**INTRO NOTES HIGH TABLE**

Welcome to this audio introduction to The High Table by Temi Wilkey. The audio described performance at the Bush Theatre will be on Saturday 14th March. There will be a touch tour at 1.30 pm, the introductory notes will begin at 2.15 and the performance itself at 2.30.

The performance lasts for approximately two hours and twenty minutes, including a twenty minute interval.

The High Table is described as an epic family drama played out between the heavens and earth. The dresses are chosen, the venue’s been booked and the RSVPs are flooding in. But with her wedding to Leah drawing nearer, Tara’s future is thrown into jeopardy when her parents refuse to attend. This kind of love is unheard of, they say, it’s not African.

High above London, three of Tara’s ancestors are jolted from their eternal rest. Can these

representatives of generations passed keep the family together? And will Tara’s decision ever get their blessing?

The action moves between Nigeria and London, but the set remains the same throughout with the addition of a few occasional props. The acting area thrusts forward into the auditorium with the audience seated on three sides. At the rear, two of the pillars which support the roof of the auditorium stand about 6 metres apart and form a frame for the set. Behind them the back wall is of brick, against which changes in lighting indicate the passing of time or a change of location. From left to right In front of the wall runs a long mound about a metre high, which slopes forward towards us in a series of rough steps. It rises slightly higher on the right, to where two tall cylindrical drums with swollen bellies stand next to each other. The mound resembles the side of a low hill – the surface is of sun-baked red-brown earth with veins of variously coloured rock visible in places. Some characters cross the undulating top of the mound and walk down onto ground level where the dry red earth extends forward. The ground here is covered by a crumbling substance with tiny sparkling flecks in it, enclosing a wide area of fine white sand in the centre of the space

Throughout the performance a musician in a red and black tunic and red trousers remains up on the right and accompanies the action on drums. He is tall and slim and his long black hair is braided and twisted and tied back low at the base of his neck.

There are five performers. Three of them each play two characters with little change in their appearance as they step from one location to another.

The action begins at the North Star on the edge of the present. Here we meet three of the ancestors – Yetunde, Babatunde, and Adebisi.

 **Yetunde**, the Ancestor of the North, is a well-built, arresting looking woman in her early fifties. She wears a floor length brilliant blue robe with embroidered lines of white decoration over one breast and on the wide sleeves. A neatly folded turquoise shawl is worn just resting over her right shoulder, then hanging down at front and back,. Her hair is concealed beneath a high white turban which gleams in the light. Yetunde has challenging dark eyes and a determined expression.

**Babatunde** is the Ancestor of the West. He is also in his early fifties – his woven scarf is of green and gold stripes and neatly folded. He wears it draped it loosely around his shoulders like a stole. The light catches his shiny bald head. His traditional long-sleeved dull yellow robe is calf length, split at the neck and decorated with white embroidery. It has a split up each side revealing black trousers. He has simple slippers of brown leather.

A recent arrival. **Adebisi**, the Ancestor of the South, is the youngest of the three. She is a boyish young woman in her early twenties. Her hair is pulled back tightly from her face and worn in a small bun, and she has one gold earring. Adebisi wears calf length red trousers and a waist length, patterned yellow blouse with short sleeves. Her flat shoes are red. She has a length of green fabric tied loosely around her waist like a skirt.

When the action moves to London we meet **Tara** who is a lively young girl in her twenties. She is dressed for comfort in a simple dark red top with a vee neck and elbow length sleeves. Later she puts on a brown cotton shirt. Her black trousers are ankle length and stop just short of shiny black Doc Marten boots. Tara’s long hair is pulled back from her forehead into tiny braids which are twisted with a ribbon into a bun on the back of her head. She wears a nose clip, a silver ear cuff, and a slender chain around her neck.

In scenes set in London, Yetunde becomes Tara’s mother, Mosun, and Babatunde is now Tara’s father Segun. Adebisi unfastens her green skirt and becomes Tara’s girl-friend Leah. When she returns to the afterlife, she ties the green skirt back around her waist.

During scenes between Tara and Leah the other ancestors remain – they draw back and sit in the shadows each side of the mound.

Segun visits his younger brother in Lagos. **Teju** is also Tara’s uncle. He is in his mid forties. He wears a traditional pyjama suit of trousers and tunic in maroon with cream decoration at the front of the neck and flat leather slippers. His hair is thinning at the front and cut very short and he has a short beard.

Any props required during the action are brought on by the performers and include a low stool, its four legs fastened with thick rope, and a whisk made of twigs, which is used to brush dust from the floor.

Cast and production credits.

Jumoké Fashola plays Yetunde and Mosun

David Webber plays Babatunde and Segun

Ibinabo Jack plays Adebisi and Leah

Cherrelle Skeete plays Tara

And Stefan Adegbola plays Teju

The Musician and Co-composer is Mohamed Gueye

Lighting designed by José Tevar

Sound designer and composer is Enrico Aurigemma

Set and costumes designed by Natasha Jenkins

The play was written by Temi Wilkey

And directed by Daniel Bailey