

Sunday, February 2, 2014, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Barefoot Divas



Walk a Mile in My Shoes

Originally co-commissioned and produced by Sydney Festival and New Zealand International Arts Festival in association with Vicki Gordon Music Productions 2012, this project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body, and Creative New Zealand, the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa.

Cal Performances' 2013–2014 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

Barefoot Divas

Walk a Mile in My Shoes

CAST

Whirimako Black	<i>vocals</i>
Emma Donovan	<i>vocals</i>
Merenia Gillies	<i>vocals</i>
Ngaire	<i>vocals</i>
Maisey Rika	<i>vocals</i>
Ursula Yovich	<i>vocals</i>
Vicki Gordon	<i>producer, co-director</i>
Alana Valentine	<i>writer, co-director</i>
Adam Ventoura	<i>music director, bass, vocals, cavaquinho</i>
Steve Marin	<i>percussion, vocals, charengo, guitarrón, zampoña, quena</i>
Daniel Pliner	<i>keyboards</i>
Percy Robinson	<i>guitar, vocals</i>

Artist Representative

Karen A. Fischer, Pasifika Artists Network

Artist Management

Vicki Gordon Music Productions PTY LTD

WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES is a shared celebration of culture, country, spiritual connection, and language by extraordinary indigenous women.

Six women. Six distinct life stories tied to the complex history of Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea's indigenous peoples. Six strikingly fresh voices that move this history down a new and compelling path.

Ursula Yovich (Aborigine Burarra/Serbia) and Emma Donovan (Aborigine Gumbaynggirr/New South Wales) join Whirimako Black (Māori), Maisey Rika (Māori), Merenia (Māori/Romani), and Ngaiire (Papua New Guinea) for this powerful, symbolic musical collaboration. *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* was premiered at the 2012 Sydney Festival—one of Australia's largest and most pioneering arts events—and recorded live for the remarkable album of the same name, released in the United States on July 16, 2013.

The Divas' original compositions, songs in Aboriginal languages and a fusion of English and Māori (Te Reo), come alive via the ensemble's six-part harmonies and soaring voices. Swinging between acoustic roots (the rousing "Te Matapiko"), jazz, R&B ("Ngarraanga"), and Latin-infused soul ("Fortuna"), *Walk a Mile in My Shoes* reflects the diverse and life-affirming experiences of contemporary indigenous women. Echoing their profound heritage, the Divas' outspoken, moving pieces resonate with anyone interested in authentic, deeply felt vocal performance, contemporary song writing, and intense musical expression.

Walk a Mile in My Shoes also highlights the work of some of Australia and New Zealand's most accomplished multiethnic musicians: bassist and music director Adam Ventoura, drummer and percussionist Steve Marin, keyboardist Daniel Pliner, and New Zealand Māori guitarist and vocalist Percy Robinson. Visit www.barefootdivas.com.au.

BAREFOOT DIVAS



New Zealand's soul diva **Whirimako Black** has built up a loyal jazz, blues, and Māori fan base with her sublime Te Reo Māori and English songs. She is, undoubtedly, one of

New Zealand's finest musicians. In 2006 she was Awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Māori music, and in 2008 she picked up the New Zealand Music Tui award for best jazz album. Ms. Black has performed throughout New Zealand, Europe, and Australia over the past decade. She creates a truly unique, intimate presence in her performances with a sublime and exceptionally expressive voice that has been described as "pure velvet." Her distinctive sound, her use of traditional Māori musical forms and Te Reo Māori make her a unique and powerful voice for New Zealand. In 2012, Ms. Black appeared in her debut acting role as the lead in the New Zealand feature film *White Lies*, produced by South Pacific Pictures and directed by Dana Rotberg with Producer Chris Hampson. She is currently nominated for Best Actress in the Asia Pacific Screen Awards and in the MOA New Zealand Film Awards for her performance.



Emma Donovan is one of Australia's finest indigenous singer-songwriters. She is committed to educating the global community about Aboriginal culture and spirituality

with the inclusion of her traditional language, Gumbayngirr, in her music and songs. Seamlessly blending roots, reggae, gospel, and soul, Ms. Donovan is a passionate singer, songwriter, and collaborative vocal artist. Today, she continues to work with such ensembles as the Black Arm Band and Barefoot Divas, and has now embarked in an exciting new collaboration with the Melbourne-based band the Putbacks. Her vast concert experiences include

the Royal Concert Hall in London, Musée de Quai Branli in Paris, the Benaki Museum in Athens, Tjibaou Cultural Centre in New Caledonia, Festival of Pacific Arts in Palau, Treaty Grounds of Waitangi in New Zealand, the Sydney Opera House, and the Winter Olympics in Vancouver.



Merenia Gillies is a multitasking, beat-throwing musician who sings in five languages and is a powerhouse performer on stage with the most instinctive vocal talents

of her generation. Born in Rotorua, New Zealand, Ms. Gillies was signed to Pagan Records at age 16. With her heritage a mixture of Māori, Romany, and Welsh, she embraces and indulges in an eclectic array of musical influences using the traditional styles of her ancestry as a platform for layering hypnotic beats and sultry, soaring vocals. She is one of Australia's most inimitable popular recording artists and live performers in the soul, club, and Latin genres. Often described as a soulful, Latin-infused Sharon Jones, Ms. Gillies works extensively as a live performer and studio musician performing across Australia, in Asia, and touring on the international stage.



Sydney-based, Papua New Guinea-born future-soul artist **Ngaiire** is building a reputation for herself as one of the Australia's most recognizable and dynamic vocalists and performers,

as well as for her love for flamboyant stage attire. She released her debut album *Lamentations* in 2013 to much critical acclaim as one of the best Australian releases of the year. Ngaiire spent some time writing songs for her album in an obscure drinking bar in the suburban outskirts of Tokyo with celebrated jazz pianist, beat maker, and composer Aaron Choulai. Her peculiar vocal arrangements and rare sense of soul transcend universal territo-

ries with its electronic soul elements, and gratifies the folk world with her great adoration for storytelling and heartfelt laments. She rounded off a massive year in 2013 opening for Alicia Keys and John Legend.



Māori singer-songwriter **Maisey Rika** has one of Aotearoa's—i.e., New Zealand's—most impressive voices, creating music that fuses cultural roots, memorable tunes, and honest, sometimes haunting lyrics. Hailing from the small town of Whakatane, Ms. Rika's powerful, majestic voice has captivated audiences worldwide. She began singing professionally at age 13. Her first recordings brought her to national stardom with *E Hine*, a classic collection of Māori traditional songs, achieving double-platinum sales and winning Best Māori Language Album at the New Zealand Music Awards. Ms. Rika was nominated for Best Female Vocalist in 1998 at age 15. In 2010, she won all four Māori Music Awards for which she was nominated, including Best Māori Female Artist and Best Māori Songwriter of the year and she repeated her sweep again in 2013, winning five Māori Music Awards for her most recent recording *Whitiora*, as well as picking up Best Album at the 2013 Vodafone (Tui) Awards, New Zealand's music awards. She has toured Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Indonesia, Hawai'i, and Australia and has performed at WOMAD Taranaki and Australian World Music Expo.



From humble beginnings in North West Arnhem Land, **Ursula Yovich** has defied the odds to become one of Australia's most celebrated performers. Recently listed as one of the top 21 most iconic women of the Australian stage, page, and screen, she has dazzled audiences all over the world from the concert hall of the Sydney Opera House and

the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London to Carnegie Hall in New York. For her stunning performance in *Capricornia* she was awarded the 2007 Helpmann Award (Australia's equivalent to the Tony Awards), receiving her fourth Helpmann nomination for her role as the Black Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. In 2010, she was nominated for her fifth Helpmann for Best Actress, alongside Cate Blanchett, for *Waltzing the Willara*, and Best Cabaret for her one-woman show *Magpie Blues*. She has played significant roles in the feature films *Jindabyne* and Baz Luhrmann's *Australia*, and performed on every major theater stage in Australia. In 2012, she was also featured in *Pecan Summer*, Australia's first indigenous opera, and performed a sold-out season at the Sydney Theatre for *Secret River*, directed by Neil Armfield, and in Wesley Enoch's translation of Bertold Brecht's *Mother Courage* at the Queensland Theatre Company.

CREATIVE TEAM

Vicki Gordon (Ngati Kahungunu) (*producer, co-director*) is a New Zealand-born Australian who has worked as a musician, music and festival director, record label manager, artist manager and producer. Barefoot Divas is the culmination of her *kaupapa* ("sacred cause") to explore her connection to her Māori heritage and combine it with her enduring commitment to the importance of showcasing indigenous women singer-songwriters on the international stage. Ms. Gordon has been honored in the Australian music industry with a Human Rights Award Commendation, a Community Cultural Development and Women in the Arts Fellowship, as well as numerous gold and platinum record awards in recognition of her success as an artist manager and record producer. She was the first female Australian Recording Industry Association Board member to represent independent artists. Ms. Gordon is the founding president of the nonprofit Cicada International Inc., which presents the esteemed indigenous music program *Nurlu Jalbingan*, as well as creative producer for Vicki Gordon Music Productions, which creates music theater for festivals and mainstage venues.

Alana Valentine (*writer, co-director*) is a playwright and director who has worked with some of Australia's most celebrated indigenous artists, including Stephen Page at Bangarra Dance Theatre and Wesley Enoch, Artistic Director of the Queensland Theatre Company. In 2012, she won the fifth STAGE International Playwriting Award from UC Santa Barbara for *Ear to the Edge of Time*. This prestigious award is given to a play about science or technology and attracted over 200 entries from 19 countries. Ms. Valentine's theater-making engages with authentic, real-life stories and voices of Australian communities. She combines a humorous and poetic form and has worked with professional, youth, and community performers. In 2013, she won three Australian Writers Guild Awards, including the major prize for *Grounded*, a play about Newcastle marine pilots. It has been her privilege to work with *Barefoot Divas* to polish their confidence to communicate as songwriters and cultural visionaries, through both their music and spoken word.

Adam Ventoura (*music director*) is an established music director, bass player, vocalist, percussionist, composer, and producer. Specializing in pop, R&B, soul, and rock Mr. Ventoura has played, recorded, and toured with an array of world-class artists, including Al Green, Jon Stevens, and Stan Walker. He has been Mr. Stevens's music director for the past two years and co-wrote his current album release. Mr. Ventoura is widely recognized as one of Australia's top bass players, sharing his passion for music in Australia, South America, the United States, the United Kingdom, Asia, the Middle East, and New Zealand. He is the founding music director and a band member of *Barefoot Divas*.

MUSICIANS

Steve Marin is one of Sydney's most in-demand musicians, playing drumset and traditional South American string and wind instruments, as well as Latin percussion. He performs with his own band *Son Veneno*, which toured extensively though Europe and the United Kingdom; *Merenia and the Way*; *Sonido*; *Samba Mundi*; and *Victor Valdes*; and has played with musicals *Dirty Dancing* and *Smoke and Mirrors* on the West End in London. He is a founding band member of *Barefoot Divas*.

Daniel Pliner is a composer and pianist living in Sydney. He performs with the instrumental hip-hop trio *The Asthmatic*, which features turntables and violin, and *Dereb the Ambassador*, a Ethiopian-soul group featuring legendary Ethiopian singer *Dereb Deselegn*. They have performed at the Tokyo Jazz Festival and WOMAD. He currently plays keyboards for the highly acclaimed *Barefoot Divas*. Mr. Pliner has also been involved in development of the Sydney alternative-rock scene, as a member of the groups *Slimey Things* and *Darth Vegas*, and is active in the Latin music scene, performing as a member of the groups *Watussi* and *Reyes de La Onda*. He has also worked with Latin artists *Ordequis Reve*, *Bill Summers*, and *Edwin Bonilla*.

Percy Robinson comes from Gisborne and Rotorua on the East Coast of New Zealand and has been performing, singing, recording, and touring nationally and internationally in a wide variety of musical contexts for most of his working life. He has sung and played guitar with the likes of *Randy Crawford*, *Daniel Merriweather*, *Gin Wigmore*, *Gary Pinto*, *Sean Paul*, and *Guy Sebastian*. Mr. Robinson recently returned to New Zealand, after many years living in Australia, to pursue his interests in Māori language, Māori musical instruments, and cultural studies at Waikato University. He is a founding band member of *Barefoot Divas*.