



The (Post) Mistress

Tomson Highway

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Canada's most famous Aboriginal playwright, Tomson Highway, sets his latest theatrical achievement, *The* (*Post*) *Mistress*, in a not-so-distant past, when sending letters through the mail was still vital to communicating with friends and loved ones, and the small-town post office was often the only connection to faraway places longed-for or imagined.

Born and raised in Lovely, Ontario, a small French-Canadian farming village near Lake Huron, Marie-Louise Painchaud has never had occasion to venture much farther than the nearest community – Complexity, a copper-mining town and a somewhat larger dot on the map of the Georgia Bay area. For thirty years, Marie-Louise has worked at the local post office, and, through the many letters she sorts when they arrive and the ones that she stamps before they go out, she has come to know the lives of everyone in town and vicariously experience their various loves, losses, and personal dramas.

In this one-woman musical tour de force, Marie-Louise confides in us the interwoven stories sealed in the envelopes she handles every day. A samba beat offers the soundtrack for the tale of a local woman's passionate but doomed affair with a man from Rio de Janeiro; a rhythmic tango plays as Marie-Louise divulges a friend's steamy tryst in Argentina. All together, twelve unique musical pieces, ranging from Berlin cabaret to French *café chanson* to smooth bossa nova, accompany a multilingual French, Cree, and English libretto.

In *The (Post) Mistress*, Tomson Highway creates not only a rural comedy but also a sublime parody of small-town life – the northern Ontario version of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* or Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*.



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