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**La MaMa presents the premiere of "Red Mother" by Muriel Miguel,
acclaimed Spiderwoman Theater co-founder.
Boisterous Brechtian tale traces a mythic "earth journey" of a Native woman
across what was once the People's land.**

WHERE AND WHEN:

May 27 to June 6, 2010

La MaMa E.T.C. (First Floor Theatre), 74A East Fourth Street

Presented by La MaMa E.T.C. in association with Spiderwoman Theater, developed in collaboration with Loose Change Productions

Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 pm; Sundays at 2:30 pm

\$18 general admission

Box office (212) 475-7710, www.lamama.org

Runs 65 minutes; critics are invited on or after May 27

NEW YORK, April 19--"Red Mother," featuring the celebrated **Muriel Miguel**, co-founder of Obie-award-winning **Spiderwoman Theater** collective, will be presented by **La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club** Thursdays through Sundays from **May 27 to June 6**.

The sixty-five minute play is the tale of Belle, an old Native woman who, with horse and companion Blue Fred, travels across what was once the People's land. Inspired by "Mother Courage," it weaves Brechtian themes with Kuna demon tales and traditional stories with a contemporary soundscape. The one-person show, which features original multimedia projections, elaborate fabric hangings, and music, is a unique expression of the Native American community, told from a woman's perspective. **Murielle Borst**, Artistic Director of The Silvercloud Singers and Dancers and Miguel's daughter, directs. The production has been developed in collaboration with New York-based **Loose Change Productions**.

Muriel Miguel is a veteran of Off-Off-Broadway and an original member of Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre. The piece explodes the fiction of Indigenous women as virtuous and noble "earth mothers," a stereotype perpetuated by dominant culture as well as the Native population. In Brecht's play, Mother Courage is morally equivocal, torn between protecting her children and war profiteering. Similarly, fiery Belle, the Red Mother, challenges any traditional image of motherhood--and yet does so with a sense of wit and abandon. Says Miguel, "Belle speaks for and to the failed mothers, prostitutes, and addicts--women living on the fringe."

"Red Mother" draws on the "storyweaving" technique of Spiderwoman Theater. Founded in 1976, named for the Hopi goddess of creation, the troupe is the oldest continuously operating women's theatre collective in North America. It has featured Muriel Miguel and her two sisters, Lisa Mayo and Gloria Miguel, through much of its existence. The "storyweaving" they developed blends poetry, personal memory, and traditional Native stories, often in a cyclical presentation, full of searing wit and boisterous humor.

As "Red Mother" moves through past and present, through the real and spirit worlds, its lighting and projections identify points along the journey. To accomplish these effects, original video projections have been developed by Ottawa-based media artist **Bear Witness**, whose videos, chronicling the effects of colonialism on native people, have been featured at the Sydney Festival, the Berlin Film Festival, and the National Gallery of Canada, among many venues. Set and costumes are by **Christine Plunkett**, project designer for Dragone Entertainment Group, founded by Cirque Du Soleil director Franco Dragone. Original music has been composed by **Russell Wallace** of the Lil'wat Nation. Wallace was recently commissioned to compose a choral work with Hussein Janmohamed for the Dalai Lama's visit to Vancouver. Lighting design is by **Don White**, resident technical director for Nozhem: First Peoples Performance Space at Trent University, Ontario.

Muriel Miguel is from the Kuna (a people of Panama and Colombia) and Rappahannock (a people of Eastern Virginia) nations. Forming the play's backdrop is an immense quilt which evokes the *mola*, a traditional costume of Kuna women, rich with ancient symbols representing flowers, sea animals, birds and demons depicted via reverse appliqué. The play, says Miguel, is virtually a *mola* come to life. It opens with sounds of an honoring/war song for the dead interwoven with a female voice calling for her mother as Indian

massacre site names are projected onto the quilt. The play embodies the tradition of the passing on of memories. That it is directed by her daughter, Murielle Borst, says Miguel, is another embodiment of this process.

Miguel trained in modern dance with Alwin Nikolais and Erick Hawkins. With Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre, she appeared in the groundbreaking plays "Terminal," "The Serpent," "Mere Ubu," and "Viet Rock." With Spiderwoman Theater, she has performed at the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, the Walker Art Center, Theater for the New City, Dance Theatre Workshop and WOW Cafe Theatre, among countless other venues. She has also actively mentored young Indigenous performers, mostly women, at New York University, The Centre for Indigenous Theatre in Toronto, and independently. She has pioneered the teaching of Indigenous Performance through "storyweaving" and through the use of the Laban method. She has been awarded an honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from Miami University, Ohio, and was profiled in *American Women Directors of the Twentieth Century*, published in 2008. She was chosen as the first Lipinsky resident (Feminist-in-Residence) at San Diego State University's Women's Studies Department. Along with her sisters, Gloria Miguel and Lisa Mayo, she received a Lifetime Achievement Award in February 2010 from the prestigious Women's Caucus for Art.

Miguel began to develop "Red Mother" in 2003, working with members of the Playwrights Workshop Montreal. She continued to develop it at the American Indian Community House and at urban ink productions/fathom lab's New Works division. In November, 2007, "Red Mother" was presented in workshop by Indigenous Performance Initiatives and Two Spirit Productions at Nozhem: First Peoples Performance Space at Trent University in Ontario. It was then staged in 2008 by the Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. as part of their Native Expressions Series. Featuring greatly expanded set, projection, music, and lighting design, this will be its world premiere.

Spiderwoman Theater was founded in 1976, when Muriel Miguel gathered together a diverse company of women of varying ages, races, sexual orientation, and world view. This group included her two sisters (Gloria Miguel and Lisa Mayo). During the 1980s, the three sisters grew to form the core of the collective, which became a favorite of the downtown New York theatre scene. The group broke new ground in their use of storytelling and "storyweaving" as the basis for the creation of their theatrical pieces. Spiderwoman has appeared in Indigenous and contemporary theatre and art venues throughout the Americas and Europe and was honored with a 2005 retrospective exhibit at Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. The troupe has been featured at the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, Theater for the New City and Dance Theater Workshop, among many locales.

Director/choreographer **Murielle Borst** is also a professional actress and writer. She earned her BFA in Theatre and Dance from Long Island University. She studied acting at HB Studio and with Spiderwoman Theater in New York City. She has worked with *I Giullari di Piazza*, a traditional Italian performance group that works in Neapolitan and Sicilian stories and music, where she has interpreted traditional Italian myths into English, as well as created original myths using traditional methods of Native Storytelling. In 2000, her one woman show, "More Than Feathers and Beads," was presented at the Global Indigenous Theater Festival, sponsored by the 2000 Summer Olympic Games and produced at the Sydney Opera House. She is currently Artistic Director of The Silvercloud Singers and Dancers. She won a Native Heart Award at the Native American Music awards for her spoken verse on their current CD "Visions from the City."

"Red Mother" has been developed with the assistance of **Loose Change Productions**, founded in 2009, which is dedicated to the promotion of transnational, cross-cultural theatre and performance exploring new creative, moral, ethical, and political territories. Loose Change develops works within the company itself and also co-produces in collaboration with outside artists. The company's interest is in work that builds innovative structures; they seek stories told theatrically which entertain but still retain the ability to spur social awareness and empathy between cultures.

For more information, please visit: www.spiderwomantheater.org and www.loosechangeproductions.org.

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REVIEWERS ARE INVITED on or after MAY 27.

Captioned, high-resolution photos of this show and all other shows currently represented by Jonathan Slaff are available for download at: <http://picasaweb.google.com/jslaff/jsnyc>.