

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Harbourfront Centre presents the Toronto Premiere of Dada Masilo's *The Sacrifice*

South Africa's award-winning choreographer examines the relationships between community, sacrifice and renewal in her mesmerizing interpretation of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*

Toronto, ON – Harbourfront Centre presents the exhilarating Toronto premiere of award-winning South African choreographer **Dada Masilo's *The Sacrifice***, on stage **May 16 and 17, 2023**, at **7:30pm** at **Fleck Dance Theatre**, as part of the international contemporary dance series Torque. Inspired by Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring*, Masilo roots her powerful interpretation in Botswana's rituals, rhythms and sounds. Together, the cast of ten dancers and four musicians explore the intricate balance between community, sacrifice and renewal in a riveting fusion of traditional Tswana, the traditional dance of Botswana, and contemporary dance performed to an original live score.

"It is a great privilege to present Dada Masilo's intoxicating and deeply moving work, *The Sacrifice*, to Toronto audiences," says Nathalie Bonjour, Director, Performing Arts at Harbourfront Centre and Torque Curator. "Masilo's innovative vision melds the European heritage of *The Rite of Spring* with the rapidly rhythmic and expressive movements of Tswana to examine the universal cry of sacrifice for the greater good. It is an urgent call to our world that has never seemed more timely."

As a choreographer, Masilo has steadily pushed against the Eurocentric storytelling and representation common in renowned ballet classics, instead infusing her works with contemporary and southern African dances and fearless, culturally relevant narratives of her choosing. She is known internationally for reinterpreting classics like *Giselle* and *Swan Lake* to speak to Black identity and feminism. In *The Sacrifice*, Masilo further innovates by focusing on Tswana, the traditional dance of Botswana, as the main dance form of inspiration to give it the same platform and prestige as ballet.

Inspired by Stravinsky's score and complex rhythms (after dancing to an extract from Pina Bausch's *Rite* while a student at the Brussels P.A.R.T.S. School for Contemporary Dance), Masilo collaborated with the cast to create a new composition rooted in southern African rhythms, music, rich vocals and bird songs. In performance, the dancers interact throughout, "teasing the musicians as they clap and stamp in time, the call and response between players and dancers setting up a vibration of movement and sound that seems to ripple through every muscle of their bodies" (*The Guardian*).

Toronto is the third North American stop in *The Sacrifice's* highly acclaimed international tour. The work had its North American premiere in Vancouver, followed by Ottawa, before landing in Toronto. It continues on tour to the United States.

Masilo is Artist-in-Residence at The Dance Factory in Johannesburg. Her awards include a Bessie Award (*Swan Lake*) nomination in 2016, DANZA&DANZA Award for "Best Performance in 2017" (*Giselle*) and A Prince Claus' Next Generation' Award in 2018. In May 2017, she premiered *Giselle* in Oslo and, in 2021, *The Sacrifice* in Vienna. Since 2012, her works have been performed in 25 countries and 150 cities worldwide.

As part of their contemporary dance series Torque, Harbourfront Centre will host a Torque Q&A immediately following the performance on May 17.

For tickets and further information, visit: harbourfrontcentre.com

About Harbourfront Centre (harbourfrontcentre.com)

Harbourfront Centre is a leading international centre for contemporary arts, culture and ideas, and a registered, charitable not-for-profit cultural organization operating a 10-acre campus on Toronto's central waterfront. Harbourfront Centre provides year-round programming 52 weeks a year, seven days a week, supporting a wide range of artists and communities. We inspire audiences and visitors with a breadth of bold, ambitious and engaging experiences. We champion contemporary Canadian artists throughout their careers, presenting them alongside international artists and fostering national and international artistic exchange between disciplines and cultures.

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LISTING INFORMATION

Harbourfront Centre presents Dada Masilo's *The Sacrifice*

Dates: May 16 and 17, 2023 at 7:30pm

Ticket Prices: \$39-\$79

Address: Fleck Dance Theatre, 207 Queens Quay West (3rd Floor)

Box Office: HarbourfrontCentre.com

Website: HarbourfrontCentre.com

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