

FolkFest Shows a Different Side of Rwanda **Despite war, poverty and deforestation the Batwa keep singing**

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, July 3, 2006—Juno Award winner MIGHTY POPO has launched what may be his most ambitious undertaking yet. With support from the Canada Council for the Arts, he has launched a tour of five BC festivals to share the music, culture and stories of URUNANA RW'ABADATANA and the Batwa people.

The genocide of 1994 left less than 1% of the Batwa people—Rwanda's original inhabitants—alive. War and deforestation have further impacted their culture and well-being. Traditionally people of the forest, the majority of the Batwa have been forced to relocate to cities and surrounding areas. They have lost their livelihood and their traditional forest lore is no longer being passed from one generation to the next. Although some Batwa have found work as day labourers, servants and tenant farmers, close to 80% have been forced to turn to begging to support themselves.

POPO first encountered URUNANA RW'ABADATANA (which stands for "the unbroken circle") on a trip to Rwanda last year. On seeing the Batwa music-and-dance ensemble perform, he says "It was the first time I experienced my own musical culture." He adds, "their sense of rhythm has no equal. It is simple and raw but amazingly complex in details."

Accompanied by the *inanga*, a stringed instrument, and the *ikondera*, a cow horn with a haunting sound, their music emphasizes sound rather than words—and is the primary way by which they communicate with the forest.

FolkFest marks the first stop on a tour that also includes Vancouver Island Musicfest, Harrison Festival of the Arts, Vancouver Folk Festival and Islands Folk Festival. URUNANA RW'ABADATANA's performance at ICA FolkFest on Sunday, July 2 marked the first time the group had ever performed publicly outside Rwanda—or used microphones.

The son of Rwandan refugees, POPO was born in Burundi, where he was exposed to the richness and diversity of African music. At 19, he moved to Canada and launched his career as a musician. It wasn't until the end of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, that POPO traveled to Rwanda for the first time. He credits Rwanda and the people of Rwanda with significantly enhancing his life.

The ICA FolkFest is presented by the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria and produced by TNT Productions. For more information about ICA FolkFest, call 472-FEST or visit www.icafolkfest.com.

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For more information, contact:

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Upcoming Performances

URUNANA RW'ABADATANA

At Teatro Circo

In Centennial Square

Monday, July 3	4:00pm – 4:45pm
Tuesday, July 4	1:30pm – 2:15pm
Tuesday, July 4	8:15pm – 9:00pm
Wednesday, July 5	2:15pm – 3:00pm
Wednesday, July 5	5:45pm – 6:30pm
Thursday, July 6	12:00pm – 1:00pm
Thursday, July 6	3:45pm – 4:30pm

Upcoming Performances

MIGHTY POPO

At Teatro Circo

In Centennial Square

Monday, July 3	8:00pm – 9:00pm
Tuesday, July 4	6:45pm – 7:45pm
Wednesday, July 5	8:00pm – 9:00pm
Thursday, July 6	7:00pm – 8:00pm

