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Canadian WWI Soldier Songs and Stories Gain Fresh Perspective in Brand New Multidisciplinary Project, *Ridge*

Writer, storyteller, and musician Brendan McLeod explores themes of grief, war, and our collective connection to the past through the lens of the Battle of Vimy Ridge and the words of the soldiers who were there.

Vancouver, BC — The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts at the University of British Columbia presents ***Ridge***, a premiere multidisciplinary performance from award-winning Canadian artist **Brendan McLeod** on Thursday March 26, 2020 in the Chan Centre’s Telus Studio Theatre, part of the Beyond Words series. *Ridge* uses direct storytelling, verbatim theatre, and live music from Vancouver-based folk group **The Fugitives** to create a visceral work about the Battle of Vimy Ridge and other formative events in our country’s history.

“When the Chan Centre presented Brendan’s monologue *Brain* in 2016, a personal and candid take on consciousness and OCD, I was blown away by what a truly captivating storyteller he is,” says Wendy Atkinson, Chan Centre programming manager and curator of the Beyond Words series. “He has a unique ability to delve into extremely challenging topics, from mental health to—in the case of *Ridge*—world war, and make us see them in a new and intimately personal way. His performances shine a light on our shared humanity, and I have no doubt the premiere of his latest work will leave us moved, reflective, and perhaps even unsettled by the questions he poses.”

Ridge is a work that probes difficult yet necessary questions about how and why we grieve. It’s a vivid and kinetic ride through history, as well as an intimate examination of our connection to the past. The piece investigates soldiers’ experiences and wonders how, as a society, we can go about remembering the sacrifices of veterans more actively, while at the same time taking a stand against the exploitation of young lives and confronting the futility of war. McLeod utilizes direct storytelling, as well as historical readings of soldiers’ words, to convey the sentiments and collective documentation that exists around the 1917 Battle of Vimy Ridge—often touted as the “battle that made Canada”—which resulted in more than 10,000 Canadian casualties.

Branching off of those themes, the piece also features Vancouver-based band The Fugitives performing a collection of re-imagined WWI-era soldier songs. Updated melodies and music bring new life to wartime lyrics, including the tune “Take Me Back to Old Ontario,” based on an original 1915 composition by Canadian soldier Frank E. Balson. The band has left the lyrics intact so audiences experience the songs the way they were written, but has updated them with modern melodies and arrangements so they resonate more closely with contemporary audiences. The Fugitives, founded in 2007 by McLeod, have been nominated for multiple Canadian Folk Music Awards and a Western Canadian Music Award. Their 2013 album *Everything Will Happen* spent ten weeks on the top ten Canadian folk charts, and earned them a support slot across Western Canada with Buffy Sainte-Marie and an appearance at UK’s Glastonbury Festival. In 2018, the band toured across both Canada and the EU, and had an official showcase at the Folk Alliance Conference in Kansas City, MO.

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Brendan McLeod is the author of one novel, a one-woman play, two monologues, and a musical storytelling show centered on the life of Rachmaninoff. Of his performance in the monologue *Brain*, the *Georgia Straight* said, “McLeod is so smart, his rapid-fire delivery so clean and confident, his wit so casual, copious, and reassuring that he makes the journey feel safe for the audience. He gives himself; he feels less alone and we feel less alone. That’s what theatre is all about.” *The Winnipeg Free Press* said of McLeod, “there’s an easy precision to his delivery, which combines crack timing with immediate, unforced intimacy.” A former Canadian SLAM champion, he was the Poet of Honour at the 2012 Canadian Festival of Spoken Word.

About the Beyond Words Series

The Chan Centre’s multidisciplinary Beyond Words series was launched in 2012 to explore the power of storytelling through performance as an agent of change and means of igniting conversation. Previous events have included sold-out engagements with avant-garde multimedia artist Laurie Anderson, as well as throat singer Tanya Tagaq and Greenlandic mask dancer Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory. The 2020/21 Beyond Words series will be announced in Spring 2020.

About the Chan Centre for Performing Arts at UBC

Since 1997, the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts has earned an international reputation for its striking design, stellar acoustics, and exceptional programming. Artists, critics, and patrons alike are unanimous in their praise of the facility, winning it a place among North America's top-rated performing arts spaces. Featuring three unique venues—the Chan Shun Concert Hall, the Telus Studio Theatre, and the Royal Bank Cinema—the Chan Centre is a vital part of UBC campus and community life where artistic and academic disciplines merge to inspire new perspectives on the world around us. Past performers and speakers include Wynton Marsalis, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Renée Fleming, Dan Savage, Yo-Yo Ma, Jane Goodall, Herbie Hancock, Lila Downs, and Anoushka Shankar.

LISTING INFORMATION

The Chan Centre Presents *Ridge*

Date:	March 26, 2020 at 7:30pm
Ticket Price:	\$35/\$27/\$15
Address:	Chan Centre for the Performing Arts University of British Columbia 6265 Crescent Road Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1
Box Office:	604-822-2697 / chancentre.com Open Tue–Sat, 12pm–5pm
Website:	chancentre.com
Link to Artist Photos:	chancentre.com/press-downloads/

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For further media information:

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