

The Exchange Project presents *Promise of a Love Song*

Promise of a Love Song is born out of ambition: To connect otherwise isolated cultures and bring them face-to-face in the making of art; to encourage artists with very different experiences and aesthetics to compare notes and pool their creative resources; to then stage and tour a play relevant to each community and of vital interest to the nation at large.

Conceived in 1995, the Exchange Project is a collaboration of three nationally acclaimed theater companies: Junebug Productions, an African American theater company of New Orleans, LA, Teatro Pregones, a Puerto Rican theater of the Bronx, NY, and Roadside Theater, an Appalachian ensemble from Whitesburg, KY.

The Project initially saw the three theaters traveling in a round-robin fashion to introduce themselves and their works to each other's world. Artists met with the community in workshops, story circles, and music jams presented at local arts centers and schools; they joined their audiences in informal discussion and celebration. Each time, they were warmly welcomed, enjoying home cooking and the stories that are best heard around it. The performance stage was clearly but one of many spaces where the Exchange Project would develop.

Following the excitement of the initial two-year exchange, a joint production was proposed in 1997. At first, the artists entertained disparate ideas of what their play could be--folk music revue, history lesson, multicultural cabaret . . . but within the year, one proposal won everyone over: Love stories, a musical play. Everyone agreed that love and music would best capture their exchange, all about cultures and styles and the ties that bind.

The three companies started playing off each other's ideas: Talking about family, politics, food, what's funny and what's not; arguing over right and wrong, on and off the page. The dialogue extended to the stage, with each company playing their music, dancing along or engaged in debate over what's blue about Blues and whether or not Delta, Bluegrass, and Bolero have anything in common. The companies set out to discover how rhythms and music illuminate the strengths, struggles, similarities, and differences of these cultures. They fought sometimes, and disagreed, and sometimes agreed to disagree. They quarreled like lovers. Mostly, they worked, each and everyone, overtime and without losing track of that one promise of a promise.

It's a fitting reminder to say that collaborations are trials of the soul. And if that's what it takes to build community, then there's no greater challenge than to keep the Promise of a Love Song.

Promise of a Love Song premiered in October 1999 and toured nationally through March 2002.

PROMISE OF A LOVE SONG NATIONAL TOUR, 1999 - 2002

October 1999	Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA
January 2000	The Lied Center for the Performing Arts, (UN-L) Lincoln, NE
March 2000	Hostos Community College, Bronx, NY
April 2000	University of Nebraska, Lincoln
May 2000	Flynn Theater, Burlington, VT
September 2000	University of Virginia, Wise Tennessee Tech, Cookeville, TN University of California, Davis
April 2001	Aronoff Center for the Performing Arts, Cincinnati, OH
November 2001	Penn State University, College Station, PA South Jersey Performing Arts Center, Camden, NJ
April 2002	Bay Chamber Concerts, Camden, ME Tamejavi Festival, Fresno, CA