Audio Preshow Note Transcript for *Blissful State of Surrender*

Welcome, this is the audio pre-show note for *Blissful State of Surrender*, written by Sanita Fejzić. This is a Blissful State Production presented as part of the TACTICS MainStage series, in association with GCTC. As Fejzić says, she has “tried [her] best to approximate a realistic portrait of the Bosnian refugee-immigrant experience in Canada and the cultural differences this can generate within the family unit.” “The play attempts to translate things that cannot be spoken–to show the ghosts that haunt every survivor of the 1992-1995 Balkan War and genocide of [her] Muslim Bosniak people.” This play is written to honour Fejzić’s grandmother, Šuhra Fejzić who was murdered, along with the approximately 250,000 Bosnians killed during the genocide.

Blissful State of Surrender tells part of the Bolić family’s story. Onstage, in Suzana and Emir Bolić’s living room, their grown children return home for Agata’s birthday, the youngest child. However, during the course of the evening, each member of the family is confronted with their history from Bosnia, and their present life now in Canada. This leads to cultural and generational clashes as the family tries to navigate their traditions and be open to new ways of thinking. During a snowstorm, the past is blown in, and the secrets and past trauma once kept hidden are slowly revealed.

The show is approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes long including a 20-minute intermission. Please be advised that the show includes themes of genocide, racial-religious tensions, sexuality, mental health and memory loss. During instances where the past intrudes on the present, there will be sounds of explosions, bombings, a screeching effect and sniper shots. All the characters eat appetizers and drink during this family gathering. When they drink there will be the occasional bottle pop from opening a beer or uncorking a bottle of wine. Throughout the show, there is a lighting effect of snow falling projected on the back wall.

Upon entering the theatre, the set is in place. There is a raised diamond platform, approximately two steps high from the black stage floor. The longest edges stretch out width-ways across the stage space, spanning the

width of the audience seating. Placed on the platform is a family's living room. An oversized red Persian rug with beige and black embellishments covers most of the diamond-shaped platform, with the corners of the rug hanging over the platform's edge. On the left point of the diamond, a hardwood floor is exposed upon which stands a wooden coat rack. It bears two beige coats and a brown handbag. To its right, following the line of the diamond closest to the audience, sits a woven basket and a black boot tray with two sets of winter boots. This forms the entryway to the house. Because the set has no walls and no door, a wind sound effect is played when the characters pass through the front door. To the right of the entryway, following the back of the diamond is a brown L-shaped couch, with a wooden tray on the attached ottoman. The ottoman section of the couch protrudes into the center of the living space. Tucked in front of the couch is a hexagonal, glass-topped, wooden coffee table. To the right of the couch, a silver floor lamp arches over the couch, approximately at head height when seated. Frequently in the play, the characters knock their heads or bump into the lamp. To the right of the couch is a round, wooden dining table covered in a white table cloth, and is filled with appetizer plates, beers, wine glasses, two bottles and a pink, glass, fruit bowl. Surrounding the table are four sturdy wooden chairs. Behind the table there is a set of stairs out of view of the audience which leads offstage to the kitchen and the rest of the house. Located between the couch and the table, centred at the back of the living room, is a semi-circle ottoman, with a magazine bin next to it. An imagined fireplace is located where the wall would be between the audience and the living room. Hanging at the back and over the platform is a white crescent shape. It spans the width of the outside edges of the couch and dining table, measuring about six paces wide. The crescent shape appears like an archway of a tunnel, with red brick exposed through the plastered surface. At the top of the lowest edge of the crescent is a lip that is covered with a dusting of snow, framing the dark void beneath. Behind the crescent is the black wall of the theatre where snow steadily falls throughout the play. Below the platform is white cement rubble that is pushed up around the platform, similar to a snowbank. The family's living room sits within what seems to be a warm, serene snow globe just waiting for a shake.

Most of the characters will speak in Bosnian at different times in the play. We first meet Emir Bolić, played by John Koensgen. Emir is husband to Suzana and father to the three daughters. He appears to be a clean-shaven white man of average height and weight in his sixties. His gray hair is trimmed short on the sides to complement his balding hairline. He wears a white, brown and black sweater vest, with its horizontal stripes of white lines, with geometric circles and zigzags. The vest is buttoned over top of his blue, striped, collared dress shirt. He wears light beige pants with pockets, and plaid slippers throughout most of the performance. He and his wife speak with Bosnian accents. He enters carrying an abstract painting of a woman's face.

Suzana Bolić, is played by Zvjezdana (Dana) Užarević. Suzana**,** also called Sue and Suzo by her loved ones, is fifty-five years old. Like her husband, she appears to be white. She is a slender woman of average height. Her blonde long hair is tied up in a stylish low bun. She wears a velvet-green dress with a ruffled v-neck collar layered over an off-white mock turtleneck. Tied around her waist is a colourful red apron with stripes of different horizontal patterns and trimmed with a red fringe. She wears black tights and beige flats.

Senka, played by Andrea Massoud, enters from outside. She is the second daughter of Suzana and Emir. Senka is twenty-five and like her sisters speaks with a Canadian accent. She has long flowing, straight, brown hair. Like her parents, she appears to be white and is a shorter, full-figured woman. She wears an oversized, long wool light beige vest, with two black buttons and pockets. Underneath she wears a comfy, smooth, grey mock turtleneck, with the sleeves pushed up. Her black pants have gold buttons at the top and are tightly fitted. While at home she wears fuzzy open-toed slippers. She is glued to her phone and carries her handbag that has a colourful decorative strip of embroidery on it.

Maja, played by Kate Smith, is the eldest, at thirty-four and the tallest of the Bolić daughters. She appears to be a white woman with blonde medium-length hair of average build. She wears cropped tightly-fitted blue jeans with a light pink blouse that bells from the cinched waistline,

extending past her hips. The three-quarter length sleeves are also belled ending mid-forearm. The top part is decorated in an embroidered pattern of flowers with a v shape down the center, forming an embroidered belt.

Jidu, played by Anurag Choudhury, carries in Maja's luggage. He is Maja's friend from high school and is thirty-six years old. He speaks in a British accent. He is a brown man of average height and appears trim with broad shoulders. He wears his long black hair tied in a bun on top of his head and has a full black beard. He wears a maroon crew neck sweater, with two orange abstracted dogs. They are outlined in blue and stretch over the torso of his shirt. The outfit is completed with dark grey pants and boots. When he arrives these boots are swapped for slippers.

Agata, played by Danielle Savoie, is the youngest Bolić and is turning twenty years old. She is blonde with a pixie haircut. She appears white and has a slender figure like her mother. She wears a patterned shirt with a crew neck. The pattern is similar to a crochet grandmother pattern with multiple colours of muted pink, blue, white and orange. On top, she wears a cropped orange hooded sweater. She wears light blue baggy jeans and green slider slippers.

For more information about the show, cast and crew please visit www.gctc.ca/program.

This introduction was written by Drea and is recorded by Celina Hawkins.