

# FALL SEASON

Sep 19, 2015

Tanya Tagaq  
*Nanook of the North*

Sep 27, 2015

Roscoe Mitchell  
*Trios*

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George Lewis,  
Catherine Sullivan,  
Sean Griffin  
*Afterword, an Opera*

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Niv Sheinfeld/Oren  
Laor and Same  
Planet Different World

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Annie Dorsen  
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*Escuela (School)*

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Gisèle Vienne  
*The Ventriloquists  
Convention*

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Tatsu Aoki/  
Tsukasa Taiko  
*Taiko Legacy 12  
Reduction*

Museum of  
Contemporary Art  
Chicago

Sep 19, 2015

# Tanya Tagaq

## *Nanook of the North*

Music composed by Derek Charke

Vocals Tanya Tagaq

Violin and Samples Jesse Zubot

Percussion Jean Martin

NANOOK OF THE NORTH (1922, BW-65MM)

Producer Robert J. Flaherty

Director Robert J. Flaherty

Screenplay Robert J. Flaherty (writing)  
Frances H. Flaherty (concept)

Cinematography Robert J. Flaherty

Music Rudolf Schramm (1947 version);  
Stanley Silverman (1976 version)

Film Editing Robert J. Flaherty, Charles Gelb;  
Herbert Edwards (1947 version)

### FILM CAST

Nanook Allakariallak

Herself, Nanook's wife,  
the smiling one Nyla

Herself, Nanook's wife Cunayou

Himself, Nanook's son Allee

Himself, Nanook's son Allegoo

Narrator (1939 re-release,  
uncredited) Berry Kroeger

Copresented with  
World Music Festival  
Chicago



## ABOUT THE WORK

Tanya Tagaq lives in Manitoba. Her singular sense of the sound of the Arctic spaces shown in *Nanook of the North* originates in her childhood upbringing on Nunavut's Victoria Island and her mother's own memories of forced relocations from northern Quebec—the area in which the documentary was filmed. Her Inuit throat singing often makes room for improvisation and contrasts traditional, two-person harmonies. Thus, Tagaq transforms Robert Flaherty's documentary film, adding feeling and depth to a complex mix of beautiful representations and, from today's perspective, adding a racially charged dimension to the silent classic.

For this project Tagaq employs a restored version of the Flaherty film and features a commissioned score by composer Derek Charke. Her concert with *Nanook of the North* was commissioned by Toronto International Film Festival Bell Lightbox as part of its film retrospective *First Peoples Cinema: 1500 Nations, One Tradition*. *Nanook of the North* film is used courtesy of The Flaherty.

## ABOUT THE FILM

*Nanook of the North* (1922) is considered the world's first major work of nonfiction filmmaking and brought fame to its director, Robert Flaherty, who lived and worked for years among the Inuit. It launched the genre of documentary filmmaking—a term that did not even exist until 1926—but it also became notorious for employing racial clichés and staged buffoonery.

Completing four mineralogical surveys in the Hudson Bay area in Canada before becoming a filmmaker, Flaherty displays in the film his deep knowledge of the territory and his authentic respect for the Inuit lifestyle. Flaherty openly admitted that he hired multiple Inuits to play Nanook and his family as well as to help as members of the production crew. Additionally, he acknowledged that the film was a combination of *cinéma vérité*, stagings, and simulations.

In one telling scene, Nanook leads the Inuits in a walrus hunt. Although the Inuits had begun using rifles by the time of the documentary's filming in 1920-21, in the scene, Nanook and his comrades instead use harpoons to defeat the animal.

Flaherty conceded that many scenes, such as the walrus hunt, were staged; yet, at the same time, the scenes portray the skills necessary for survival in Canada's brutal environment. Furthermore, these staged scenes are also perhaps one of our only visual records of a quickly vanishing culture.

Unlike modern documentaries, which often serve as educational tools for a narrow audience, *Nanook of the North* was an absolute success when it premiered. Nanook (actually named Allakariallak) became an internationally recognized figure, and, when he died a few years after the film's release, his obituary ran in newspapers worldwide.

Today, *Nanook of the North* occupies a complicated role in the history of filmmaking. Despite—and perhaps because of—its stereotypical and sometimes derogatory portrayals of Inuit culture, the film was one of the first twenty-five films to be selected in 1989 by the U.S. Library of Congress for its National Film Registry, a registry that preserves “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant” movies.

Compiled with source material from Jay Carr's "Turner Classic Movies Film Article: *Nanook of the North*" and Eric D. Snider's *What's the Big Deal?: Nanook of the North* (1922)

## FROM THE ARTIST

*From an interview with The Guardian (May 17, 2015)*  
*by Homa Khaleeli*

"I WILL NEVER STOP BEING SURPRISED THAT PEOPLE LIKE MY MUSIC . . . I CAN FEED MY CHILDREN BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE FREAKS!"—TANYA TAGAQ

The passionate and political singer laughed at people's reactions to hearing her described as an Inuit throat singer: "They think my concerts are going to be 'just darling.'" Rather, Tagaq transforms the tradition of throat singing into a wildly emotional medium. Her concerts, she says, are entirely improvised: "If they are good shows, I pretty much lose consciousness. Nothing exists, but it's not scary, it's total peace. I will hear a tiny voice, and it sounds like it is far away and it gets louder and louder, and then I realize it's coming from my mouth." Tagaq's intensity is offset by her readiness to laugh at herself. She remarks, "I find the idea of covering songs from an indigenous woman's perspective really funny. For instance, the idea of "Caribou" [the Pixies track she covers on her new album *Animism*] being sung by someone who eats and hunts caribou, is . . . just funny to me."

TAGAQ'S INUIT HERITAGE IS ALWAYS ON HER MIND,  
YET HER MUSIC IS NEITHER NOSTALGIC NOR FOLKSY.

Rather, her music is accompanied by a sharp political edge. Growing up in the Inuit area of Nunavut, Tagaq saw firsthand the result of Canadian attempts to dismantle Inuit culture. Her mother was "born and raised in an igloo" in Pond Inlet, near the Arctic Circle, and she describes the area as magical: "Huge, jagged mountains rise out of the water. There are bears, seals, and it's rich in marine life."

But in the 1950s, the family was relocated to Resolute Bay by the Canadian government. Due to the area's strategic position, the government forcibly relocated Inuit from northern Quebec to Resolute in an attempt to maintain control of the High Arctic during the Cold War. One of the coldest inhabited places in the world, Resolute Bay's average yearly temperature is just under 4°F. While the Inuit were promised homes and game to hunt, the displaced Inuit soon discovered that there were no buildings and little familiar wildlife. Moreover, they were forced to endure weeks of

24-hour darkness during the winter and 24-hour sunlight during the summer, which had not occurred in northern Quebec. While the Inuit were told that they could return home after a year if they chose, this offer was eventually withdrawn, forcing the Inuit to stay in their new home. Eventually, learning the beluga whale migration routes enabled the Inuit to survive in the area.

After living in Resolute Bay for some time, Tagaq's family moved even further from their origins to the larger Cambridge Bay. Tagaq was sent to a residential school there—a system that had been created to forcibly integrate indigenous children into Canadian culture. (It should be noted that the Canadian prime minister offered an apology in 2008 to the former students of Indian Residential Schools for the “damaging impact the schools had on aboriginal culture, heritage and language.”)



Photo: Nadya Kwandibens

“DURING MY CHILDHOOD, EVERYONE WAS TRYING TO THROW AWAY INUK CULTURE.”

It was only when Tagaq moved to Nova Scotia for college that her mother thought to send tapes of traditional throat singing to her homesick daughter. The tapes awakened Tagaq's memory and familiarized her with the form, which is traditionally sung as a duet and passed down through generations. Instead, Tagaq learned to sing it on her own, often in the shower. She remembers, “When I started, it felt

like I was flushing out all the pain . . . It has taken me forty years to have a true pride in who I am.”

It is now Tagaq's goal to use her rising celebrity in order to highlight her community's challenges. Her most recent album, *Animism*, includes tracks called “Fracking,” “Fight,” “Flight,” and “Genetic Memory.” Deeply aware of the politics surrounding the Inuit people, Tagaq explains, “In the Canadian prime minister's eyes, Inuit people are a problem because we are demanding our rights and blocking resource development because we don't want our land to be ruined.”

Tagaq has been persistent in her attempts to raise awareness about violence against First Nations women.

During her 2014 performance at the Polaris Music Prize awards show, the names of 1,200 indigenous women who have been murdered or gone missing in the past thirty years scrolled down a screen. She asks, “If your daughter was four times more likely to be murdered than the girl across the street, what would you do to stop it?”

At the same time, Tagaq emphasizes the success stories and strength of Inuit women and, in her concerts, explores themes of sexuality and femininity. She explains, “In mainstream culture, women are not supposed to enjoy their flesh. Inuit women have to be strong . . . and sex wasn't seen as dirty.” In describing her performances, she says, “I love the ecstatic and extreme emotions I can convey on stage, but I like to mix together what is sexy. There's sex and death—procreation, fear, anger and laughter.”

Ultimately, although Tagaq's singing is wordless, she wants to put her performing to good use: “If my singing is a platform to help these issues being raised, then I will do it with love, with laughter and with fists.”

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### DEREK CHARKE

is a JUNO and East Coast Music Association (ECMA) award-winning composer and flutist. He attended the University of North Texas, the Royal Academy of Music in London, the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague, and the State University of New York at Buffalo, where he received his Ph.D. in composition. Charke has been commissioned by the Toronto Symphony, Winnipeg Symphony, Symphony Nova Scotia, St. Lawrence String Quartet, and cellist Jeffrey Zeigler. His *Tundra Songs* (2007) was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet and Tanya Tagaq. Charke teaches composition and theory at Acadia University, where he codirects the Acadia New Music Society, and he continues to perform regularly as a new music performer and improviser on the flute.

### JEAN MARTIN

is a drummer, multi-instrumentalist, and producer in Canada. Martin studied in New York City and is based in Toronto, but his network of collaborators extends internationally. As a performer, Martin has collaborated with Christine Duncan, Jesse Zubot, Bernard

Falaise, Kevin Turcotte, D. D. Jackson, and Justin Haynes. With the Canadian jazz group Chelsea Bridge, he released five CDs (Unity Page Records) and was featured at the Blue Note (New York City), the Molda International Jazz Festival (Norway), and the Washington D.C. Jazz Fest (Canadian Jazz Ambassador Series). In 2004, Martin was nominated as "Best Drummer" at the National Jazz Awards and received the Freddy Stone Award for excellence in contemporary music in Canada. Martin has been a featured soloist in the National Arts Centre Orchestra (Ottawa) and appeared with trumpeter Kevin Turcotte on the televised jazz special *Duos* (Télévision française de l'Ontario, Bravo). He is the Artistic Director of Barnyard Records, where he has produced and engineered dozens of recording projects.

### TANYA TAGAQ

was born in the remote Canadian Inuit town of Iqaluktuutiaq (Cambridge Bay), Nunavut. She studied visual arts at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. While living in Halifax, Tagaq began to teach herself traditional Inuit throat singing and started performing at festivals and clubs in Canada and Europe. She continues to perform across the globe at diverse venues,

including Carnegie Hall. Tagaq has collaborated with artists such as Björk, Mike Patton, and Michael Deveau. In 2013, Tagaq was awarded the Galaxie Rising Star Award at the Mundial Montreal for her showcase performance of *Nanook of the North*. She was nominated for the JUNO Award for Aboriginal Recording of the Year for both *Sināa* (2006) and *Auk/Blood* (2009), the latter of which also received a nomination for Instrumental Album of the Year. Her newest recording *Animism* is winner of the 2015 JUNO Award for Best Aboriginal Album and was nominated for Alternative Album of the Year. Tagaq also is winner of the 2014 Polaris Music Prize.

### JESSE ZUBOT

is a musician, producer, and composer. He was named "Violinist of the Year" at Canada's National Jazz Awards in 2003, 2008 and 2009. In 2005, Zubot started the label Drip Audio, which is dedicated to producing creative music and has produced more than thirty-five albums. Zubot has been commissioned by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to write symphonies and arrangements for the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and Symphony Nova Scotia. His first full string quartet premiered in 2014 at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre.

Zubot is winner of the 2010 Multi Media Industry Award at the Western Canadian Music Awards for his work with Tanya Tagaq on the score for *Tungijjuq*. He has received three JUNO Awards for his work with avant-rock band Fond of Tigers (2011), chamber folk-jazz ensemble The Great Uncles of the Revolution (2004), and roots instrumentalists Zubot & Dawson (2003). He was nominated for Producer of the Year at the 2015 JUNO Awards for Tanya Tagaq's *Animism* (2014), which also received a Polaris Music Prize.

## ABOUT OUR PARTNER

The 17th Annual World Music Festival Chicago celebrates diverse music from across the globe at various locations throughout the city this September 11-22. This free festival, produced by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, is the largest event of its kind in the United States.

This year's striking lineup features several premier concerts at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park including Red Baraat, La Santa Cecilia, Mahmoud Ahmed, Aziz Sahmaoui & University of Gnawa, Orlando Julius & the AfroSoundz, Tal National, L. Subramaniam and Fareed Ayaz, and Abu Muhammad Qawwal and Brothers. Additional highlights of the World Music Festival Chicago 2015 include an Ethiopian New Year celebration and Ragamala, an all-night celebration of Indian classical music at the Chicago Cultural Center.

The full schedule with locations and

times of each performance may be viewed at [worldmusicfestivalchicago.org](http://worldmusicfestivalchicago.org).

For updates and festival information, connect with us on Facebook ([facebook.com/WorldMusicFestivalChicago](https://www.facebook.com/WorldMusicFestivalChicago)), on Twitter (@WMFChicago) or on Instagram (@ChicagoDCASE).

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is dedicated to enriching Chicago's artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy through programming such as World Music Festival, Chicago Jazz Festival, Taste of Chicago, Downtown Sound at Millennium Park, unique exhibitions at the Chicago Cultural Center and throughout the city, diverse theater and dance programs and much more. DCASE also fosters the development of Chicago's non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City's future cultural and economic growth, via the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan; and marketing the City's cultural assets to a worldwide audience.



Ester Rada  
Courtesy of the artist

For more information on DCASE and its programs, visit [www.cityofchicago.org/dcase](http://www.cityofchicago.org/dcase).



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Lead support for the 2015-2016 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

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As of September 2015

As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presents the most thought-provoking visual art and performing arts of our time. MCA Stage is a vibrant series presenting theater, dance, and music by leading artists from the US and around the world in MCA's three-hundred-seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of MCA Chicago's artist-activated, audience-engaged programming. Along with the museum's exhibitions and educational initiatives, they encourage a broad and diverse community to experience and discuss the work and ideas of living artists.

#### **PARKING**

Validate your ticket at the coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 East Chicago Avenue) or the Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash). Discounted parking is limited to six hours on the date of performance.

#### **LOST AND FOUND**

To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312-280-2660. Unclaimed articles are held for thirty days.

#### **SEATING**

Please switch off all noise-making devices while you are in the theater.

Patrons are seated at the management's discretion. Food and open beverage containers are not allowed in the seating area.

#### **REPRODUCTION**

Unauthorized recording and reproduction of a performance is prohibited.

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Program notes compiled by Yolanda Cesta Cursach

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