**PART B – MANDATE AND HISTORY OF COMPANY or DESCRIPTION OF AD HOC GROUP**.

**The MANDATE of the Children's Peace Theatre (CPT) is to create a culture of peace by engaging children and youth through the practice of theatre and art.**

We believe:

* In the transformational power of theatre to foster leadership through personal empowerment.
* That our artistic practice must value equally process and product

We believe:

* that peace is possible
* that there is no peace without justice
* that children and youth will be the instigators of social change

We believe:

* That we have a commitment to our community
* that we have a collective responsibility to foster and model a culture of peace
* That a respectful, inclusive and transparent environment is essential to our work.

CPT is a charitable not for profit, arts organization that has developed a unique methodology, using the arts to empower individuals and communities. Through the creation and presentation of collaborative theatrical performances, CPT provides participants from diverse communities the opportunity to address the challenges and embrace the strengths of their communities. CPT works primarily in, and has developed deep roots in the priority neighbourhood of Crescent Town in Toronto. Crescent Town has a very large new Canadian population – over 64% - many of whom come from countries where war and violence were part of their everyday experience. In recent years youth violence has been on the ascendance, gang activity is noticeable and racism is systemic. Many of our young constituents live with ongoing economic hardship.

**History:**

Children’s Peace Theatre (CPT) was created in 2000 in response to the United Nations’ Declaration of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

As the creative and courageous work of the company gained international attention, CPT was invited to perform at the Declaration announcement at the United Nations headquarters in New York. But the 25 CPT children, youth and adults who had been looking forward to the prestigious event with such delight were turned back at the U.S. border. The date was September 11th, 2001.

As the grim events of that day unfolded, the world changed, and a culture of fear and mistrust among diverse cultures gained ascendance. Today’s children and youth have grown up in that shadow. The children of CPT returned home and created a new and very different theatre piece that explored both the feelings and the questions raised by the terrorist attacks. They toured their new songs and stories of peace through schools, libraries and community centres, helping others to come to terms with the new reality and understand that everyone can contribute to a culture of peace.

Over the next five years, CPT continued to run a summer collaborative production for children 8 to 12 in Toronto’s high-risk Crescent Town. CPT’s professional artists worked at the grass roots level in schools and local communities and at the same time CPT organized and performed at events that featured Romeo Dallaire, Jane Jacobs and Jean Vanier. But fresh challenges were imminent.

CPT experienced a brilliant flash of relevancy in 2005, when violence struck close to home with the brutal and senseless murder of local teenager, Drew Stewart. CPT artists and staff volunteered to work on their own time with a large group of Drew’s friends. Drawing on their personal memories of his life as well as the raw and painful emotions evoked by his violent death, Drew’s Group created a moving piece of theatre in remembrance of their lost friend.

The work that these young people did each week at CPT led them to confront the complex reality of violence in their lives and in the lives of so many youth in their city. They struggled to reconcile their desire for peace with their need for justice and their desire for revenge. Bravely, they chose peace and channeled their emotions and deliberations into a powerful play that they performed throughout the city. The young members of Drew’s Group, as they came to be known, were transformed by the courageous work they did at CPT. They were awarded the 2006 YMCA Peace Medallion for their moving and inspiring work. In turn Drew’s Group profoundly changed CPT.

In early 2006, founding artistic director Robert Morgan retired and the work of CPT continued with Karen Emerson as the Artistic Director. Under Karen’s artistic direction, CPT's artistic vision and programming has grown substantially. Recognizing the need to broaden its reach, and deepen its commitment to the community, the Children’s Peace Theatre now operates year-round, offering programs and projects for over 2,000 children and youth of all ages and backgrounds every year. The organization has been honoured with the **Mayor’s Community Safety Award** and the **Leonardo Da Vinci award for Innovation and Creativity in the Arts,** and a **YMCA Peace Medallion.**

**Operations:**

CPT is run by an Artistic Director, General Manager and Assistant Manager in full time contract positions. CPT also employs two full time facilities and program staff whose salaries are 100% reimbursed through Toronto’s Investing in Neighbourhoods. Each summer we employ three students through Service Canada and we employ youth in our mentorship opportunities year round.

CPT employs approximately 20 to 25 freelance artists per year to facilitate our programs and provides meaningful volunteer work to over 60 people a year through our programs and events. CPT has a volunteer Board of Directors that currently has 10 members.

CPT is funded primarily through public sources and receives Arts Council funding from all levels of government and is currently an operational client of both the Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Council. We also fundraise privately and rely on generous donations from the private and corporate world to keep our projects accessible to those in the community who benefit from them. We are developing more revenue generating social enterprises to build operational sustainability.

This coming year we will stage our twelfth annual summer production. Following is a description of some of our ongoing core programs and events:

**Current Programs and Projects:**

**Peace Camp Summer Production**: For three weeks in July, twelve top professional artists and 18 youth and junior youth guides work with Peace Camp participants aged 8-13 in a process informed by the approach of the individual artists and youth guides as well as the interests of the individual campers. Collaborating in small groups, the musicians, writers, actors, directors, and visual artists guide the participants to creatively explore conflict on four different levels: the personal, the familial, the communal, and the global.

Each small group presents its work - scenes, tableaux, songs, poems, installation art pieces - to their peers and receives feedback. The artists and youth guides meet daily to discuss the day’s creative processes and strategize for the next day’s activities. Under the guidance of an artistic director, and in a collaborative decision-making process with the guides and artists, pieces are selected to be re-worked, rehearsed, and/or polished. Midway through the second week, a final presentation takes shape, which is then rehearsed throughout the remainder of the workshop period. The piece is a completely original work with an original score, visual production pieces and a script.

In the course of creating their theatrical piece, participants are encouraged to contemplate issues outside of their usual domain in the Global Perspectives portion of Peace Camp, which broadens their perspective to include global social justice issues and events. Peace Camp 2010 featured a young man studying at the Arava Institute in Israel, which uses environmental issues as a vehicle for peaceful collaboration in the Middle East (parallel to the way that our programs use the theatrical process).

Peace Camp culminates in 3 theatrical performances (including a gala Saturday night show) based on the explorations of the themes and the children's visions of Peace. **In 2005, Mayor David Miller awarded The Children's Peace Theatre with special recognition for our Summer Peace Camp.**

**Peace is Possible Parade and workshops:** A series of 13 Peace is Possible workshops facilitated by professional artists (music, theatre and dance) to 400 plus children in day camps in the area. The workshops are hosted at a local school, and the children work with the artists on specific themes and develop artistic work which is included in the Peace is Possible Parade, staged towards the end of the production period of the Collaborative Theatre process of Peace Camp.

**The Youth Leaders Theatre Project**: YLTP is a FREE theatre training and creation program based on the CPT principles of collaborative creation, community development and youth engagement. With the belief that peace is possible, participants work collaboratively with their peers and professional theatre artists. They develop original plays based on their own issues and ideas, then present them at local venues and public events across the G.T.A

**Youth Festival**: Each year 14 neighbourhood youth are mentored to plan and implement a Youth Festival. The youth learn skills in programming, grant writing, promotion and event planning. The Festival invites youth in the GTA to showcase their work through workshops and artistic performances, exhibits, film screenings and dialogue on topics of relevance to the youth.

**Conflict Transformation:** Theatre basedworkshops with school children in grades 4 to 12. Professional artists work with the students in school time to create theatrical vignettes expressing their feelings and ideas around issues of peace and Conflict Transformation.

 **Selected List of Performances**

Performances since 2004 have included:

* 2004 Conferences with Jane Jacobs, Janice Stein, and Jean Vanier
* International Educators' Peace Conference in Hamilton,
* “Spirit Matters” Conference hosted by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
* An event featuring retired head of the Canadian Armed Forces, General Romeo Dallaire held at the University of Toronto. CPT participants in a moving theatrical performance depicted the impact of genocide in Rwanda on the children of that country (April 2004)
* Many events hosted by like-minded organizations, including Mines Action Canada and Artists Against War (2005-08).
* Performance and direction of Free the Children fundraiser, Sept. 2005, with Craig Kielberger
* “Creativity unleashed” hosted by the University of Peace, Harbourfront April 2006
* “Peace in the City” performed at Toronto City Hall, May 2006
* Canada Day Celebration in Stan Wadlow Park, July 2006 and 2007
* YMCA Peace Medallion Ceremony at the central YMCA, Toronto November 2006
* Youth Leaders Theatre Project performance at Theatre Passe Muraille (AMY Project), 2007 and 2008
* OISE Spirit Matters: One Earth Symposium, spring 2007
* Adlib collective – 8 street performances throughout the city – 2008, 2009
* Annual Peace Camp performances, 2001 - 2011
* Speak out youth Festival and performances at CPT 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011
* Multicultural Festival and performances at CPT 2008, 2009,2010
* YLTP Performances at Luminato 2008, 2009
* School performances by YLTP 2010, 2011

**PART C: Detailed Project Description**

This summer we plan to run our 12th annual **Collaborative Theatre Production** for children and youth known as Peace Camp. The Project includes producing the “***Peace is Possible Parade***” and the attendant arts workshops for children. The Theatre Production, PIP Parade, and PIP Workshops, have become an important tradition in the priority neighbourhood of Crescent Town community, providing much needed arts and cultural activities and events as well as leadership and arts mentoring for youth. We are requesting support from Canada Council for the Arts to ensure this important artistic development work can continue.

**Objectives**:

* To provide top quality arts experiences for children and youth in Crescent Town and contribute to cultural development in the area
* To provide opportunities for children and youth to work collaboratively with professional artists to explore issues that matter most to them and to our society
* To provide opportunities for meaningful work for diverse artists and youth artists
* To provide opportunities for professional artists to work in a truly collaborative process
* To engage and inspire the broader community in a dialogue about issues of importance to the children and youth through the presentation of the creative collaborations

**The Collaborative Theatre Production** involves a three week long creative process wherein twelve renowned musicians, writers, actors, directors, and visual artists guide 18 youth to engage 40 children aged 8-13 in a collaborative theatrical process. Each year a current issue is chosen to inspire the collaborative work which results in both a first class theatrical performance and an opportunity for all participants to develop conflict transformation, and leadership skills through the arts. During the course of creating their theatrical piece, participants are also encouraged to contemplate issues outside of their usual domain through Global Perspectives guest speakers who enhance their understanding of the relevant global and social justice issues related to the theme.

This year’s production, **‘Eat it up’,** will be a candid and empathetic look at the historical, cultural, scientific and political aspects of what we eat. Inspired by Director, Liz Pounsett’s interest in using the art of story telling to take participants on a personal journey to discover how what we eats defines not only our physicality, but our social status, politics, and ultimately our collective humanity. Storytelling in this context refers to the broadest meaning of telling stories, which will include many art forms including spoken word, visual arts and music. Explorations led by leading edge artists in each discipline will be employed to create a sensually stimulating and provocative narrative of how we shape the world by what we eat.

The process will be deeply experiential and accessible to even the youngest of the participants connecting them directly to the content through cooking, planting and food rituals. As always, the work will pose many questions for the participants to explore always from the personal and moving out to include the global: how does our personal culture, traditions, and dietary choices impact our own health, our families and our communities? How does what we put on our plates impact other children on the far side of the world, climate change, and geopolitics?

The real value this project offers to the children and to the youth is the discovery of how artistic process can open their minds to new ideas and help them to understand the world they live in. Given the constant information overload and sense of despair many young people grow up with, this work offers a way to provide them with the knowledge and personal power to make positive choices.

The Collaborative Theatrical process will culminate in 3 theatrical performances (including a gala Saturday night show). The cast of 70 will perform their original work complete with musical score and visual production pieces for over 600 people in the community.

**The “*Peace is Possible Parade*” and workshops:** To deepen community involvement a series of *Peace is Possible* workshops will be facilitated by professional artists to children in day camps in the area. The children work with the artists to develop art, music and movement to animate the *Peace is Possible Parade*, which takes place towards the end of the production period of the Collaborative Theatre process.

This year in partnership with the Neighbourhood Youth Alliance, we plan to expand the PIP Parade and workshop from 13 to 20 in order to provide more opportunities for artistic activities for children and provide opportunities for local youth to be mentored to co-facilitate the workshops with the artists and plan and implement the parade.

The workshops are hosted at a local school provided through the Provincial Focus on Youth program. The coordinator of the project is funded by Service Canada Summer Jobs and many of the youth are funding through Tropicana Summer Jobs.

The children and artists involved in PIP and the Collaborative Theatre Production become integrated at the end of the process and provide audiences for each others’ work. On the last Friday of the process, the children, artists and community members participating in the PIP Parade march their way through the neighbourhood en route to the Children’s Peace Theatre. The members of the theatre cast make their way to the roadside to cheer the arrival of the Parade. The Parade participants, after enjoying a picnic and a rest on the grounds of the Children’s Peace Theatre, take their seats in the outdoor amphitheatre, providing a keen audience for the cast’s first big matinee performance.

 *“The Children’s Peace Theatre is located in a high-risk neighbourhood, with a high de nsity of new immigrants. The company is dedicated to representing diverse communities and providing a safe place for children and youth in the East York Region.I truly feel that this program is vital to the community I truly hope that the Canada Council can provide support for this unique program in order to continue its legacy for nurturing children, youth, artists and elders in the East York Region.”*

Coleen MacPherson, Artist and Director

**Artistic interest of the project**

The artistic vision of the Children’s Peace Theatre is rooted in the affinity between artistic creation and peace building. The practices of collaborative theatre and peace building require the same ability to give meaning to a web of relationships and to envision alternatives to the status quo. The vision is driven by the enduring belief that it is possible for the world to break out of the cycle of violence that it has been trapped in since perhaps the beginning of time.

These are not easy times we live in. Violence is all around us-*the imagined violence* of video games and the alternate realities of cyberspace, *the real world* violence of war, and threat of terrorism, and the *real life violence* of bullies, guns, gangs, and domestic violence that many children and youth contend with in the home and school yard. These are the lived experiences of the young people that we work with. Young people who grow up in homes or neighbourhoods like fraught with violence, economic hardship and divisiveness. Young people who are the most susceptible and the most often affected by the violence.

Children and youth, more so than others, are most oppressed by violence. They can be trapped in cycles of domestic violence, pressured by the wrong circles of friends and influenced negatively by the media. We have all witnessed the effects that indoctrination and narrow-mindedness can have on the moral upbringing of generations of children.

Imagine if it was possible to offer children the opportunity to expand the horizon of their mindset, to break through the barriers of their socio-economic disadvantages, the effect of negative personal experiences or whatever it is that is holding them back from a new and attainable vision of peace?. Learning the skills of peace can set them free. And like ever widening ripples, youth can take these lessons learned out into the world. It sounds ambitious. And it is. But you have to believe that peace is possible. And you have to start with the means that you know in the communities that you can reach.

Our challenge as artists, as an organization creating peace, and indeed for us all of us is how to transcend a seemingly endless spiral of intolerance, conflict and violence, while living in communities and a world that continues to manufacture it. As artists, how do we inspire our children and youth to take up the practice of peace? If nothing else, we must remember that art is derived from the freeing up of all boundaries combined with the ability to imagine something new. Who else, therefore, is better suited than the artist to inspire alternatives and alternative ways of thinking?

For most of the decade, we have been developing our arts-based methodology to practice, document and disseminate a culture of peace. During this time, we have learned a lot from the children and youth we have worked with about what it takes to transcend the real and imagined worlds of violence. Making the connection to the lived experience of our young participants is a crucial first step to the development of the compassion or empathy necessary for peace building and for compelling theatre that is rooted in experienced truth. Our work exists as an antidote to the violence that pervades children’s lives. It brings another reality to their lives, teaching them a vocabulary of peace, helping them to deal with conflict in their day-to-day lives and the violence in the world around us.

At the Children’s Peace Theatre we stand by our firm and abiding belief that peace is not an abstract and elusive concept. We talk about peace as a skill which must be learned and nurtured. It is an ongoing task. What we recognise is that conflicts exist, but that we need to learn how to face those conflicts without resorting to violence. This can be an enormous challenge for a young person confused by the lessons of the modern world and the culture of violence it celebrates.

The very essence of our methodology – what we consider to be the essence of peace building – is the development of the qualities of courage, compassion and creativity. Why courage? Because it is frightening for someone to try and break away from cycles of behavior and learned experience. Why compassion? Because a necessary element to the peaceful equation is the empathy required to see the world from the eyes of the “other”. Why creativity? Because learning how to deal with conflict peacefully requires the ability to see conflict as a window to the complex workings of power and oppressions and artists help us see these connections in a vibrant way. The most powerful process through which conflict can be explored and the qualities of courage, compassion and creativity authentically transmitted is collaborative creation, which our Summer Production Peace Camp exemplifies.

As we plan for our 12th Summer of Collaborative theatre making and peace building, the world is at crossroads. We are moving closer to the brink of economic and environmental collapse brought about by the Industrial way of live which has dominated the past two centuries and has been driven and sustained by an ethos of intolerance, greed and fear. Currently, unemployment is rising to dangerous levels all over the world, the cost of food is at a record high resulting in a record one billion human beings-nearly one-seventh of the human race- face hunger and starvation, and if that is not enough, climate change threatens to destabilize ecosystems around the world. It is clear that we need a new narrative to lead us to into a more equitable and sustainable future.

The focus of the work this years work ‘Eat it up’ will be an exploration on the theme of how what we consume shapes the world we live in. The artistic conceptual framework will be the power of storytelling and common narratives. Throughout all of history storytellers have shaped societies and the way we think. To ancient humans, storytelling was magic and played a crucial role in societal bonding and cohesion. Today we have unimagined technologies to tell our stories, but a general lack of courage, vision or funding to tell them. Stories have for the most part become entertainment, sensationalism, and slick marketing campaigns that inundate us daily with sound bites that dull our senses, corrodes our self esteem and undermines the value of storytellers and artists. Yet the desire and need for storytelling that fosters human bonding and cohesion is as crucial as ever.

It is significant that only humans have the imagination and the desire to tell stories. Every child will spontaneously make up stories if they are not told them. Every culture has a story telling tradition. The roots of psychology, religion, and ideology all lay within stories and stories shaped the distinct cultures which developed over hundreds of thousands of years.

Once upon a time when we invented stories, we invented gods, heroes, villains, and magic. Common themes emerged across different civilizations such as creation myths, or fables explaining how things came about. Most ancient tales had one thing in common, no matter where they were found in the world, they were at their heart didactic and instructive on morality, teaching about the pleasures of a morally good life while describing the misery that followed ill deeds.

Why is storytelling so critical at this juncture in human history? Storytelling in all its artistic forms holds the potential to create a common human narrative that can foster the empathy, and cohesion necessary to work collaboratively to a new tomorrow and away from the brink of environmental destruction.

Who better to initiate this new narrative than children and youth? Fundamental to the artistic vision for this project is the belief that children and youth have the capacity for profound artistic expression, that they can be engaged in social issues and that they have the power to change their world and ours for the better. The real value Children’s Peace Theatre offers to the children and to the youth is the permission to review and question the world they live in. This project is intended to inspire them to question why the world continues to celebrate competition, consumerism, and everyday rituals that poison our bodies, minds and planet. The process is designed to inspire them to envision that other worlds are possible and help them to engage audiences in a deep dialogue about how to best live and share our planet.

**Artistic choices**

Also fundamental to our vision is working with accomplished young professional artists. Truly skilled artists working on the project bring a vibrant creativity, a wide cultural vocabulary, and the ability to convey information through imagery. They are able to poetically and sensitively give subtle shades of meaning to difficult themes and inspire everyone to develop their fullest imaginative capacity. They are able to craft and shape the collaborative work into a production that is a coherent work of theatre.

This year we will working with two highly skilled artists, Liz Pounsett and Tanisha Taitt. Both of these young artists have extensive experience working with children and youth and in creating and performing socially conscious work. Liz has trained and worked multiple styles of theatre including physical theatre and clowning. Tanisha also has many years working with young artists and on socially impactful theatre. Tanisha also has strong musical abilities. Both artists have a large and varied tool box to draw from to find varied and accessible ways to work with children and youth.

Music and visual arts are important parts of the both the process and the product of our work. For the past six years, Artistic Director Karen Emerson has been using visual arts as a process to access other ways of knowing and communicating the themes, as well as to create environmental structures throughout the site that enhance the productions. Feedback from the participants and audiences and artists tells us that the visual arts component has become central to the process. These collaboratively developed installations have become a striking and memorable part of the productions.

Music has also become a prime tool both for exploring the themes and for creating a powerful production. This year we are excited to have back as our Music Director award winning jazz trumpet player and composer Brownman Ali. Last year Brown was a pivotal member of the team bringing his unparalleled diversity of musical vision and unique ability to penetrate complex musical ideas to their core essence, in order to inspire children of all abilities to not only participate and love music, but to create sophisticated lyrics and moving rhythms as part of their scenes. His musical scores add a brilliance to the production, creating theatre that should not be missed.

The team of core artist guides are chosen by the Artistic Director and the Director based on stylistic directions. All members of the artistic team are chosen based on their ability to work collaboratively with children and youth. Priority is given to diverse artists in order to ensure that they reflect the diversity of the children and youth that we serve,particularly those from South Asia (the largest segment of the Crescent Town population).

For the summer Peace is Possible workshops the Artistic Director mentors a youth coordinator to program the artists. We try to hire diverse artists who come from countries that have experienced or are experiencing conflict. Past artists have included musicians, dancers and visual artists from Palestine, Colombia, Peru, Asia, South Asia, Guatemala, and many others.

**Timeline**

June 2011: Research and Development (Artistic Director and lead artists)

July 2010:

Week one: Three days of Creative Explorations and Orientation to Peace Theatre Methodology to team (Artists, youth artists, youth guides)

Week two: Exploration with entire cast, concurrent with week one of Parade workshops

Week three: Development of theatre piece, concurrent with Parade workshops

Week four: Performances, concurrent with workshops and Peace is Possible Parade

Gala Performance Saturday July 24

**Developmental process**

Collaborative creation is a unique form of theatre that has the power to transform the participants and the community. It is based on the following guiding principles:

**Inclusion:** All are welcome and their input is valued.The diversity of our participants reflects the diversity of our community. The work nurtures diversity in those who create and participate in theatre.

**Process is equal to Product:** The learning and exploration that takes place during the process is as valuable as the final created work for both the artists and the community involved.

**Commitment to Excellence:** Artists of the highest artistic calibre are hired to maintain high standards of performance and production, giving participants the satisfaction of work well done.

The process of collaborative creation is seminal in CPT’s work, and begins with the hiring of professional artists who are experienced in this form of creation and committed to the same core principles. CPT’s theatre artists for this project will include Adam Paolozza, Ravi Jain, Coleen MacPherson, Michaela Washburn, and spoken word artist Boonaa Mohammed with Artistic Director Karen Emerson leading the project. Their credits and resumes are included in this grant application, and collectively they have many years of experience both in traditional theatre and in collaborative theatre creation with youth and other marginalized communities. Additional artists will be invited to participate as guest facilitators.

Our methodology dictates that all participants, artists, youth and staff are involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project. We enter the project with a timeline of activities, a clearly delineated theme, and a creative framework for the theme. The project is open-ended, leaving exact content and focus to be determined by participants, giving them ample space to explore meaning that cannot be determined from the outset.

**Work Schedule: Phase One – Research and Development**

In May 2011 the primary artists (Theatre Director, Music Director and Visual Arts Director) on the project together with the Artistic Director will research the critical aspects of the theme ‘’Eat it up’. They will meet several times to explore possible subthemes and ideas relevant to the main theme to design the first week of exploratory activities for the cast, choose stylistic choices to best explore the themes, and research speakers for the global perspectives component of the work, and to plan for the training of the youth artists and guides.

These team meetings also allow us to explore ways to incorporate visual arts, music and other disciplines into the work and to build the common vocabulary of the team. Through the research and development process the threads that hold the themes together and give them meaning become evident. This process leads us into the production period with the themes and the activities, the artists, guest speakers and youth artists we need to inspire the final collaborative development of the production.

In late June, early July, the core team of artists facilitate the youth guide training and creative explorations. It is an essential aspect of the project that the youth community members and artists involved design the basis of the work together. The training will serve multiple purposes. Firstly as a forum for experimentation in the various arts disciplines that will be explored with the intention of collectively envisioning aspects of the final presentation. Secondly to prepare the group of key artists and youth to work with the younger children who will be part of the collaborative production in July. Many of the youth guides are at-risk youth who have been trained through the Youth Leaders Theatre Project. This is a paid employment opportunity for these young people and has provided profound experiences for them in the past.

**Production**

The production phase is a three week collaborative process involving the 6 artists, 6 youth artists, 12 younger apprentice youth, and 40 children ages 8-13.

In the first week the thrust of the work is to establish community and build a common vocabulary for working among all members of the cast. We do not enforce or impose rules of behaviour but guide and model behaviour. We ask participants to develop their own set of community commitments, which will be conducive to collaborative creation. The unique environment of our productions is palpably different from the school or street environment the children are accustomed to. The days are spent exploring the key themes set out from the work of the core artists and youth artists. The exploration process with the younger cast members is undertaken using theatre, art and music activities, as well as by discussions hosted by the guest speakers invited to ‘Global Perspectives’. Each day small groups present their work (scenes, tableaux, songs, poems, installation art pieces) to their peers and receive feedback. The artists, youth, and adult guides meet daily to discuss the day’s creative processes and strategize the next day’s activities. Each day grows out of the authentic and often moving moments of the previous one. All moments are possible fodder for the final play.

As we enter the second week the creative team distils the work from the first week of explorations. From the many poignant and important scenes, images, songs, poems that have emerged, elements are chosen to be fully developed into pieces for the final work. The children are placed in smaller groups based on their personal affinities, skill sets, or other criteria to further develop their work. The small groups continue to present their work to their peers and receive feedback. Under the guidance of the director, and in a collaborative decision-making process with the guides and artists, pieces are re-worked, rehearsed, and polished. Midway through the second week a final full length presentation takes shape, which is then rehearsed throughout the remainder of the production period.

Performances begin towards the end of week three, culminating in the Gala Performance on the final Saturday night (July 24).

To further deepen community involvement a series of 20 Peace is Possible workshops will be facilitated by diverse artists (music, theatre and dance) to 400 plus children in day camps in the area. The workshops are hosted at a local school, and the children work with the artists on specific themes and develop artistic work which is included in the Peace is Possible Parade, staged towards the end of the production period. The children then walk from the local plaza, through the streets of the neighbourhood exhibiting and using the work they created in the workshops, ending up at CPT where they see a performance of the finished work. At the end of the performance, the children share their work with each other – in a Q&A session with the performers and a presentation of the work developed in the PIP workshops by the creators.

**Impact on children and youth.**

CPT has been making a difference in the lives of the young people in our community of Crescent Town and the surrounding area for over ten years. The collaborative experience of creating theatre on subjects that are important to them gives people the skills and the consciousness to shape their own moral views and to further the cause of peace in their own lives, within their troubled community and throughout the world. This in turn has the power to transform individuals and communities.

*”Children’s Peace Theatre strives to acknowledge the inherent wisdom of children and youth, and to enthusiastically encourage them to explore this new territory of “putting yourself in someone else’s shoes” using courage, compassion and creativity as their guides. It also offers a beautiful opportunity for all those who facilitate and lead (adult guides and artists) to exercise and rediscover patience and empathy. I strongly believe that Children’s Peace Theatre is a very special hub of socially-conscious art and community-based creation, that is making ever-developing inroads into effective conscious and caring community living. Conflict is not something that will ever go away, but this company has a remarkable ability to work. The Peace Camp acts as a spark plug, igniting imaginations and reinvigorating all of its participants – from the kids to the youth guides to the artists. It deeply deserves your support.”* Liz Pounsett, Theatre artist and director

‘’Eat it Up’, will provide arts experiences for a diverse group of marginalized children and youth that have limited access to the artistic process or opportunities to express themselves creatively. They will receive basic training in collaborative theatre creation as well as stagecraft, and will be exposed to a variety of art forms. Through the process, young people learn that art is for them, not just for the “other guys”. Art does not have to be something “out there” but rather can be incorporated into your own life as both a means of creative expression and a source of pleasure. Northrop Fry, the world renowned Canadian literary critic has said that sophistication is the ability to approach culture without fear. Through the process of creative collaboration with their peers and with professional artists fear is dissipated and replaced by an appreciation of the arts – both for the process and for the end product.

The process is a powerful one that challenges them to situate and recognize themselves as part of a pattern and become aware that their choices and behaviours are both affected by the pattern and in turn affect the continuation of it. Youth are encouraged to directly address issues such as intolerance, inequity, and racism that breed violence locally and globally and give expression to their views.

The process also encourages them to explore their own conflicts, struggles, and visions and turn them into authentic and empowering theatre. It is a rare opportunity for them to work closely with top theatre artists to create a high-quality performance piece and experience first-hand the sense of accomplishment that comes from a show well crafted and well received. It engages them in the issues that impact their lives and helps them to communicate their ideas to their families, neighbours, and communities. The work provides participants with tools not only for creating theatre but for becoming engaged and caring citizens.

In the long term, youth participation in the arts has been shown to help reduce violence. A three-year study initiated by two McGill University professors in 2001, titled “National Arts and Youth Demonstration Project”, published findings that children who participate in high-quality, structured, and cumulative arts instruction experience benefits such as: development of social skills, increased confidence and self-esteem, and over the long-term, a decrease in drug/alcohol use and lower incidents of violence.

**Impact on the Community**

The proven magic of theatre is that it has the ability to help people view the deepest issues of their own and mankind’s reality precisely by taking them out of that reality to a place of suspended belief and heightened imagination.

Apart from the work of the Children’s Peace Theatre, there are very few cultural events that happen in Crescent Town. With the performances of ‘Eat it Up, and the Peace is Possible Parade and workshops, featuring young local residents telling the stories of their own community, the neighbourhood will be able to celebrate the work of its own children and youth. The community will also hear the opinions of their children and young people– a constituency whose voice is often ignored. This unique form of theatre that is created from personal and communal testimony offers a necessary challenge to audiences to embrace the realities of their own communities.

We have developed strong bonds in the community and have access to a diverse group of children and youth from the neighbourhood and beyond. Currently CPT participates in the Neighbourhood Action Planning Committee, the Crescent Town Youth Services Network (YSN) and is a member of a collaborative steering committee for YSN. We have partnered with Access Alliance, The Bangladeshi Canadian Community Association, and other cultural organization in the neighbourhood on projects and events.

Every spring/summer, CPT hires three university students studying in fields which relate to our work (international studies, theatre arts, arts administration, etc.) to work collaboratively with us to produce a series of performances and events. Each of these students is mentored by the Artistic Director and the General Manager. Our organization works in a very open, collaborative way, and the students are given a great deal of encouragement and freedom to include new, exciting ideas into our programming and the ongoing work of the organization. Exposure to work on the ground in a small not for profit arts organization provides them with excellent experience and a broader knowledge of the field in general.

The project will also provide opportunities of employment for youth and for over 50 volunteers of all ages from the community.

**Impact on the artists:**

CPT's work is unique and innovative. We believe we are one of the few, if not the only arts organization in the country using our artistic practice in the pursuit of peace. We employ excellent professional artists to work with participants (primarily children and youth) to create work based on the issues of interest to the group. The collective creation process is a collaborative one, and it produces theatre work that is exciting, original, and authentic. It is the synthesis of fine professional artists working with community participants through theatre (including its attendant art forms, visual arts and music) in the service of creating a culture of peace that makes our work unique. By offering high quality programming that places children and youth at the centre of our artistic endeavours, innovative theatre is created that contributes to the form while nurturing the imaginations and creativity of future generations.

Currently, CPT works largely at the local level and we are continually working to expand our network in order to be part of the ongoing dialogue between arts organizations working with youth around social justice. We continue to build strong, supportive relationships with the artists we employ and with non-arts organizations who work with children and youth, particularly those who work from a social justice perspective.

Through our work with a broad range of diverse, established and emerging artists, we have developed strong relationships, creating opportunities for partnerships and collaboration. Over the years we have provided space for many independent artists and theatre groups to conduct workshops, events, retreats and ongoing projects, including workshops for “Pylade” a theatre piece being developed by Adam Paolozza with Michelle Smith, Dean Gilmour, and Ravi Jain. For the past three seasons the A.M.Y. Project– Artists Mentoring Youth (a project dealing with at-risk girls of colour, led by actor/director Claire Calnan) – used our space to prepare their spring performances, and youth from our Youth Leaders Theatre Project performed at the festival. We continue to provide space to Turtle House (an arts organization working with refugee children), Lost lyrics, and several other arts groups. Through our Annual Youth Festival, we have also developed relationships with various artists, including spoken word artists Truth Is and Boona, and with social justice organizations such as Schools without Borders and Global Aware. In our summer workshop program and we have worked with a diverse group of artists including David Kabuuka, David Buchbinder, Diana Tso, Victoria Matta, Nisha Ahuja, and others.

We provide paid work for artists as facilitators and creators in our programs – the Collaborative Theatre Production (Peace Camp), Youth Leaders Theatre Project, Conflict Transformation (in school time) and for performing artists at the annual Youth Festival. Besides the income that artists derive from working with CPT – there are many additional benefits to both them and to the Toronto arts milieu in general. CPT employs Toronto-based emerging and mid career professional artists from theatre, music, and the visual arts. By providing employment opportunities to our artists, along with opportunities to create and present their work, we support their ongoing development.

Our artists possess a diverse range of interdisciplinary skills. When they work together at CPT toward the creation of new work, the artists learn a great deal about other art disciplines from one another. Our emphasis on work with at-risk youth provides artists with unique and challenging experiences.

During our Summer Theatre Collaboration project, artists are offered a unique opportunity to work in collaborative process with a cast of 40 young children and perform in an outdoor venue that consists of a natural amphitheatre seating 200 people, and its environs - a meadow, a forest, the lawns of the estate and the house itself. It is a unique opportunity to create site-specific work - a creative opportunity not often available.

*This three week camp provides a nurturing atmosphere for children and youth to look deep within themselves and their communities, and it also allows artists, like myself, to reconnect with the essence of collaboration. I have always found the three weeks as a way of re-learning how to work with people, how to look at conflict, and how to make my work politically engaged and connected to the people we are creating for. The children at Peace Camp have always fed my creative self, and I will never forget their honesty and generosity.”*

*Coleen MacPherson, Artist and Director*

The impact of working successfully with children and youth to create work that truly reflects their own ideas is a profound one for the artists who work with CPT. Although many of the ideas come from the young participants, the professional artists guide the development of the ideas into main themes and from themes to fully developed performance. It is a very rewarding experience for the artists, who are working to both empower the project participants, and also to craft work that meets their own personal vision and criteria for creative success.

The artists are challenged by the insights of the young people they work with, insights that demand an examination of their power as artists, the role of theatre in the lives of disenfranchised youth, and the place of theatre in social change. Artists are given the opportunity to think and work out of the box of the convention-bound play, to help create work that is authentic, creative and capable of capturing the immediacy of our times.

*“I have worked with Children’s Peace Theatre since 2007 as a workshop facilitator, an assistant director, and last year, as director of the summer Peace Camp. It has been an honour, a challenge and a constant source of inspiration. Each year, we choose a theme through which to investigate conflict and conflict transformation, by way of creating a play, and involving music and visual art. Last year at the Peace Camp we investigated the concepts of Faith and Reason. No mean feat, most especially for a group of 60 children, youth, guides and artists, ranging in age from 7 to 70. I am proud of the work that we did, and importantly, proud of the process.”*

Director, Liz Pounsett

**The Challenges:**

There are many challenges that arise in working with a diverse group of children and youth, many of whom are facing conflict at home or have experienced conflict in their home country. The potential for conflict is high within the participant group due to racial tensions, cultural histories and other issues. The intensity of working to create collaboratively under tight time schedules also creates tension setting the perfect stage for all participants to practice what we are preaching: courage, compassion, and creativity.

Ensuring that we honour the process, not just the product, is an ongoing challenge. It is too easy to get caught up in the “show time” mentality. However, we know that the long term benefit of working in collaboration with the children and the artists emerges largely from the process. It is important that no one voice, or just a few voices, shape and create the final performance piece and it is a far richer and more impactful production if we cultivate every voice – the quiet, the loud, the outrageous and the shy. This is not to diminish the importance of the quality of the performance but rather to understand and ensure that it is an integral part of what we are doing, but not the only objective.

Our programs are inclusive and open to all, regardless of culture, race, gender, or sexual preference and degrees of ability. It is our challenge and privilege to assist participants in the process of learning to celebrate their differences as they work collaboratively towards theatrical creation and production. The environment cultivated by staff, artists and participants is different from anything most people have experienced in school, work places and other creative venues and opens up possibilities for people to tell their stories without fear of judgment or ridicule.

We face an interesting challenge in that the work developed by the participants and the artists is site- specific and predominantly outdoors. We use the meadow, the forest, the lawns, the heritage house, the natural amphitheatre located on the property for both creation and performance. This is both an advantage and a challenge. Often the environment created for the piece uses visual arts pieces made from objects found in our immediate surroundings. It is always a challenge to stage the final production with 40 to 50 performers and visual installations and enhancements while contending with nature, and the physical challenges of some participants. We continue to work with the City of Toronto, the owner, to ensure that the property is accessible and safe for participants. We have come up with creative solutions to deal with inclement weather and forces of nature.

Funding this project has been an ongoing struggle for over 11 years. In this economically challenged area of Toronto, it is not possible to charge fees to all participants and is always a challenge to cover the costs of the project. It is our mandate to not turn any children away for economic reasons, and we raise funds to subsidize fees for those who cannot afford to participate. We continue to build the capacity of the organization and improve ways to bring in Individual and corporate support in order to ensure this important work continues.

**Methods of evaluation**

Our work is always exploratory and we are constantly learning and adapting that learning to new endeavours. Critical to our ongoing success and to our organizational goals is finding ways to document our successes to create a repository of stories that document how people have overcome conflict through the process of collaborative theatrical creation. Ongoing evaluation also informs us of the effectiveness of our work, and reveals the need to explore other programming directions and initiatives**.**

In order to capture the challenges and successes, and to evaluate the effectiveness of our projects we have developed a number of creative tools for monitoring the process, and measuring the outcomes of the project. Evaluation involves staff, artists, the participants, their families and members of the community.

The success of the project is determined by:

1) The quality of the work produced – the experience of the audience and the community

2) the quality of the process – the experience of the participants (children, youth and theatre artist who engage in the production)

The evaluation process is primarily qualitative although we also track number of participants, audience and volunteers involved in the project. The qualitative information is gathered from artist and youth feedback forms, and a number of creative feedback tools for the younger participants, including opportunities to chat with their mentors and to talk about their experience. Some of these conversations are in “interview style” and are captured on camera. The tools used are sensitive to the different learning styles of the participants as well as language barriers, allowing the opportunity for written evaluation, as well as visual and artistic methods of expression.

The evaluation process includes:

* AD and artists meet twice daily at beginning and end of day for ongoing assessment of the exercises and activities that are used to encourage exploration and creation.
* At the end of each week during the production phase each professional artist and youth artist completes a feedback interview with the AD
* An independent video artist documents the process and the product. Artists and participants are interviewed during each phase and the final performance is recorded with comments from artists, participants and audience. (Note: permission is required from parents for children to be videotaped or photographed.)
* Attendance tracking and close communication with parents or guardians is in place to gather input regarding impact on participants
* Input is sought from audiences at our performances
* Audience and workshop attendance numbers are collected and other statistics relevant to the project, including volunteer hours.

**Key Artist List for Children’s Peace Theatre’s Production of ‘Eat it Up’**

This year Liz Pounsett will lead the process for the second year . Liz has extensive experience working with children and youth creating and performing socially conscious work. Liz has trained and worked multiple styles of theatre including physical theatre,and clowning and both have strong musical training. This makes them both ideal candidates to find varied and accessible ways to work with children and youth.

We are privileged to have multi-award winning jazz trumpet player Brownman Ali back for a third year as our Music Director. For two years Brown has been a pivotal member of the team bringing his unparalleled diversity of musical vision and unique ability to transmit complex musical ideas to their core essence in order inspire children of all abilities to not only participate and love music, but to create sophisticated lyrics and moving rhythms as part of their scenes. His own musical scores add a brilliance to the production creating theatre that should not be missed.

**Director, Liz Pounsett**

Liz Pounsett is an actor, theatre-maker, teaching artist, and the artistic director of the independent theatre company, [The Question Company](http://www.thequestioncompany.ca/). Liz’s theatre credits include The Question Company’s critic's pick at last year’s Fringe Festival You Mean Now?; Hamlet, Theatre WhyNot; Platinum Travel Club, Theatre Passe Muraille, as well as The Question Company’s Summerworks 2005 hit Downtown.

Liz spent two years in Paris at Ecole Jacques Lecoq, and while there shot the film Le bruit du fond.  Currently, Liz is working on developing the next instalment of The Question Company’s Time Trilogy, The Future, a working title, with the generous support of Nightswimming and the OAC.

**Music Director, Brownman Ali**

Called “***Canada's preeminent jazz trumpeter"*** by NYC's Village Voice and considered one of the most acclaimed improvisers residing in Canada, **Brownman** - born Nick Ali - on the small Caribbean island of Trinidad, is the multiple award winning NYC-schooled protégé to his teacher - Grammy-winning trumpet legend **Randy Brecker**. In the spirit of supreme trumpet genre-crossing visionaries such as **Brecker** and **Miles Davis**, he tirelessly leads and composes actively for no less than 6 ensembles of his own.

He is also a musical director and/or featured soloist in countless other groups; testament to his unparalleled diversity of musical vision and skills making him one of Canada's most decorated jazz artists and highly in demand session calls for both **Universal** and **Sony/BMG** recording studios in forms of music ranging from be-bop to hip-hop. As a featured soloist he has appeared with Canada's leading Latin, urban, hiphop, reggae, island and DJ artists in addition to his foundational jazz milieu.

With just under **300** recording credits to his name – many of these albums having won or been nominated for Junos (Canada's Grammy) - he is considered to be one of the most unique and provocative improvising trumpet players on the scene today, and a vanguard for the evolution of jazz in Canada.

**Tanisha Taitt**