

NEW DIRECTIONS IN MUSIC PRESENTED BY



Pimootewin
The Journey

**SOUND
STREAMS**

LAWRENCE CHERNEY
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Study Guide for *Pimootewin: The Journey*

Libretto by Tomson Highway

Music by Melissa Hui

Direction & Choreography by Michael Greyeyes

Table of Contents

Contents	2
How the Study Guide works	2
The Project	3
About Soundstreams	3
About the Work	3
The Story	3
Cree Culture	4
Aboriginal Culture	4
Cree Mythology	5
The Character of the Trickster	5
The Concept of the Spirits	5
The Land of the Dead	6
Storytelling or Oral Literature	6
Aboriginal Canadian Music	6
Canadian New Music	7
What is contemporary or new music?	7
Opera Production	8
Opera or Music drama	8
Oratorio	8
Music by Melissa Hui	9
List of Music Terminology	10
Bibliography	12
Internet Resources	13

How the Study Guide works

The Study guide gives you information about *Pimootewin* and outlines some related topics which may be helpful in contextualizing the work.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following supporters for making the Education program possible

Arts Education Partnership Initiative

The Arts Education Partnership Initiative (AEPI) is a one-time program of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and is administered by the Ontario Arts Foundation.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



**METCALF
FOUNDATION**



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

torontodartscouncil
An arm's length body of the City of Toronto



Charles H. Ivey Foundation; Hal Jackman Foundation; McLean Foundation
As of March 1, 2010

The Project

About Soundstreams

Founded by renowned oboist Lawrence Cherney in 1982, Soundstreams has presented hundreds of unique and compelling concerts, from intimate chamber music events to multi-choral spectacles, operas, music-theatre works and 8 highly successful international festivals.

Each Soundstreams season is comprised of 7 or more music events presented primarily in Toronto. The programming, curated by Artistic Director Lawrence Cherney, focuses on music by living composers with a special emphasis on Canadian composers. Soundstreams regularly commissions new works from both Canadian and international composers for world premiere, adding an average of two works to the global repertoire every year since 1982. Concerts are often recorded for broadcast by CBC Radio Two and the European Broadcasting Union, preserving the musical legacy Soundstreams upholds.

About the Work

Pimooteewin: The Journey

Melissa Hui, Composer
Tomson Highway, Librettist
Michael Greyeyes, stage director and choreographer

Lydia Adams, music director (Elmer Iseler Singers)
Choir: The Elmer Iseler Singers

A new music drama for solo Soprano, solo Tenor, Narrator, Choir and Instrumental Ensemble.

Instrumentation: flute, oboe, clarinet (or trumpet), percussion, violin, viola, cello, and double bass

The Story

Weesageechak and Migisoo bemoan the departure of the living to the land of the dead. They journey long and far to the river, which separates them from the magic island where the Spirits of the Dead dwell. The Four Spirit Men take them to the magic island, where The Spirits of the Dead dance every night by the light of the moon, held up by Atheegis the Frog. Weesageechak kills the Frog and swallows the moon. The Spirits of the dead can no longer dance - Weesageechak captures them in a basket and sets out to return to the Land of the Living. But the Spirits of the Dead are restless, and on the long journey back, one by one they escape from the basket. Weesageechak never again attempts to bring back the Spirits of the Dead.

Cree Culture

Aboriginal Culture

For the purposes of this Study Guide we will be using the term Aboriginal or Indigenous as oppose to the word Native as is used by educational curriculum.

At the last Canadian census in 2001, over 1.3 million people reported having at least some Aboriginal ancestry, representing 4.4 % of the total population. The cultural areas of aboriginal peoples are divided in Arctic, Subarctic, Northeast, Great Plains, Plateau and North West Coast. Among Aboriginal Canadians are: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis.

The word **Inuit** refers to the Aboriginal people of the Arctic who live in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec and Northern Labrador. The word means “people” in the Inuit language Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

Métis live in every region of Canada having mixed Aboriginal and European ancestry.

First Nations live in the Subarctic, Northeast, Great Plains, Plateau and North West Coast. More than 50 First Nations in these parts of Canada have some cultural similarities. Nevertheless they are different from one another - and very different from Inuit, whose culture was shaped by the northern environment. Some of the First Nations are: Cree, Ojibwa, the Algonquin, Montagnais, Naskapi, Malecite, Micmac, Beothuk. You will find different spellings, e.g. Algonquin or Algonkin.

There are many Cree First Nations that are located in different areas. In 1999 there were roughly 140 Cree or mixed Cree reserves located in Alberta, Manitoba, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Quebec, and Saskatchewan. The estimated number of Cree in North America is 60.000.

Some of the Cree First Nations are

In Alberta:

- Little Red River Cree Nation
- Bigstone Cree Nation
- Samson Cree Nation
- Woodland Cree First Nation

In Saskatchewan:

- Muskeg Lake Cree Nation
- Lucky Man Cree Nation

In Ontario:

- Chapleau Cree First Nation
- Moose Cree First Nation

In Manitoba:

- Tataskweyak (Split Lake) First Nation
- York Factory First Nation
- Norway House Cree Nation
- Peguis First Nation
- Opaskwayak Cree Nation

In Québec:

- Waswanipi Cree First Nation
- Cree Nation of Mistissini
- Ouje-Bougoumou Cree Nation
- Cree Nation of Wemindji

Cree Mythology

Mythology comprises of stories that pass on knowledge, values or beliefs of a cultural group. Thus, it determines the culture itself. Aboriginal mythology embraces mythological stories about the origin of the cosmos and the world, many stories about the Trickster and those that are related to rituals and ceremonies for special purposes e.g. birth, medicine or seasonal ceremonies.

The Character of the Trickster

The Trickster is a central character in Aboriginal North American mythology. Different peoples have differing names for it: such as Weesageechak in Cree, Nanabush in Ojibwa, Raven on the West coast, Coyote on the plains (and other places). Such a character exists as well in many other cultures on every continent.

On the one hand, the Trickster has a divine role having the power to create many aspects of the world. He can mediate between the human world and the divine. He has the ability to change his physical appearance. So, he can look like a human being, like an animal or a plant.

On the other hand, he has a very human character, trying to extend the limitations of human existence. He expresses human desires and he operates in the human world. He can act both in a positive or a negative way. Very often he violates the rules and serves as a bad example. Storytellers can thereby teach morality or entertain their audience. That means the stories about the Trickster have an important social function.

Tomson Highway says: "What he is, above all else, however, is a clown, the world's most hysterical, most ridiculous, given to the people by the Great Spirit, so to speak, to teach us the pivotal lesson that the reason for existence on the planet is not to suffer, not to wallow in guilt but to enjoy life, to take pleasure in the simple act of living".

The Concept of the Spirits

Spirit powers are believed to exist in every living thing including every animal and plant. In dance ceremonies the dancers become the spirits themselves.

Tomson Highway writes: "Probably the feature that most distinguishes the languages of aboriginal North America from those of Europe is that, in Cree, for example, there is no gender so that, in a sense, we are all he/she's, as are trees – which, like people, have a living/breathing spirit, a soul – as are cats, as is the sun and other astral bodies, as is God..."

The belief in the Spirits shows the deep acknowledgement and respect that Aboriginal people feel for nature and their environment.

The Land of the Dead

In Aboriginal culture, there is a belief in an afterlife. There is no belief in good and evil like in Christian religion.

Human beings are believed to have a soul that is able to exist without the physical world. The soul enters the body at birth and leaves it at death. After the death it will enter the land of the dead, where all souls live a carefree life. In some cases the souls can return to earth and haunt the habitations of men.

The various Aboriginal Peoples have different concepts about where the land of the dead is and how it is to be reached. Some believe that the Milky Way or the stars are the entrance to it. The Cree believe that there is a river that divides the land of the living from the land of the dead.

There are many mythological stories or tales in different cultures in which people want to return their loved ones to life. For example the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice or *The Monkey's Paw* by W.W. Jacobs.

Storytelling or Oral Literature

A key element of the Aboriginal American culture is oral tradition – through stories, songs, prayers and poems. Storytelling transmits the specific knowledge of the Aboriginal peoples from one generation to the next. Beyond the content, the skills of memorization and dramatic presentation are important and esteemed by the listeners. Some presentations move back and forth between spoken poetry and singing.

Storytelling has a social function. It joins people as they come together and share life experience.

The structure of the stories often includes the following elements: breaking of a rule or an existing order, consequence, and an occasional attempted escape from the consequence.

Aboriginal Canadian Music

Aboriginal music, singing and dance are strongly related to each other and to a specific social context. Aboriginal music is predominantly vocal music with accompaniment by drums, rattles and flutes or whistles. The percussion instruments that are used are foot drums, bass drums, tomtoms, tambourines, rattles, rasps, and tinklers. The instruments are constructed from materials from the local environment such as seeds, tree parts, and parts of animals. Like living beings instruments are seen as animate objects and are therefore treated respectfully.

Songs are passed on from one person to another like stories.

Canadian New Music

What is contemporary or new music?

With the term contemporary or new music we don't mean Pop, Hip Hop or Rock music, which is popular music of our day. What we define as new music is music composed using the elements of classical music but done in a new way. This can lead to unconventional sounds. Contemporary music often shows a new use of the musical language.

Classical music has mainly European origins. Many classical composers from the 18th and 19th century were Italian, French, English, German or Russian. In the 20th century Canadian composers gained more importance. The CBC started commissioning works in the early 1940s. In 1974, the biennial CBC Radio National Competition for Young Composers was established. Today many of Canada's best-known composers have been awarded this prize.

Since the 1940s the development of Canadian music constantly progressed. Québec's contemporary music organization, La société de musique contemporaine, has existed since 1966. In the 1970s the new music activities increased. More organizations like the Vancouver New Music Society were established.

For 28 years since 1982 Soundstreams Canada has organized concerts and festivals of new music and commissioned new compositions. Some of the renowned Canadian composers that have been commissioned by Soundstreams are: R. Murray Schafer, Michael Oesterle, Christos Hatzis, and Brian Cherney. The CBC continues commissioning and broadcasting new concert music. In the 21st century the dedication to further develop and promote Canadian contemporary music continues.

Opera Production

Opera or Music drama

An opera is a musical and dramatic art form that brings together lyrics, instrumental music, singing and acting. Opera involves solo singers, an orchestra and usually a choir. The first operas date from about 1600. Monteverdi was one of the opera composers of this time. Other well known composers of operas were: Georg Friedrich Haendel (1685-1759), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1765-1791) and Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901). The lyrics in an opera are called the libretto.

An opera is comprised of different pieces such as ensembles like duets or trios, the solo airs and choir pieces. Mostly an orchestra piece, called the overture, happens at the beginning of operas.

Opera singers have different voices according to their range of tones and their volume. Men's voices are divided into the deep voice of the bass and the high voice of the tenor. The voice that lies in between both is named the baritone. For women the deep voice is called alto, the high voice is a soprano and the one in between is the mezzo-soprano. In terms of volume the voices can be light, lyric or dramatic in their nature. In the classical operas from recent centuries there are from about 5 to 10 solo singers.

The size of the orchestra increased over the centuries. In the 18th century the orchestra was quite small, made up of string instruments, woodwind instruments, and a Continuo instrument like a harpsichord (or organ). In the late 19th century and early 20th century the symphony orchestra became big including more string instruments, all wood wind and brass wind instruments, diverse percussion instruments, and harp.

Oratorio

An oratorio is a sacred composition that involves solo singers, an orchestra and a choir. This setting resembles the opera. But an oratorio is not staged. There is usually no interaction between the characters on stage. Further, it has no costume design.

The texts of an oratorio have religious origin. In the oratorios from the 18th and 19th century texts are based on the bible. An oratorio involves Solo-arias and choir parts, ensemble pieces like duets and recitatives. Recitatives are a mixture of sung and spoken recitals. In the recitatives the most part of the story is told, whereas in the arias some phrases that express certain emotions are repeated several times. Pimootewin is takes the form of a semi-staged oratorio.

Well known oratorios are *The Messiah* by Georg Friedrich Haendel or the *Christmas oratorio* by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

Music by Melissa Hui

The following text is based on an Interview with Melissa Hui that she gave in 1995 as a 28-year old composer. (The Interview was led by Ray Chatelin for the journal "Music and Words" of the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada.) As Ms. Hui immigrated to Canada when she was a child, she says: "I've been a stranger in a strange land for basically my entire life." How does this fact influence her composition style? Melissa Hui does include multi-cultural, such as Asian or Aboriginal, elements in her contemporary music. She does not follow a certain school of composing but describes herself as searching and expressing in her "own individual way". As everything is developing and changing, she explains "You can no longer express new ideas using old techniques and old ways." How does she describe her way of composing? "I'm very economical with my material. I don't write many notes. And the more I compose the more economical I become. I really believe that less is best."

What does she think about new Canadian music? "Canada is blessed in that we have a much shorter history in the tradition of new music. And because of that I feel the attitude in Canada has been amazingly open to different, individual styles."

A review: The Canadian Music Centre writes about Hui's composition style

"Hui's music is generally not goal-oriented or harmonically-based, as is much of our Western music. As a result, her musical structures are not hierarchical and all elements play an equal role, encouraging the listener to find meaning in the 'lack' of drama. For example, in *Come as you are*, the form is articulated by four long silences between four tableaux of flat musical textures. Silence is thus as important as sound, for it divides the temporal canvas into snapshots and allows for reflection between them".

"Most cultural influences on her work appear as discrete sound objects that have a specific sound, colour, texture, pitch content, rhythmic profile and register, so that when an obvious cultural element emerges, she utilizes its extra-musical 'baggage' to exploit the "friction [in] their juxtaposition.""

List of Music Terminology

Alto is the name for the female low voice.

An **Aria** is a piece for solo singer from an opera or an oratorio.

Baritone is the name for the male voice that lies in between the Tenor and the Bass voice.

Bass is the name for the male low voice.

A **Duet** is an ensemble for two singers.

Ensemble has two meanings. It can be an Ensemble of musicians that play music together.

In an opera or oratorio it is any musical piece where two or more solo-singers are involved.

Harmony is the term for the chord structure of music.

A **Libretto** is the text for a dramatic work like an opera.

Mezzo-soprano is the name for the female voice in between a soprano and an alto.

Monophony outlines music that has only one melody.

An **Opera** is a musical composition that involves solo singers, an orchestra and a choir. It combines music and drama. It is fully staged and performed with costumes and stage design.

An **Oratorio** is a musical composition that involves solo singers, a choir and an orchestra. It is based on a sacred text. It is usually not staged but presented in concert-form.

An **Overture** is the opening orchestral work of an opera or oratorio.

Pipa is the Chinese lute.

Polyphony describes music that involves more than one melody simultaneously.

A **Recitative** is a mixture of sung and spoken recital.

Soprano is the name for the female high voice.

SATB choir is a choir with the four types of voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass.

Tenor is the name for the male high voice.

A **Trio** is an Ensemble for three singers or musicians.

Bibliography

- Canadian Music Centre (2001): *Musicanada 2000, A Celebration of Canadian Composers*, Liber, Montreal
- Chatelin, Ray: *SOCAN, Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (1995): Words and Music, Vol.2, No.2, Completely contemporary*, Melissa Hui's winning musical mix, www.musiccentre.ca
- Christen, Kimberley A. (1998): *Clowns & Tricksters, An Encyclopedia of Tradition and Culture*. ABC-CLIO, Denver
- Leeming, David/ Page, Jake (1998): *The Mythology of Aboriginal North America*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman
- Mandelbaum, David G. (1987): *The Plains Cree, An ethnographic, historical and comparative Study*. Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, Hignell Printing Limited, Winnipeg, second print 1987
- Marcuzzi, Suzanne (2007): *Recognition, Identity, and History: A case for the Inclusion of Aboriginal Cultural Histories into Canadian School Curricula*, in: Grabow, Sven/ Hull Daniel/ Waterton, Emma: *Which Past, Whose Future? Treatments of the Past at the Start of the 21st Century*, Proceedings of a conference held at the University of York 20-21st May 2005, Oxford
- McMaster, Gerald/ Trafzer, Clifford E. (editors) (2004): *Aboriginal Universe, Voices of Indian America*. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.
- Morantz, Toby (2002): *The Crees Weave Their Own Tapestry*, in: *The White Man's Gonna Getcha, The Colonial Change to the Crees in Quebec*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston
- Page, Daniel H./ Da Rosa, Victor M.P. (1982): *Heritage of the North American Indian People, Some suggestions emphasizing the Eastern Woodlands*. Borealis Press, Ottawa
- Price, John A.: *Aboriginal Studies, American and Canadian Indians*, McGraw-Hill Ryerson limited, Toronto, 1978
- Pritzker, Barry M.(1999): *Aboriginal America Today, A guide to community politics and culture*. ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara
- Sam-Cromarty, Margaret (2000): *Contes et poemes cris, Cree poems and stories*. Lettreplus, Hull
- Wesley-Esquimaux, Cynthia (2004): *Raven Saw: Tradition, Transition, and Transformation in a Northern Aboriginal Community*, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto

Sources of pictures and maps:

- 1- Cree camp 1871; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cree>
- 2- Map, Dialect groups of the Cree language; <http://www.answers.com/topic/creemap-png>
Modified from: Brock University Map Library, Canada (no names), [PDF], Software Edition, St.Catharines, ON: Brock University Map Library, 2004,
<http://www.brocku.ca/maplibrary/images/canadaNONAMES.pdf>
- 3- Cree language symbols; <http://www.creeculture.ca/images/content/syllabics.gif>,
Aanischaukamikw —Cree Cultural Institute, Opemiska Meskino, Oujé-Bougoumou, QC

Internet Resources

Aboriginal Canada Portal

www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca

Canadian Heritage

<http://www.pch.gc.ca/>

http://www.pch.gc.ca/pc-ch/sujets-subjects/arts-culture/musi/index_e.cfm

Canadian Music Centre

<http://www.musiccentre.ca/influences/composer.cfm?authpeopleid=10521&themeid=1>

<http://www.musiccentre.ca/influences/teachersguide.cfm>

Cree culture and history links

www.creeculture.ca

http://www.Aboriginal-languages.org/cree_culture.htm

Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Canadian music

<http://www.encyclopediaofAboriginalmusic.com/index.pl/music>

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

<http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca>

http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/ra/fgg/wili_e.html

<http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/sts/index-eng.asp>

Institute for Canadian Music

<http://www.utoronto.ca/icm/links.html>

Elliott, Robin (editor): ICM, Institute for Canadian Music Newsletter

<http://www.utoronto.ca/icm/newsletter.html>

Library and Archives Canada

http://www.collectionscanada.ca/02/0201200110_e.html

Aboriginal drums

www.Aboriginaldrums.ca

Natural resources, The Atlas of Canada

<http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/peopleandsociety/nunavut/people/culturalareas>

Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre

<http://www.sicc.sk.ca/heritage/sils/ourlanguages/cree.html>

Statistics Canada

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/abor/canada.cfm>

The Canadian Encyclopedia

<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com>

Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org>