



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Canadian WWI Soldier Songs and Stories Gain Fresh Perspective in *Ridge* World Premiere, Adapted from Stage to Screen

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 world premiere feature film from award-winning Canadian artist **Brendan McLeod**, as part of its online Fall 2020 Dot Com Series. *Ridge* uses direct storytelling, verbatim theatre, and live music from Vancouver-based folk group **The Fugitives** to create a visceral film about the Battle of Vimy Ridge and other formative events in our country's history. Shot in October 2020 at the Chan Centre, *Ridge* was initially scheduled to premiere in March of this year but was postponed due to the pandemic and re-imagined for the screen as a state-of-the-art cinematic experience. The film will premiere at Vancouver's The Cinematheque on November 7, followed by an official online release on Remembrance Day (November 11) at chancentre.com.

"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 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.

The film adaptation of *Ridge* was recorded on legendary Cooke Anamorphic lenses by a production team including Director Mike Southworth, Director of Photography Byron Kopman and others, using a variety of locations throughout the Chan Centre as the innovative set. From dressing rooms, to the canopy that soars above the stage, to the orchestra pit, McLeod and his band The Fugitives were able to eradicate any pre-conceived notions of how a performing arts centre and orchestral concert hall should be utilized, and transform the venue itself into a character all its own.

McLeod's Vancouver-based folk band The Fugitives (with Adrian Glynn, Carly Frey, and Chris Suen) perform a collection of re-imagined WWI-era soldier songs throughout *Ridge*. The band rewrote new melodies and music for the soldiers' words, in order to more readily access the emotional content of the lyrics, and to continue folk music's long tradition of reshaping songs over time—the same way

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soldiers reshaped these songs in the trenches. “During the pandemic, where war metaphors abound, these songs have given us much-needed perspective around hardship, the sacrifice of previous generations, and, mostly, what vulnerable communities can be forced to endure at the hands of the government and military in a crisis,” the band says. “We think about these soldiers when we sing, and hope you will too.” The Fugitives will release *Trench Songs*, a brand new stripped-down album featuring these tunes and recorded during the pandemic, on November 5, 2020.

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 Chan Centre Dot Com Series

The Chan Centre’s online-only Dot Com Series features brand new digital performances by artists from around the globe, filmed both internationally and right at home on the Chan Centre stage. This fall, six virtual performances will be available online from designated premiere dates in an on-demand format: Jeremy Dutcher (Sep 25), PIQSIQ (Oct 16), Cristina Pato (Oct 23), Ridge (Nov 11), The Music of Raven Chacon (Nov 20), and Abel Selaocoe: Songs of Liberation (Nov 27). All fall performances will be available to watch on-demand until December 21, 2020. Register to watch one, or subscribe to gain access to all six.

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 Dot Com Series presents *Ridge*

Date:	In-person screenings: November 7 at 4:30pm + 7pm, The Cinematheque (1131 Howe St) Watch online at chancentre.com from November 11 at 7pm PST
Venue Address:	Chan Centre for the Performing Arts University of British Columbia 6265 Crescent Road Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1
Website:	chancentre.com/dot-com-series/
Link to Artist Photos:	chancentre.com/press-downloads/

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