

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STARFest Conversations series features Theresa Shea April 23

St. ALBERT—STARFest is thrilled to continue our new Sunday afternoon author series with Edmonton author Theresa Shea on Sunday, April 23 at 2 p.m., and her award-winning historical novel, *The Shade Tree*.

This compelling and dramatic exploration of racial injustice and conflict is set against the backdrop of some of America's most turbulent historical events. The lives of two white sisters and a Black midwife are inextricably linked through a series of haunting tragedies, and the characters must make difficult, life-changing decisions about where their loyalties lie: with their biological families or with a greater moral cause.

The Shade Tree won the 2020 Guernica Prize for best unpublished literary manuscript by a Canadian, and the 2022 Georges Bugnet Award for Fiction.

"Theresa Shea's books start fascinating conversations, and we're so happy to bring her to the STARFest Conversations series," says STARFest Director Michelle Steinhusen. "All of the library's copies of *The Shade Tree* are currently checked out. We have a strong community of readers, and I know they will come with great questions."

The Georges Bugnet Award jury had this to say about the novel: "Nuanced, emotional, complex — *The Shade Tree* is an engaging work of fiction that unfolds systemic racism, slavery, and feminism. Theresa Shea pushes boundaries in this coming-of-age story. A brutal but compelling journey of two sisters, one who savagely exploits her privilege while the other awakens too late to the knowledge that she is also an accomplice to social injustice."

Steinhusen will host Shea on April 23 through a reading and an informal audience conversation. The event begins at 2:00 p.m. in Forsyth Hall at the Downtown Library and will end with a book signing. Admission is free, coffee and cookies are provided. Register at sapl.ca.

Shea's first novel, *The Unfinished Child*, was published in 2013 and was a finalist for the Georges Bugnet Award and the Alberta Readers Choice Award. A word of mouth bestseller, it remains a book club favourite. Shea was born in the U.S. and moved to Canada in 1977. A graduate of McGill University, Queen's University, and the University of Alberta, Shea is currently working on *Dog Days of Planet Earth*, a novel that examines animal rights and the climate crisis through

the historical lens of the nuclear experiments conducted by the United States Government between 1945 and 1992.

STARFest Readers Festival offers a range of author events through the year: the star-studded ticketed fall festival takes place over three weeks each October. The festival also offers occasional ticketed "STARFest Presents" after-hours events throughout the year. The STARFest Conversations series will bridge these events with free, intimate Sunday afternoon author events throughout the year. Be the first to know about STARFest events and the 2023 festival by subscribing to our newsletter at www.starfest.ca.

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For more information contact:

Leslie Greentree, Marketing & Communications Specialist
St. Albert Public Library
780-459-1750
lgreentree@sapl.ca

or

Michelle Steinhusen, Festival Director
St. Albert Public Library
T: 780-418-6623
msteinhusen@sapl.ca