

— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE —

NEW ARTS CLUB ENDOWMENT FUND HONOURS DENIS SIMPSON

VANCOUVER, B.C. (August 5, 2020)—Today, the Arts Club Theatre Company announced the **Denis Simpson Fund**, which will directly support the company's antiracism and inclusion initiatives.

This endowment fund was established in honour of the late multitalented performer **Denis Simpson**. It is also part of the Arts Club's Statement of Actions, which outlines their commitment to removing barriers to inclusion within the company—including those created by systemic racism.

The idea for the fund came out of many internal discussions at the Arts Club centred around how to best implement long term, sustainable, and systemic change. The company decided to establish this endowment to help support ongoing apprenticeships, commissions, internships, and much more, which will contribute to the continued decolonization of the institution. The Arts Club is inquiring with the BC Human Rights Tribunal to ensure this fund is used correctly and in a way that is non-discriminatory.

"We're glad to be able to honour Denis's memory and legacy with this fund, which will be used to ensure that the Arts Club is an open and inclusive space for all artists, patrons, and staff," said Executive Director **Peter Cathie White**.

Simpson was a wonderfully gifted actor, singer, writer, director, and choreographer. He was a true, consummate entertainer. From *Ain't Misbehavin'* (1987–1988) at the Revue Stage to *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (2009–2010) at the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, Simpson's unique presence graced the Arts Club's stages for 25 years in over 20 productions.

Two of the many highlights of his career include writing, directing, and starring in his one-man show *Denis Anyone?* (Revue Stage, 1995–1996)—which described his experience growing up Black in Canada and earned him a Jessie Richardson Theatre Award—and co-writing and directing the musical *Wang Dang Doodle* (Granville Island Stage, 1999–2000).

Born in Jamaica, Simpson arrived in Canada at the age of 8, spending his early years in Toronto. His career began at the age of 19 when he performed in the original Canadian production of *Hair* at Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre. His face and talent became nationally known in 1978 as the host of the popular children's TV series *Polka Dot Door* and an original member of the a cappella singing group The Nylons. He appeared on screen many times, but his love was always the theatre.

Simpson selflessly gave his time to countless charitable activities, including raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic and supporting fundraisers to benefit the cultural community of Greater Vancouver and Canada as a whole. He is an inductee of the B.C. Entertainment Hall of Fame. His sudden passing on October 22, 2010, deeply impacted those around him, including his fellow artists, colleagues, fans, and family.

His sister **Gloria Reuben** stated, "Everyone who loves Denis knows he would be thrilled and humbled that this very special fund at the Arts Club is being established in his name."

The Arts Club has committed \$10,000 to the Denis Simpson Fund and is reaching out to the community to join them in the goal of raising \$20,000 by August 15th. Contributions can be made online at artsclub.com, or by calling 604.687.5315, ext. 847. All proceeds from the live reading of Arts Club 2018 Silver Commission *Redbone Coonhound* on August 14 will also go towards the fund. This reading is part of the company's upcoming festival **Dialled Up: An Arts Club**

Community Celebration, which will take place from August 8 to 14. More details about the festival are available on the Arts Club's [Digital Edition website](#), and will continue to be shared on the company's social media channels.

High-resolution images are available upon request. For interviews, please contact Madison Taylor, Communications Associate, at publicity@artsclub.com

ABOUT THE ARTS CLUB

The Arts Club Theatre Company, founded in 1964, is Canada's largest not-for-profit urban theatre company. Led by Artistic Director Ashlie Corcoran and Executive Director Peter Cathie White, it offers professional theatre at three venues—the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, Granville Island Stage, and the Newmont Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre—as well as on tour throughout the province.

