



## HANDS DOWN – THE STORY BEHIND THE PLAY

Whenever Toronto actor/producer Jen Pogue could get her spouse, film & television director Warren P. Sonoda, to take a night off work and join her at the theatre - they would always leave the venue inspired and full of ideas of the plays they dream of creating one day.

“Warren always loved theatre, and whenever we would go see a play, he’d always say how much he missed it. So I told him we should enter the Fringe and see what happened,” said Pogue, who is to produce and act in their upcoming show, *Hands Down*. “Absolutely not, was his response. So I entered us anyways!”

“Jen told me just to go for it. Besides, no one ever gets selected the first time they enter the Fringe Lottery, right?” said Sonoda with a smile, “ Well, we did. And we found out right as I began prep on a movie for CBC which hasn’t given me much time to work on it.”

Regardless, Sonoda decided to embrace the opportunity. “Warren always does his best work when facing a deadline,” adds Pogue.

But now with the impending July curtain fast approaching, Sonoda has sequestered himself to strictly writing and working with Pogue and co-producer Stephanie Jung to cast, develop and produce *Hands Down*. “I’m more or less treating this like a film, writing the play in screenplay format so I know the timing of it, enlisting my longtime production designer Diana Abbatangelo (*Coopers’ Camera*, *Textuality*, *Servitude*) and costume designer Jennifer Soutar (*Odd Squad*) to help sculpt the play’s aesthetic and casting some top-shelf film and television actors that I’ve either worked with or have been huge fans of. There were no auditions, just impassioned phone calls to join our circus and sign up for the team.”

“I have no problem directing a multi-million dollar movie or episode of television, but writing and directing a play? I’m terrified. To creating a living, breathing story with engaging, hilarious characters for 55 minutes? It’s the scariest thing I’ve had to do professionally. But I’m thrilled and honoured to be part of such a iconic, profoundly essential festival. We’re up for the challenge!”

With an incredible cast, crew and designers jumping on board and the Factory Mainspace as their stage, Pogue and Sonoda are excited to make this show happen. Because this is a duo that doesn’t just dream, they do.

## HANDS DOWN – THE PERSONAL CONNECTION

Warren P. Sonoda has entered a new phase of his career as a storyteller; once known as a gun-for-hire film and music video director, he has taken it upon himself to start telling more personal, adventurous, and character-driven stories deeply reflecting his views and thoughts on this crazy circus of life. *Hands Down* is his first step in crafting his own perspective on human nature, however modest, with the hope that he can spread his wings creatively.

“It’s important to me, at this point, mid-career, that I start to take risks again. The Toronto Fringe has allowed me to get back to the basics of telling a human story of struggle, endurance and when to just let go. Kinda like the place I am in my life right now. Although the narrative device is this epic, desperate, hilarious car contest, it’s really about how far people will go to get what they want, that sometimes they don’t know what they actually need, and that everyone has a limit, but you often don’t know what they are until you do something for 100 hours. I know there will be some people attending the show that will be curious if a filmmaker can segue into theatre. Some people will come to see if I fail, which is fine - that’s human nature too - but for me, it’s the simple act of taking a swing - hit or miss - which is the important part. People should come because it’s fascinating to see others swing for the fences, damn the outcome. That’s where it gets messy and fun – and maybe, hopefully with these incredible actors, that’s where true art really lives and breathes. I’m excited to find out.”