, he replied, *"There really is no way to sum up how I felt when I got the news. The first feeling was definitely dizziness. Receiving this prize is obviously an incredible honour. It's one that I think necessarily invites self-scrutiny, and for me, a renewed commitment to core beliefs and values. This reflection has also reminded me that "it takes a village to raise a theatre director" and that whatever I have achieved, I have done so with enormous support of friends, colleagues, supporters of the arts, taxpayers, as well as the love and faith of my family."*

He added, *"I have been making theatre and directing since I was 14. Making theatre has always been my way of making sense of the world around me, and I'm lucky that it still works this way for me. This award not only gives me a great sense of accomplishment but it emboldens me to tackle new challenges and responsibilities that lie ahead."*

"At RBC we understand the power of theatre to enrich our lives and strengthen our communities," said **Shari Austin**, Vice-President, Corporate Citizenship, RBC and Executive Director, RBC Foundation. *"We're proud to support the Siminovitch prize which brings profile to exciting emerging Canadian theatre artists."*

Protégé **Mitchell Cushman** had this to say, *"I am greatly honoured have been named by Chris as his Siminovitch protégé. Over the past few years I have been fortunate to collaborate with Chris on a number of projects; I have observed the wisdom and power of his direction, the vision and innovation of his artistic direction and the dedication and generosity of his mentorship. I believe him to be the most compelling, conscientious and inspiring director that we have in this country, and I can think of no artist more deserving of this honour."*

I would like to give a tremendous thank you to the Siminovitch family, the University of Toronto and especially to the RBC Foundation for making the Protégé award possible, and for championing creative exchange across generations.”

Our new partnerships also include Hart House Theatre, University of Toronto, where the inaugural Prize Ceremony was held. Bruce Kidd, Hart House Warden had this to say, “*We are very proud of the role that Hart House Theatre plays in stimulating and educating the next generation of Canadian audiences. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the Siminovitch Prize in its mission of strengthening Canadian theatre by investing in our most brilliant mid-career and young artists.*”

“Each year, since its inception in 2001, the Siminovitch Prize has turned the spotlight on exceptional Canadian theatre artists. The award has stimulated and enabled winners to push the boundaries of their craft, illuminated their work nationally and internationally, and has served as a springboard for the advancement of their careers,” said **Dr. Kathy Siminovitch**. *“This Prize, and its protégé component, allows us to reflect on the importance of theatre to our country’s cultural life, the need of its artists for support, recognition and opportunities for risk-taking, and the incredible value of mentorship.”* Added **Margo Siminovitch**, *“the Prize honors our parents’ values of fostering success in others, their passion for theatre and their recognition of theatre as a unique vehicle to represent a nation’s culture.”*

The Siminovitch Prize, RBC Foundation and Hart House University of Toronto salute the 2013 applicants, finalists, and recipients.

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About the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre

The Siminovitch Prize in Theatre honours professional directors, playwrights and designers by acknowledging excellence while encouraging even greater exploration and originality in Canadian theatre. The Siminovitch Prize was created in 2001 and is dedicated to distinguished scientist Lou Siminovitch and his late wife Elinore, a playwright. A jury awards the \$100,000 prize annually. Previous recipients include director Daniel Brooks (2001), playwright Carole Fréchette(2002), director Jillian Keiley (2004), playwright Daniel MacIvor (2008), designer/puppeteer Ronnie Burkett (2009), and director Kim Collier (2010). For more information visit siminovitchprize.com.

About RBC and the Arts

RBC supports a wide-range of grassroots and local initiatives that contribute to the cultural fabric of our communities. Through the RBC Emerging Artist Project, RBC provides opportunities for up-and-coming artists through programs such as the RBC Canadian Painting Competition and the RBC Emerging Filmmakers Competition. In 2012, RBC contributed more than \$95 million to causes worldwide, including donations and community investments of more than \$64 million and \$31 million in sponsorships. For more information, please visit rbc.com.

About Hart House Theatre

Hart House Theatre is a focal point for the performing arts in the University of Toronto community. Students, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of the university use diverse mediums (drama, music, film, dance, and spoken word) to explore and express emerging interests and ideas. Blending informal and formal education in a professional theatre space, they create innovative programming which the whole community can enjoy. For more information, visit harthouse.ca