

CANADIAN-CARIBBEAN AUTHORS SHOWCASED IN

literature|alive

DOCUMENTARY AND AUDIO BOOK SERIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Toronto, ON August 23, 2005 - The wealth of extraordinary voices and dynamic narrative methods of Canadian-Caribbean authors will be showcased in *Literature Alive*, a new documentary and companion audio book series by Caribbean Tales and Leda Serene Films. The 13-part *Literature Alive* documentary series, which airs on Bravo! beginning October 2005, profiles Canadian-Caribbean authors and follows the evolution of Caribbean heritage fiction from the 1960s through to the hip hop generation.

"People of the Caribbean are natural-born storytellers," says **Frances-Anne Solomon**, President, CaribbeanTales.org and President and Founder, Leda Serene Films. "We spend time with our ancestry. We tell stories of our past. Our rich and diverse histories are often scattered as we migrate on our diasporic journeys, but still we continue to gather, reinvent, and share our tales."

Literature Alive's featured authors invite viewers and listeners into their lives to join them in the creative process and discover the links between personal experience, ancestry, and migration; between Canada and the Caribbean; between artist and art. Whether sitting down with living legend **Louise Bennett** as she reflects on her illustrious career, hitting the city streets with DJ and hip hop artist **Jemeni**, or traveling with **Andre Alexis** to Trinidad and to literary festivals in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, viewers experience how vibrant Caribbean culture continues to be as it expands around the globe, and how vital the act of storytelling is to it.

A select list of authors follows:

- Haitian exile **Dany Laferriere** tours his adopted home of Montreal, sharing the insightful manner and razor sharp wit that characterizes his writing. A fascinating man in a charming city.
- Jamaican icon **Louise Bennett** reflects upon her rich life story and her illustrious body of work in an interview conducted by renowned actress Leonie Forbes. The country's leading author, poet, and comedienne, "Miss Lou" pioneered the use of the Jamaican language, raising the patois dialect to an art level and reflecting the truth and essence of Jamaican life.
- Author and playwright **Andre Alexis** travels from his birthplace in Trinidad, to his childhood home in Ottawa, and to the Toronto neighbourhood that he now calls home, discussing how each location has a remarkable hold on him his work.
- **Shani Mootoo** celebrates the launch of her novel *He Drowns She in the Sea* at an intimate and entertaining dinner party with guests including filmmaker Richard Fung and writer Gamal Abdel-Shehid.
- **Tessa McWatt** discusses her life and work, her past and passions, and her evolving understanding of the concepts of 'home' and 'belonging' while on a musical journey from her current home in Britain to visit with her family in Toronto.

- **Nalo Hopkinson** explains her “hybrid history” as a “sci-fi writer,” a “speculative fiction writer,” a “fantasy writer,” and a “fabulist”, who combines Caribbean and Canadian culture, mixes her life story with folklore, blurs the boundaries between the real and the fantastic, and in tales that take place in an invented urban landscape.
- **Richardo Keens-Douglas** speaks candidly about the importance of his message to children—to believe in themselves and have pride in their cultural heritage—and about his struggle, as a young man, to find confidence in his identity.
- A day in the life of **Jemeni**—poet, writer, actor, comic, journalist, Spoken Word artist, and host of Flow 93.5’s *Morning Rush*. A voice that stands out in the Babel of urban Toronto.

Literature Alive is produced by CaribbeanTales.org and Leda Serene Films for the Canadian Independent Film and Video Foundation, Bravo! , Book Television, Canadian Learning Television, and Gayelle Television.

ABOUT CARIBBEAN TALES

Founded in 2001 by Frances-Anne Solomon, Caribbean Tales is a not-for-profit multimedia company committed to producing educational films, videos, and new media content that reflect the rich tradition of Caribbean-heritage storytelling. Projects include the CaribbeanTales.org website, a vital, anti-colonial history of the Caribbean available to all on the worldwide web; an e-newsletter, featuring profiles of Caribbean storytellers and cultural commentary, as well as news and events; and the Literature Alive documentary series, audio books and web site. For more information visit www.caribbeantales.org

ABOUT LEDA SERENE FILMS

Leda Serene Films is a film, television and new media production company based in Toronto, Canada. The company has produced an impressive range of award-winning programs—from feature films to more innovative multi-media projects—and is dedicated to placing people of colour in front of as well as behind the camera. The company has made its name as a producer of high-quality dramas and documentaries that celebrate diversity—strong personal stories from different cultural perspectives in the global diaspora.

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Literature Alive is a 13x1/2hr documentary series that profiles Canadian-Caribbean authors and follows the evolution of Caribbean heritage fiction from the 1960s through to the hip-hop generation.

People of the Caribbean are natural-born storytellers. We spend time with our ancestry. We tell stories of our past. Our rich and diverse histories are often scattered as we migrate on our diasporic journeys, but still we continue to gather, reinvent, and share our tales.

It is no wonder then that Caribbean fiction has become internationally recognized for its wealth of extraordinary voices and dynamic narrative methods. Canada in particular is home to some of the most exciting writers working today – Austin Clarke, M. NourbeSe Philip, Olive Senior, Dany Laferriere, Dionne Brand, Arnold Itwaru – each one brings their unique and personal vision to the page.

Literature Alive seeks to uncover the often-unexplored personal histories of these authors. We are invited into their lives and to join them in their creative process. In doing so, we discover the links between personal experience, ancestry, and migration; between Canada and the Caribbean; between an artist and their art.

The series reflects the growing diversity of this literature, and the exciting shifts in form and content. From the personal and evocative prose of Tessa McWatt, to the imaginative inner spaces of Nalo Hopkinson, to the fierce, thrilling poetry of d’bi young, Literature Alive encompasses the entire breadth of this creative movement. We sit down with living legend Louise Bennett as she reflects on her illustrious career. We hit the city streets with DJ and hip hop artist Jemeni. We travel to Trinidad with André Alexis, and to literary festivals in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. We see how vibrant Caribbean culture continues to be as it expands around the globe, and how vital the act of storytelling is to it.

Literature Alive is a multi-faceted project. The documentaries will be accompanied by a series of audio books, featuring dramatic readings of some of our authors’ works. The series will also be enhanced by the website Literature Alive Online, providing discussion forums, study guides, and an online book club.

Caribbean Tales and Leda Serene Films are proud and excited to produce Literature Alive for Bravo!, Canadian Learning Television, Book Television, and Gayelle Television (Trinidad), and hope you will share in that excitement.

SELECTED EPISODES



Memory Places

Author and playwright **Andre Alexis** takes us on a tour of those places that spark his memories and stir his imagination. We travel from his birthplace in Trinidad, to Ottawa, where he spent his childhood, and finally to the Toronto neighbourhood he now calls home. As he discusses his work, we come to realize why each location has such a remarkable hold on him.



The Man Behind The Mic

In this portrait of enterprising young poet/promoter/producer **Dwayne Morgan**, we witness his tireless efforts to mount rousing literary and music events in Toronto, and to bring his spoken word poetry to an ever-expanding and always appreciative audience.



My Dinner With Shani

We celebrate the launch of **Shani Mootoo's** recent novel *He Drowns She In The Sea* at an intimate and entertaining dinner party. You are invited to share in the festivities with Shani and her guests, filmmaker Richard Fung and writer Gamal Abdel-Shehid.



Home

Based in Britain, writer **Tessa McWatt** takes a rare trip to Toronto to visit her family. Along the way, Tessa discusses her life and work, her past and passions, and her evolving understanding of the concepts of 'belonging' and 'home'.



Un Homme Dans Sa Ville

Haitian writer **Dany Laferriere** grew up under the stifling dictatorship of Duvalier, before deciding to go into exile in Quebec. In this documentary, Dany takes us on a tour of Montreal, showing us those places that hold special meaning for him, and discussing his success in accepting, and being accepted by, his adopted home. A fascinating man in a charming city.



Jemini in the City

Poet, Writer, Actor, Comic, Journalist, Spoken-Word Artist, and Host of Flow 93.5's 'Morning Rush', **Jemini** has become a voice that stands out in the Babel of urban Toronto. Dedicated to her work and community, Jemini is an inspiration, and generously shares her talents with us in this documentary.



Blood, Dub, and the Matriarch

Dub poet **d'bi young** shares this documentary with her storyteller mother Anita Stewart. In this intimate portrait of the two women, we explore their bond, their history, and their common views on the power of poetry.



Believe

Children's author **Richardo Keens-Douglas** is first and foremost a storyteller. Performing his work for young audiences, we see him inspire the children to believe in themselves and have pride in their cultural heritage. Richardo speaks to us candidly about the importance of this message and about his struggle, as a young man, to find confidence in his identity.



Gardening with Olive

In a lush greenhouse, we join author **Olive Senior** to discuss her interest in gardens and birds, imagery that appears again and again in her poetry and prose. We also talk about her recent departure from fiction, with the release of her comprehensive Encyclopedia of Jamiaca Culture.



Miss Lou Then and Now

Louise Bennett is a Jamaican icon. The country's leading author, poet, and comedienne, Miss Lou pioneered the use of the Jamaican language, raising the patois dialect to an art level and reflecting the truth and essence of Jamaican life. In this remarkable interview conducted by Leonie Forbes, Louise reflects upon her rich life story and her illustrious body of work.



A Fabulous Space

Nalo Hopkinson's work combines Caribbean and Canadian culture, mixes her life story with folklore, blurs the boundaries between the real and the fantastic, and takes place in an invented urban landscape that reflects her hybrid history. She's been called a sci-fi writer, a speculative fiction writer, a fantasy writer, a fabulist, and somehow none of these terms seem to do her justice. Hear Nalo explain it all for herself in this intriguing documentary.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Series Creator/Producer
Directors

Frances-Anne Solomon
Frances-Anne Solomon
Ngardy Conteh
Regan Macaulay
Lana Lovell
Judy Singh
Tumelo Phadi

Associate Producer
Line Producer
Production Manager
Cinematographers

Regan Macaulay
Susan Fueg
Ngardy Conteh
Christopher Laird
Kiarash Sadigh
Frances-Anne Solomon
Colin Akoon
James Griffith
Judy Singh
Kristoff Rochon
Powys Dewhurst

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Anthony Baird
Jay Prychidny
Jeremy Singer
Steve Dazzi
Domenique Naipaul
Kevin Risk
Judy Singh

Composer/Sound Editor/Mixer
Interviewers

Frances-Anne Solomon
Mauri Hall
Frances-Anne Solomon
Tumelo Phadi

Online Editor/Graphics
Technical Coordinator
Publicity
Production Coordinator
Production Secretary
Production Assistant

Anthony Baird
Johnny Vong
Victoria Lord Public Relations
Stacey-Lee Maughn
Tania Ramirez
Paul Elimby
Mandisa Taylor
Catherine Emmanuel

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

LEDA SERENE FILMS

Leda Serene Films is a film, television and new media production company based in Toronto, Canada.

The company has produced an impressive range of award-winning programs—from feature films to more innovative multi-media projects—and is dedicated to placing people of colour in front of as well as behind the camera.

The company has made its name as a producer of high-quality dramas and documentaries that celebrate diversity—strong personal stories from different cultural perspectives in the global diaspora.

CaribbeanTales

Founded in 2004 by Frances-Anne Solomon, Caribbean Tales is an innovative not-for-profit multimedia company committed to producing Educational films, videos, and new media that celebrate the rich tradition of Caribbean-heritage storytelling. Caribbean Tales seeks to reflect the diversity and invention of Caribbean culture in its projects, using any and all types of media and state of the art technology.

Projects include the CaribbeanTales.org website, a vital, anti-colonial history of the Caribbean available to all on the worldwide web; an quarterly e-newsletter, featuring profiles of Caribbean storytellers and cultural commentary, as well as news and events; and the Literature Alive documentary series, audio books and web site.

For more information visit www.caribbeantaes.org

FRANCES-ANNE SOLOMON



Frances-Anne Solomon is a Director, Producer and Writer in film, TV and radio. She was born in England, grew up in Trinidad, and studied Theatre Arts at the University of Toronto before moving to the UK where she lived and worked for several years.

As a director, her credits include *Peggy Su!* (BBC Films 1997), *What My Mother Told Me* (Channel 4 1995), *Bideshi* (British Film Institute 1994), and *Valentine's Night* (BBC 1993). Documentaries directed include *Reunion* (BBC, 1993), and *I Is A Long Remembered Woman* (Arts Council of England 1991).

Alongside directing, between 1992-98, Frances-Anne also worked as a Script Editor, Producer and Executive Producer for BBC Single Drama & Films, where she was responsible for several films and TV movies, including the Black Screen strand, (for black writers, producers and directors) and Screen on the Tube (for new feature directors). Productions include, *Speak Like A Child*, director John Akomfrah, *Love Is The Devil*, director John Maybury, *The Sixth Happiness*, director Waris Hossein, *Flight*, director Alex Pillai and *Siren Spirits*, directors Ngozi Onwurah, Pratibha Parmar and Dani Williamson.

Prior to this she worked as a radio drama producer/director for the BBC, responsible for some 35 productions including *Monsoon* by Maya Chowdhry, *Nadir* by Parv Bancil, *Afrogoth* by Pete Kalu, *The Adoption Papers* by Jackie Kay and *Her Father's Daughter* by Winsome Pinnock.

Frances-Anne returned to Toronto in 1999. Through her company Leda Serene Films she continues to create, produce and direct film, television and new media projects. In 2001 she founded the not-for-profit company, Caribbean Tales, and in 2002 helmed the ground-breaking sitcom *Lord Have Mercy!* which was broadcast on 4 Canadian networks, and was nominated for 2 Geminis.

