

FINBOROUGH | THEATRE

VIBRANT **NEW WRITING** | UNIQUE **REDISCOVERIES**
Spring-Summer Season 2017 | April–July 2017

The UK Premiere

SONGS IN THE KEY OF CREE

Music and Lyrics by Tomson Highway.

Performed by Patricia Cano, Tomson Highway and Marcus Ali.

Presented in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

"English is so hierarchical. In Cree, we don't have animate-inanimate comparisons between things. Animals have souls that are equal to ours. Rocks have souls, trees have souls. Trees are 'who,' not 'what.'" – Tomson Highway.

As part of the Finborough Theatre's celebrations of Canada's 150th birthday, and as part of a European tour including ten shows in seven countries in twenty-one days, the UK premiere of an evening of the songs of multi-award-winning writer, composer and musician **Tomson Highway**, **Songs in the Key of Cree**, plays for one late night performance at the Finborough Theatre on **Saturday, 6 May 2017**.

Songs in the Key of Cree is a compilation of songs written over the past thirty years by Cree-Canadian playwright/songwriter/pianist **Tomson Highway**. The twelve songs in the show are taken from five of his musicals – *Rose*, *The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito*, *The (Post) Mistress*, *The Sage*, *the Dancer*, and *the Fool* and his latest new musical as yet to be titled.

What makes the songs unique is their Cree lyrics. Cree is the most spoken Native language in Canada today, and many of Canada's most well-known place names are of Cree origin including Winnipeg, Manitoba, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Chicoutimi, Quebec and Ottawa. Cree is a very rhythmic language that lends itself very naturally to music and music-making, and the style of the music is "cabaret." Think Cole Porter and Kurt Weill...with Cree lyrics. Which is not to say that many songs will be sung in English as well. And some in French. (Mr. Highway is tri-lingual in Cree, his mother tongue, and French and English.)

The songs will be sung by extraordinary Peruvian-Canadian cabaret singer, **Patricia Cano**, accompanied by jazz saxophonist **Marcus Ali**, and by **Tomson Highway** himself on the piano.

Writer, Composer and Musician **Tomson Highway** was born in a snow bank on the Manitoba/Nunavut border to a family of nomadic caribou hunters. He had the great privilege of growing up in two languages: Cree, his mother tongue, and Dene, the language of the neighbouring nation, a people with whom they travelled and hunted. His parents, with no access to books, television or radio, would tell their children stories, and Tomson fell in love with the oral tradition of storytelling. When he was six, he was taken from his family and placed in residential school. Although he resented being taken away from his parents, he did learn music, and had plans to become a concert pianist. Tomson enjoys an international career as playwright, novelist, pianist, and songwriter. His critically acclaimed works include the plays *The Rez Sisters*, *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, *Rose*, *Ernestine Shuswap Gets her Trout* and the best-selling novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. For many years, Tomson ran Canada's premiere Native theatre company Native Earth Performing Arts (based in Toronto), out of which emerged an entire generation of professional Indigenous playwrights, actors and many Native theatre companies in Canada.

Tomson Highway's many awards include the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Best New Play and Best Production (three wins, five nominations), the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama (two nominations), the Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Award (two wins), winning the Toronto Arts Award (for outstanding contributions made over the years to the City of Toronto cultural industries), the Wang Harbourfront International Festival of Authors Award, the Silver Ticket Award (from the Dora Mavor Moore Awards, for outstanding contributions made over the years to the Toronto theatre industry), the National Aboriginal Achievement Award (2001), and the Order of Canada (1994).

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www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

Press Information

Vocalist **Patricia Cano** was born in Sudbury, Ontario, where she grew up in a Peruvian household. Upon graduating from the University of Toronto in Theatre and Spanish Literature, Patricia spent five years working in Paris with the world-renowned theatre company Le Théâtre du Soleil, during which time she travelled to Seoul to study traditional South Korean folk singing and drumming. Patricia has also spent time in Rio de Janeiro listening, playing, singing and feeling her way through the exceptional Carioca music scene. In 2009, Patricia launched her singing career here at home with her debut album *This is the New World*, co-created — in four languages — with her Brazilian musical partner, Carlos Bernardo. This album won Best Album — Solo artist at the North Ontario Music and Film Award Conference in 2011.

Marcus Ali is a Toronto-based saxophonist and a graduate of York University's jazz program. A versatile musician who is equally at home in a wide range of genres, he has played on over sixty albums on a variety of woodwinds (saxophones, flutes, clarinets, West African flutes, tin whistles). He has performed, toured, and recorded with dozens of bands including Grand Prix de Jazz award winner Nick Ali and Cruzao, Matt Dusk, Mr Something Something, Orquesta Fantasia, and The Composers Collective Big Band. He can currently be heard with the Ali Bros, Grüvoria, DRUMHAND, Soldiers of Song—a tribute to the Dumbells and multi-Juno nominated Jason Wilson. He has toured extensively across Canada as well as throughout the US, the UK, the Caribbean and Japan.

The Press on Tomson Highway

"One of the 100 most important people in Canadian history" Maclean's Magazine

"Turns out the man is as ridiculously talented as a musician as he is a scribe." Karen Fricker, Toronto Star

"Tomson Highway's *The (Post) Mistress* is a cheeky musical whose disarming humour, magnetic lead actor, and jazzed up score sweeten its strong political and cosmological message." Trevor Abes, The Theatre Reader

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Box Office 0844 847 1652 Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Saturday, 6 May at 9.45pm.

Tickets £18, £16 concessions. (Group Bookings – 1 free ticket for every 10 tickets booked.)

Performance Length: Approximately 70 minutes with no interval.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Neil McPherson on e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **07977 173135**

Download press releases and images at <http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/press-resources.php>