

Audio Preshow note for *Women of the Fur Trade*

Welcome, this is the audio preshow note for *Women of the Fur Trade* by playwright Frances Končan and directed by Renae Morriveau. This is a co-production with three theatre companies National Arts Centre Indigenous Theatre, the Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC), and Native Earth Performing Arts.

Women of the Fur Trade is set in eighteen hundred and something something, somewhere upon the banks of a Reddish River in Treaty One Territory. Three very different women with a preference for twenty-first century slang sit in a fort sharing their views on life, love, and the hot nerd Louis Riel. This lively historical satire of survival and cultural inheritance shifts perspectives from the male gaze onto women's power in the past and present through the lens of the rapidly changing world of the Canadian fur trade.

This show is approximately 2 hours long with no intermission. Please be advised that this play includes discussions and references to colonialism, racism, reconciliation, treaties, astrology, sexuality, marriage, war, genocide and violence. This show also includes strong language, fighting, death, and loud and overlapping sounds that surround the audience. The play takes a satirical look at history and how we relate to one another. It presents us an opportunity to consider these with hope and humour. For the full list of content notes for *Women of the Fur Trade* please visit the content note linked on the website's show page.

The set is designed by Lauchlin Johnston and is in place when we enter the theatre. The whole stage space is approximately 20 paces wide and 15 paces deep and about a storey high above us. Wrapping the rear stage boundary is a multi-coloured ribbon curtain using the Métis sash colours of red, blue, green, white, yellow, and black. This ribbon curtain features over three kilometers of hand cut ribbon that hangs down from the high ceilings of the theatre to about 2 feet off the ground. The ribbon curtain wraps around the back in a semicircle, framing the stage space. At centre stage is a raised square wooden platform about waist high. It is turned so one of the square's corners points towards the audience. This is the fort that Marie-Angelique, Cecilia and Eugenia live in. The point of the platform is about 2 paces from the front row of the audience. The platform is put together with various lengths of wooden planks making the edge of the platform uneven, and appearing as though it is hastily put together. Its understructure shows the scaffold of the platform. || At the back of the platform is a floating gallery wall featuring portraits of powerful men in gold picture frames. The portraits are brought to life with projections by the show's Projection Designer Cande Andrade. The men's portraits are animated with movements such as blowing a kiss, or their backgrounds glow in yellow, in pink, or with embers floating across the faces. At the center of the gallery wall are two larger portraits. To our left is Louis Riel and to our right is Thomas Scott. These portraits are large, about 40 inches tall and 30 inches wide. This gallery wall obscures the stairs and platform behind, giving the sense of containment and

confinement while on the platform. || Three wooden rocking chairs are placed on the platform in a row. Beside each rocking chair there is a large bag where various props like tea cups, quills and paper, and puppets are stored. To our left is the rocking chair with a well-worn floral cushion, beside the chair there is a pink iridescent bag trimmed with pink fur, which belongs to Marie-Angelique. The center rocking chair is Cecilia's chair, and next to it is a large green cloth traveling bag. To our right, is Eugenia's rocking chair with a well-worn floral cushion. Beside it is a black athletic bag with hot pink handles, a decorated beaded pattern adorns the sides. Beneath and around the platform is the black stage floor of the NAC's studio space. This emphasizes the confinement of the platform area.

At the end of this audio note there are more descriptions about how the set changes during the show, including the explanation of surprise elements. If you would prefer to keep these a surprise, you can stop playback after the website information is shared.

A note about description in this audio note. Renae Morriveau, as a Cree person, would like to draw your awareness to language use in relation to how someone is described. In Cree and other Indigenous languages people are related to by their name or role in community. For example a person might be referred to as a child, parent, elder, knowledge keeper or auntie. In this note it is important to honour and express this way of relating to people and understand that this is in contrast to western practices such as in the English language where pronouns and individualism are centred. In this note, characters are described according to Indigenous practice, while actors are described with pronouns.

There are five characters in this play. Characters are described in order of appearance and when they speak.

Kelsey Kanatan Wavey (they/she/he) is a plus size, femme presenting person of average height with short dark hair and light skin. Kelsey Kanatan Wavey plays Marie-Angelique, a Métis person. Marie-Angelique wears a fashionable long-sleeve ribbon skirt dress. The base colour is blue with Métis floral motifs, the ribbons decorate the skirt in bands of hot pink, neon green and yellow. A light purple floral lace overlays the entire dress softening the look with scalloped trim at the bottom. A hot pink ribbon is wrapped as a belt for the dress. Marie-Angelique wears a blue beaded necklace and beaded red dancer moccasin boots. Marie-Angelique has long black curly hair with the front pieces tied back, and enters wearing a long fur coat. (pt 8)

Cheri Maracle (she/her) is an Indigenous woman of the Mohak Nation. She is also Irish on her mother's side. Cheri Maracle has a medium build, is 5' 8" and has long dark brown hair. She plays Cecilia. Cecilia is a white person who is visibly pregnant at the beginning of the play. Eventually Cecilia gives birth and is no longer pregnant. Cecilia has long red hair that is styled in a Victorian manner with braided loops over the ears and a bun holding the rest of the hair. Cecilia wears a floor length pink floral motif dress with a collar and long sleeves. A light pink tulle is folded in a V shape over the bust and shoulders which softens the dress and covers some of the floral motif. Cecilia enters wearing a short fur coat, and also wears simple light brown moccasins.

Lisa Nasson (she/her) is a Mi'kmaw Indigenous woman. She has long straight dark brown hair with light brown skin and is approximately 5'1". Lisa Nasson plays Eugenia, a Ojibwe person and enters wearing a long fur coat. Eugenia's hair is styled in two long braids with beaded hair ties. Eugenia's regalia also includes a floral breastplate fringed with green threads covering a fuchsia dress shirt with green ribbon on the cuffs. Eugenia also has long wide pants embellished with floral decoration and green ribbon. This regalia is complemented by ankle height blue moccasins that are beaded and a double pocket belt with matching floral motifs.

These three friends, Marie-Angelique, Cecilia and Eugenia, occupy the fort platform area. The male characters, Louis Riel and Thomas Scott, never step foot on the platform.

Jonathan Fisher (he/him) is a slender, heterosexual Anishinabe man. He has long dark brown hair with grey wisdom highlights. He is of average height 5'11". Jonathan Fisher plays Louis Riel, a Métis person. Louis wears a long waist coat and pants in Métis sash colours over a black vest, white dress shirt and black bow tie. Around Louis' waist is a Métis sash. Louis also wears black sneakers with white soles. Louis has a grey mustache, long brown hair with grey wisdom highlights and his hair is tied into a bun.

Jesse Gervais (he/him) is a Métis man with short brown hair and an athletic build. He is a tall man of 6'2". Jesse Gervais plays Thomas Scott, who is an Irishman. Thomas wears a white dress shirt, plaid vest and cravat with a gem brooch. The look is completed with a long waist coat, pin striped pants and brown dress shoes. Thomas has side-parted, gelled hair and brown mutton chops.

For more information about *Women of the Fur Trade* please read the program available at shorturl.at/knrwX. For questions about your tickets if you booked through GCTC please contact GCTC's box office by email boxoffice@gctc.ca or by phone 613-236-5196. If you booked your tickets through the NAC please contact the NAC box office by phone 1-844-985-2787.

This is the section of the audio note that will discuss the changes of the set and surprise elements of the show. If you would prefer to not know, this is your chance to stop the recording. (pause). This section will discuss the back portraits, the stage platform and elements that come down from the ceiling.

As you will recall, there is a floating gallery of portraits. The two largest portraits of Louis Riel and Thomas Scott have canvases that will roll up to reveal the live actors playing these well-known historical figures inside the frame. The portrait canvas is then rolled down again.

Moving to the wooden platform of the fort. This structure appears to be quickly built and alludes to the wooden gallows that were used for hanging executions. At the end of the play Louis Riel is hanged in a symbolic way. Louis will stand on the lower part of the

black stage floor beside the platform. Then a noose will drop from the ceiling as a trap door opens with a very loud bang. The noose stays for the rest of the play.

Another surprise element in the show is how the characters send letters. When a letter is delivered or is sent, a basket is lowered from the ceiling while a pitch bending violin plays "O' Canada". The basket is emblazoned with the Canada Post logo. This theme music plays each time a basket is lowered or raised. Another basket is lowered later in the play for Thomas Scott with the FedEx logo on it.

In another fun moment, Marie-Angelique and Cecilia use puppets they have made of Louis Riel and Thomas Scott. Both puppets appear to be made of grey woolen socks with red trim and have open jackets revealing sexy abs. The Louis Riel puppet has a Métis sash, and a blue jacket, black curly yarn hair and a mustache. The Thomas Scott puppet has a mustard colour jacket, yellow yarn hair and hudson bay company coloured leg warmers.

Thank you for listening and enjoy the show.

End of audio note.