Note: In Canada, we now refer to Aboriginal people either as Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Anishnawbe, or Ojibway, Cree, or Algonquin, etc. depending on what nation a person belongs to.
CONTENTS

Production Credits Page 3

Playwright Stumbles upon an Almighty Story Page 4

Designer’s Diary Page 8

Glossary of Terms Page 9

Activities and Discussion Page 11

About Native Earth Page 14

Resources and Further Reading Page 15
Production Credits

Almighty Voice and His Wife
By Daniel David Moses
Directed by Michael Greyeyes
Produced by Native Earth Performing Arts
Almighty Voice - Derek Garza
White Girl, Interlocutor - Cara Gee
Set and Costume Design by Jackie Chau
Lighting Design by Sarah Marcroft
Sound Design by Richard Lee

Mar 28-Apr 12 2009
Theatre Passe Muraille 16 Ryerson Ave Toronto
Daniel David Moses is one of the most renowned Aboriginal playwrights of our time with such masterpieces as *Coyote City* and *The Indian Medicine Shows*. Here is an excerpt of his essay *How My Ghosts Got Pale Faces* (Pursued by a Bear, Talks, Monologues and Tales, Exile Editions, 2005), where he describes the creation of one of his most moving creations: Almighty Voice and His Wife.

“I first read a version of the story of Almighty Voice when I was working as a researcher at the Woodland Cultural Centre in Brantford, probably in the fall of 1978. I knew as soon as I came across the story that I would someday do something with it, write something about it. I made a photocopy, started a file.

“Almighty Voice was a young Cree warrior who lived in Saskatchewan near the end of the last century. The spiritual sounding name is the English translation of *Kisse-Manitou-Wayou*. His story is usually told by mainstream writers as the story of a sad misunderstanding, of a Renegade Indian. In the Cree communities of Saskatchewan, the story has a life still that’s almost mythical, because Almighty Voice, I know now, became a symbol of resistance.

“A short version of the story begins in late October of 1895 when Almighty Voice kills a cow. You don’t need to know why, or who it belonged to, if it did indeed belong to anyone. All you need to know is that the Mounties hear about it and arrest him and throw him into the guard house. (That guard house still stands as a monument to him in the town of Duck Lake. A nearby building sports a mural two stories tall based on the only photograph we believe we have of Almighty Voice.)

“Do the Mounties think they will teach him a lesson? Someone among them perhaps thinks he’ll just tease Almighty Voice and tells him that he’s going to hang for killing the cow. Almighty Voice escapes and heads off across the prairie.

“Is the Saskatchewan River already iced over or does he have to ford, even swim, through the freezing waters? One of the Mounties decides to go after the Indian. And there certainly is snow on the ground by the time the Mountie finds Almighty Voice a day or so later, surprises him resting beside a fire.

“The details of the incident shift from version to version of the story.

“Let’s suppose that the Mountie suggests in English that the young man surrender and that Almighty Voice says “Go away! I won’t die for no cow!” in Cree. The result is the death of the Mountie and the start of a manhunt that lasts, off and on, for the next year and a half, with Almighty Voice always managing to elude the authorities, due to his familiarity with the landscape and thanks, no doubt, to his people.

“Then in May of 1897 Almighty Voice and two of his friends are spotted by a farmer and chased and cornered in a bluff of poplars. All the authorities, Mounties, soldiers, the priest and the Indian Agent, all the settlers, farmers, shopkeepers, traders, all the Indians in the area show up to watch the standoff.

“Almighty Voice and his friends make like warriors, taunt their enemies, sing their songs. The authorities try to starve them out for as long as it takes for the cannons to be brought down from the Fort at Prince Albert. They’re small cannons but they work. Almighty Voice and his friends are killed. The End.

“When I first read that story, I guess I was innocent, or more accurately ignorant, of the history of that part of Canada. In school I’d been taught that this country had been settled mostly by treaty and wasn’t that civilized and humane?
I hadn’t realized how much space there might be between the lines of such documents, hadn’t seen the difficulties in translation between the language of English and for instance Cree, between the respective cultures and sets of values, between for instance what each community thought was the definition of human.

When I first read that story, I was shocked by its arc -- kill a cow and die. I didn’t understand what had gone on. I needed to know more.

I needed to know, for instance, that Almighty Voice was a young man in the first generation after the Riel Rebellion and that the site of the Battle of Batoche was in his territory, and that his was the first generation of people who were confined by those nice humane treaties on reserves, the first generation of people for whom the buffalo weren’t a major source of food and inspiration.

Knowing just these instances, one can begin to understand why a young Cree warrior might kill a cow, how racism started to be institutionalized, why the whites and their government were so scared of one dark-skinned delinquent.

Why he might just spark off another uprising out there in the west!

But when I first started thinking about the story, I hadn’t any of these instances in mind. All I had to think about was that dark-skinned delinquent and a situation that seemed the epitome of the word “overkill.”

In the different versions of the story I came across over the years, one detail that appeared in a couple of them was the presence at the killing of the Mountie of a witness, a young Cree woman. One version of the story identified her as a cousin of Almighty Voice, travelling with him as a cook. The other version didn’t comment on her role at all, only mentioned in a tone of offended astonishment that, after the Mountie was killed, the young woman turned calmly back to tend whatever was cooking on the fire. (How this striking behaviour was observed by no other witness was not revealed.)

Maybe it is because I was raised on the Six Nations, where the power of women has always stayed clear, that the presence of the young woman got me thinking. But wouldn’t anyone wonder what that young woman thought she was doing there, out in the middle of the winter prairie, away from the village, with that young man and maybe a horse and only the food and weapons they could carry and at least one Mountie following their trail?

The role of a cook seemed insufficient reason for her to be in such peril, even if she was a relative. Why couldn’t he cook for himself? He’s a warrior, isn’t he? The role of wife or, even more convincing, of lover, however, could make her reasons for being there clear, made the entire situation seem suddenly more interesting.

I remembered then those black and white movies that Hollywood put out after the Second World War, movies I’d seen on television late at night that presented the sort of stories where young lovers get in trouble with authority and all the idealism their love implies does them no good at all in the face of stupidity and greed and power.

I realized then that what I was looking at was like those film noir stories, love against the odds, Bonnie and Clyde, Romeo and Juliet. That sort of love story was more interesting to me than the Renegade Indian one that I’d heard all too often before. I could almost see the logo for “A Universal Picture”. So I decided I’d write a story about Almighty Voice and that girl, that my play could be called “Almighty Voice and His Wife”.
Discussion

What's with the buffalo?

The buffalo (bison) extermination in North America was the result of government supported hunting companies killing anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 buffalo per day. The government wanted to eliminate buffalo herds that often impeded trains from efficient travel. The government also had a second motive, "The military was keenly aware that a substantial decline in buffalo would pose a serious setback to the Indian’s ability to resist (European) expansion. It would also spell an end to their seemingly nomadic lifestyle and force their move to reservations (reserves)" (Novelguide.com). The buffalo population, once the most numerous large mammal on Earth and a substantial part of the diet of many Aboriginal tribes, declined to less than a 1000 by the 1890's.(Alfred)

- What references to the buffalo were present in Almighty Voice and his Wife?
- How is the buffalo extermination connected to Almighty Voice’s choice to kill a cow?
- What do you think of the consequence of jail and possible execution for Almighty Voice’s actions?
- How might have Almighty Voice’s story ended differently, if the buffalo had not been exterminated?

What’s with the whiteface?

Moses turns the minstrel show on its head by opening the second act of Almighty Voice and His Wife with both actors' faces painted white. Minstrel shows started in the early 1830s and became hugely popular across North America until the 1930s. White actors would paint their faces black with large red lips to depict a comical, exaggerated, stereotypical African-American person.

- What do you think Moses' intention was for using whiteface in his play?
Designer’s Diary

Jackie Chau is a costume and set designer for theatre who has worked on such projects as fu-GEN Asian Canadian Theatre’s Lady in the Red Dress and Native Earth’s The Place Between.

“The designer’s job is to realize the director’s vision and visually create the world in which the play takes place,” says Jackie while leafing through her sketchbook. “The set is the first transformation that the audience experiences, the first window into the world the playwright wanted the audience to see. Then the costumes give characters dimension.”

The first step in a designer’s process is to listen to the director. In this case, Jackie listened intently for any consistency in director Michael Greyeyes’ words so that she could get a sense of what he was imagining would be a home for all the action.

Jackie was asked to create a set that embodies “remembering”. Words that came to mind from Michael were “snow”, “shattered glass” and “mirrors”. She was also asked to shift the set so that in the second act, it becomes a physical manifestation of White Girl’s memories.

Discussion

Name at least 3 materials used in the set design. What do they represent?

Name at least 3 elements of costume design in the play. How did it inform us about the characters?

- How did the set shift in the second act? What was the effect?
Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal: The term "Aboriginal" is appropriate when referring to matters that affect First Nations (Indian) and Métis peoples. The word is most appropriately used as an adjective (e.g., Aboriginal person).

First Nation(s): A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian". Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. The term has also been adopted to replace the word "Band" in the naming of communities.

Inuit: An Aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in the Northwest Territories, and in Northern Quebec and Labrador. The word means "people" in the Inuit language - Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

Métis: The term refers to Aboriginal people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis people, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.

Native: A term used to refer generally to Aboriginal peoples. The term "Aboriginal person" is preferred to "native". The Battle of Duck Lake was a skirmish between Métis soldiers of the Provisional Government of Saskatchewan and Canadian government forces that signaled the beginning of the North-West Rebellion.

Louis David Riel (1844 –1885) was a Canadian politician, a founder of the province of Manitoba, and leader of the Métis people of the Canadian prairies. Riel sought to preserve Métis rights and culture as their homelands in the Northwest came progressively under the Canadian sphere of influence. He is regarded by many as a Canadian folk hero today.

An Interlocutor in the context of the show, is the master of ceremonies of a minstrel show who performs in blackface (see page 7).

Ghost Dance: In the 1800's, a Paiute Native healer by the name of Wovoka envisioned a Ghost Dance that would be salvation for Aboriginals. Tribes across the U.S flocked to meet Wokova to learn the Ghost Dance in the hopes that the dance would annihilate their colonizers and bring back the buffalo and wild horses. The Ghost Dance was banned on Lakota reservations by white officials because of its connections religious fervour and activism.

Wounded Knee Massacre occurred on December 29, 1890. Five hundred troops of the U.S. 7th Cavalry, surrounded an encampment of Miniconjou Sioux (Lakota) and Hunkpapa Sioux (Lakota). The Army had orders to escort the Sioux to the railroad for transport to Omaha, Nebraska. One day prior, the Sioux had given up their protracted flight from the troops and willingly agreed to turn themselves in. They were met by the 7th Cavalry, who had been instructed to disarm the Lakota before proceeding. During the process of disarmament, a deaf tribesman named Black Coyote refused to give up his rifle because he did not understand the order to disarm. This set off a chain reaction of events that led to a scene of chaos with fighting between both sides. By the time it was over, more than 200 men, women, and children of the Lakota Sioux had been killed. Twenty-five troopers also died during the massacre. Around 150 Lakota are believed to have fled the chaos, with an unknown number later dying from hypothermia. The site has been designated a National Historic Landmark.

Squaw is the phonetic spelling for the Algonquian word meaning "woman." As an English language loan-word, used as a noun or adjective, its present meaning is an Indigenous woman of North America, regardless of tribe. The term has been considered offensive.
Activities and Discussion

The Truth In Stories

Who writes the history we are taught? Who gets to tell the story? What is the real story? In the news? On YouTube? In the newspaper?

Read this neutral telling of a situation:

Dennis comes to school in the morning. He goes to his locker and gets his books for class and puts away his coat. As he walks to class, Michelle passes him in the hallway carrying a gun. Dennis goes to the office and the police are called. In the process of police arresting Michelle for gun possession, Michelle ends up dead.

Split into four groups.

One group creates a scene telling the whole through the eyes of Dennis.
One group creates a scene telling the whole through the eyes of Michelle.
One group creates a scene telling the whole through the eyes of the Police.
One group creates a scene telling the whole through the eyes of the Principal.

Discussion

How were the stories different?

In the different methods with which the story was told (i.e. the words used, tone, blocking) how did it effect the actual story?

Which one did you believe?

After viewing the other groups’ scenes, how might you change your own?
Myths

How do they start? Where is the truth and where is the exaggeration? How do we decipher the truth and the fiction in such stories? As an example there are a number of misperceptions and myths that exist about Al Jazeera and Al Jazeera English in North America. The information you are about to read is available on Al Jazeera’s English website http://iwantaje.net/hm. The site was launched in direct response to the prevailing opinions of the news channel by the western world. Since it comes from Al Jazeera, how does it affect your receiving of the information? Where do we draw the line of truth? We encourage you to watch the channel for yourself to judge, via livestation.com/aje or youtube.com/Aljazeeraenglish. Ok, here we go…

Myth: Al Jazeera Supports Terrorism

No, this is not true. Al Jazeera Arabic, like many other broadcasters, has received Osama Bin Laden tapes and material from other sources that are of interest to the general public. Al Jazeera makes an editorial judgment to air small amounts of newsworthy content if it is deemed relevant. We are certainly not alone in this decision - just about all the other major broadcasters do the same. People often neglect to mention that AJ wasn’t the first network to broadcast a tape from Bin Laden, and the last tape that was released online was first picked up by another outlet. What is true is that Al Jazeera has given more airtime to American leaders than has ever been given to Osama Bin Laden.

Myth: Al Jazeera is Anti-Semitic

Al Jazeera is available in Israel. The decision was made to remove BBC and replace it with AJE because AJE was thought to be unbiased and balanced. They have given more air time to Israeli officials than any other news channel outside of Israel.

Myth: Al Jazeera is Anti-American

Absolutely not. Al Jazeera is committed to providing an international platform for American voices, often reaching places where the American perspective is rarely heard. News coverage and programming coming from the US is extensive.

Myth: Al Jazeera Shows Beheadings

This is inaccurate. Al Jazeera has never and will never broadcast a beheading. Al Jazeera upholds the strictest guiding principles of accuracy, impartiality and objectivity.

Myth: Al Jazeera has a Specific Agenda

Al Jazeera has no commercial or political constraints, which automatically gives it less bias than any other English channel. It is true to say that Al Jazeera has a unique point of view, offering an alternative perspective to other Western-based outlets.

Facts and Figures

- Al Jazeera Network has more than 69 bureaus across the globe
- Al Jazeera English has more than 1200 staff from nearly 50 nationalities.
- The Al Jazeera English broadcasts to more than 140 million households in more than 100 countries.
- Al Jazeera English broadcasts news and current affairs from four broadcast centers: Doha, Qatar; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; London, England, and Washington, DC.
- The Al Jazeera English website receives 22 million visits every month. Approximately 50% of the website traffic comes from the United States and Canada.
- Al Jazeera’s branded page is the most watched News channel on YouTube.
- In January 2007, Al Jazeera English replaced BBC World on Israeli satellite television.

An article written about Al Jazeera by The Independent newspaper in the UK. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/no-wonder-they-banned-aljazeera-the-truth-hurts-556605.html

- Ex-CBC host Avi Lewis joins the Al Jazeera English Network.

AVI LEWIS Gemini Award-Winning Broadcaster
In the 1990s, Avi Lewis was the host of City TV's landmark music journalism show, *The New Music*. He was MuchMusic’s first Political Specialist, winning a Gemini Award for Best Special Event Coverage. Lewis was the host and producer of *counterSpin with Avi Lewis* on CBC Newsworld. In 2004, Lewis directed his first feature documentary, *The Take*, which was nominated for 4 Gemini awards and won the International Jury prize at the American Film Institute Festival in Los Angeles.

Lewis is currently hosting a new weekly television series – *Inside USA* – an examination of the real issues at stake in the US presidential elections. The series debuted on Al Jazeera English television network in February 2008.
Native Earth Performing Arts is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the creating, developing and producing of professional artistic expression of the Aboriginal experience in Canada.

Through stage productions (theatre, dance and multi-disciplinary), new script development, apprenticeships and internships, Native Earth seeks to fulfill a community of artistic visions. It is a vision that is inclusive and reflective of the artistic directions of members of the Aboriginal community who actively participate in the arts.

**Artistic Mandate**
Native Earth Performing Arts Inc. (NEPA Inc.) is dedicated to the expression of the Native experience through theatre arts. Its mandate is:

- to provide a base for professional Native performers, writers, technicians and other artists
- to encourage the use of theatre as a form of communication within the Native community, including the use of Native languages
- to communicate to our audiences the experiences that are unique to Native people in contemporary society
- to contribute to the further development of theatre in Canada.

Native Earth is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and engages with the Canadian Actors Equity Association under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement.

**7 VALUES**
In service to our mandate and mission, the company operates according to 7 traditional principles which inform decisions in all undertakings. It is our belief that these tenets not only honour Aboriginal values, but are universal to all cultures in various manifestations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courage</th>
<th>Patience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of Character</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources and Further Reading

WEBSITES
Aboriginal Canada Portal: www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca
Aboriginal Healing Network: www.ahf.ca

BOOKS

Giago, Tim. "To the Lakota, December is a Month of Tragedy," Native American Times 13.99 (December 2008)
