

Theatre Passe Muraille

John & Waleed

January 31, February 1, 2021

7:30pm

Running Time 75 min

John and Waleed

by John Millard & Waleed Abdulhamid

John is a Toronto based composer, singer and songwriter from Kitchener, Ontario. Waleed is a multi-instrumentalist and composer from Khartoum in the Sudan. With open conversations and through friendship, the two musicians weave traditional Canadian and Sudanese folk songs and their own compositions, through a performance that explores their lives, traditions and journeys. John & Waleed offers a unique and personal experience on storytelling and cultural intersection. It is, from Sudan to Southern Ontario, a journey told through music.

This digital project was made possible with the assistance of Charles Street

Video: charlesstreetvideo.com

Credits

Created & Performed by

John Millard &

Waleed Abdulhamid

All music arranged by

John Millard &

Waleed Abdulhamid

Dramaturge & Director

Marjorie Chan

Set & Costume Designer

Joanna Yu

Projection Designer

Kaitlin Hickey

Lighting Designer

Logan Cracknell

Sound Coordinator

Kai Masaoka

Stage Manager

Nicole Eun-Ju Bell

Digital Producer & Editor

Indrit Kasapi

TPM Production Manager

Eric Read

Camera Operators

Rinchen Dolma

& Ulla Laidlaw

**Additional footage
& original animation**

Lily Ross-Millard

& Kaitlin Hickey

Assistant Dramaturge

Rinchen Dolma

Thank You

Erin Fitzgerald, Kai Yueh Chen, Hazel Venzon, Emilie Aubin, Andy McKim, Liza Mattimore, Cahoots Theatre, David Dacks and the Music Gallery, Ken McKenzie, Array Space Dean Johnston and Jonathan Leung-Sam

Banjar Provided by Teilhard Frost www.tfrostmusic.com

Development for this version of John & Waleed is supported by Donald Simpson in memory of Jan Simpson.

Director's Notes:

John & Waleed first premiered in 2017. Not long before we started rehearsal, Azzeddine Soufiane, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Ibrahima Barry and Abdelkrim Hassane were killed at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec on Sunday, January 29, 2017 in an act fuelled by hate. How can there be such hate in our country? There is a desire to protest, "This is not my Canada."

But sadly, it is.

Three years later, the murder of George Floyd emboldened a social revolution and thrust Black Lives Matter into the mainstream conversation. For us as artists, the balm of shared music and friendship called to us again. Simplistically, the show could be viewed as the story of a Black man and white man who make music together.

This interpretation belies the virtuosity and artistry of these two musicians. Framed and bolstered by their music, the work circles an ocean of themes whilst navigating the uncomfortable parts of this conversation: colonialism, religion, privilege, race.

The original design was of a sail, like one might find on a sea-faring vessel of yore. For me, the sail speaks of our journeys from afar, and the global migration of people. Living on the shores of Lake Ontario, on the land of the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, and the Anishinaabe, including the current caretakers, the Mississaugas of the Credit, makes the non-Indigenous residents of Toronto immigrants. Whether driven by economics, or war, by force or desire, or simply in search of a better life, we have made Canada our home. Connected by a colonial rope that binds us, we have been thrust together, in spite of our different beliefs, traditions and experiences.

For John & Waleed, they too are a part of this collective history of migration. Their geographic origins have shaped the belief-systems, which they, and their music evolved from. Waleed, first came to music in the Sufi centres of the Sudan, and growing up in Southern Ontario, John's father was an ordained minister. Indeed, John's hometown, the city of Kitchener, is named after the British General who invaded Khartoum, Sudan's capital city. Even their instruments are linked. The modern banjo, most commonly associated with the American folk traditions, originated in Africa, as the banjar. Made with gourds and animal skins, the instrument was recreated by those enslaved and forcibly transported to the American south from Africa. Today, when John accompanies an African children's song, on the banjo, an instrument drawn from this colonial narrative, it is unexpected, and surreal, yet also sounds utterly apt.

Their own music follows this migratory tale, from the traditional, to their own compositions. Our shared colonial history is such that John & Waleed are in a time and place that, in spite of their different backgrounds, they cannot only be friends, but also musical collaborators. The unique glory that is their music, is compounded by the fact that they perform it seemingly with ease. And yet, their virtuosity disguises the complexity and difficulty of melding their respective diverse musical approaches. It is through their hard work, and determination that our musical experience will be so harmonious. For me, it speaks to the respect and love that these two friends have for each other and their craft. As with any relationship that is important, it takes effort, empathy, and good will for success.

John & Waleed is more than just a show with music and storytelling about two friends. It can inspire and represent a way forward in tumultuous times. We not only identify with their camaraderie, and their friendship but we also desire to similarly act with respect for others that share our space. We aspire for peace for ourselves, our families, and our communities. In the cold, inky nights of Canadian winters, John & Waleed's music can be a beacon to light the way. It makes us want to affirm, "This is my Canada." So, welcome.

Marjorie Chan | Director, John & Waleed
Artistic Director, Theatre Passe Muraille

Season Sponsors

TPM's 20.21 Season is sponsored by TD Ready Commitment. The season is also supported by Canadian Heritage, Canada Council for the Arts, Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, Hal Jackman Foundation, The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation, Martin Atkinson Foundation at Toronto Foundation and Metcalfe Foundation

On Tour

This show is part of a digital tour, streaming to our presenting partners across Ontario: **The Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts, First Ontario Performing Arts, St. Catherine's, The Grand Kingston, Public Energy Performing Arts, Peterborough, The Rose, Brampton.**

Upcoming digital shows February 10-13, 2021 – 11:11 by Samson Bonkeabantu Brown. March 3-6, 2021 – Speculation by Leslie Ting **visit www.passemuraille.ca for more information**

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Régine Cadet | Managing Director

Indrit Kasapi | Associate Artistic Director

Rinchen Dolma | Metcalf Artistic Director Intern

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Eric Read | Production & Facilities Manager

David Fisher | Mainspace Technician

Administration

Petra Chevrier | Financial Director

Jenn Sartor | Producer

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