



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

How I Learned to Serve Tea

**A series of workshops and creative consultations
on the politics of capacity and resource sharing**

**Created and facilitated by Shaista Latif
in association with the Koffler Centre of the Arts and Why Not Theatre**

Toronto, ON, October 3, 2019 – **Koffler Centre of the Arts** and **Why Not Theatre** are thrilled to announce *How I Learned to Serve Tea*, a year-long series of community-engaged workshops in collaboration with multidisciplinary artist **Shaista Latif**.

At the workshops, participants are greeted by an array of carefully arranged items. Prompted to action by a series of questions, participants are encouraged to interact with the objects as a group. As implied in the name, tea is served – but the number of teacups is limited. Through facilitated dialogue, participants explore the dynamics of power as guest and host; aiming to understand what it takes to make space for others.

Through acts of play and hospitality, Shaista Latif encourages workshop participants to reflect on differences of identity and to use these concepts as navigational tools rather than limitations. Workshops will form the basis of an extended research process underpinning an exploratory public performance work or exhibit to be produced in 2020.

“This work is about class, authorship, agency and autonomy but I am no expert,” explains **Shaista Latif**. “Assessing the language of invitation and hosting, and how it translates into action is the foundation of *How I Learned to Serve Tea*. I choose to do this work by asking questions.” Read more on the project and Latif’s [full artist statement here](#).

“At Why Not Theatre we are constantly trying to find ways of engaging with artists that provoke new models of working and creating,” said **Ravi Jain**, Artistic Director, Why Not Theatre. “We are excited about Shaista using her art to create spaces to have vulnerable conversations, share stories and open up our ways of thinking. She is a powerful artist exploring profound questions in a completely unique and surprising way, and we are thrilled to be collaborating with her and Koffler Centre of the Arts on this unique project.”

“The Koffler is excited to be collaborating once again with the remarkable Why Not Theatre and Shaista Latif on *How I Learned to Serve Tea*,” said **Karen Tisch**, Executive Director, Koffler Centre of the Arts. “The opportunities for meaningful community engagement and positive social impact emerging from this participatory and process-based artist residency strongly align with the Koffler’s mandate to foster thought-provoking dialogue between artists and the public. As a creator, Shaista is exploring vital questions surrounding identity, equity and power-sharing within and beyond institutions, and we are delighted to be part of this timely discourse.”

To launch this project, artists and arts/culture workers are invited to participate in a special public *How I Learned to Serve Tea* workshop on **Thursday, October 17, 2019** at Small World Music Centre, Artscape Youngplace, 180 Shaw Street, from 6–8 PM. Participants will also receive an informal tour of the Koffler Gallery’s group exhibition *Undomesticated*, spanning all three floors of Artscape Youngplace.

To register for this free workshop, please RSVP: https://hiltst_specialworkshop.eventbrite.ca

Workshop Booking Information

How I Learned to Serve Tea workshops are available for groups of 5 to 40 people. They run 1.5 – 3 hours each and are subsidized for qualifying organizations or collectives. No one will be turned away due to lack of funds. For more information or to book a workshop, please contact: taliesin@theatrewhynot.org

ABOUT SHAISTA LATIF

Shaista Latif is a Queer Afghan-Canadian multidisciplinary artist, consultant and facilitator. Her works and collaborations have been presented by Koffler Gallery, Ontario Scene Festival, SummerWorks, Why Not Theatre, Blackwood Gallery, Mercer Union, the AGO, Halifax Queer Acts Festival, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and recently the Undercurrents Festival. She is a published playwright (Playwrights Canada Press) and voiced the character Soraya in the Oscar-nominated film *The Breadwinner*. In 2020, Latif will be touring her critically acclaimed show *The Archivist* around Ontario. Her latest work *Learning the Language of My Enemies* was recently presented in conjunction with *Nevet Yitzhak: WarCraft* at the Koffler Gallery.

ABOUT KOFFLER CENTRE OF THE ARTS

The Koffler Centre of the Arts is a cultural platform that explores critical ideas and concerns of our time through thought-provoking exhibitions, publications, performances, literary events and digital initiatives. As an organization with roots in the Jewish community, we value – and aim to foster – social justice and equality, while nurturing a passion for learning. We position Jewish identity in conversation with diverse perspectives and global voices to examine complex issues and promote intercultural understanding. Harnessing the power of art as a driver of positive change, the Koffler seeks to offer transformative arts experiences that inspire new and fresh ways of looking at the world. The Koffler Gallery and its administrative offices are located at Artscape Youngplace, in Toronto’s vibrant West Queen West art and design district.

ABOUT WHY NOT THEATRE

Why Not Theatre is an agile, international theatre company based in Toronto, Canada, rooted in the values of innovation, community and collaboration. Our work is inventive, cross-cultural, and reflects our passion for the exploration of difference. We challenge the status quo, by examining what stories are being told, and who is telling them. More than just a theatre company, we develop creative strategies to build a healthier and stronger arts ecology. We MAKE and tour critically-acclaimed and award-winning new work, SHARE resources with other companies and artists to produce and tour their work, and PROVOKE change through new producing models and the presentation of work for new audiences. We are led by a core team of Founding Artistic Director Ravi Jain, Managing Director Owais Lightwala, and Executive Producer Kelly Read.

- 30 -

For further information and images for media use, contact:

Tony Hewer, Director of Marketing, Communications and Archives

Koffler Centre of the Arts

180 Shaw Street, Suite 104-105, Toronto M6J 2W5

647.925.0643 x224 | E-MAIL: thewer@kofflerarts.org | WEB: kofflerarts.org | koffler.digital