

## Yvette Nolan

### Honoured as this year's Recipient of The George Luscombe Award

Toronto, June 7, 2011 – **The George Luscombe Award** was inaugurated in 1999 and recognizes an individual for *mentorship in theatre*. Revolutionary theatre founder and artistic director George Luscombe founded Toronto Workshop Productions in 1959, marking the beginnings of Toronto's alternative theatre movement. His 27 years at TWP is the longest tenure of any artistic director in Canada.

This year's recipient is **Yvette Nolan**: playwright, director, former Artistic Director of Toronto's **Native Earth Performing Arts** (NEPA) and a powerhouse of artistic vision and integrity. Nolan took the reins of NEPA in 2003, and her tenure there to 2011 raised the company's profile enormously and had a tremendous impact on the emergence of strong First Nations artists across the country.

She founded Native Earth's **Young Voices** program to aid the growing number of Canadian theatre school graduates and emerging creators of First Nations heritage as well as artists from beyond the immediate First Nations arts community. Now in its sixth year, the program provides these young talents the opportunity to develop their craft with the help of established performing arts professionals. Several graduates of the program have gone on to create high profile, award-winning works: Falen Johnson – *Salt Baby*, presented by Native Earth Performing Arts; Waawaate Fobister – *Agokwe*, a multiple 2009 Dora Award winner, was initially developed at Young Voices prior to its Buddies in Bad Times Theatre presentation; Spy Denommé-Welch – *Giiwedín*, a full-scale opera in three languages co-produced with Native Earth, earned a 2010 Dora Award nomination.

Even prior to Young Voices, she blazed a path for the next generation, including for current Native Earth Artistic Director: Tara Beagan, whose second play (*Dreary and Izzy*) Nolan presented at **Weesageechak Begins to Dance**, NEPA's new works festival, and premiered on the mainstage the following year.

Addressing the need for an indigenous presence at non-arts public events, Nolan created **Made to Order**, a theatre creation program which brings Aboriginal perspectives into schools and communities with plays that tackle important issues: the health of the global ecology, tobacco addiction, gay-bashing and the pillaging of non-renewable resources are sample topics that have been explored.

Nolan herself has written more than a dozen works for theatre, including the critically acclaimed *Annie Mae's Movement*, *Blade*, *Two Old Women* and *Job's Wife*, and has directed a number of theatrical works including George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, Marie Clements' *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* and Philip Adams' *Free's Point*. She was a co-creative force behind *Death of a Chief*, an Aboriginal adaptation of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* featuring a cast of nine, co-produced with the National Arts Centre.

She received the City of Toronto's Access Equity and Human Rights Award and was named one of Toronto's Vital People by the Toronto Community Foundation. She is a past President of the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, the Playwrights Union of Canada (now Playwrights Guild) and Playwrights Canada Press, as well as editor for Playwrights Canada Press of *Beyond the Pale: Dramatic Writing from First Nations Writers and Writers of Colour*. She is currently working on a history of indigenous theatre in Canada.

Nolan created a home base for countless artists at Native Earth - a place where First Nations artists could grow. Her passion and remarkable skill are evident in the fact that many of the artists she mentored, continue the work she established.

Previous winners of The George Luscombe Award are Urjo Kareda, Ken Gass, Jenny Phipps, Maja Ardal, Winston Morgan, Alison Sealy-Smith, Layne Coleman, ahdri zhina mandiola, Andy McKim, Iris Turcott, and together, Leah Cherniak and Martha Ross. The George Luscombe Committee members are: Chair - Maja Ardal, Steven Bush, Ravi Jain and Anusree Roy. The George Luscombe Award comes with original artwork by Theo Dimson.

*The George Luscombe Award is administered by the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA). TAPA is an arts service organization that represents nearly 200 professional theatre, dance and opera companies in the City of Toronto and administers the Dora Mavor Moore Awards. In addition to the Doras, other programs and services provided by TAPA include: T.O. TIX - Toronto's Official One Stop Ticket Shop at Yonge-Dundas Square and online at [www.totix.ca](http://www.totix.ca); 5 STAR EXPERIENCE Theatre & Dining Packages; Toronto's official Theatre Guide; hipTIX, offering \$5 tickets to students between the ages of 15 and 29; citySPECIAL; the Commercial Theatre Development Fund; and the Travel Retreat Initiatives Program – TRIP. For more information visit [www.tapa.ca](http://www.tapa.ca) and [www.totix.ca](http://www.totix.ca).*