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New Native Theatre's Festival Debuts the Unexpected as It Kicks-Off Tenth Anniversary Season

It is a prolific time for Native American performing artists as New Native Theatre performs the third annual National Native American Ten Minute Play Festival at Gremlin Theatre in Saint Paul, Minnesota August 8 through 12, 2018.

The festival invites local and international Native American and First Nations artists from across the continent to share brand new stories with the Twin Cities community. It is an evening filled with laughter and celebration as Native people control their narrative. This year, NNT presents 13 new plays by emerging and professional playwrights from diverse tribal backgrounds and hosts an international actor in residence from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The plays take on a wide variety of themes, "A Christmas in Ochopee" by Montana Cypress explores the classic "American family" play under a Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida lens, while William S. Yellow Robe, Jr., who is Assiniboine, returns to the festival for the third year in a row, exploring cultural appropriation with humor in "Files of the Indian Police." Deanna StandingCloud is following up her successful play, "Blood Quantum Physics," from last year's festival, which went on to be performed by NNT throughout last year and won the 2018 Wisconsin Native Playwrights' contest, with its sequel, "Virtual Medicine Man," that examines western society's obsession with Native culture while her characters desperately protect and hold onto their own Ojibwe values.

This year's line-up also includes plays written by: Tim Brown (White Earth), Andrea Fairbanks (Leech Lake), Lara Gerhardson (White Earth/Red Lake), Alex Shunka Wakan Wacipi Hesbrook Ramier (Cheyenne River), Bret Jones (Muscogee Creek), Lennixx-Rodney Treat Lee (Cheyenne River), Michael D. Nephew (Eastern Band of Cherokee), Laura Annawyn Shamas (Chickasaw), Odessa Star Comes Out (Oglala Lakota), and June Thiele (Athabaskan and Yupik).

Some plays are based on personal experiences and reflections about what it is like to be Native in America today. The playwrights explore their lives and write personal truths without holding back. "New Native Theatre is a place that champions Native authors, we're excited to present a wide array of new ideas to Twin Cities audiences, once again we're breaking the stereotype of what's 'expected' in the Native American narrative. This year's festival is full of the unexpected." Says Artistic Director, Rhiana Yazzie.

In 13 delightful, funny, and serious plays, NNT trail blazes through centuries of untold stories that deserve to be told. Even with the most tragic stories something can be learned or can bring joy. "The American theatre truly needs Native American stories like these," says festival dramaturge, Blossom

Johnson, who is in residence for the summer from Columbia University. Her new play “Amasani” will premiere in NNT’s upcoming tenth anniversary season which will be announced in its entirety at the Saturday night celebration after the 7:30PM show where blues guitarist Wade Fernandez will perform. New Native Theatre is the only theatre in the Upper Midwest dedicating its resources to only producing plays by Native authors and artists.

This year’s festival also includes an actor in residence. Lorne Maxwell Duquette who is Cree First Nations of Saskatoon, Canada is this year’s resident actor. “When I step onto the stage I enter another realm, it’s a spiritual shift and I incorporate my Cree spirituality to lead me safely from the start to finish of a production, as to not lose myself in the characters I bring to life. New Native Theatre is so much more than the final product on that stage, its ten years of hard work behind the scenes. And behind the curtain lies a whole other show of hard working individuals giving of themselves to provide you a journey to another world.” Says Duquette.

The performances begin Wednesday, August 8th at 7:30 P.M. and go through August 12th at 2:00 P.M. Special celebration concert featuring Wade Fernandez begins at 9:30PM on Saturday, August 11 followed by a dance party ending at midnight. New Native theatre is happy to bring the festival back to the Gremlin Theatre for the second time located at 550 Vandalia Street, St. Paul, MN 55114. All tickets are Pay-What-You-Can at the door. Advance tickets are full price at \$25 and are available at www.BrownPaperTickets.com.

New Native Theatre is a new way of thinking about, looking at, and staging Native American stories for the stage. Based in the Twin Cities, it is the only and longest running professional Native American theatre company in the Upper Midwest focusing exclusively on Native American playwrights, actors, and directors. For more details or questions, please contact New Native Theatre at (612) 367-7639, or email at info@newnativetheatre.org. Visit www.newnativetheatre.org for details.

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