

## PRESS RELEASE

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StrongBack Productions with Tara Theatre present:

# Chigger Foot Boys

A World Premiere reveals untold stories of young Jamaican soldiers as the world continues to reflect upon the four years of the First World War centenary

Written by Patricia Cumper | Directed by Irina Brown

Tara Theatre, 22 Feb – 11 March 2017

**PRESS NIGHT: Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017, 7.30pm**

Patricia Cumper, renowned playwright and former Artistic Director of Talawa Theatre, draws inspiration from personal and historical stories in her latest play, set in a rum bar by the docks in Kingston, Jamaica 1914. Oblivious of the impact that the distant war in Europe will have on them, their island and the future of the British Empire, a soldier, a hunter, a scholar and a lover are playing a game of dominoes whilst trapped by a thunderstorm. Amongst them is a young Norman Manley, future statesman and National Hero of Jamaica. In a series of flash forwards, *Chigger Foot Boys* delves into the fate that awaits them and many other Jamaicans who volunteered and fought on the fronts of World War One.

Director Irina Brown, is a former Artistic Director of the Tron Theatre, Glasgow (1996-1999). She has directed many theatre and opera productions, that include her work at the National Theatre (multiple award winning play *Further Than the Furthest Thing* by Zinnie Harris), the Royal Opera House (*Bird of Night* by Dominique Le Gendre), the West End (*Vagina Monologues*), and the Royal Albert Hall (*Orango* at the Proms, 2015). As Artistic Director of the Natural Perspective TC, she directed Racine's *Britannicus* (Wilton's Music Hall) and *Jenufa* (Arcola).

The cast includes John Leader who is currently performing in the National Theatre's critically acclaimed *Peter Pan* and has previously toured with *War Horse*, and Suzette Llewellyn, who was one of the founding members of innovative theatre troupe BiBi Crew, dedicated to producing new writing from an African-Caribbean perspective. They are joined by TV and theatre veteran Stanley J Browne, Jamaican born emerging actor Jonathan Chambers, actor and director Matthew Truesmith, and Ike Bennett, who makes his professional debut before graduating this year from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

**StrongBack Productions infuse Caribbean synergies into British Theatre and the performing Arts, developing and creating new work and adaptations for a wide range of audiences.** Artistic directors Patricia Cumper and Dominique Le Gendre with Producer Pauline Walker channel their shared passion for telling stories towards creating work that entertains and educates audiences while celebrating Britain's rich diversity. Their work, together and separately, has won critical acclaim both in the UK and the Caribbean. Rooted in Caribbean culture and music and with a strong understanding of the role of culture in postcolonial societies, they embrace the complex and vibrant reality of diverse Britain, and draw inspiration from the communities from around the world that contribute to the day to day life of the nation, creating partnerships and performances within communities that are overlooked. *Berwick Sound Waite and Sea 2015*, engaged over 200 musicians of all ages to tell stories through music, of Berwick-upon-Tweed as the town celebrated their 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary. *Chigger Foot Boys* follows StrongBack Productions' storytelling evenings at Brixton East and Rich Mix, *Rude Gyals* and *Strong Back Tales*, which featured stories from Black and Bangladeshi women, with performers including Martina Laird and Leeza Gazi of Komala Collective.

# MOBIUS.

The Lower Vestry  
St George's Bloomsbury  
6-7 Little Russell St  
London WC1A 2HR

Jamaican born **Patricia Cumper** was Artistic Director of black-led touring company Talawa Theatre (2006-2012), and was awarded an MBE in 2013 for services to the arts. Her work includes plays and novels, and her recent radio dramas for BBC Radio 4 include *Trollope and the Labours of Hercules* and a 10 part adaptation of Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize-winning novel *Beloved*. *Chigger Foot Boys* is produced by **Pauline Walker**, who has brought shows to Rich Mix, Talawa Studio and Swan Wharf, and is Creative Producer of The Alfred Fagon Award. Music and sound design is by StrongBack Productions co-founder and composer **Dominique Le Gendre**, who has written music extensively for theatre, art installations, dance, film, television and radio drama for BBC Radio 3 and 4 and is a former Associate Artist of the Royal Opera House.

The creative team includes Louis Price, set /costume designer and filmmaker, who has worked with such companies as Boy Blue Entertainment at the Barbican (Unleashed), The Young Vic (The Emperor), Home Manchester (The Funfair), BBC Proms (Orango), Birmingham Rep (What Shadows), Liverpool Playhouse (Bright Phoenix), and Schauspielhaus Graz in Austria (Amphytrion) as well as an award-winning lighting designer Kevin Treacy who has designed for numerous theatre and opera productions, including Opera Northern Ireland and Sherman Theatre and the Royal Court's upcoming co-production *Killology*.

**Tara Arts is established as one of the UK's foremost creators of cross-cultural theatre.** Their work, which consists of both new writing and reimagined classics, seeks to make imaginative connections across communities, to help foster a global sensibility from their own locality. The company was founded in 1977 by Artistic Director Jatinder Verma, along with Sunil Saggar, Ovais Kadri, Praveen Bahl & Vijay Shaunak. Tara Theatre opened in September 2016, and has been awarded Project Design of the Year at the London Construction Awards as well as being nominated for both Theatre Building of the Year and Sustainability in The Stage awards 2017.

@Tara\_Arts | @StrongBackProd | #ChiggerFootBoys | [strongbackproductions.com](http://strongbackproductions.com)

**Running Time: 120 minutes | Suitable for ages 14+**

## Company Information

**Directed by** Irina Brown

**Designed by** Louis Price

**Lighting Design by** Kevin Treacy

**Produced by** Pauline Walker

**Written by** Patricia Cumper

**Music and Sound Design by** Dominique Le Gendre

**Production Management by** Shaz McGee

## Cast

Ike Bennett, Stanley J Browne, Jonathan Chambers, John Leader, Suzette Llewellyn, Matthew Truesmith

## Listings information

**22 Feb – 11 March 2017**

Tara Theatre, 356 Garratt Lane, London, SW18 4ES

7.30pm (Mon-Sat), 3pm (Sat 11 Mar) | £15.50 (£14 concs)

*BSL interpreted performance Fri 3 March.*

[www.tara-arts.com](http://www.tara-arts.com) | 020 8333 4457

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