

Hello! I'm Ksenia Broda-Milian, the Education and Enrichment manager at Royal MTC, and this is the audio introduction to *Rubaboo - A Metis Cabaret* at the John Hirsch Mainstage. This introduction covers some visual aspects of the performance. Another track lists the cast and creative team. This introduction takes five and a half minutes.

This production is 90 minutes long, with no intermission. It is a mix of song and storytelling, without a linear narrative. Andrea, the creator of the show, often speaks directly to the audience.

There are four performers: Andrea, the main singer and speaker; Robert, who mostly plays guitars; Karen, who mostly plays fiddle; and Nathen, who plays a chapman stick - this looks like a board with a tapered end and ten strings. Nathen holds it on a steep slant with one hand and plucks or strums it with the other hand. All four performers play hand drums, which are on stands across the stage like tiny white moons. Robert and Nathen wear fitted brown and grey pants, button down shirts, and vests. Karen wears a short sleeve shirt, dark vest, and purple ribbon skirt. Andrea wears a white blouse with embroidery, wide belt with embroidered flowers and strawberries, and blue ribbon skirt with golden yellow bands. She adds a red shawl each time she tells us the story of The Circle.

A wide sky stretches across the back of the stage, changing colours with each song to a different time of day - for example, a cheerful blue, mysterious sunset with red at the horizon, twilight tinged with purple, and deep indigo speckled with stars. Sometimes white wisps of clouds reach across, carved out of light.

In front of the sky are three striking pillars of fabric. The central one is in a soft hourglass shape. When all four performers stand together in front of it, it is just as wide at its base as that group. It tapers up towards its centre, then expands again. On either side are convex shaped fabric, widest at the bottom and then widening slightly again at their tops, like the trunks of trees.

Each pillar features artwork by Leah Marie Dorian, with bright, solid colours, flowing geometry, and many small circles that reflect Metis beadwork. The left one features a

cloaked woman looking towards the centre of the stage. Curving lines and circles stretch upwards from her towards the ceiling. She stands on the green back of a turtle, associated with the earth. The artist, Leah, says that Turtle teaches patience, stability, and grounding, and represents a creation story of many Indigenous cultures where North America was created on the back of a giant turtle - hence the traditional name Turtle Island. A sunflower grows from the turtle shell, which Leah says teaches us to follow natural cycles.

The pillar on the right shows a similar woman, looking to the one on the left. She too has curving lines extending from her face, and a heart filled with dots floats in front of her. She is standing on the bank of a blue river with spiralling waves and fish.

The central pillar has a yellow half-circle at the bottom, filled with smaller dark circles and surrounded by green grass. Orange and red flames reach upwards, and swirling dotted lines of blue smoke extend up from that. Andrea often stands in front of this pillar, so that the lines extend up from her head and shoulders. Just above head height is a circle with red dotted edge filled with orange curlicues, and a blue-edged cream circle above that, reminiscent of the moon.

Andrea will talk about the elements of earth, air, fire, and water, all of which are represented in these paintings. The textures at the base of each pillar stretch forward onto the floor, creating paths forward across the stage towards the audience. The stage is highest near these large fabric panels. This is where the four performers are for most of the songs. They each have a microphone, and a woven basket nearby, interspersed with low black speakers and instrument stands.

There is a wide platform one step down from the musician level. The painted path continues down the centre. To the left of the path is a firepit: grey stones surround chopped wood, and from within light shines up on a large iron cookpot.

At the beginning of the show, you will hear a strong drumbeat. Andrea will enter with a basket that she puts beside the fire, and will add ingredients to the pot, sprinkling spices and stirring - making the rubaboo stew. She picks up her drum and begins to sing,

facing each of the four directions. Then the other instruments join, inviting us on a journey.

When Andrea tells us about the element fire, the men, as fire-keepers, tend to it. In the Water section of the show, the women, as water protectors, add water to the pot, and all four drink some. They all return to the pot for the beginning of the Air section, when we hear loud strong winds. They try to use a flame to light sacred medicine, but the wind is too fast. After the winds soften, we reach the Earth section, when all the performers place items from the basket into the pot. The final song begins with all the performers there together.

Thanks for listening! We hope you enjoy the show.