

## **Media Release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### ***NEW TRAINING PARTNERSHIP CONNECTS ON-STAGE AND BEHIND-THE-SCENES ASPECTS OF THEATRE IN STRATFORD, ONTARIO***

**Stratford, Ontario, April 2017** – Off the Wall Stratford Artists Alliance has joined with Theatre Ontario to present a new experience for their respective summer training participants. By combining Off the Wall's extensive workshops in all things behind-the-scenes – sets, props, and costume design, etc. – with Theatre Ontario's immersive acting, directing and playwriting courses, the two companies have created a hub for theatre practitioners and enthusiasts from all backgrounds to jointly flex their creative muscles.

“By bringing together artists who inhabit these two worlds and giving them an opportunity to share creative space, students will gain a fuller understanding of the collaborative nature of theatre,” said Bruce Pitkin, Executive Director of Theatre Ontario. “Collaboration is essential to building careers and leadership roles in Ontario's theatre industry.” Pitkin noted that both organizations will benefit from the synergies of collaboration – everything from marketing and promotions to programming enhancements. The partnership will effectively allow those who have been focused on bringing the play's text to stage to gain a comprehensive view of all that it takes backstage to mount a production. Equally, behind-the-scenes artists will experience the creative process of taking words from script to stage.

“We are excited that this collaboration is happening in Stratford, which has earned its reputation as a cultural and theatre hub,” says Michele Boniface, Chair of the Board of Directors of Off the Wall. “Stratford is well-known for its important place in Canadian theatre and is increasingly recognized for the diversity of arts and artists in the community. Our students really will be working in a creative incubator.”

Off the Wall offers one-week summer courses from July 3<sup>rd</sup> to August 18<sup>th</sup> covering millinery, scenic painting, artistic welding, costume design and stage carpentry. During the two weeks that Off the Wall and Theatre Ontario will be collaborating in Stratford's Factory163, the courses offered will include *Mask Making* and *Prop Building and Faux Food*. The collaboration will also coincide with the conclusion of the five-week intensive *Theatre Production Arts* program and the two-week *Setting the Scene* program, in which participants learn how to integrate all the elements of a production.

Theatre Ontario will arrive in Stratford on Sunday August 6<sup>th</sup> to begin their first week of courses – *Sharpening Your Actor's Toolkit* with Tom Diamond, *How Do I Make This Play Happen?* with Thom Currie, and *Freeing the Body & Imagination – An Introduction to Mask in Performance* with Peggy Coffey. On August 13<sup>th</sup> the second week of intensives will begin, welcoming students for *Who The Heck Are You?! Creating Character* with Liza Balkan, *Building Your Own Directing Process* with Philip Akin, and *How to Tell an “Important” Story* with Donna-Michelle St. Bernard.

Together, these combined intensive experiences create a training hub like Ontario has never seen before. Theatre Ontario and Off the Wall agree that bringing new theatre specialists and students to Stratford to explore their own creativity – while taking in the fabulous work on show at

the Festival's various theatres – is the perfect way to mark Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations with the theatre community in Ontario.

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