**Chiaroscuro, Bush Theatre**

Welcome to this introduction to *Chiaroscuro,* by Jackie Kay. It has been directed by Lynette Linton. The audio described performance will be on Saturday, September 28th. The programme notes will begin at 2.15 and the performance itself at 2.30pm.

The performance lasts for one hour and thirty minutes without an interval. The describer will be Di Langford.

In the dictionary Chiaroscuro is defined as the treatment of light and shade in drawing and painting.

Here is a quote from the theatre programme –

I want to find it all now

know our names, know the others in history

so many women have been lost at sea

so many stories have been swept away

Aisha, Yomi, Beth and Opal couldn’t be more different, but when Aisha hosts a dinner party, the friends soon discover that they’re all looking for an answer to the same question. Does it lie in Aisha’s childhood? Or in Beth and Opal’s new romance? Who will tell them what they really are? What starts out as a friendly conversation between women, soon turns heated when Yomi reveals what she really thinks about Beth and Opal’s relationship.

The set is simple and remains the same throughout, with lighting indicating scene changes. The space resembles a recording studio, with the audience on four sides. Arranged around the central space are a collection of musical instruments. These include a keyboard, and a drum kit, which are both on small wheeled trolleys with a seat for the player and can be moved easily around the space. There is also a guitar and a microphone on a stand. Also on wheels are several black flight-cases which can be used as seating or tables. The four pillars which stand at equal intervals around the space and support the theatre roof are each enclosed within a wire cage, with looped black cables attached. These are fastened with green and orange tape. Slim neon lighting runs up the pillars and glows pink during scene changes. Attached to each pillar at head height, and facing into the space, is a round mirror.

As we enter the auditorium the room is dimly lit by blue and red spotlights and u-shaped coloured bulbs fixed to the ceiling which glow intermittently with an orange or purple light.

There are four female characters, each played by a woman of colour. The performers play the instruments and also sing. They are all in their thirties and casually dressed. **Aisha** is the oldest - she is tall and slim. She has light brown skin and dark hair which is caught back behind where it reaches almost to waist level. She wears a cotton scarf twisted around her head. Her outfit looks practical. The sleeves of her button-through, pale blue cotton jumpsuit are rolled up – she has black suede boots with square heels. Aisha often sings at a free standing microphone or sits at the keyboard.

The first person to play the drums is **Beth** whois short and fullbreasted with wide hips. She has black skin, a round face and large full lips. Her black hair is bunched up and confined within a twisted coloured scarf, tied tightly around her head. Later she unties the scarf and allows her hair to spring out naturally. Her light blue men’s shirt is worn unbuttoned over a black jumper, with black leggings and soft black leather shoes. Beth has a silver nose ring and earrings which glint in the light. She also wears a silver crucifix and her belt has a silver buckle.

**Opal** plays the guitar and later the keyboard. Of medium height, she is light-skinned with neat features. Her dark hair is pulled up and twisted on top of her head. Opal appears to be the youngest of the four. She has a slim figure and wears a short sleeved, dark green tee shirt tucked into pale blue, cropped jeans. Her white trainers have dark blue flashes. Later she puts on a waist length denim jacket. Opal is restrained and thoughtful, observing her companions with interest.

The keyboardis first played by **Yomi**. She’s much taller than the other three – almost six foot, and slender, with dark skin and long dreadlocks which hang separately – some in front of her shoulders and others down her back. Her sleeveless orange top is tucked into blue jeans rolled up above the ankle, and her trainers are black and white. Later she adds a short black jacket. Yomi has an expressive face and long limbs. She is physically demonstrative, and lopes around the space.

Cast and production credits

Aisha is played by Preeya Kalidas

Beth by Shiloh Coke

Opal by Anoushka Lucas

And Yomi by Gloria Onitri

Chiaroscuro was written by Jackie Kay

It was designed by Moi Tran

The musical director and composer is Shiloh Coke

And it was directed by Lynette Linton

For further information please ring the theatre on 020 8743 5050