2008-2009
HOT SEASON FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE PRESENTS

SPIRIT
HORSE

Roseneath Theatre
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Dear Teachers,

*Spirit Horse* is a rich and unique theatre experience. The story engages the audience with humor and honesty while the theatrical style celebrates the power of the imagination. The combination takes us on a journey that has a meaningful effect on our understanding of the world and the way we view our own lives.

While this story is specifically about the culture of a Canadian First Nations family, *Spirit Horse* also reflects the experience of children and their families immigrating into North America, struggling to adjust to and embrace their new life. Although the struggles of Angelina and Jesse might differ from those of your students face, the emotion is the same.

Their time with the Spirit Horse becomes an exciting and humorous adventure for the two children, but in the midst of that joy, they are also dealing with the tragedy of loss. When the story begins, rifts between parents and children seem impossible to repair. Yet, somehow the Spirit Horse brings them all together again, dissolving the lines between traditional and modern, magic and reality. It is through the Spirit Horse that three generations of family members are finally able to heal.

We know you will enjoy this exceptional performance!

TPAC Education
About Roseneath Theatre
Roseneath Theatre has been producing original theatre for children, families, teachers and communities for over 20 years. We tour all over the world, and are seen as one of the foremost producing companies of our kind in Canada. Our work consistently garners awards and nominations based on the excellence of the scripts, the caliber of the performers and the quality of the production values, as well as outstanding critical and audience response. Roseneath Theatre tours as many as 300 performances to over 100,000 young people and their families annually and is the largest touring company in Ontario.

An Introduction to the Production
Spirit Horse is a Native Canadian adaptation of an award-winning Irish play called “Tir Na N’Og” by British playwright, Greg Banks. The play is touted to be one of Britain’s most successful children’s theatre productions in the past two decades. Roseneath’s Artistic Director, David S. Craig saw the original play at an international theatre festival in the United States and was thrilled by the combination of imaginative staging, live music, spiritual and realistic elements in the narrative, all woven into a terrific adventure. However, he wanted the story to have a more direct relevance for North American audiences, and particularly North American young people.

David contacted celebrated Ojibway writer/playwright, Drew Hayden Taylor (“Toronto at Dreamers Rock”) who immediately saw the connections to the experience of First Nations people. Both communities lived on the edge of mainstream society. Both had rich traditions that were being lost in a modern world. Drew has structured his original adaptation around an authentic Stoney Nation (Sioux) belief using the backdrop of the Canadian Rockies as his setting. In the play, the lives of two urban Stoney Nations' children living in a Calgary high-rise apartment building are changed forever when their grandfather, who lives by “the old ways” on a reservation, discovers a Spirit Horse which rides from a mountain lake and into their lives. The play is a touching and beautiful story with an unexpected emotional twist at the end when we discover that the horse represents the spirit of the children's mother. It is the magic of the traditional ways that brings healing and hope to a troubled family that has been disconnected from its roots and heritage.

A Note From the Playwright
Having talked with people of the Stoney Nation, specifically a gentleman by the name of Sykes Powderface, I found a legend that embraced the same elements, the same need for strength and commitment that the original story had. Legends were my Rosetta Stone. All cultures have stories and legends (do you know yours?). They are the fingerprints of a people.

Over the phone, Sykes told me a fabulous tale of magical horses, mysterious lakes, and rising to meet challenges. The true irony is that both he and I, being First Nations, come from what can be called oral cultures. That is to say, history and education were passed down verbally through story. And here we were, exchanging stories orally, but through this thing called a telephone. And, keep in mind, to the Stoney people, this isn't just a story. It's truth. Supposedly, there is such a lake, and there is such a horse. And it does take a very special person to ride it.

This was originally a story about the gypsies in Ireland. It became a story about the Stoney people in Alberta, written by an Ojibway writer from Ontario. What did I learn from this experience? Well what I first thought would be difficult became fun. I made some good Stoney friends; learned more about their ways. I got to tell a fabulous story. I learned to never look at the differences; look at the similarities. As an Ojibway, I’ve always believed that stories are memories of the universe and if they aren't told and shared, the universe becomes a much smaller place. So start sharing.

Drew Hayden Taylor, Playwright
A Note From the Director

In its new incarnation, the play has retained its energy and style of the original performance but there is a legend at the heart of the story that has changed. However, both the original Irish legend and the Native Canadian tale revolve around a horse which appears from under water and proceeds to help our protagonists, two young children and their father, to come to terms with the death of the children's mother. The horse also reconnects the father with his past life and helps to remind him of his old ties to his community. The story is about how an ancient legend combines with the harsh realities of an oppressed group, Irish Travellers (gypsies) / Native Canadians, to create a story that is both an adventure and a journey of emotional discovery for all the characters.

The story telling is fast moving and very physical; the actors change characters in front of our eyes, sometimes narrating directly to the audience, but always emotionally engaged. There are only three actors but between them they play some 60 characters and inanimate objects, from a dog to a helicopter with almost no costume changes and no changes in the set. Everyone plays the horse at some time in the play. The story is an epic, a chase across a vast landscape where the emotional mood of the characters and the nature of the countryside is expressed through music, which is played live on stage. Music is very important in setting the mood of the play.

The actors need to be fit and very creative; it is not easy to play a horse one minute and the next second to be a dad who is devastated at losing his children, and then become a police dog! Importantly we have to believe in all these characters. In the past we have received many drawings from people who have seen my version of the play. They often draw pictures of a big white horse. We never actually see a real horse on stage, but the actors have managed to make the audience feel that they have seen and heard one! This is the magic of theatre! Enjoy.

Greg Banks, Director

A Note From the Set and Lighting Designer

In creating the world of this play, the director and I chose to use the materials found in the modern world combined with the shapes found in the traditional native world. The main characters of the play are living on the fringe of a society where many of the structures are made of metal and concrete, while their heritage lies in structures that were made of wood, bark and animal skins. I have tried to echo the shapes of the tipi, of the prow of the canoe and of the longhouse while combining these with a kind of modern scrap yard jungle gym. In practical terms, this allows the actors to climb on, through and around the structure and allows the many scenes and locations of the play to occur within one world, without elaborate scene changes.

Transitions are made simply using the performers’ and the audiences’ imaginations. The paint treatment is meant to enhance the magical element of the play, using iridescent metallic colours which can represent natural as well as mystical places. As the play will be performed frequently without stage lighting, it was important to me to use reflective paint, which will have sheen and sparkle under different lighting conditions. The Spirit Horse itself will be represented in many different ways. The performers will use their bodies and imaginations to find many ways of representing the horse through their positions upon the structure. Props will be extremely simple and in some cases completely imaginary.

When I entered into discussion with the director Greg Banks about designing this play, he was most interested in providing many different ways the set could be climbed upon, stood upon and interacted with that would encourage a high level of imagination on the part of the audience. When children play, they frequently transform the most ordinary and unlikely objects and shapes into their own magical world. We have attempted to embrace that idea with the set for Spirit Horse.

Glen Davidson, Set and Lighting Designer
As the play opens we meet two adventurous children, Jesse and Angelina, who live with their father in a high-rise apartment in Calgary, Alberta. Both girls are members of the Stoney Nation and were born on the reserve in the foothills of the Rockies. Jesse, the eldest, lived on the reserve until her sister was born. She learned her Native language and had a taste of the traditional way of life. Angelina was raised in the city and knows little of her people. She wishes desperately that she had a mother and longs to hear whatever Jesse remembers.

We learn that their father turned his back on his First Nation community and moved to Calgary after blaming his wife's death on the traditional ways. Seven years later, we see he is still struggling with guilt and depression and has neither dealt with his own grief nor helped his children come to terms with their own loss. Father has also given up his life as a rodeo star, further alienating himself from his roots and heritage.

While the two sisters seem happy enough looking out for each other living in an urban mainstream community, it is obvious they get little attention from their dad and that school is definitely a challenge. The children's grandfather, who continues to live on Stoney Nation land with his people, provides the girls with their only connection to their heritage.

One day Grandfather discovers a Spirit Horse on the reserve that mysteriously appears from under the lake near Wildwind Mountain. Knowing the spiritual significance of this mystical appearance, Grandfather decides to follow the Spirit Horse in his truck, and is led all the way to the city and remarkably right to the apartment where Jesse and Angelina live. It is as if the horse knew all along where to go.

Amazed at the sight of the horse, the children run to their Grandfather who enthralls them with the story. Grandfather announces that he has named the horse Wildwind, after their mountain on the reserve where their mother is buried. He teaches them that the Stoney Nation people believe that below the surface of the lake by Wildwind Mountain, Spirit Horses run. And very rarely, one will come to the surface. Legend says, if some man is lucky or strong enough to ride this Spirit Horse, the horse will return to the lake, giving up his power to whoever caught and rode it. That is the belief of our people. I believe this is such a horse."

As told to Drew Hayden Taylor by Sykes Powderface, from a Stoney Nation reserve in Alberta and shared through the character of the Grandfather in Spirit Horse.

Synopsis

"A Spirit Horse is a magic horse.
It comes from a magic place.
A magic mountain. Our mountain.
Wildwind Mountain, out there to the west, where your mother is buried.
You see, the mountain belongs to our family.
It is said by our elders that somewhere below the surface of the lake on its slopes, Spirit Horses run. And very rarely, one will come to the surface.
Legend says, if some man is lucky or strong enough to ride this Spirit Horse, the horse will return to the lake, giving up his power to whoever caught and rode it. That is the belief of our people. I believe this is such a horse."

Grandfather Spirit Horse

As told to Drew Hayden Taylor by Sykes Powderface, from a Stoney Nation reserve in Alberta and shared through the character of the Grandfather in Spirit Horse.

Spirit Horse

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Angelina and Wildwind bond immediately and when the little girl climbs up onto the graceful horse, they ride around the grounds of the apartment as if they had ridden together forever. The girls beg Grandfather to leave the horse with them and there is no question the horse wants to be with Angelina. In a very funny scene the two girls smuggle the horse up the elevator and into their apartment determined to have the horse live with them. Dad gives in with a shrug and leaves everything up to the girls who find inventive ways of feeding and looking after Wildwind.

Before long the situation grows complicated when snoopy neighbors report the horse to the authorities and city officials come and take the horse away. Father promises to get the horse back only to discover that Wildwind has been sold. This leaves both Jesse and Angelina even more determined to retrieve Wildwind. Upon discovering Wildwind’s whereabouts, the children vow to find the stable and take Wildwind back and, indeed, they do. They head west with Wildwind to the mountains, the land of their people. Thus begins an extraordinary and often hilarious adventure as they ride, walk, and even take a freight train in an effort to get to the mountains while evading police, dogs, and even helicopters that are after them as horse thieves. After learning that his daughters are wanted for stealing horses, the worried father takes off on a quest of his own to find the children, hoping to bring them back safely and prove that they are not horse thieves.

After a series of misadventures and learning they are being pursued by the police, the girls eventually make it to the reserve. Wildwind takes them right to the lake at the foot of Wildwind Mountain – their family’s mountain – and stops right at their mother’s grave where Angelina is surprised to find out that her mother died on her birthday. She is told the family secret for the very first time; her mother died while giving birth to her.

Moments later, Father arrives on the scene and not far behind him are several police cars from the chase. Afraid that the police are going to take the horse away from her again, Angelina mounts Wildwind and rides madly. In the distance Jesse and her dad see Wildwind ride right into frigid water of the mountain lake with Angelina on its back. They both disappear under the waves. Panic arises as we learn that Angelina doesn’t know how to swim. In an emotionally charged scene, Dad dives into the water and swims out to rescue his daughter; the Spirit Horse however, never emerges from the lake.

As she is carried out of the water in her father’s arms, Angelina is at peace. She tells her father about the vision she had while beneath the surface of the lake. She saw her mother who told her she loved her and that everything was going to be all right. Truths of Stoney beliefs are revealed as we discover that the Spirit Horse was in fact, the spirit of the little girls’ mother.

So thankful that his daughters are safe, Dad hugs them and pours out his love, something he has not been able to do for a long, long time. The Spirit Horse has brought the family together in a sacred place on the reserve. We are left with a feeling of hope that they are in a place where they can reconnect with each other, their people, and their culture. The process of healing has begun – the power of the Spirit Horse has been passed on.
First Nations
In Canada, the original peoples claim the overall designation First Nations, just as in the United States, people once called “Indians” from Christopher Columbus’ first incorrect assumption of his location, are now referred to by the more truthful name, Native Americans. In both countries, there are many individual tribes, each with their own traditions and culture. Spirit Horse focuses on one family from the Stoney Nation and explores their struggles between loyalty to their traditional beliefs and adapting to a modern way of life.

The Stoney Nation
The family represented in Spirit Horse belongs to the Stoney Nation. The playwright and actors represent the Cree, Ojibwe, and Métis people. The following information comes from Government of Canada:

Information about the First Nations in Canada (Source: Government of Canada)
There are 704,851 First Nations people in Canada.
Most First Nations people – 403,369 (57%) – live in First Nations communities, which are also called reserves. The other 301,514 (43%) live mainly in the larger cities.
There are 614 First Nations communities; 126 in Ontario and 44 in Alberta

The Stoney or Stony (also known as Nakoda) are a First Nation group, indigenous to both Canada and the United States. They inhabit large parts of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Montana. They are descendants of the Dakota and Lakota nations of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountains, part of the large Sioux Nation. They refer to themselves in their own language as “Nakoda”, meaning people. The name “Stoney” was given them by white explorers because of their technique of using fire-heated rocks to boil broth in rawhide bowls.

The actors are all First Nations peoples, too!

Mike Bernier and MacKayla Washburn are Métis. (Pronounced may-tee with the accent on the second syllable.) The Métis people emerged out of the relations of Indian women and European men. While the initial offspring of these Indian and European unions were individuals who possessed mixed ancestry, the gradual establishment of distinct Métis communities, outside of Indian and European cultures and settlements, as well as, the subsequent intermarriages between Métis women and Métis men, resulted in the genesis of a new Aboriginal people - the Métis. Distinct Métis communities emerged, as an outgrowth of the fur trade, along some parts of the freighting waterways and Great Lakes of Ontario, throughout the Northwest and as far north as the McKenzie River. The Métis people and their communities were connected through the highly mobile fur trade network, seasonal rounds, extensive kinship connections and a collective identity (i.e. common culture, language, way of life, etc.). Today, the Métis people are alive and well within Canada; however, they continue to push for the respectful recognition and reconciliation for their Aboriginal rights and existence within the Canadian federation. There are more than 100,000 Métis people in Canada.

Nadine Jackson is Cree. The Cree tribe is one of the largest American Indian groups in North America. There are 200,000 Cree people today living in communities throughout Canada and in parts of Northern United States (North Dakota and Montana). Many Métis people descend from Cree Indians and French Canadian voyageurs.
Style of the Play: Magic Realism

In his notes, David Craig says that the genre of theatre that best describes *Spirit Horse* is known as ‘Magic Realism’ (or Magical Realism), an artistic genre in which magical elements appear in an otherwise realistic setting. The term, originating in visual art, is also used to describe literary and theatrical works.

The following elements are found in many magical realist works.

- The play contains fantastical elements presented as naturally as the realistic elements, and never explained.
- Characters accept rather than question the logic of the fantastical.
- The performance exhibits a richness of sensory details and uses symbols and imagery extensively.
- Time is distorted so that it is cyclical or so that it appears absent. Another technique is to collapse time in order to create a setting in which the present repeats or resembles the past.
- The story incorporates legend or folklore.
- The plot presents events from multiple standpoints - often shifts between characters' viewpoints and includes internal narration on shared relationships or memories.
- There is an open-ended conclusion that leaves the reader to determine whether the magical and or ordinary events are more “real” or true.

Quest Story

*Spirit Horse* is a ‘quest story’. In a typical quest, the characters set out in search of an object or a place that they believe will bring them happiness or security. The characters might be spurred to take up their quest by a legend or a secret map that has been handed down from generation to generation. These stories are generally full of acts of bravery, near mishaps, and magical persons or objects that help or hinder them along the way. There are also elements of ‘Magic Realism’, i.e. very realistic people and situations, and everyday events are interwoven with elements of the fantastical and impossible. Through a suspension of disbelief, we accept these magical elements as real (e.g., the Harry Potter series, the TV show *Heroes*). There is also a story-within-a-story as the Grandfather relates the Stoney Nation Legend of the Spirit Horse to the children.
Story Telling: the Fingerprint of a People

It is important to note that the word legend is referred to in the First Nations culture to mean a story used to pass down a deeply held belief. It does not imply that these are myths or folktales, which are more symbolic and used as parables or cautionary tales. It might be helpful to consider the following definition.

leg·end~
1. An unverified story handed down from earlier times, especially one popularly believed to be historical.
2. A body or collection of such stories.

The following two paragraphs are adapted from www.aboriginal-culture.com/cree-legends.htm and may provide a better understanding of the importance of legends in the Ojibway and Cree cultures.

Legends will always play a big role in the way we see ourselves as part of the world around us. Our stories are rooted in the history of our people. It is these legends that taught our children the valuable lessons of surviving a harsh and often unforgiving land. We want to share our traditional stories with you so that you may hear some of our ancient history.

The ancient Cree and Ojibway people had what is known as a verbal culture. This means that they relied heavily on telling stories to pass information on from one generation to the next. The elders within the tribe shared the legends. It was their responsibility to keep the Aboriginal traditions alive, for to not learn from its lessons often meant surviving in a harsh and unforgiving climate. It was for the children and the generations of the future that our legends have survived over the thousands of years of our existence in the James Bay Frontier.

Kieffer Bunting writes, “The legends and songs of our Native Culture was like the first literature in Canada. The first people to walk on our land told constant stories about their adventures, the ancient stories of their ancestors. The songs and stories were about every aspect of living with our land, and the characters of our land, such as the moose, beaver, rabbit, eagle, and the wolf. These are our wonderful beings that roam our lands with us even until today. Through stories and songs, that is how we keep our history alive and pass it on through the next generations to come. Our stories did a lot for our people. They teach, learn, and even discipline our children. A strong, native story might make a child learn the consequences of one’s actions or make the child feel a shame for what they have done. Within our culture, aboriginal people knew they could reflect theses stories to people and children of different cultures and of different times.”

As an Ojibway, I've always believed that stories were memories of the universe, and if they aren't told and shared, the universe becomes a much smaller place. So start sharing.

Drew Hayden Taylor, playwright
Bringing your family’s oral history to life!

**Goal:** Students will communicate family stories in various manners.

**Purpose:** To give students a personal connection with the importance of storytelling as a communication between generations and to give them a chance to make creative choices in skills that relate to playwriting, directing and performing.

1. Ask students to remember a story that is told in their family, (including extended families and foster families—both are part of their individual history) perhaps a story shared with them by a grandparent, parent, aunt or uncle. This is part of their family’s oral history and might one day become a family legend. The teacher might share a family story of her own to help your students get started or use the example below.

**Example** from the guidebook author, Beth Anne Musiker: Our family’s sense of our own history is cemented by the repeated and romanticized telling of my Latvian grandfather’s dangerous journey to the USA as a stowaway on a ship from Germany when he was just 19 years old. It’s a story we would beg to hear over and over again because it never ceased to amaze or impress us. Perhaps you’d like to share an example of your own to help your students get started.

2. Have students sit together in pairs, close their eyes, and remember the details of their family story. After a minute or two ask students to keep their story in their mind’s eye and slowly open their eyes.

3. Students will each take a turn telling their story to their partner. Let them know that they will have only they have 2 minutes each to do so, and that because their time is short they are going to want to choose carefully consider which parts of the story can be condensed and which must be told in full.

4. Discuss the action of telling family stories. Ask students if there is a point to each story. Why does it get told over and over? Is it meant to entertain, or share something about a certain family member, or teach a lesson? Can students imagine these family stories as plays? Would they be easy or hard to put on the stage?

**Extension**

1. Continuing from the activity above—Ask the pairs to choose one of the stories shared to use in the next portion of the activity. Give them only 45 seconds to make a choice!

2. Ask each pair to join another pair. Have the foursome take turns sharing the chosen family story from the first pairing. Again, students have only 2 minutes per story so they must tell it in a concise form. (There should only be 2 stories shared for the group of four). Have the group of four select one of the two stories shared for use in the next step of the activity. Again only 45 seconds to choose!

3. Ask the students to find a way within each group to act out the chosen story. The goal is to bring the story to life in any way they think will be most effective in helping their audience (the rest of the class) get the most out of the story. Ask them to present the story in a manner that will help the rest of the class understand and enjoy the story and its importance to their family’s heritage. Explain that they may choose to act the whole thing out and/or they may choose to narrate certain portions of the story.

4. Students may only use their bodies and their imaginations and objects found in the classroom to dramatize their story.

5. Allow students 10 minutes to put their performance together. Ask them to remember the purpose of the story as well as the plot of the story so that the audience can learn, understand and enjoy their performance of the story.

6. Ask each group to perform their story for the class.

7. Allow short reflection after each performance, asking a different question of each group such as the following:
   - How were you affected by the time limitations?
   - What were some of the challenges you faced along the way?
   - What did you learn about each other through this activity?
   - What did you learn about yourself or your own family through this activity?
Creating something from nothing!

**Goal:** Students will act out the character of a horse in a play.

**Purpose:** To give students the chance to explore the abilities of their bodies to express the visions of their imaginations in the way actors do.

**Introduction** Explain to students that the performance style of this play requires a great deal of the actors and of the audience. The audience must bring their imaginations, and the actors will guide them. Actors have many tools to help the audience's imagination, but their most important tools are their bodies and their voices. *Spirit Horse* requires the actors to move their bodies in inventive ways to change into different characters, animals, and even things. One of the important animals they must portray is the Spirit Horse. There will not be a real horse, or a puppet horse or a statue of a horse on stage. The set becomes the Spirit Horse at one point, but most of the time, the Spirit Horse itself is played by every actor in the play.

**Becoming the Spirit Horse**

1. Ask students to suggest some ways that a person/actor might go about playing a horse. What quality of movement would a Spirit Horse have? ~strong/delicate/slow/impatient/graceful~ How can an actor move their head and legs as a horse would? What attitude does the horse have? Can that be seen from the way an actor moves his or her body?

2. After hearing several ideas ask students to find a space of their own and take a minute to close their eyes and visualize what a Spirit Horse might look like. While their eyes are closed ask students to think about all the details that define/describe their Spirit Horse: size, weight, shape, sounds it makes, movements, what makes it recognizable to us?

3. Have students open their eyes and ask for them to take a minute to find a way to translate what they have envisioned into their bodies. This is the challenge the actors must face for *Spirit Horse*. Students may use their voices but NO words. Encourage them to try a few ways. It may help older students if they turn their backs to the class to try it out.

4. After a couple of minutes ask for volunteers to demonstrate their Spirit Horse to the class. As actors, they would have to remember what they did, in order to recreate it again and again for the play.

5. Ask students what they observe about the similarities and differences in fellow students’ choices.

6. Though the actors in *Spirit Horse* are different body types, they worked together to come up with the same types of movements to portray the horse. Try choosing one student’s portrayal and asking all the students to use the same movements and expression.

**Portraying the Spirit Horse without BEING the Spirit Horse!**

1. Ask students if they think it’s possible to show that the Spirit Horse is in the scene without actually having any of the actors directly play the role of the Spirit Horse? Discuss the idea of showing that the horse is present but not actually playing the horse. Ideas might include straddling an imaginary horse as if riding it – one or two at a time, petting an imaginary horse, or feeding an imaginary horse, etc. Ask students to demonstrate their ideas.

2. Put students in groups of three – four at the most (if there are four students the fourth will act as “director” for the next segment) and provide them with a space in the room to work.

3. Hand each team a copy of the following excerpt from the play. Let students know that in the play there are only 3 actors but they play more than 60 parts between them.

4. Have students start by reading the following script excerpt aloud in their own groups. Everyone is to play at least one part!

5. Ask students to find a way to bring the scene to life using just their bodies and imaginations. Ask them to seek solutions for how to play all the parts, including the horse, that will be clear and fun for both them and the audience.

6. Provide up to 10 minutes rehearsal time, and remind them not to let the script bother them as they perform. Actors would call this a first run-through, and they would be holding scripts, too.

7. Have students share their work with the class and notice together the different choices each group makes.

*Younger students will not need to think about acting techniques first. Simply ask them to pretend to be a horse, and then guide them in analyzing their choices.*
ANGELINA
Can we keep her, Grandpa?

GRANDPA
Well, that’s up to the horse.

ANGELINA
She wants to stay.

JESSE
Angelina, you’re crazy. Just how would we get her up to our apartment on the fifth floor?

ANGELINA
The elevator.

JESSE
You are crazy. You can’t put a horse in an elevator.

ANGELINA
There’s no law against it.

JESSE
Sure there is. It says no more then five people.

ANGELINA
There won’t be any more then five people. There will only be two kids and one horse. Let’s go.

JESSE
Are you going to stay and visit, Grandpa?

GRANDPA
No, my granddaughter, I’ll be going back home. Take good care of that horse. They both hug their grandfather.

JESSE
Bye. Angelina, I don’t believe you’re gonna do this.

ANGELINA

JESSE
Angelina!

ANGELINA
Grandpa becomes the horse. The children and the horse enter the elevator with difficulty. Angelina is forced out through the lack of space. The door shuts.

JESSE
Angelina runs up all the stairs. Meanwhile, Jesse does anything and everything to prevent Wildwind from squishing him. The Elevator doors open. Both girls and the horse explode from the elevator where Angelina is waiting.

JESSE
Finally!
A Note from the Composer

I am involved with *Spirit Horse* because of my work with First Nations fiddle music. I come from Manitoba where there is a strong tradition of First Nations fiddling, as there is all across the prairies and right up into Northern Canada. It is a really energetic style of fiddling that uses the feet a lot, as you will see in the play. The fiddle also reminds us of the Celtic roots of the original play. The score also includes several percussion instruments—drums and rattles, an accordion, various kinds of flutes, and a special mandolin. The drums and rattles are important because of First Nations tradition, and the accordion is just a great all-round portable orchestra.

I created themes for different parts of the play and for different characters. Sometimes different instruments are associated with different characters—the fiddle kind of goes with the horse, for example, while the flute and voice are more for the mother’s spirit and the old ways. The accordion is for the dad, and his life in the outside world and the pressures he has to deal with. Creating the music for this show is very much a collaborative process with the actors and the director. The music has to reflect what is going on in the characters emotions, so a lot of it had to be worked out as we went along. It’s like creating another voice for each of the actors that will help them express themselves. That’s what makes it so exciting and why the music in this show has to be live, just like everything else.

Anne Lederman, Composer

How do sounds and music communicate an atmosphere for us?

**Goal:** Students will use sound to create an atmosphere.

**Purpose:** To introduce students to the creative challenges of sound effects.

1. Have students close their eyes and think about the sounds they hear at their home first thing in the morning. What kind of sounds do they hear in their heads as they remember? What’s the first sound they usually hear? Is it an alarm clock, sounds from the kitchen, someone waking you up, the sound of the shower, your brothers and sisters, dogs barking, garbage trucks, roosters, etc.

2. Ask students to choose one of the sounds that is a part of their morning environment.

3. Give students a couple of minutes to practice using their voice to try to duplicate that sound. (They may also need to make sounds with their bodies—for example, stomping.)

4. Have students each take a turn to demonstrate their sound to the class. If the sound is unusual, let the class guess what it represents.

5. Divide the class in half, with one class closing their eyes and listening, and the other half trying to make all the sounds one after another. Ask students to concentrate and make the sounds in the order they might come in the morning. Some sounds may need to be repeated. Switch groups.

6. Compare the experience of providing sound effects and listening to them.

7. Ask students to think about how sounds help create not only the various environments, but the emotional atmospheres in which we live. Can they tell when their parents or siblings or teachers are having a good day or bad day just by the sounds they make? Can they tell when a baby is hungry or happy? If a dog thinks there is trouble or is just happy to see you? How can they tell the difference?

8. Try number five again, but this time add an emotional undecurrent: excitement, joy, frustration, sadness. What sounds can students add to convey the new mood?

*Samples of Native and Métis fiddle playing can be heard here: [www.deepdownproductions.com/lederman-metis-native-fiddling-western-manitoba-p-82.html](http://www.deepdownproductions.com/lederman-metis-native-fiddling-western-manitoba-p-82.html)*

Ask students to close their eyes and think about their favorite movies:

- What kind of music underscores or accompanies the action of the film?
- Can you tell what’s happening in the movie by the type of music that is being used?
- What kind of music is generally used for the scary moments? happy moments?
- Is there special music that seems to be played each time a particular character appears?
- How does music in your favorite movies help to tell the story?
- How does it help you believe the story?
Questions for post-performance reflection

- What do the children do to survive on the journey? Do they always choose the best way? (begging for money, breaking into the movie theatre, running away with Wildwind) What else might they have done?

- What are the positive or negative examples set by the adults in the play regarding honesty, integrity, and good citizenship? (police, stable owner, pawnshop owner, the passers-by who give money)

- Discuss the Father’s parenting skills. Is he a good father? Why or why not? Do you think the father is going to change as a result of the Spirit Horse adventure?

Reflective Activity for the whole class:
On butcher paper, create a mural depicting the journey of the children and the Spirit Horse.

Resources

Books
Building a Bridge by Lisa Shook Begaye
Jingle Dancer by Cynthia Leitich Smith
Where Did You Get Your Moccasins by Bernelda Wheeler
Rising Voices: Writings of Young Native Americans selected by Arlene Hirschfelder and Beverly R. Singer
My Kokum Called Today by Loewen, Iris. Ill. by Gloria Miller
A Name for a Métis by Delaronde, Deborah L.
An Aboriginal Book List for Children by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Lessons from Turtle Island: Native Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms by Guy Jones.

Relevant Websites
www.aboriginal-culture.com/cree-legends.htm
www.annelederman.com ~Composer Anne Lederman’s website
www.goodminds.com ~A Native-owned clearinghouse for Native resources. Distributes books, videos, CD ROMs, etc. that are respectful of First Nations/ Métis/ Inuit people, their history and culture.
www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/elemsoc/g5u22ess.html ~Lesson plans for Grade Five Social Studies from the Government of Saskatchewan
www.stoneynation.com ~the Stoney Nation website