

FemFest 2017: Coming of Age - Celebrating 15 Years!

Winnipeg, June 1, 2017 – In 2003 *Chicago* was dominating film awards, George W. Bush was leading the charge in Iraq, *America's Next Top Model* premiered on television and FemFest was launched. This year we celebrate FemFest entering a new phase with FemFest 2017: Coming of Age, running from September 16 to 23. The 15th annual festival featuring powerful plays by women for everyone, will take over the Asper Centre for Theatre and Film for eight days of exciting performances. This year will also feature a special performance from an award-winning author at the West End Cultural Centre and a special interactive experience at the Millennium Library.

This year's theme revolves around coming in to one's own – growing up, maturing and accepting oneself. FemFest 2017 will take audiences through an empowering journey as they explore how we move forward as individuals and as a community. We are excited to announce the touring shows and guest artists who will be in Winnipeg for FemFest 2017:

Judith Thompson is one of Canada's most celebrated and prolific playwrights. Her visit to FemFest in 2012 was profound for the writers who worked with her and audiences who heard her speak. To celebrate 15 years FemFest wanted to bring back Canada's top female playwright.

Watching Glory Die – Produced by Mulgrave Road Theatre (Guysborough, NS): In order to truly explore the craft of our guest artist we are excited to welcome this powerful play by Judith Thompson from an East Coast Company with a long history of producing compelling work. The script was inspired by the true story of New Brunswick teen Ashley Smith. Deliberately fictionalized, a riveting and deeply compassionate portrait of three women - Glory, incarcerated for minor offences at age 14; Rosellen, the girl's adoptive mother desperately trying to remain connected to her daughter; Gail, a prison guard, walking the line between her 'orders' and her conscience.

Tomboy Survival Guide – Written and Performed by award-winning author Ivan Coyote (Vancouver, B.C.): *Tomboy Survival Guide* is the music and story-driven collaboration of award-winning writer and storyteller Ivan Coyote, the hummingbird high-energied drummer and percussionist Sal Zori, the mellifluous baselines of Pebbles Willekes, and the subtle and graceful tinkering of trumpet player Alison Gorman. FemFest is excited to partner with the West End Cultural Centre for the first time to present this unique concert experience. Ivan Coyote will also be doing a special lecture and reading from his books for queer youth as part of the festival.

FemFest 2017 will also include the Winnipeg premiere of ***Two Indians*** by Toronto playwright, Falen Johnson. After years apart two cousins meet in a Toronto alley to recreate a ceremony from their childhood, but can they remember how? When the words missing and murdered, truth and reconciliation, occupation and resistance are everywhere, how do two Mohawk women stand their ground? The piece will mark the stage directorial debut of Sonya Ballantyne, rising Indigenous film-maker. Of course the festival will continue to offer our Bake-Off playwriting competition; readings of new works in development; and an opening cabaret featuring fantastic female artists in music, theatre and film.

FemFest runs from **September 16-23, 2017** at the **Asper Centre for Theatre and Film** (at the University of Winnipeg, 400 Colony Street). Tickets are \$15-\$20 for single shows and a full festival pass is available for \$50. FemFest welcomes all audience members to join the celebration of female artists and enjoy the local and national art scene. For more information visit our website: www.femfest.ca.

About Sarasvati Productions: Founded in Winnipeg in 2000, we seek to inspire artists and audiences through the use of theatre and to provide a place where artists can develop, showcase their skills and celebrate their creativity. FemFest has been up and kicking since 2003 and to date has showcased hundreds of artists!