



A World Premiere from Theatre Passe Muraille and Modern Times Stage

AS I MUST LIVE IT

By Luke Reece

"This is the story As I Must Live It"

On stage in Theatre Passe Muraille's Mainspace February 11 – March 2

Toronto, Ont. – Kicking off the Mainstage season, in February, [Theatre Passe Muraille](#) is thrilled to begin the new year with the **World Premiere** presentation of their co-production with [Modern Times Stage](#), **AS I MUST LIVE IT**, on stage **February 11 – March 2** in the Passe Muraille Mainspace. (Media night: February 15)

A funny, endearing, and thought-provoking new work, **AS I MUST LIVE IT** comes from award-winning spoken word artist **Luke Reece**. Through poetic storytelling touching on everything from antagonistic squirrels to Chris Pratt's abs, Reece shares his experiences growing up with a mentally ill father in a mixed-race family. Featuring Reece's signature deft wordplay, with the direction of internationally acclaimed audience-specific practitioner **Daniele Bartolini** and stunning projections from one of the UK's leading immersive production design companies, **Limbic Cinema**, **AS I MUST LIVE IT** brings the page to the stage for an intimate and pun-filled event.

"This show is a culmination of ten years of writing spoken word pieces that started as a way to process my experiences and relationship with my father," shares Reece. "Now...now it's much more than that. It's a beacon for those who have had similar experiences – and for those who haven't. It's a sharing of stories and poems ultimately to talk about something real, with as much heart and humour as possible."

The 'something real' Reece wants to talk about, is the significantly under-addressed experience of mental illness within the Black community – and among Black men in particular. Reece comments, *"The beginning of reframing is just to have the conversation. I am putting it in a frame, presenting an option of framing. From there, we can tear it apart or make it better. But we have to start with making a frame, instead of putting it in your garage behind skis that you never use. When we don't talk about things, we hurt ourselves and each other. Essentially, I'm trying to use this piece as a giant wedge to stop the cycle."*

An award-winning producer, playwright, poet and educator, Luke Reece is the Associate Artistic Director at Soulpepper Theatre, and a highly regarded arts leader. In addition to his work within traditional theatre mediums and venues, Reece is one of Toronto's most decorated slam poets, becoming the Toronto Poetry Slam (TPS) Grand Champion in 2017, winning the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word as the captain of the TPS team and then again in 2018 as the team coach. In 2018 he placed 2nd in Canada individually which earned him a spot representing the country at the 2019 World Cup of Poetry Slam in Paris France where he placed 4th.

Marjorie Chan, TPM Artistic Director articulates that: *"AS I MUST LIVE IT is one of the three works this season, that started or continued development at Theatre Passe Muraille, even as a global pandemic shut down many theatres. We've been pleased to be able to support the various development phases of this incredibly personal piece through the past four years. Luke and Daniele have created a potent and rather large piece of work and so we're thrilled to be welcoming Modern Times Stage as a collaborator as we prepare to finally share it with the world."*

"We're always looking for innovative, aesthetically & formally radical, imaginative, and profound works of art, and progressive artists, creators, and organizations – Luke Reece is that special artist, and collaborating with TPM and Daniele has produced a piece of art that has that special and unique aspect of theatre that reminds us all why we fell in love with it to begin with!" says Rouvan Silogix, Artistic Director of Modern Times Stage.

Reece's collaboration with Daniele Bartolini began in the spring of 2020, when they were brought together by then SummerWorks Festival Artistic Director Laura Nanni to co-curate a multi-artist anthology project reflecting on a changing world in the grip of the pandemic. The pair connected personally and creatively right away, and Reece asked Bartolini to join him in an upcoming workshop for AS I MUST LIVE IT.

Speaking to directing Reece in this production **Bartolini** says, *"A stranger walks on a stage. Within seconds we have the impression that we have known him forever, that we love this person. This is the gift Luke Reece has as a performer. As a director, what do we do with this ability? We simply create any condition to let it exist freely. We protect this gift. My approach to directing this piece is just that, protection."*

AS I MUST LIVE IT, previously 'Building Relationships with the World', has been a part of the Buzz In-Development Series at Theatre Passe Muraille since 2020. During this time, they were also in the Digital Creation Lab, during which it was suggested they look into collaborating with Limbic Cinema. Driven by the desire to build out an immersive experience from Luke's language, they approached Limbic – a leading, UK based immersive production design company – and ended up partnering with them to create the visual world for the piece.

“Limbic have created a magical video design for the piece,” comments Bartolini, *“This isn’t only a show. It is a place of encounter of people and stories and a place of encounter of forms – auto-fiction, spoken word, immersive theatre, art installation.”*

Performances of AS I MUST LIVE IT will run Tuesday to Saturday at 8:00 PM and Sundays at 4:30 PM. All performances of AIMLI will be captioned. Mandatory masking performances are scheduled for February 17 and 25 and March 1. All performances at Theatre Passe Muraille offer a relaxed environment. Tickets are Pay-What-You-Can-Afford at three price points, \$12, \$35, and \$65 and are available now online at passemuraille.ca.

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AS I MUST LIVE IT

A Theatre Passe Muraille and Modern Times Stage co-production

On stage February 11 – March 2 at the Theatre Passe Muraille Mainspace, 16 Ryerson Avenue

Media night: February 15

Written & performed by Luke Reece

Directed by Daniele Bartolini

Lighting Design by Sarah Mansikka

Set & Costume Design by Jackie Chau

Sound Design by Adrian Bent

Projection Design by Limbic Cinema (Barret Hodgson, Thom Buttery)

Stage Management by Ada Aguilar

ABOUT LUKE REECE

An award-winning producer, playwright, poet and educator, Luke Reece is the Associate Artistic Director at Soulpepper Theatre, one of Canada’s leading non-profit theatre companies. Through Luke’s work as an artistic leader within the national arts community, he advocates for engaging and nuanced storytelling that challenges Canadian audiences. In 2021 Luke was included in York University’s inaugural Top 30 Changemakers Under 30 list.

Luke is one of Toronto’s most decorated slam poets, becoming the Toronto Poetry Slam (TPS) Grand Champion in 2017, winning the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word as the captain of the TPS team and then again in 2018 as the team coach. In 2018 he placed 2nd in Canada individually which earned him a spot representing the country at the 2019 World Cup of Poetry Slam in Paris France where he placed 4th. He continues to give back to the Toronto Spoken Word scene as a board member for the Toronto Poetry Project. In the spring of 2020 Luke was featured performing for former Toronto Raptor and NBA

Champion Serge Ibaka on his Instagram Talent Show. His body of work also includes a radio play, animated short, and a praised short film featured on CBC titled 'Notice'.

ABOUT DANIELE BARTOLINI

Daniele Bartolini is a director, playwright and immersive interdisciplinary artist born in Florence, Italy who produces work in Canada and Internationally. His work has been defined as “an especially intriguing investigation” by the New York Times and “the theatre of the future” by Italian Magazine PaneAcquaCulture. Daniele’s creations have been commissioned and presented at institutions such as La Biennale di Venezia, Soulpepper, The Goethe Institute of Bucharest, Canadian Embassy in Rome, Olympic Theatre of Vicenza and in association with the National Arts Centre’s National Creation Fund.

He calls his practice ‘audience specific’, seeking for a role of co-authorship and artistic collaboration with the audience. “One of the things that sets DLT apart from the ‘immersive’ genre is that it’s what Daniele Bartolini calls audience-specific theatre, which is meaningful because the term points to how the play conforms to you — not just to you making choices of which way to drive the plot, but that the play is unfolding around and because of you.” - Lise Hosein, CBC ARTS

He is the creator of internationally acclaimed The Stranger, a show created for a lone audience member that travels across the city, and was presented in three different continents. Daniele is the Artistic Director of DLT, a company known for city-spanning experiences where the participants take on the role of protagonists and the reinvention of the theatrical form. He is currently commissioned as a playwright at Stratford Festival. Daniele has been nominated for Outstanding Direction and Outstanding Production at the Dora Awards for The Stranger and for Outstanding Ensemble of If on a Christmas Night. He is a recipient of multiple awards including the RBC Newcomer Access Prize and the Premio Girulà of the city of Naples, and he is a finalist of the Telus Newcomer Award of Toronto.

ABOUT THEATRE PASSE MURAILLE

Established in 1968, Theatre Passe Muraille (meaning “theatre beyond walls”) is one of the first alternative theatre companies in Canada. The company is focused on developing and producing new alternative plays that strive to articulate a distinct Canadian voice that reflects the complexity of our intercultural society. TPM aspires to be a leader locally, nationally, and internationally in establishing, promoting, and embracing collaborative and inclusive theatre practices. We do this so that we can support and ignite the voices of unique artists, communities, and audiences.

ABOUT MODERN TIMES STAGE

Modern Times Stage creates original Canadian art, reimagines classic work, and adapts plays in different languages and contexts to bring holistic and innovative forms to our contemporary and diverse Toronto audiences. We are committed to exploring, imagining and creating exciting, radical, performing arts in Toronto, while empowering voices that have been historically and presently marginalized – focusing on artists who have immigrated or sought asylum in Canada. The company has toured to Montreal,

Colombia, the United States, Europe and Iran and has been nominated for 65+ Dora Awards in its 32+ years of existence.

Modern Times is the only Toronto-based Theatre company that prioritizes empowering immigrants, newcomers and refugees as part of our core mandate.