

Workshopping a Little Creation:
**A Scenographic Approach to Theatre for Young Audiences, Oral Tradition and the
Concrete Indian**

by

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Abstract

This thesis describes the production of *A Little Creation*, a play that I wrote and developed, which took place on the Frederic Wood stage during November 2011. The intent was to workshop my original script as a dramatic piece and explore its theatrical and visual elements. It was initially planned for the black box space of the Dorothy Somerset Studio on the University of British Columbia Campus, but was shifted to the Frederic Wood Theatre main stage. This shift to a much larger venue meant an increase in production scale and technical possibilities; the production literally grew to fit the space. The workshop production ran for three evening performances and one matinee during the week of November 24th until the 26th, 2011. Advisors for the project were Professor Alison Green, Professor Dory Nason, Professor Ron Fedoruk and Melody Anderson.

The workshop consisted of a staged realization of my script in progress of the same title where I functioned as playwright, puppet designer and developer, as well as costume and set designer. In collaboration with Director Patrick New, UBC MFA candidate in Direction, Stage Manager Ashley Noyes, Designers Gua Khee Chong (Sound), Emily Hartig (Lighting), Jon Tsang (Lighting Supervisor), Brady Villadsen (Projections) Carolyn Rapanos (Graffiti and Head painter), and Actors Nyla Carpentier, Alex Carr, Meaghan Chenosky, Laura Fukumoto, David Kaye, Ashley McAllister and Lisa Smith, the workshop was intended to explore my creative process as an Indigenous person and artist alike, and to create a theatrical piece that I wanted to design rather than design a director's vision; which is often the case. This thesis is a description of

that workshop process concluding in an evaluation of the workshop and its effect on my creative process.

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Dedication

For my partner Matt who pushed me to discover my passion and then proceeded to help me realize it.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"When I sit alone in a theatre and gaze into the dark space of its empty stage, I'm frequently seized by fear that this time I won't manage to penetrate it, and I always hope fear will never desert me. Without an unending search for the key to the secret of creativity, there is no creation. It's necessary always to begin again. And that is beautiful."

~Joseph Svoboda

I always want to try something new. It's that fear of the unknown and that fear of failure that drives my creative instinct...you can't be wrong if no one has done it before, right? So I wanted to approach my Thesis in the same fashion, chaos seems to be my comfort zone and if you never know what's going to happen you are prepared for anything...

As a mixed blood Métis woman I feel my history is pivotal in the ways in which I see the world. Our chaotic individual stories, histories and mythologies affect the ways in which we interpret our surroundings and interact within contemporary society. There's this unstable interlocking web that dictates who we are and what we will become based on a self-created persona we embody and act out within these systems. These interconnections between self-perceived identity and our environment are crucial in understanding the ways in which we are evolving culturally. Contemporary Canadian society holds on so tightly to static ideas of the past and ridged stereotypic representation of aboriginal peoples that authenticity of the self is constantly being questioned. With this project I tried to devise a new social artistic identity through my

work that approached these ideas of authenticity and identity by reinterpreting them in a personal and urban-centric aesthetic. Thus creating a singular moment in parallel with the traditional stories and characterizing what Ojibwa photographer Nadya Kwandibens refers to as the “concrete Indian” as a temporal identity. This production while visually displaying oral traditions and Indigenous stock characters examines the essence of the contemporary life of indigenous youth and particularly mixed blood culture in an urban setting.

I’m not trying to speak for any one culture or the Aboriginal community at large in the reinvention of these stories. As a mixed blood urban individual my grasp on my heritage is just that, a grasp, and my stories were given to me just as they were given to those that told them. I’m just trying to remember.

1.1 Project Origin Research and Inspiration

“it’s our tradition to recall our history or obtain our history in an oral manner. It is important for our children and others to benefit through the process of continuing to recall and make history”

~Ojibwa Shaman and Artist Norval Morrisseau

My inspiration was simple; I wanted to tell a story that brought together the various versions of the creation myth from across Canada because hearing and being a part of other First Nations stories was such an important experience when I was growing up. In order for my thesis to have a pan-Canadian feel I focused on the most popular stories from the Northwest coast (Haida), the Prairies (Cree) and Eastern Canada (Six

Nations and Inuit). Each region has very specific stock animal characters and trickster beings that act as teachers within the oral tradition to explain each Nation's origin, history and theology. The Northwest coast seems to favour the tale of Raven tricking the Hunter's daughter into letting him into the Hunter's cabin to steal the sun and moon and bring light to a world previously blanketed in darkness. The original Cree creation story tells of the world parent giving birth to six brothers (the number of brothers changes depending on the story's origin) and the fifth was the trickster Weesageechak who created man out of clay. However Coyote is a more notorious Trickster figure with more lascivious behavior so I chose to focus on him as a character. In the Northeast the Inuit favour Raven in stories similar to those of the Northwest coastal Nations. The Great Lakes area tells the story of the Earth Diver (traditionally a muskrat) who swims to the bottom of the ocean to retrieve land for the fallen Skywoman, thus creating Turtle Island where we stand today.

Within each story these characters often cause mischief and ultimately bring about the creation of the world or other miracles by accident, therefore relating a Nation's heritage and imparting lessons of morality and life skills through entertaining stories. It is also interesting to note that each Nation tells the same story with minor differences. Sometimes Raven flies in and out with the box containing the moon, sometimes he shrinks down and hides inside the daughter's womb until she gives birth to the moon and in an Inuit story Raven actually steals the daughter and the moon saves her by creating tides and capsizing Ravens boat. Each story has the basic elements that need to be conveyed, but each Nation makes the stories their own. This idea of owning

and creating your own history is what gave me the motivation to write this story. I wanted to do something that was intrinsically mine, something that I could explore and share, where it was safe to grow and make mistakes. So the basic idea was to present a bricolage creation story through amalgamating a variety of First Nations legends that were all a part of my life growing up, with a scenario from my childhood; a kind of autobiographic fiction. I made the distinction between the stories that were from my family and those that I heard told by visitors from other Nations at powwows and gatherings my mother brought us to. But growing up, the origins didn't seem to matter and as one story began to bleed into the next, my over active imagination made it harder and harder to distinguish the difference between what the story was saying and what I was taking away from it. With this project I hoped to move the familiar oral tradition form into a contemporary medium like theatre where we are able to engage the multimodal literacies of the live event to interpret and create a dramatic identity.

By multimodal I mean that I hoped to engage multiple levels of understanding so that every aspect from music, movement, and visual aesthetic to the actual hearing of the words are all signifiers in a larger story. I was very adamant on keeping a strong narrative voice because the oral nature of the stories is such a powerful tool to understanding them. I wanted the audience to see what I see when I hear the stories but I also wanted them to have enough freedom to be able to imagine what they are hearing in conjunction with all the other sensory stimulus. For this reason I chose to develop the piece for young audiences. It just seemed the most pliable form in terms of audience acceptance. When entering a space meant for children I find that we are more

able to trust what we are experiencing because the environment encourages curiosity. Spectacle is intertwined with knowledge acquisition so that one is indistinguishable from the other. Every element tells the story and yet the story is incomplete if one is missing.

The theatre for young audiences' format seemed to lend itself so brilliantly to the pivotal character of the Trickster figure since he/she is the subject through which lessons are learned within indigenous storytelling around the world. A figure that is neither man nor woman but can be both, neither human nor animal but sometimes appears as one or the other or a combination of the two, he/she is neither completely flesh nor ephemeral spirit and yet still remains very real. It is this liminal space where the Trickster exists to cause mischief and teach lessons that relates so well to theatre for young audiences, and that can also be enjoyed by any age. It is the ambiguity of place and the characters that make the stories so intriguing and surreal but still familiar. I have always been fascinated with Julie Taymor and Jim Henson and I knew I wanted to interpret the creation myths through puppetry because of the effect these artists and their medium had on my childhood. Their work opened my eyes to what can be created and expressed by inanimate objects that cannot be conveyed the same way with just a living, breathing body. The creation of these creatures, which are grotesque yet beautiful, abrasive and empathetic, would be the best way for me to tell the story.

The art of object performance is also closely linked to the ritualism of storytelling and acts as a large part of Indigenous knowledge sharing. Object performance generally refers to a "performance style that contains the animation of utilitarian, or

pre-existing 'found' objects rather than those constructed for theatrical effect, such as the puppet" (Allen). This kind of performance is seen in the use of decorated objects such as feather fans and talking sticks by indigenous peoples from coast to coast, and the wampum belts of the Six Nations used to retain and perform stories and oral histories. From the basic object the performance has evolved into a more ritualistic pageantry from the theatrical transformation masks of the Northwest coast Kwakiutl, used to explore the spirit world during dance ceremonies, to Iroquois corn husk mask or false face mask used to scare away evil spirits that foreshowed disease. These objects preserve and recount the stories of the people that made them and brought them to life and are animated in the same fashion as the puppets I have created to convey the stories of my family, heritage and community. They also reflect the shifts in the stories that occur through time with each new orator.

With this project I tried to address the historical misrepresentations of Canada's indigenous peoples and myths by retelling traditional stories in an urban setting. The question of whether the myth creates us or we create the myth is always at the forefront of my mind. So by questioning the relationship of the storyteller to the story I'm trying to decipher if they are truly distinct and if one can survive without the other.

1.2 The Writing Process

As storyteller we are “connecting speaker and listener in communal experience and uniting past and present in memory.”

~Renate Eigenbrod

I had originally written “A Little Creation” as a short story mashing up a few different myths I heard as a child because I loved the characters of Coyote and Raven and felt they belonged in the story of my creation. These characters have made such an impact on my life that it seemed only natural that their stories could be shifted into my childhood account. In 2009, the story was selected for an Alistair MacLeod award for creative writing and that’s when I thought it needed to evolve and become something bigger. I turned it into a short crude play and applied to UBC with the intention of doing a small workshop production in a black box space.

I tried to take very generalized stereotypic characters, such as Raven and Coyote, along with some of the more popular stories within the Aboriginal community and center them to pivot around my childhood experience of visiting my grandparents and hearing the stories as a central access to a larger world. The interlacing of autobiographical events with the reinterpretations of the creation stories was an attempt to bridge a gap between popular culture and the bi-coastal stories that were familiar to me growing up.

I am more interested in the beasts that creep in and out of the frame and permeate the worlds of Jim Henson and Julie Taymor than I am with realism. That’s

where I felt the connection, to the creature, the other, and that's one of the reasons I wanted to use puppetry in this show. These semi-grotesque puppets distort our perception of reality. For example we know the character Gran-gran is human and Coyote is a canine but we can't precisely associate them with living bodies; we are better able to identify with them because they are ambiguous. Theatre practitioner Tina Bicat explains in her book *Puppets and Performing Objects*:

"A puppet is by nature impassive. It contains the possibility to display all sorts of emotion but can't do it alone. It needs us in order to live. Its very impassivity pushes us towards questions and truths which engross philosophers and children. Its bloodless, blameless body allows us the freedom to laugh or cry at it and with it. Its life does not exist without the one who animates it and the one who watches it" (Bicat 15).

This idea of the inexistence, of that spark that can't happen without the connection between the animator, the puppet and the witness was a crucial part in the writing process. As the actors moved and interacted with the puppets we became very aware of how the story needed to progress, where it needed to expand and where the dialogue and movement needed to deviate and come back in order to tell the story.

It was clear from the initial script that a lot of development needed to take place; stronger characters had to be formed and dialogue seemed inevitable. My original intention was to hold true to the oral tradition, with a strong narrator telling the story which was being acted out. Simplicity was a goal that I let slip away from me as the workshop continued to grow and as I listened to my director Patrick New who helped me develop it. When it was decided to move the production to the Frederic Wood

Theatre from the smaller Dorothy Somerset Studio I was persuaded to adapt the script to include many more production elements than originally planned.

My idea for this play is that it takes place in a dual reality, two worlds, one that is happening, where the narrator is remembering and telling us the story of our creation that her Gran-gran told her and another that is being created as the story unravels. Both are realities on different planes side by side or overlapping, like the world of the living and that of the spirits. Eventually they begin to inform each other, molding and changing the stories as the play progresses. The key animal characters of the creation stories from across Canada, Coyote, Raven, Otter are thrust together in a communal story that belongs to no one culture in particular. They are brought into existence in both animal (puppet) and human form, just as the trickster can walk in both guises. The worlds remain separate - that of the storyteller and that of the story - until the character of Terra/Tear gets curious and breeches the mythic world. She is a symbol of the connection we share with both worlds. She is able to function and affect change in either and she is meant to show us how we have control over our own story.

The script had to change to fit the broadening scope of the production. I added the introduction segment at the beginning to give credit to the Nations and original versions of the stories from which I drew. I was afraid of infringing on the intellectual properties of the individual Nations and wasn't sure how to go about asking permission for popular stories that are shared by many Nations. By giving them credit in the script I felt it acted much like citing a quote. The additional material allowed us to introduce the audience to the characters and their places of origin. It also allowed us to play with

scale and echo, both auditory and visual, and gave some of the actors beefier roles. The smaller puppet theatre set up a familiar precedent of what a puppet show should be, reminding us of more traditional Punch and Judy style show. It also allowed for constant interaction between actors, puppets and audience, which was something I didn't want to lose sight of. The story is after all being told to us and we are a part of it, so having everyone know the source material made the reinterpretation easier to understand.

Each puppet in the main production conjured familiar images from the animals' region of origin. Bill Reid's Raven of the Pacific North West steals the sun from the Great Hunter's Daughter. The Iroquois story of Sky Woman falling on Turtles back and Otter bringing dirt to create Turtle Island originates in Ontario, and the tale of Coyote creating man out of clay from the Prairies. The Narrator is the only character without a puppet counterpart because she is the point of origin; the story is what she is remembering, recounting and interacting with. She is reliving Gran-gran telling the story to a younger version of herself (Terra/Tear) and the story keeps changing because she cannot remember what she heard and what she imagined. This leads to a constant questioning of the authenticity of the myth because she forgets that she is the one who is creating it. I had originally wanted her to voice both her opinion and Gran-gran's, but my Director felt it was too much for the actor and so the role was divided and another actor voiced the puppet of Gran-gran.

I felt that Terra/Tear should be silent; being a memory and having the ability to be a part of both worlds I thought that her language had evolved beyond speech into

movement, meaning that her body and movement would tell her story and connect the two worlds. But the Director thought that the audience couldn't understand these concepts and at the time I couldn't figure out how to make them clear. So I gave her some lines so that the audience would not think she was just mute.

Chapter 2

Artistic Collaboration

“Through sacred forces barely understood, we collectively create”

~Lewis Mehl-Madrona

I originally approached Ron Fedoruk in my first year with a proposal to do a short play, with small puppets in a small venue like the Dorothy Somerset Theatre where I would design and build all the elements - costume, sound, set, lights, puppets, everything. Ron suggested moving the project to the main stage since it was available during the slot I was to run my production. I was rather excited at first and then the reality of the sheer size of the space set in. Everything needed to grow to fit it, in my mind, even though my Advisor Alison Green and Ron gave suggestions of how to keep it contained, creating a smaller set and having the audience on stage, going back to my original plan to do everything with puppets and keep it low tech. I failed miserably. The puppets became four feet tall on average, the set needed to be redesigned because my original design of a large paper puppet theatre was no longer feasible financially and there wasn't enough shop time to build it to accommodate the size of the puppets anyway. There were so many amazing ideas being thrown out by so many talented people I just wanted to use them all, but I quickly found that to be impossible so I held on to what I could and ran with it.

This little idea had blossomed so fast and with the space came certain expectations. The workshop now had a main stage presence and was listed in the Theatre at UBC brochure under special events. The director thought we might as well get it as close to a product as possible and I agreed with him at the time. We now had a fixed opening date for a somewhat realized production of an evolving script that now had to quadruple in size to fill the Frederic Wood Theatre. A possible touring production was now the end game being considered. My experiment had morphed from me trying to create a process and an artistic identity to facilitating as best I could the director's needs, which is exactly what I didn't want to do and what I started this project to get away from. But projects always change and the more people who became involved the more changes happened.

Patrick lined up Matt Reznick to do our poster design which was exactly what I asked for and some of my concept images were used as source material (see Illus. 1). I sought out Brady Viladsen to create a projection design, since I had this idea for a sketchy animation of the tear falling to earth. But that one scene got away from me and Brady, I feel, as more and more projections were being added. The Sun and Moon puppets were abandoned for animated versions of my sketches and cheeky intro animations were created for the entrances of the large Raven and Coyote and the cataclysm of the earth being created. The animations were very clever and Brady did exactly what I wanted using a vector style Jon Tsang had showed us. But there was just something off. The animations seemed to steal some scenes and get lost altogether during others. They seemed to be working against the puppets rather than with them

some of the time. The animations will never have a life outside our UBC production due to budget and facility requirements, so the experience of coordinating with an animator was invaluable.

I was assigned lighting designer Emily Hartig and sound designer Gua Khee Chong. I had anticipated doing these elements myself and with new collaborators came new ideas. I had a hard time relinquishing control of these elements considering I had made extensive and specific lighting and sound cues in the script. Emily's lighting, supervised by Jon Tsang, came into realization during tech. Of course the ideas she talked about in production meetings were hard to visualize until all the pieces began to be put into place. The overall lighting was a bit dark for my taste but I felt it delineated the worlds nicely and brought the separated spaces into focus as a whole.

With my undertaking escalated by the size of the space I was not able to be as hands on and meticulous with all the elements as I had planned, so my workload consisted of the design of the costumes and set and the design and construction of the puppets. There was not enough money in the budget for a scenic painter, but thankfully I had a very talented ASM, Carolyn Rapanos who took on the role of head painter, with me as her assistant. She also designed the set's graffiti panel based on my artwork and local Vancouver graffiti artists' styles that I photographed and sent to her (see Illus. 2 and 3). Her integration of this stylized pseudo indigenous landscape (Haida inspired images of trees, clouds) added to that multimodal aesthetic I was trying for. I wanted the set to look as if Coyote had created it, much like creating the world, but in an urban context. So I had Carolyn tag the set as Coyote, his name sprawled over the lower

corner, with his grinning smile and a cartoon dead Raven with X's over the eyes.

Collaborating with Carolyn was the best experience I had on this show working so closely with another artist. She was so vibrant and full of ideas and understood the script and what I was trying to say.

2.1 Workshop Process

"You are the gadget. You are the one who's going to pick up all these colours and explain how this works"
~Ojibwa Shaman and Artist Norval Morrisseau

The workshop of my script consisted of two major sections: the puppet construction, which I started in August 2011, and the performance portion that began with casting in October and rehearsal beginning November 2nd. The puppet construction workshops, headed by my partner Matt Marentette and myself, took place in the trap room of the Fredric Wood theatre, and focused on the production of the larger animal characters of Raven, Coyote, Otter and Turtle and of the Sun and Moon all approximately three to five feet in length and/or diameter. The puppets were skeletal constructions of papier-mâché over a tinfoil base, a technique introduced to me by mask-maker Melody Anderson. This process consisted of four days of piece building, where groups varying from six to fourteen volunteers on various days set about the daunting task of building scaled-up deconstructed armatures based on my rough sketches and maquettes that were to be assembled at a later date (see Illus. 4, 5 and 6). The fragments were then papier-mâchéd separately over the course of a few weeks to

build up enough layers for the needed durability. These smaller workshops consisted most regularly of Steffi Lai, Meghan Kennedy and myself with occasional extra hands when we were able to recruit people as they walked by. It took an average of nine hours for the three of us cover all the pieces in one layer, with a minimum of six layers required to stabilize the skeletal structures. Aside from the main workshop I built Gran-gran and Tear along with all the hand puppets at home after hours.

The final assembly of the individual pieces overlapped with the next phase in the workshop. At this point I had to shift my attention to casting, finding a choreographer and acquiring permission from the DJ group *A Tribe Called Red* to use their tracks in the show. For the choreography I contacted a local Vancouver company Raven Sprit Dance Society. Nyla Carpentier, cast as my Raven stepped up to do the dance sequence and with twenty-five years of pow wow training we were so glad to have her.

The production needed to be urban and fresh and I wanted the actors to be able to move, since I envisioned the cataclysm of the earth being created by dance. The music for this sequence was *A Tribe Called Red's* "Electric Pow wow" which infuses dub step with traditional pow wow drums and singing. I reached out to all my Aboriginal contacts to put out the casting call: Margo Kane at Full circle, a notice in the UBC First Nation's House of Learning *Talking Stick* newsletter, an ad in *Red Wire* magazine, and my advisor Dory Nason distributed a notice by email through the First Nation's Studies department. However on the day of the audition we only had four first nations actors answer the call. Out of the four we cast three Nyla Carpentier as Raven, Lisa Smith as Gran-gran and Denalene Manitoye as Tear who was later replaced by Ashley McAllister.

After the first round of casting we proceed to general auditions, casting two recent UBC BFA graduates Meaghan Chenosky as the Narrator, and David Kaye as Coyote, and BFA Theatre Production student Laura Fukumoto was cast as Otter and hand puppeteer and finally my fellow MFA in Theatre Design candidate Alex Carr who took the role of Turtle and hand puppeteer.

The casting process was very interesting considering as a designer I do not normally have a say in who is cast, but since it was my project Patrick was very keen to allow me to help him make the decisions. It came down to a sort of bartering of one actor for others so that I received the aboriginal representation I required, while Patrick was more concerned with the level of talent. It was very tricky negotiating what was best for the play because of the variety of factors. One of my main concerns was that I didn't want to misrepresent anyone so the larger variety of races involved gave the cast a diversity that is present in the script but which also meant we were working with mostly untrained actors. But I think that rawness gave the show something visceral. What the show needed was puppeteers but no one in the cast had any experience with puppets so the whole experience would be new and educational.

The actors were cast based on their training level and physical abilities. I was looking for a bit of the character in the actor - Otter's shyness, Coyotes confidence, the Narrator's awkwardness - and I think all the actors really came to embody their character in a physical manner which is integral for children's theatre. The audience needed to know they were looking at Coyote even when David didn't have the puppet. After the first week and a half of table work in the rehearsal hall we were able to move

onto the stage. We were lucky to have puppeteer Brenden Boyd be there for the first time the actors interacted with the puppets. He went over the basic maneuvers for the variety of puppets giving tips on the ways to convey emotion and have the puppet look as though it is speaking without having a moving mouthpiece. The main rule was to establish breath and how, even if it is unnatural, the semblance of breath equals life. This idea of breath links back to that idea of multimodal performance I was discussing earlier. Tina Bicat describes this as “the energy that travels from the animator to object [investing] the puppet with the combined power of these two, plus that of the audience’s imagination” (Bicat 15).

The actors were freshly discovering the limits and abilities of the puppet and themselves as an animator. Since they did not have a hand in building the puppets they had no idea how I intended them to move. So this initial workshop seemed the most vital because this was where we were going to discover the articulation that would be used and expanded upon throughout the show. I worked with Brenden during the workshop showing the cast what I felt the main points of articulation were and then Brenden would develop these simple mechanics into lively movements. We were very lucky to have the main platform and bench set up for the beginning of the rehearsals in the space. This basically got rid of that awkward time between blocking on a flat space and seeing if it would work with the set. The space began to inform the action triggering funny sight gags like Coyote urinating his name on the wall and Otter swimming in front of the cutout waves to distract from them being reversed when the water turns to land. All the discoveries occurred with the set, puppet and animator in their environment, so

the choices became clearer and experiments with movement and negotiating the levels were quick and painless.

Because of the short rehearsal period the actors unfortunately had very little time to become really comfortable with their puppet. The compacted schedule, I feel, affected everything and tech seemed to be the catch-all for all the neglected elements. It seemed that the puppeteering style was more presentational then engaging, with the exception of David Kaye who took very well to transferring focus to the object and manipulating it with feeling and humor.

This schedule was very different from the one Ron and I had discussed earlier on in the year. We initially intended to have the puppets constructed to a functional state where we could bring in the actors for a few weeks to work the bugs out, after which I would be able to go back, reassess and rebuild as needed, and then we could start the main rehearsals with finished fully functional puppets. This layout was designed so that the actors and myself could explore and develop the story out of what we discovered in rehearsal, so that the process would be more organic, more collectively created, rather than the normal format of rehearsing a finished script with a particular goal in mind. Patrick's schedule, however, would not allow for this type of process to unfold. Our development time was compressed and the rushed timeline was stressful. Schedules were being prepared the night before for next day's call and since I was still building and painting and attending classes there was not time for me to integrate into the rehearsals because I only became aware of them very late the night before. I thought I was going to have the opportunity to work with the actors and the puppets throughout the

workshop and adjust the play to what was being discovered. I was very much cut off from this process as Patrick worked individually with the actors in the beginning, focusing on delivery and acting technique, which was important since the cast consisted of mostly amateur actors, but it felt like the movement and the actual integrating of the puppets was an afterthought.

But maybe that's what a workshop is like. This was my first production on which I have participated in so many aspects. And every show has its kinks. But I think the workshop was beneficial in the sense that I now know what to expect. I just did what I could in the time frame that was available and despite all the flaws I saw the audience really enjoyed it.

Chapter 3

Development

"We begin with the idea that everyone needs a creations story, just as much as cultures need stories about their origins."

~Lewis Mehl-Madrona

The story itself really influenced my designs. The idea of a bricolaged world, where characters, timelines, and traditions are all mashed up and confused, seemed to be my central focus. Within theater for young audiences, design functions both narratively and graphically. When breaking design down in this fashion it is easy to see the multimodal effects each element can have, how each piece is a part of the puzzle.

I initially began the design process in April of 2011, sketching out some rough ideas of what type of puppet each character needed to be, how their corresponding human animator should look and what the world these creatures inhabited needed to look like. I tossed around a lot of ideas, toying with models of paper puppet theatres, trying to envision Muppet-like Tricksters, but unsure how to build foam creatures within my budget. So I started with the basics: the costumes needed to reflect urban indigenous peoples, the set needed levels so that the creatures could traverse the iceberg and the puppets needed to articulate a certain motion. Raven needed to fly, Otter needed to swim, Coyote to run and so forth.

To help me figure out the mechanics of the puppets Ron put me in touch with acclaimed mask maker and puppet builder Melody Anderson, who gave me a tutorial in basic papier-mâché techniques. Melody explain to me how she solved articulation challenges with flapping birds wings and moving eyes for some of her productions but unfortunately those techniques wouldn't work with the scale and materials I would later use. The most valuable part of my time with Melody was when she showed me some of her trade secrets including a technique for creating horns and appendages with tinfoil. This small trick sparked something in my brain and I was determined to build all the puppets completely out of papier-mâché and tinfoil. This combination provided durability and flexibility when building, because pieces could be reshaped and patched up without visible scarring, and the light weight was necessary for such large scale puppets that were to be manipulated by only one person.

After my workshop with Melody attended the Prague Quadrennial, a two-week Scenography conference in the Czech Republic, where I witnessed some amazing puppet productions and participated in puppet workshops focusing on animation and synchronized movement. I also became interested in the topic of sustainability in costumes, reusing and repurposing. With all these new ideas and methods bouncing around in my head I returned to Vancouver and started my research on the stylization of the Trickster and his/her world and just how I wanted to present it.

3.1 Puppet Conception and Creation

"We have that decision to make, to create something. It could be grotesque and ugly, but it is monstrously beautiful, so it inspires people."

~Julie Taymor

I began researching Indigenous artists across Canada and my biggest influences came from Haida carver Bill Reid and Ojibwa shaman and painter Norval Morrisseau. Their work seemed to be at the root of a lot of aboriginal artistic movements with many other artists mimicking their style to articulate their own artistic expression. I scanned books, Google, examined the resources at the Museum of Anthropology, the Stanley Park Totem poles, walked about town taking note of the local graffiti and even sorted through jewelry, souvenirs and greeting cards by local artists on Granville island and around Vancouver. The one thing that seemed to stand out the most to me was this idea of compartmentalization within a figure. The subject always seems to be sectioned off and divided. And this isn't just the case in Canadian Indigenous artwork. This sort of linear compartmental style can be seen in Indigenous art around the world from Inca stone work in Mexico, Kalahari bushmen linocuts in Africa, Maori bone carving in New Zealand and tiki carvings in Hawaii.

Doris Shadbolt describes Bill Reid's work as having these "qualities of *containment, confinement, enclosure, stability*, which in turn embrace particular characteristics such as symmetry, frontality, a preoccupation with surface rather than depth" (Shadbolt 76). She adds:

“We find little watchful humanoid faces inserted in animal ears or eyes, or in joints, perhaps with hands pushing through as a creature is about to climb out - and sometimes they *have* climbed out. In their way they speak to us of a man-animal relationship that today could only exist in our dreams or in a lingering primordial memory” (Shadbolt 80).

These ideas of frontality, symmetry and containment started to inform some of my sketches and then simplicity came back to me. How was I going to create these complex line drawings into three-dimensional figures? Then it occurred to me to take the flat, two dimensional sketch, mirror it, and connect it in the middle to create a skeletal creature that maintained the essence of the cultures it came from while maintaining a solid design concept. I don't like things to be pretty, I'd rather they be interesting. I feel like designs should encompass fear and curiosity; that way we are never bored.

With this basic idea I set about designing each character individually while trying to maintain a set of rules: unique articulation, a compartmentalized design aesthetic, and a sort of grotesque quality. The month before the puppet construction workshop began Matt and I set about trying to translate these pencil sketches into three-dimensional moveable objects. While I tinkered around with a miniature Gran-gran Matt rationalized Coyote's articulation from the actions I described, and we then proceeded to replicate this process of building the maquettes together while then trying to figure out the ways in which they could be easily manipulated for each distinct action. All the larger scale puppets were developed from tape and tinfoil maquettes and were constructed of tinfoil, wood dowels, tape, wire and papier-mâché and assembled with leather joints, hot glue, wood screws, springs and bolts. I had originally intended to

paint the larger animal puppets but after they were constructed Alison pointed out the unity that was created with the raw brown paper finish so I decided to leave them. I'm glad I did because they gave the illusion of being carved of wood and surprised the audience when they found out they were only paper.

Individual Puppet Development

Gran-gran

Originally I wanted the Narrator to voice both her and Gran-gran's opinions and when I revisit the script I will stick with that decision. So with this initial blocking it made sense for the Gran-gran puppet to sit on the Narrator's lap with the Narrator working her head and one hand. The design was quite simple, and consisted of four separate pieces, the body with rigid comically short legs, two hands and a head that were all connected with leather strips by hot glue and screws. A handle was inserted into the back of her head and the loose neck allowed for extreme mobility and a rod operated the left hand while the other hand was pinned to her clothing so that it appeared to be resting in her lap. I made the body by bunching up large sheets of newsprint that was then covered and shaped by tinfoil. At the end the body resembled a large turkey wrapped in foil and was quite amusing. The head consisted of a large Styrofoam ball that was also covered in tinfoil to shape. I constructed the face using a combination of molded tinfoil for the features and then built up and wrinkled the

papier-mâché to show age and laugh lines. The face was a completely organic process. I thought of the fright factor of the falseface masks and human face masks seen in Haida and Mohawk ceremonies and how they were often carved with grotesque features to honour a past ancestor and ward off any evil spirits. I just experimented with her features and used some research of the anatomy of elderly women's faces to guide me. She also needed an expression that could be neutral and yet display a variety of feelings. I tried to bring my own Grandma's round sweet demeanor into the puppet's physicality, which is why she is so squat and loveable (see Illus. 7, 8 and 9).

Tear

The Tear puppet may have needed two incarnations, one to fall from the sun and the other to be worn by the actor. Since we animated the scene where the tear falls from the sun and transforms into the girl I just had to build the body puppet. My idea came from some of the puppets that I had recently seen at the Prague Quadrennial that were strapped to the waist with one hand, the head being manipulated by the artists. But I needed Tear to dance so I simply expanded on that idea to include elastic attachments to the wrists and feet. The puppet was made with legs and arms to the scale of the actor but with a smaller body, which gave it an awkward gangly look. The limbs were tinfoil and papier-mâché held together with hair elastics as joints threaded through a leather thong that was hot glued and screwed. This allowed the limbs to bounce and stretch with the dancer. The body and head were tricky because I still wanted the artist to have the option to move the head if needed. I used an orange juice

container with a slender neck for the body and then put the head on a cardboard tube with a weighted Styrofoam ball at the end and put that into the juice container. The result kind of resembled a ball joint but the length of the tube restricted the movement to bobbing up and down and spinning around. This way the puppets head would move as she was dancing and thus give her a spark of life without having to directly animate the head. Her hair was made of strands of wool yarn that I pulled apart to give it a more realistic look and her costume coordinated with the actors (See Illus. 10 and 11)

Coyote

I wanted Coyote to have flexibility. His character is always shape-shifting to better express his mischievousness so I wanted his articulation to be transformable from the four-legged canine maneuvers to the ability to stand and walk upright as a man. So his structure resembles that of a stringless marionette. The arms and legs are attached to the body by a post with a stopper so that the limbs can freely rotate. The remaining joints and neck are attached at specific angles by leather strips, hot glue and screws, which lets Coyote land on his paws with the elbow and knee rigged to face the right direction. The puppet is manipulated by handles in its back and head which allows the artist a range of motions with simple tilts and jiggles, tilting the chest to suggest breathing, tilting the chest down and hind quarters up to suggest a playful stance or reverse to a sitting position and nods of the head to suggest panting. This puppet seemed the most successful with a variety of movement possibilities that were enhanced by David Kaye's fluid agility. An issue that we encountered was that David's

hands were sweating profusely and weakening the papier-mâché structure so I had to go back and reinforce the areas and cover them in leather to contend with the moisture. Matt took lead build on Coyote, developing the maquette from my rendering and figuring out the simplest way to articulate what I needed. He also began the larger scale puppet, which I assisted with and then eventually took over and finished when he returned to school. I wanted to have an example to show the scale and the idea we were looking for to the workshop group and it made sense to get the most complicated puppet out of the way first (see Illus. 12, 13, 14 and 15).

Raven

Raven's stylization was more identifiably Haida inspired. I felt that since Raven was a predominantly Northwest Coast figure that he/she should embody this side of the country a little more while the others remained ambiguous and "tribal" for lack of a better word. This puppet was harder to conceive than it was to build. He/she needed to fly and I originally thought that it would be manipulated by two artists, one animating the body and left wing and the other the head and the right wing. But with the singular casting I now had to develop a way for one person to maneuver a puppet built for two. Luckily I had the great fortune to collaborate with Lynn Burton. We bounced a bunch of options around and settled on a drummers backpack harness that would perch Raven above the actors head at an angle allowing for wings to be manipulated by rods as I had previously intended. I attached the head with springs so that it could be controlled by the actor. After I assembled the puppet Lynn took over rigging it to the backpack and

adjusting the rods for easy manipulation. We then covered the structure in black tape and glued feathers and buttons to it as an added Raven touch. Nyla took to the contraption really well and had no issue with the setup and handling. However, I think more work was needed to rehearse the manipulation of the puppet as I felt that the performer seemed to be more in focus and I somehow lost the gigantic bird above her head (see Illus. 16, 17 and 18).

Otter

I gave Otter the task of swimming to the ocean floor and retrieving earth rather than Muskrat from the original story. Otters are cuter and more playful and really unrecognized in the world of Aboriginal storytelling so I wanted to give her/him a chance to shine. The original swimming articulation was based on the Otter's habit of winding its body from side to side to jet through currents. But the side-to-side motion was too awkward for such a large puppet. I twisted the body barrel so that the articulation undulated like a Chinese fish ornament. The body is segmented into five drum-like shapes that fit into each other. The main problem I had with the otter was the head, which looks like a bear to me. The problem came in the transfer of the flat profile image into three dimensions. The other animals mainly have profile type heads with eyes shifted to the sides, but the otter's features are all central which was a problem I didn't know how to fix or have the time to do so (see Illus. 19, 20 and 21).

Turtle

The Turtle's design was one of my favorites because it was just so simple. I had one concern and that was to have thirteen scales on his/her back to echo the months of the Ojibwa calendar. This puppet was the most basic; originally I only anticipated it would be wheeled on and voiced by one of the other actors and Tear would sit on it. With Patrick casting an actor for every part the Turtle's role became more prominent. Unfortunately the construction was so basic it didn't allow for much articulation. The feet dangled so they swayed when the puppet was moved but the head could only move from side to side rather than retracting, as Alex suggested during rehearsal. At that point there was not enough time to alter the structure but it is an idea I'm toying with for the remount (see Illus. 22, 23, 24 and 25).

Sun and Moon

I originally thought that these puppets would be mounted on rods that would rotate showing night and day. I wanted Sun's eyes to move and look around and Melody gave me some great ideas on how to accomplish this with rods through the eyeballs and a wire pulley system like bike brakes to shift them. But with the animations claiming more and more scenes the puppets were abandoned to lobby decorations while a bouncy projected version replaced them (see Illus. 26, 27, 28).

Twin Creations

The twins needed to be molded from clay as one body and then split into two to form the brothers of light and dark. I came up with all these ideas of puppets splitting apart and being snapped back together, with magnets or smaller spring-loaded halves hidden inside the bodies. But that just seemed too complicated, so I came up with a design for some sock dolls with Mohawk face paint and half shaved heads that could be attached to rods. I brought the rendering to Lynn and she constructed them to be almost identical to the drawing (see Illus. 29 and 30).

Hand puppets

The hand puppets were created to give credit to the original stories and to play with the idea of scale and the traditional ideas of a booth style puppet show. The into Punch and Judy style show was quite a success. Its campy self-debasing nature and the genre of puppet theatre in general allowed for a variety of styles. I used two Punch and Judy type glove puppets for the hunter's daughter and Weesageechak the crane. Since these characters were not in the larger story I wanted them to be able to stand out and be remembered as distinct puppets. The bodies were made of fabric and their heads were paper clay that ended up being quite heavy. The hunter's daughter had the same hair as Tear and her dress was covered in a crocheted lace with pearls to simulate the Northwest Coast style of cedar bark dresses and abalone shell buttons. The rest of the

puppets consisted of silhouette stick puppets for comic effect intermixed with the maquettes that were used to develop their larger counterparts (see Illus. 31, 32 and 33).

3.2 Costume and Cultural Hybridity

"We look at the world from the outsider's point of view, from the monster's point of view."

~Julie Taymor

When I started thinking about the costumes and how they would integrate with the other elements I had a hard time deciding whether I wanted the puppeteers to be seen as noticeable distinct entities or if I wanted them to be in neutral uniform so that they would blend into the background and the audience could focus solely on the puppets. I opted for suggestive character-driven costumes so that the audience would know which actor was which animal when they were not holding the puppet. I again chose to do a mash-up, intermixing character elements, like animal colouring and characteristics, with Indigenous regalia and contemporary fashion.

I looked at 19th century portraits depicting Indigenous peoples in fashions of the time with cultural accents, like shirtsleeves with a hair pipe breastplate and matching headdress. Many of these photographs were staged, which triggered questions of identity, authenticity and nostalgia, especially when considering how the modern indigenous identity is affected by memory and historic representations of the past. So I began to wonder if, although such a diverse people, we can be visually identifiable

beyond the historic costume created by the tales that have been spun since our story has been written down. Or are we destined to walk in the constructed shadow of pictorial history? How do we challenge this cultural depiction of teepees and feathers when contemporary fashion conglomerates like Urban Outfitters, H&M and Forever 21 appropriate these static stereotypic images as the newest trend in popular culture (Houston Brown). With these issues in mind I tried to design costumes that I think the characters would wear today, mashing up elements from each character's indigenous culture of origin with contemporary hipster style. I also used temporary tattoos of each animal on the actors to further their connection to the puppet. Unfortunately to acquire the styles I wanted and still stay in my budget I had to purchase items from Urban Outfitters, H&M and Forever 21, thus supporting the cultural appropriation I was questioning. This felt hypocritical but my budget restriction outweighed my principles.

Individual Costume Development

Narrator

The Narrator was the easiest costume to conceive since she is closest to my own age demographic and social standing. Even though she recounts stories and memories from my childhood, I don't directly identify with her stylistically. I wanted to give her a trendy everywoman quality that was current and easy to relate to. I really took inspiration from what was around me and styled her on what young women were

wearing last summer. She wore a loose sheer blouse with a feather motif, dark denim skinny jeans and gladiator sandals that were embossed with a golden Aztec-like ornamentation. Her hair was worn in a French braid along one side of her head. I found the amazing image by American photographer Edward Curtis of a Tsawatenok girl with large shell earrings that I loved, and used that inspiration creating earrings out of local abalone shells. I also wanted to link the Narrator, Gran-gran and Terra/Tear visually. The idea of the story being passed down and changing as it shifts from one teller to the next brought to mind the tradition of the wampum belt which signifies specific events through a pattern in the beading. But it is the storyteller that brings the event to life in the form of oral history and although the facts remain the same each orator has a distinct style of storytelling. With that in mind I gave the two younger women identical belts of hairpipe bead and leather thong Gran-gran however wore a necklace constructed in a similar fashion because I did not have enough beads to encircle her abdomen (see Illus. 34).

Gran-gran

Gran-gran's hair and costume was to coordinate with the puppet and I tossed around the stereotypical ideas of what old Aboriginal grandmothers look like, the long flowered dress, the shawl, the braids, beads and ribbons. The image of the Kokum from APTN's animated series *Wapos Bay* kept seeping into to my thoughts but then I realized that if this is my story then Gran-gran should dress like my own grandmother, so she needed a sweatsuit, sneakers and a pixie cut. I found matching wigs that fit the actor

and I adjusted one for the puppet. All of the human women were accented in shades of purple as that was my favorite colour as a child and it always permeates my memories. Gran-gran had a purple top under her grey sweatsuit with purple stitching that coordinated with the puppet's purple sweatshirt and they both wore green sneakers. I assembled the fat pad onto a bodysuit out of bits of carved foam I found in stock and wardrobe head Jean Driscoll-Bell attached and covered the form I had pinned together. I overlaid the design for the old age makeup on a picture of Lisa's face that the crew applied every night to help give her round face some depth of the character. Gran-gran needed to be saucy and vibrant as she embodies the characteristic of three of my grandmothers and I think in a campy sort of way we accomplished that (see Illus. 35).

Tear

Tear was the embodiment of my younger self and I styled her after the childhood vision I have of me with tousled half-braided hair and a jumper. I was lucky that Ashley fit into the costume that I had already purchased for Denalene and she was able to move freely in it. This was the first time I designed a costume for a dancer and didn't realize the most important thing were the shoes. After the third week of rehearsal it was clear with Ashley's foot swelling up that we needed actual dancing moccasins. I had originally considered styling this character in the Métis ribbon dresses that I remember from my youth but they just seemed impractical and didn't meet the hipster concept I was going for. The jumper was great for mobility and the youthful appearance and I was able to find one in a floral pattern that echoed my research. During the dance scene I

wanted to bring in some traditional elements so I fastened two layers of jingles to a belt that could be added in a quick change (see Illus. 36).

Coyote

With Coyote I played with a brown and tan colour palette to emulate the animal. I designed a leather vest with fringe inspired by Plains leather crafts and dress, which was built by Jean. The hipster vibe seemed to really suite Coyote with the baggy toque, cuffed pant and high top sneakers. With his mischievous macho nature I put his tattoo on his bicep to affirm that tough guy persona. I had originally planned a tank top because of the demographic of the show but Patrick wanted him shirtless under the vest so that is how he appeared on stage (see Illus. 37).

Raven

With Raven I chose to use a black and navy palette, to give the hint of the feathers when they are under sunlight and have that beautiful blue glint. I originally thought Raven would be a man and since the designs were done before the casting she/he is depicted as one. But the costume is quite unisex with the addition of an undershirt. So I didn't feel the need to re-render when Nyla was cast because the costume actually suited her Goth aesthetic really well with the black skinny jeans and combat boots. The tattoo was painted across the chest with the raven's head going up Nyla's neck and the wings spread out over her shoulders. To achieve a bird like quality

to the costume we deconstructed a tail-coat, removing the sleeves to create a tail-vest, and adorned the edges of the garment with buttons as a nod to the Northwest Coastal button blankets. I adorned the neck of the tank top with a string of small black feathers to add to the animalistic nature and completed the look with a stereotypic feather and bead-festooned top hat. I just couldn't help myself; that look is just so stereotypical when thinking of post-contact fashion (see Illus. 38).

Otter

The inspiration for Otter came from one of photographer Nadya Kwandibens' *Concrete Indian* portraits of a girl in mukluks texting on her phone outside a Starbucks. I loved the idea of pairing the big furry boots with pants and a raglan off-the-shoulder jersey top. In keeping with the Otter's playful animalistic theme we put Laura's hair in pigtail buns to resemble ears with a big furry bow on one side. She was also accessorized with chunky wood and bone bangles and a seed bead fringe necklace that bounced and made noise as she danced. Her tattoo was placed on the back of her right shoulder, which was visible above the scooping neckline (see Illus. 39).

Turtle

Turtle was originally designed as a girl with fringed shorts and feathers in her hair but that design wasn't as unisex as Raven and I re-rendered after casting Alex. I gave him a muted olive and gray palette with a striped shirt to echo the pattern of a

turtles underside. Alex experimented with old age makeup to help give depth to the character echoing this old-as-time idea in his movement and voice pattern, both of which were painfully slow and quite comical. To my surprise he was one of the audience's favorite characters. We rolled up his pants and put the tattoo on his leg since we were running out of exposed body parts and I didn't want to repeat tattoo location amongst the actors. With this character literally becoming Turtle Island (earth), where we all live, I was inspired by the Métis sash for the accessory because it symbolizes the unity of cultures. Traditionally the sash was woven of wool about three meters long and tied around the waist, but it was occasionally worn as a scarf so that is how I chose to use it since scarves are a popular trend. Wool would be too hot and three meters would impede the actor's mobility so I simply found a light weight scarf in my colour palette with the familiar stripe pattern (see Illus. 40).

3.3 Scenographic Unity: Tradition and Modernity

"I try to make a well-made object; that is all that anyone can do"

~Bill Reid

With the costume and puppets adhering to this fusion of traditional and contemporary urban Indigenous ideals I needed to tie all the elements together with the set and basic atmosphere of the show. Originally I wanted to build a giant paper puppet theatre complete with moving waves and tongue and groove sliding scenery on the

stage, so that the small puppet booth sat in the larger puppet theatre which, in turn, sat in the theatre itself. The idea was to play with the space and scale of the theatre by echoing to make the audience aware of the space and how it signifies the presentation of a story through multiple layers of framing. This concept would then be echoed in the script by the story being changed and framed different ways according to the teller. But my budget wouldn't allow for that so the idea needed to be simplified.

Again I needed to go back to the basics. So what did we need? I knew I wanted the show to be contemporary and urban, a hybridized world of myth and everyday but what did that look like? Images of concrete and graffiti blurred with a naturalistic landscape. But I needed to fill this space with little effort and less money. I tossed around a few ideas with Patrick, reducing my original idea to a platform covered in Carolyn's graffiti design with two internally illuminated columns on either side of the stage. Stage right signified the puppet world, the space of myth, and stage left with a porch and swing and a small TV set signified the real world. Alison suggested I change the puppet theatre into a television set, because of its significance in stereotypic reservation life. I really liked this idea and then tried to surround the platform with a large ply board cutout of the same television façade as the small puppet theatre. This tied into the small TV set on the porch which I was using as a speaker to broadcast sound bites of past Indigenous representations in popular culture. The recordings included a song from *Peter Pan* "What Made the Red Man Red," the Lakota pain reliever ad and a news report of the recent shooting of Native American woodcarver John T.

Williams in Seattle. The sounds were a way to acknowledge the past and show that we are moving forward and creating our own stories (see Illus. 41 and 42).

This was my first large-scale set design that was being constructed by someone else I was lucky to have Keith Smith as my Technical Director and Head Carpenter. His optimism seemed to be never-ending. Everything I threw at him with my poorly drafted and haphazard design was met with “we can do that.” I was able to completely trust him to do what was best for the production and he helped guide me in terms of how things should be built, talking through every aspect of each design for better understanding on both our parts. He physically walked me through ideas regarding the small puppet booth so that two people could sit comfortably inside and facilitate the necessary actions of performing and moving the theatre off stage while inside (see Illus. 43 and 44). This kind of tactile discussion was extremely helpful to me; it gave me a spatial sensibility to the measurements I was adhering to in my model. He creatively solved puppet storage problems and ensured safety for everyone involved. His presence and expertise was invaluable.

Chapter 4

Production Report

"Puppets always have to try to be alive...that desperation to live, it's basically a dead object, it only lives because you make it. An actor struggles to die onstage, but a puppet has to struggle to live. And in a way that's a metaphor for life."

~ Adrian Kohler

The production was more successful, in terms of audience reception, than I anticipated. With such minimal advertising and being the first theatre production for young audiences to be produced at UBC I didn't know what to expect. Word of mouth seemed to be a very powerful tool because every night the audience grew. We roped off the seating so that people could only sit in the center isle, thus making sure every person in the house could see into the smaller puppet theatre, but that proved problematic as more people were arriving and we had to move the ropes out further and further.

The audience was extremely receptive and chatty. David Kaye would enter from the lobby and bring the audience into the story by interacting with them during the small puppet theatre intro. The audience was engaged and responded to his questions every night with the exception of the matinee that had an abundance of children under five attending and all sitting in the first three rows. This was a little off-putting to the actors since that age group is not familiar with theatrical traditions. The matinee got off slowly and but picked up again once the music started. The three evening performances

were very energetic and fun and the audience laughed all the way through every night so I feel I was successful in pleasing the audience.

After each show we held a short talkback where the audience could come up and talk to the actors and interact with the puppets. This seemed to really be the highlight of the show because we were able to talk to the audience and get feedback in an informal setting. The Musqueam band brought several youth groups out and we were constantly being thanked by the children and their parents for telling a story that they could relate to. One little girl of about three loved Gran-gran so much that her mom brought her and her sister to every production. Every night she would sit on the porch swing with Lisa and hug and kiss the puppet until her mom told her it was Gran-gran's bedtime. Seeing the young people ranging from small children to teenagers, to the parents and my peers all getting something relevant out of the story was the most fulfilling part.

During the run I was also fortunate enough to go and speak to two sections of Jerry Wasserman's Theatre 120 class about the process and give a demonstration of how some of the smaller puppets functioned. This was a different but still valuable audience response since they were required to see the show for their class. After the demonstration there were very mixed responses; some loved the freedom of genre and actually said they were reconsidering their previous intentions of becoming actors to explore design and creation. Others didn't feel Theatre for Young Audiences belonged in the university repertoire that it was a lower form of theater that they couldn't see any relevance in studying even if they may have enjoyed it. It was interesting to compare

the responses of those who were enthusiastic to see the production and came on their own accord to those who were required to attend.

So despite some minimal negative feedback I actually felt like this story affected some of these people. That is what we are trying to accomplish with theatre. I feel like we are always searching for the moment, for connection that moves us. I tried for a pan-Indigenous Canadian feel to the story and ended up with what many people felt was universal. Many Chinese and Japanese patrons expressed the thrill of connection they felt when watching the play, because they were seeing many of their own traditional tales told through different bodies. This was just so amazing to me to see all these people from different cultures relating to the story. It shows that we really are not that different when we come back to this idea of community and the need to connect with one's past and personal heritage.

I couldn't have asked for a better response from the audience. This experience has given me the confidence to keep creating and pushing and breaking down cultural boundaries in order for a new story to be told.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

"I really do believe that if you don't challenge yourself and risk failing, that it's not interesting."

~Julie Taymor

With this being my first attempt at creating theatre I really tried to tell a story that I wanted to experience. This workshop really helped me understand how to put those ideas together in a way that everyone can understand, and it reminded me to stick to simplicity. One of my biggest struggles during this process was trying to sift through all the advice that was being offered and judiciously decide what would work and what wouldn't. I think I failed to stand up for my vision a lot of the time. Being bombarded with great ideas from many great theatre practitioners clouded my judgment and I allowed myself to be talked into ideas that didn't necessarily fit with the production just because we were able to do them. One example of this was the projections. I now believe the changes we made were a disservice to the story and production even if it was viewed as successful because it cannot exist outside of the Frederic Wood facility. This version of the show has no life after this production because it is unrealistic in terms budget and portability. It cannot tour in its current state. There are too many actors and the technical needs cannot be met by the types of road venues which support small touring shows. Also no Theatre for Young Audiences company can view this show with potential for remount because of the cost

of the animation and projection equipment, and the lack of trained staff to operate such a specialize program.

With all the constant changes to my story I also feel I lost myself in the process. Its only now in hindsight that I see how confused I was and how that confusion was reflected in the script and the production. Having never written a script or created a play before I believe I allowed myself to lose track of what I was trying to do. I still don't know who has the final say in design choices; it seems to always be the director. I'm still discovering how to maneuver in a design that I think is mine but is dictated by an outside party. The director of this project, Patrick New, is a very experienced director with an effective and established method and with such an organic project the necessity for experimentation was overlooked and the workshop was tackled as if it were a regular production. We would meet after rehearsals to discuss what I was trying to say and he helped me flesh out the parts that were confusing him, which I think made it more accessible to audiences who are not familiar with the stories and the culture. However, I think that being so close to the project, knowing all the stories and what I thought I was saying made it difficult to hear outside suggestions, I thought it was clear and I was easily offended in the beginning. I struggled with these constant requests to change the script to accommodate the blocking and actor's talent level and felt as if the project was being taken over by this alien entity that didn't understand what I was trying to say or do with this story. But I didn't know how to counter this power struggle and where my own voice fit into the decision-making process.

As a designer I know that my task is to aid the director in bringing his/her vision to life, so as the playwright/designer I was unsure of where my opinion outweighed the director. I think the solution is to direct or co-direct with a more like-minded individual, one who has knowledge and experience with stories like mine and a desire to collaborate rather than dictate. Each type of director has a place but when creating theatre that is so close to my heart I think I need to assemble a collective of people who have a similar way of thinking to mine. When I started this project my lighting design supervisor Jon Tsang told me that a designer is only as good as the people they surround themselves with, and he was absolutely right. My crew was not only talented but inspiring and they pushed me to a finished product that might not have been what I started out trying to obtain but I still think this rendition of the production has merit and was a success.

I really think this workshop was successful despite the drawbacks of a complicated and expensive production. The workshop showed me what was possible. It developed in a trial and error sort of way; with each elusive and perplexing step I eventually attained some clarity and I now know how to approach my reworking of the script for its next workshop. With this being an entirely new process to me I wasn't confident enough to make informed decisions, but seeing what worked and what didn't, I now feel more secure in what I want to say and how I want to say it. The script is currently in the process of being rewritten in a way that brings it back to simplicity, back to my original intentions. I'm focusing on the design component being a character all its

own so that all the elements are truly in sync. Every element must feel like it belongs there rather than the contrived atmosphere that was created in such a rush.

I learned so much in terms of myself as an artist and my capabilities and limitations as a theatre creator and I now know I will never live in that world of achievable expectations. I already have my next play in mind, a spin-off of this story focusing on the relationship of Terra with her papa interlaced with Inuit myths of water creatures. I think I will continue with this idea of autobiography mashed-up with myth and create a series of short plays that can be produced individually or as a collection.

I'm truly thankful for this opportunity to create freely and I think this experience has not only changed the way I design and create theatre but it has shown me the endless possibilities. It has changed my entire outlook on what I wanted as a career.

Illustrations

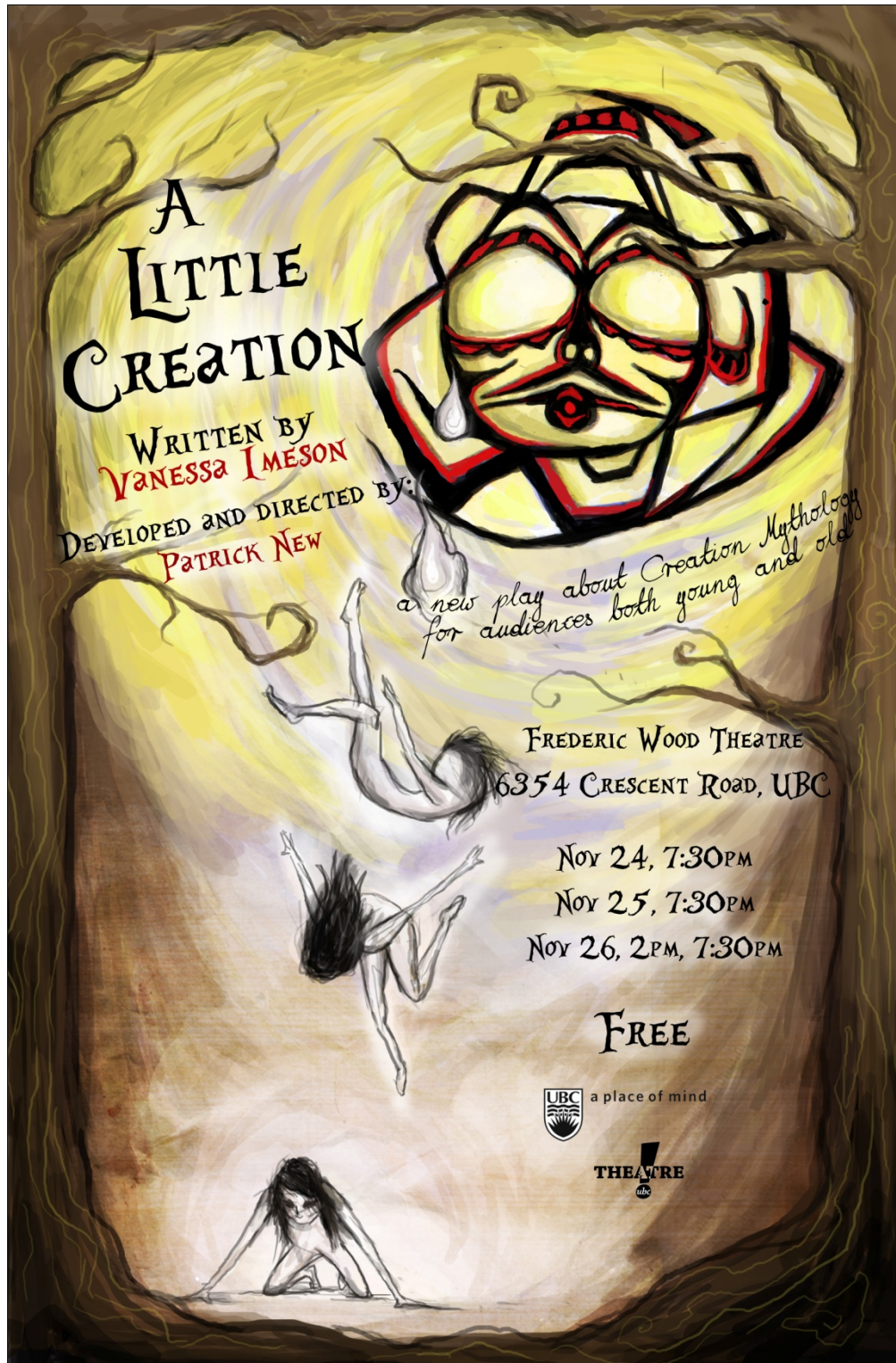


Illustration 1 – Matt Reznick's poster design.



Illustration 2 –Carolyn Rapanos' graffiti rough sketch

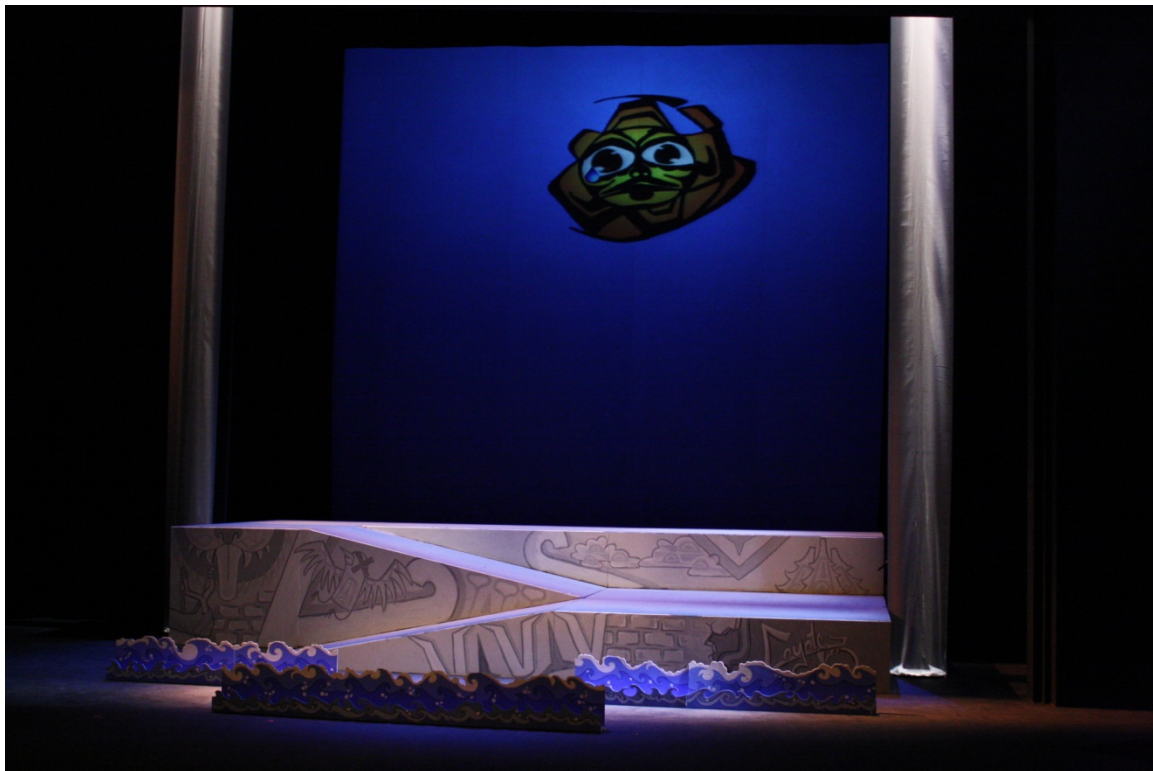


Illustration 3 –the complete graffiti platform



Illustration 4 – singular armatures before assembly



Illustration 5 – a rough sketch of the concept for the Raven puppet



Illustration 6 – a painted 4X6 inch Raven maquette



Clockwise

Illustration 7 – Gran-gran maquette

Illustration 8 – finished Gran-gran puppet

Illustration 9 – close up of Gran-gran's face, unpainted



Illustration 10 – Tear's simple bobbing head mechanism



Illustration 11 –Tear puppet



Illustration 12 – Coyote rough sketch



Illustration 13 – Coyote maquette



Illustration 14 – Coyote in standing position



Illustration 15 – shows Coyote in performance with actor David Kaye



Illustration 16 – Raven head detail



Illustration 17 – Raven wing detail



Illustration 18 – Raven in performance with actor Nyla Carpentier

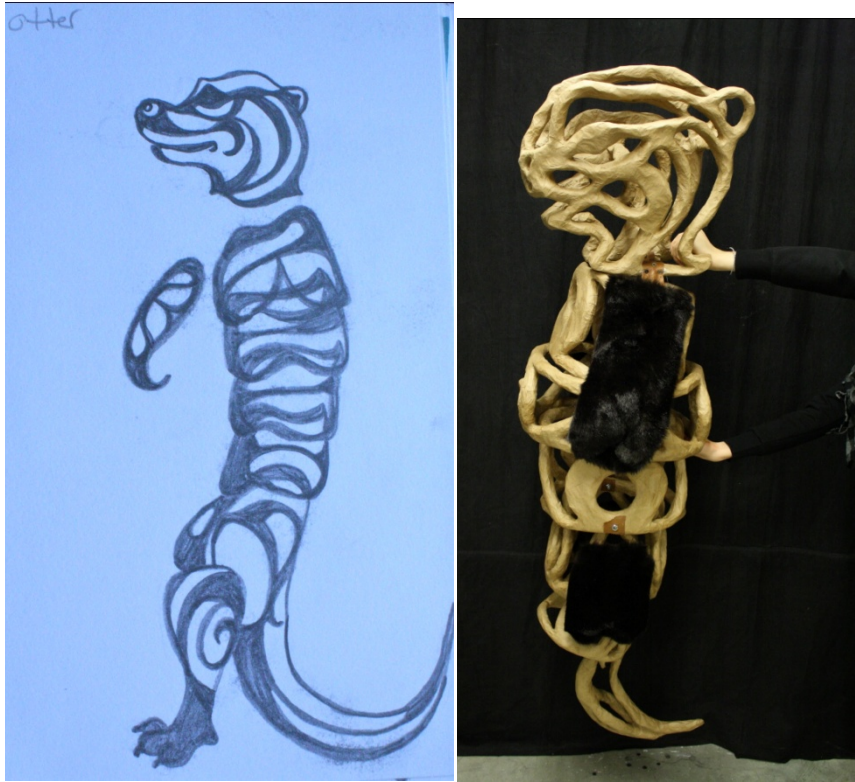


Illustration 19 – Otter concept rough sketch

Illustration 20 – Otter puppet profile



Illustration 21 – Otter in performance with actor Laura Fukumoto

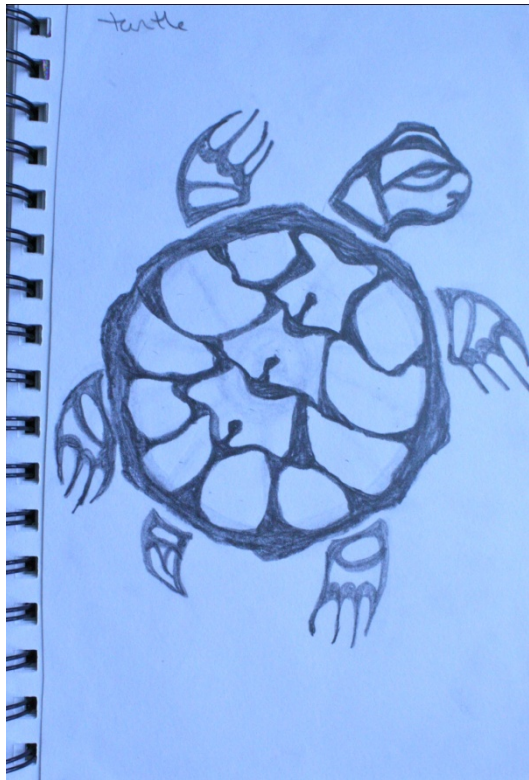


Illustration 22 – rough concept sketch of Turtle



Illustration 23 – Turtle maquette

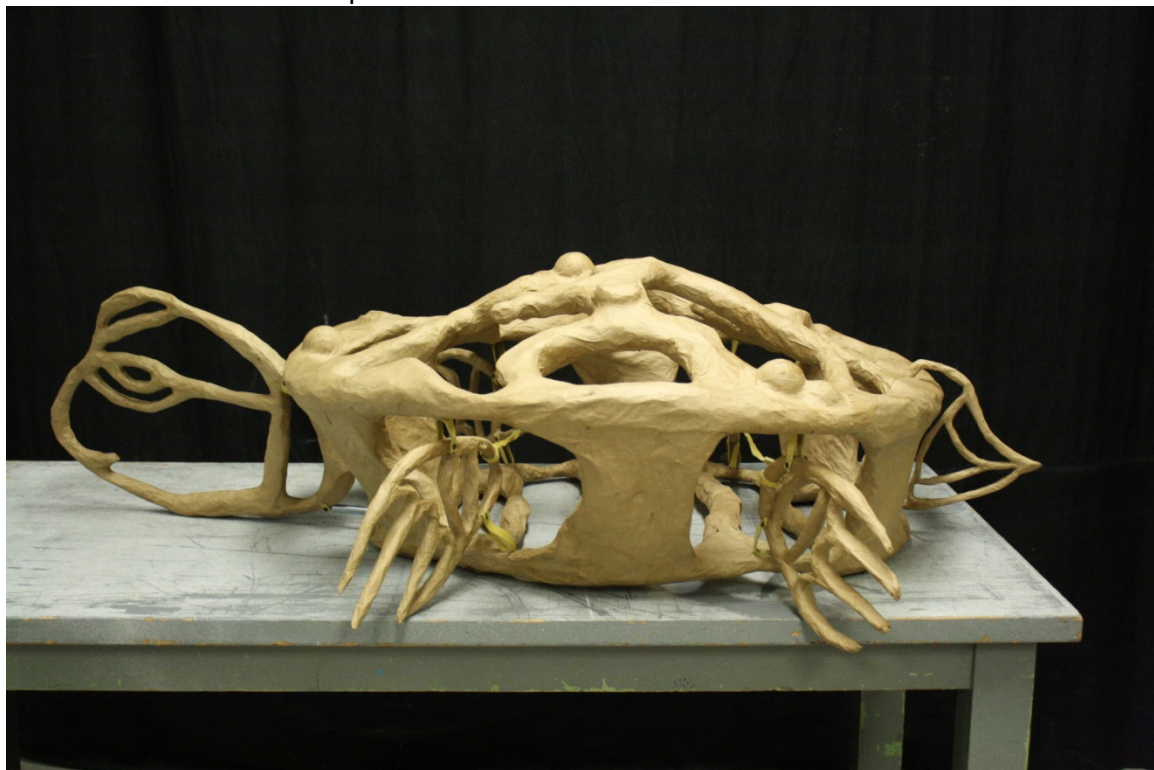


Illustration 24 – Turtle profile



Illustration 25 – Turtle in performance with actor Alex Carr

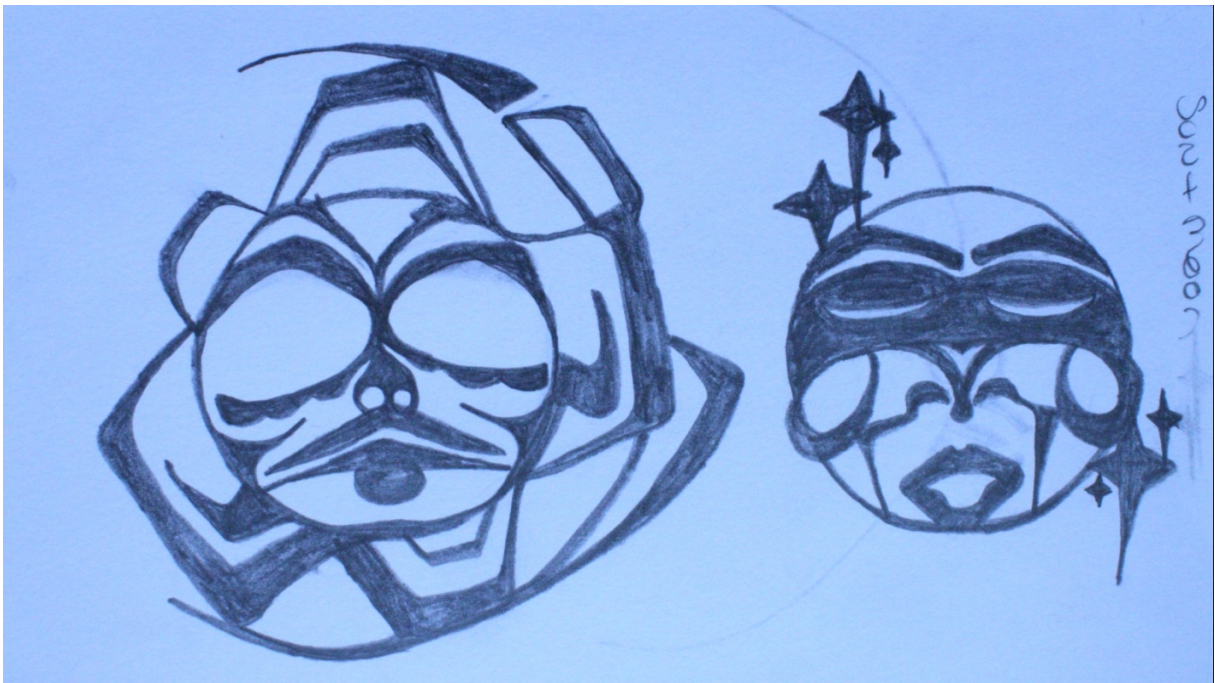


Illustration 26 – rough sketch concept for Sun and Moon



Illustration 27 – Sun projection

Illustration 28 – Moon projection



Illustration 29 – Twin Creations sock puppets



Illustration 30 – Twin Creations in performance with actors David Kaye, Alex Carr, Laura Fukumoto and Nyla Carpentier



Illustration 31 – Weesageechak hand puppet



Illustration 32 – Hunter's daughter hand puppet

Illustration 33 – puppet box rehearsal with Alex Carr and Laura Fukumoto



Illustration 34 – rendering, research and final design of Narrator costume, Actor Meaghan Chenosky

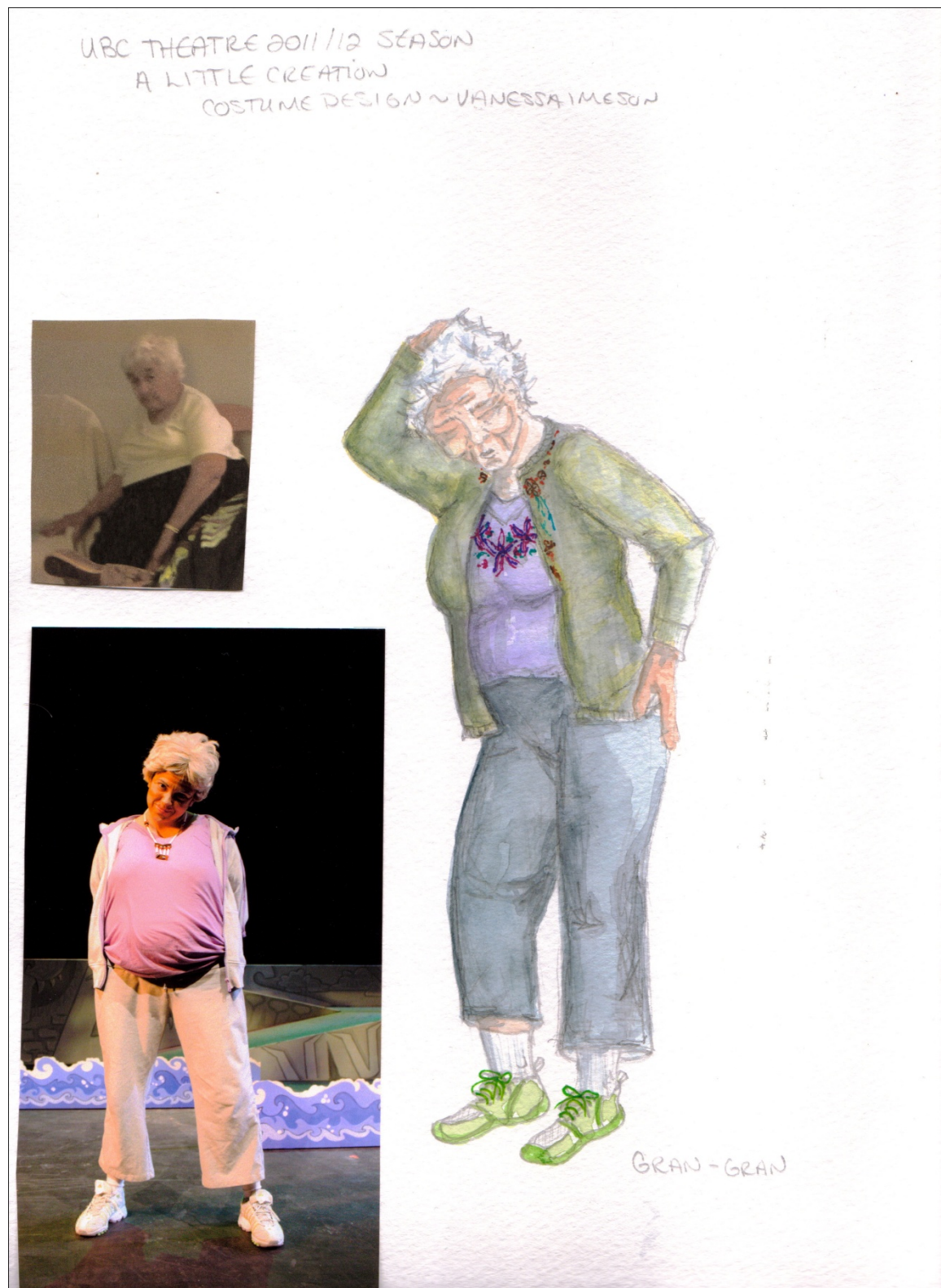


Illustration 35 – rendering, research and final design of Gran-gran’s costume, actor Lisa Smith



Illustration 36 – rendering, research and final design of Terra/Tear’s costume, actor Ashley McAllister

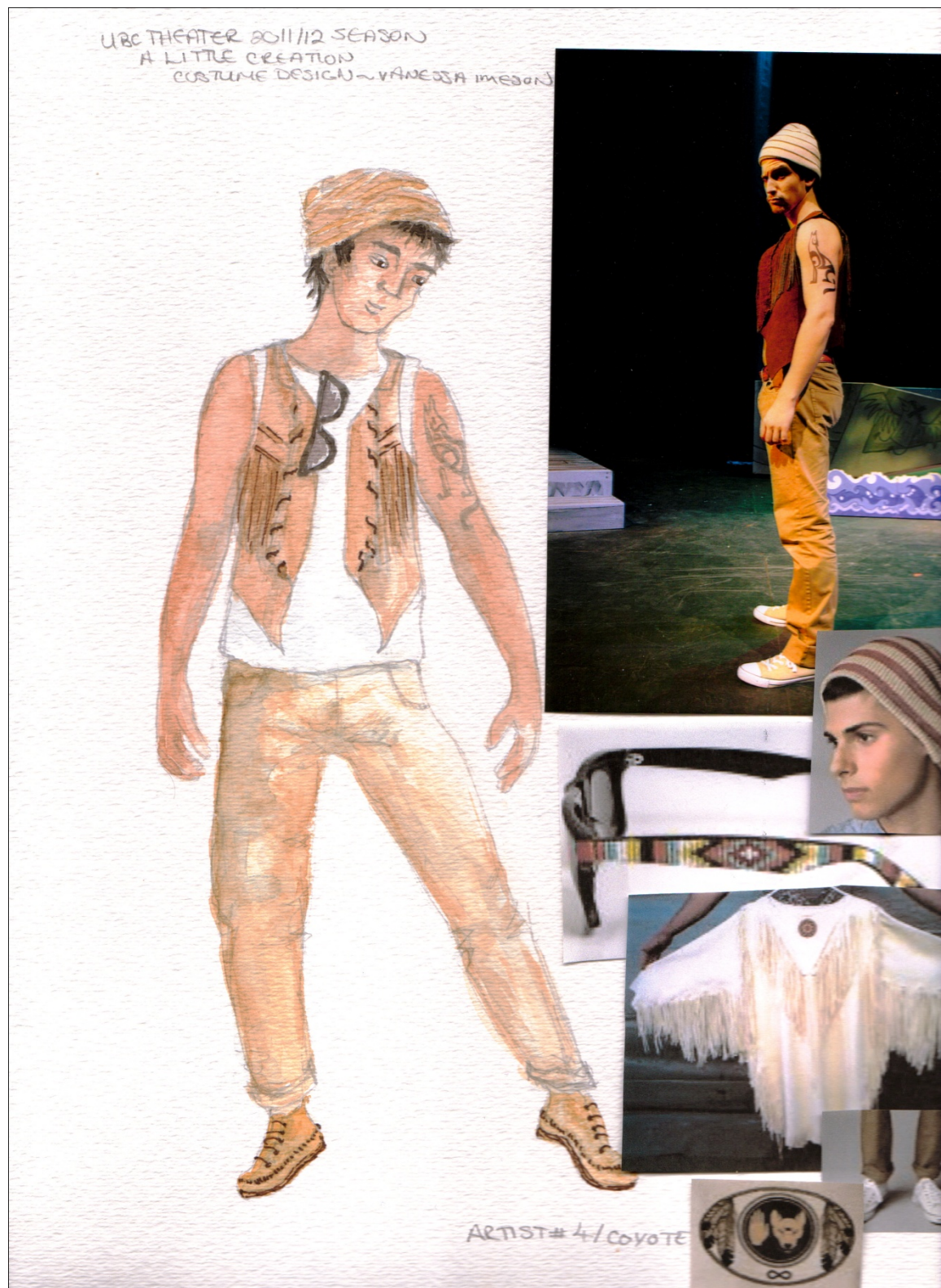


Illustration 37 – rendering, research and final design of Coyote’s costume, actor David Kaye



Illustration 39 – rendering, research and final design of Otter’s costume, actor Laura Fukumoto



Illustration 40 – rendering, research and final design of Turtle’s costume, actor Alex Carr

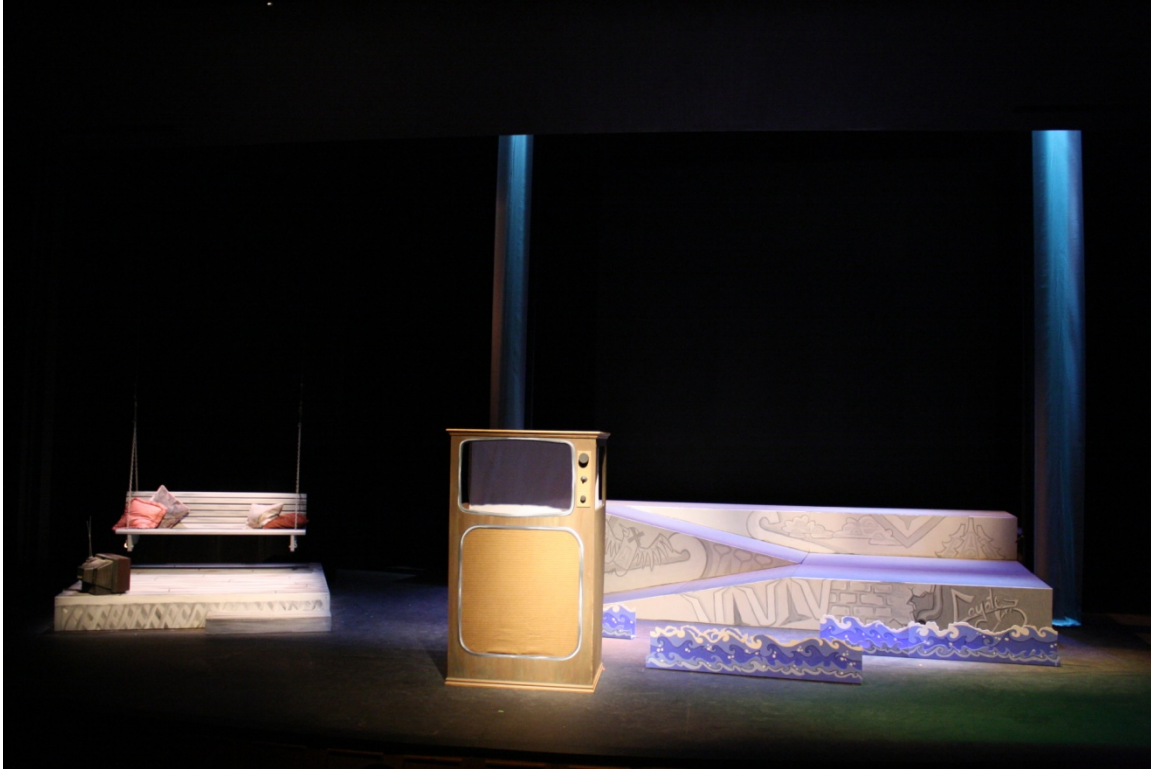


Illustration 41 – final set



Illustration 42 –Narrator talking about her childhood memory, actor's Meaghan Chenosky, Ashley McAllister, Lisa Smith



Illustration 43 – shows puppet theatre in action



Illustration 44 – actors Alex Carr, Laura Fukumoto and David Kaye lifting the puppet theatre

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APPENDIX

Script

A Little Creation

Written by Vanessa Imeson

Developed for the Stage by Vanessa Imeson and Patrick New

Author's Note:

A Little Creation is an amalgamation of several Canadian First Nation Creation stories and characters blended together to reflect the traditions of the past with the bricolage of the modern lives of the concrete Indians today. The play is a combination of oral tradition and theatrical realization. The characters are visually left up for interpretation but should retain and essence of their cultures of origin (Haida, Cree, Ojibwa, Iroquois) while allowing the hybridity of traditional and contemporary culture to inform the design.

List of Characters:

Narrator.....Adult Terra retelling the creation story with Gran-gran puppet to her younger self.

Gran-gran.....Terra in the golden years, she tends to exaggerate and spin yarns at a whim. Puppet and human form.

Terra/Tear.....Enters as younger puppet version of Narrator listening to the tale and then takes on the role of Tear in the retelling both in puppet and human form. Terra/Tear is manipulated by the same actor throughout, preferably one with dance training. Puppet and human form.

Sun.....Personification of the Sun the giver of life. Very jovial. Puppet. Voice over.

Moon.....Personification of the Moon. Very blue, dreamy and melancholic. Puppet.

Raven.....One incarnation of the Trickster spirit. Very meticulous and tedious. He is ruled by routine and ethereal laws of probability. Puppet and human form.

Coyote.....Another incarnation of the Trickster spirit. Very selfish and arrogant. Content with the world revolving around him. Puppet and human form.

Turtle.....The basis of the world. Early belief was that the earth was carried about the heavens on the back of a giant turtle. Grandmother type character. Puppet.

Otter.....The overachiever. she is smarter than the rest because she relies on her passive observation to deduce truths about the world. Puppet and human.

Suggested Actor Breakdown

ARTIST	CHARACTER
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#1	AGE 20-35	Narrator
#2	AGE 9-15	Terra/Tear
#3	AGE 65-85	Gran-gran
#4	AGE any	Raven
#5	AGE any	Coyote
#6	AGE any	Introduction Hand puppets, Otter, Tear's creation I
#7	AGE any	Introduction Hand puppets, Turtle, Tear's creation II

Setting:

The stage is occupied by three distinct spaces; the back porch stoop of the contemporary world where the play is currently being told, the puppet world where the story being told plays out with puppets and the apron where the real world mixes with the mythic and characters take on human form. There is also a Punch and Judy style hand puppet theatre in the shape of a cheesy old television set at the beginning.

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Hand Puppet Theatre preset center of the apron with puppeteer #6 and #7 inside.

*Top of show music: a mash up of "Native Puppy Love" and "Electric Pop Wow Mini Mix"
A Tribe Called Red*

Coyote enters from front of house whistling. He notices the audience and the set and takes it all in with grand gesture, Coyote is a cad and overdramatizes but not to the point of melodrama. The music fades as he moves about the house and speaks to the audience.

Coyote: *(whispers) Hey... (looks around) Hey...what are you doing here? (points to someone in the audience) Yeah...you...what's going on? Why are you all here? (tries to illicit answers from the audience then adlibs from their answers) What story? (rustle inside small puppet theatre, coyote starts to fumble with oversized remote) Oh... is it the Cree story where Weesageechak molds the brothers of light and dark out of clay and they race around the world creating day and night? Like this...*

Coyote points to the hand puppet theatre, clicks the remote, colours change in the tv and sock puppets with animal characteristics pop up.

Puppeteer#6: *umphhh....uggggrh...ahhhha...making brothers is harder than it looks.*

Sock Weesageechak tries to roll little people stick puppets who run away from him.

Coyote: *No, no that's not right is it, (Coyote flipping channels, colours change) well is it the Haida story of Raven where he tricks the hunters daughter into letting him into the hunters cabin so that Raven could free the sun and moon and bring light to all the earth? (Flipping) Here it is...*

Coyote points to the hand puppet theater where a new story starts. Cabin hung with Velcro sun and moon inside, stick puppet Raven flies about the cabin and watches the sock puppet hunter's daughter who has stereotypic long wool hair.

Puppeteer#6: *(as hunters daughter) Bye dad...uh have a good hunting trip. (looks about, tossing her hair) don't worry I'll be fine here alone...no...no...I won't let anyone in...(unenthused) especially my good for nothing boyfriend...ok dad...locking the door...BYEEE...(harsh whisper) Bobby... he said he was going to be here. (shrugs shoulders and goes in cabin) Eh.*

Puppeteer#7: *(as Raven, looks out of the puppet theatre and speaks to the audience)... oh...ok so your probably wondering what my plan is...ok I'm going to knock on the door...(looks around) she's gonna open the door...and then I will just fly in grab that Sun and Moon and then just fly back out...foolproof! (knocks on cabin again and hides) Knock, knock, knock.*

Puppeteer#6: *(as hunters daughter, mimes opening door) Bobby...(looks around)*
huh...well...ooh...umm...ok.

(Raven rushes the hunters daughter and gets inside the cabin)

Puppeteer#7: *(as Raven, grabs Velcro sun and moon)* Give me that Sun.

Puppeteer#6: *(as hunters daughter, screams and blocks the exit, they skirmish)* ahhhh,
ahhhhhhhh, ahhhhaahh. Nope...no...no way you are getting out of here...awww my dad
is gonna kill me.

Puppeteer#7: *(as Raven, panics)* Crap, crap, crap. Ahh the chimney *(flies out the chimney coughing)* man I'm never gonna get this soot out.

Puppeteer#6: *(as hunters daughter, watching raven fly away)* hun...I always wondered
why ravens were black.

Coyote: Wait you can't be here to see Raven... I just got a text from him *(pulls out cell)* and he has a pow wow this weekend, besides *(looks around and flaps arms like wings)* there really isn't enough space for him *(aside)* or his ego, to fly around in there. Oh, are you here to see that same old Iroquois story of Skywoman falling down to earth when it was nothing but a puddle.

Coyote points the remote at the hand puppet theatre and flips channels, the colour changes. The Skywoman stick puppet falls down from the top of the puppet theater accompanied by raindrop sound.

Coyote: *(sarcastic)* I know, I know Muskrat brings her dirt and she puts it around turtle's shell and creates turtle's island and we all live happily ever after... kind of like this.

Coyote points to hand puppet theatre. Stick puppet turtle is plunked on edge of puppet theatre.

Puppeteer#7: *(as sock skywoman)* Help...help...I'm drowning.

Puppeteer#6: *(as sock muskrat)* Here...here you go lets just put this on turtles shell.

Puppeteer#7: *(as sock skywoman)* Thanks!

Coyote: *(sits on stage facing the audience, looks about and in a hushed voice)* You know, I was the first one to convince some ducks to get some dirt so that I could create this place.

Coyote flips channel over his shoulder and mouths the words along with the puppeteer.

Puppeteer#7: *(sock coyote)* Hey you ducks *(paper ducks on a stick)* go get me some dirt.

Coyote: But you know re-writes. Awww no, you're not here to listen to that Terra girl are you? *(to puppet theatre)* that's it pack it up *(artist #6 stands up and walks with theatre off stage, while still inside)* Oh that Terra girl is just all mixed up, too many stories, too many blood lines, things just seem to blur together over time and shift and change so you never know what you're gonna get. There are infinite possibilities and with time the stories change ever so slightly and begin to reflect the storyteller more and more. They jumble and mix and get confused and that is where we begin.

Blackout

"What made the red man red" Disney's Peter pan. Lights fade up with Narrator sitting on swing, Terra puppet with artist #2 laying at the bottom. Coyote hands remote to tear and runs off stage. Terra flips the channels and we hear various sounds and ads (anything with an indigenous element: Lakota commercial, woodcarver shooting etc.) Peter pan comes back on with fading volume as the Narrator speaks in a clear storyteller voice (except for when she regresses) and moves about the stage through her monologue.

Narrator: (to audience) Oh Hello! Oh there are so many people. What's your name? (adlibs from response) well you know (persons name), and everybody for that matter, when I was a little girl, my Gran-gran sat with me beneath the Amur Maples that lined the cusp of the creek and told me the stories of our creation. I would sit by her feet sucking the nectar outta clover letting her words intertwine with the daydreams in my head. I can't wait to tell these stories to my own gran kids. I remember them like yesterday's picnic lunch, turkey on whole wheat with potato salad on the side and a tall glass of fresh squeezed lemonade...mmm...(aside) or was it ham on rye, potato chips and coke... (laughing embarrassed) um never mind, I remember well enough to know I had lunch anyway. That's the thing with memories, you know, they just get all jumbled up with thoughts and stories and ideas and sitcom plots, that you just can't distinguish what you think you remember and what you think you created from the truth....or fiction for that matter (looks off dreamily) Oh...umm...what was I saying (retraces) uhh...memories...coke...stories...Amur maples. Oh yeah...ok (back to storyteller voice) so those summer days at my gran-parents were what I looked forward to every June, running on grass with no broken concrete sticking out and tripping you out of nowhere, well except that patch by the pouch that my gran-gran poured herself, oh and playing in running water that wasn't attached to a faucet. Well we still did that, my papa would set up the sprinkler in the back yard and my sister and I would run around in matching swim gear and goofy snorkels. And then we would lay around in the sun and my Gran-gran would talk, and talk, and talk...

Artist #3 and Gran-gran puppet waddle out and sit next to the Narrator.

Gran-gran: (interrupting) Terra!

Terra puppet and artist #2 shift at the sound of their name and move clumsily closer as Narrator continues.

Narrator: She'd say, snapping her fingers, she always did that when she was trying to get my attention.

Gran-gran begins to tell the creation story to the audience and the younger versions of herself who still look bored, music comes up.

Gran-gran: Terra, now listen! Turn that darn thing off. *(tear turns off T.V.)* I'm going to tell you the LEGEND OF OUR CREATION *(epic voice with cosmic sounds. They look in opposite directions to see where it came from)* Long, long ago, before the Sun caught the Moon for the first time, the whole world was covered with water and ice.

Lights slowly come up on the puppet world but drop abruptly with Tear's question. Narrator settles down beside tear.

Tear: Why?

Gran-gran: What do you mean why? That's just the way it is.

Tear: But if there was nothing but water and ice how do we know the story even took place. I mean, who was there to pass the story down?

Gran-gran: *(unsure)* Well Coyote was there.

Tear: *(unconvinced)* Coyote?

Gran-gran: Yes. I just talked to him last week and he confirmed it.

Narrator: *(sarcastic, moves to sit with Gran-gran)* He confirmed it?

Gran-gran: Yes.

Narrator: Yes?

Gran-gran: *(epic voice)* YES!

Narrator: ok, ok I'm just trying to get the story straight.

Gran-gran: oh...well don't you worry bum,

Gran-gran freezes while narrator regresses.

Narrator: *(to the audience)* Her and my papa always called us that...well bum or jo... my sister and I never knew which one of us was which...sometimes I was bum and then I was jo. Sometimes even in the same sentence, I used to think it was because they could never remember our names.

Gran-gran interrupts.

Gran-gran: OH...well don't you worry bum, there are no discrepancies here. If your old Gran-gran knows a thing or two it's how to tell a story. Now where were we?

Narrator: *(rushed and unenthused)* Long, long ago, before the Sun caught the Moon for the first time...

Gran-gran: Oh yes... Long, long ago, before the Sun caught the Moon for the first time the whole world was covered with water and ice.

Lights fade up on puppet world and dim slightly on the stoop. Narrator takes over telling the story. Spinning stars swirl on the back scrim.

Narrator: *(sense of wonderment)* In the beginning...there were stars.

Lights slowly come up, Sun and Moon rotating about each other in the puppet world. As they spin about, the light changes from night to day and back again. After at least 3 steady rotations the sun stops at 10 o'clock and the moon at 4.

Narrator: There was also a Sun, to bring light to the day...and a Moon, to cast the shadows of night.

The sun and moon speak to each other only in passing.

Sun: Good morning.

Moon: Good Night.

Sun: Good Night.

Moon: Good morning.

Sun: Good morning.

Moon: Good Night.

Narrator: Now that Sun, she was a happy one but she was bored. *(aside)* Routine just got the best of her. What she wanted was somebody to have fun with...to hang out...or at least someone she could...

Gran-gran: *(buts in)* Text.

Narrator: Right, Text when she saw something funny or had to wait in line or wanted to get some... *(looking for the word)* some...

Gran-gran: *(buts in)* Sushi.

Narrator: Right, right sushi and so she shouted at that Moon...*(confused)* wait Sushi?

Blackout on puppet world, lights come up on stoop where narrator questions Gran-gran.

Gran-gran: *(matter of factly)* Well what else would they eat?

Narrator: Well...*(searching)* well I don't know but where would they get sushi?

Gran-gran: ...mmmmm...yam tempura rolls...

Narrator: *(snapping her fingers)* Gran-gran focus!

Gran-gran: oh well *(nonchalantly)* the world was covered by water and ice so Coyote set up shop...the economy was in the market for something new and fresh since all the previous business had been washed up.

Narrator: Coyote.

Gran-gran: um yeah... "Su-Shi Coyote" used to be up on Manitoba st. near 4th.

Narrator: What? Oh never mind...where was I...ah...oh right, That Sun, she was just so lonely and blue in fact that she shouted at that Moon.

Lights up on puppet world as the slightly fade on stoop.

Narrator: Hey there blue eyes...

Sun: Hey there blue eyes, let's go out sometime! Let's go swimmin'! Let's have some fun!

Narrator: Oh, but that Moon, she was always so blue and more content to sit on her own and gaze at them stars. That Moon was so fond of them stars, with their twinkling smiles gleaming as they danced and twirled in that inky blanket above the world, that she barely noticed Sun jumping and carrying on. So that Sun, crazy as she was, decided to find someone to go out with. Someone who would go swimming and have some fun.

Sun moves to High noon position. Colour in the puppet world intensifies hot yellow orange. Moon is hidden at the bottom of the rotation. Transitioning projections imply Sun's search from the stars to the earth as she scans the sky with her eyes and then focuses her attention to the world below with a tilt of the orb.

Narrator: She searched high and low and low and high, but nobody wanted to play. She searched the heavens peering behind the twinkling stars, Nobody wanted to go out! She hopped from cloud to cloud hunting for someone...anyone to go swimming or go to the...the...

Gran-gran: Movies.

Narrator: Right movies,

Gran-gran: She heard the new movie (*name a current film*) was out and she really wanted to see it!

Narrator: But nobody wanted to do anything. They were all just too busy they said. Then Sun saw Raven flying in circles above a big iceberg, and she yelled and hollered and hollered and yelled...

Sun yells and makes a commotion, Narrator reacts to the racket in gesture but continues, Raven flight music comes up. Raven enters; the tip of the iceberg is projected with some clouds on the scrim from behind with Raven flying above it, sun remains at high noon looking down.

Narrator: But that Raven couldn't slow down. She was just so busy soaring above that iceberg...dipping and gliding...gliding and dipping. Her wings spread wide and her head bobbing about surveying all the world. Sun could see that Raven's reflection shimmering in the water below as she soared in that circler formation. Round and round the peak... stretching and flapping...flapping and stretching... her Alular quills glinting in Sun's light. She was grinding her teeth so hard her occiput ruffled and stood on end. And...

Music stops, Raven freezes, lights up on stoop.

Narrator: (to Gran-gran) um...what's an occiput again...

Gran-gran: It's the back of the crown...where the feathers puff up (*puts puppets hand at the back of its head to show position of feathers*) now keep going ...keep going.

Narrator: Oh right... but all that flying was keeping that Raven far to busy so she screeched up to sun. I've got people to see...

Raven: (OCD) I've got people to see and places to go, places to go and people to see.

Narrator: Says that Raven.

Raven: Now I didn't put you up there to shine over the world and then to annoy everyone with all...all that ruckus. *(talking to him self)* squawking and mocking and talking and gawking. Sun... I'm sorry but, I am very busy, I simply don't have time to go out! Very busy. I don't have time to go swimming, I'm very busy, very very busy and I certainly don't have any time to have fun! Now quit talking to me or I'm going to drop this stone from my beak and who knows what will happen. *(talking to him self)* whole world is going spring up outta that ice and men are going start climbing outta clam shells and then who's going be responsible...me that's who...me...oh well how am I supposed to explain that...huh...how...awww I never should have left the spirit world... I don't have the time or the patience for this.

Raven flies off stage left.

Narrator: Time! What a funny concept Sun thought and she kept looking, looking for someone, maybe for someone with time.

Projection of the iceberg moves up exposing a second tier where Coyote is trying to suntan. Coyote's music comes up.

Narrator: Then Sun saw that Coyote scampering down, way down below on the iceberg and everybody knows that Coyote has nothing but time.

Coyote hops out without puppet and stops music to converse with Narrator.

Coyote: You know I resent that!

Narrator: *(annoyed that she was interrupted)* So that Coyote, you know he's king of the roost so he goes gallivanting about this iceberg.

Coyote: I don't gallivant!

Narrator: *(more annoyed)* well you do now! *(in disbelief to Gran-gran)* Who's story is this anyway! So that Coyote...he goes gallivanting and scampering, sniffing and roaming, marking his territory all over the place...

Coyote: *(spells out name)* COYOTE.

Narrator: *(covering her eyes)* ugggh this is a kids show. Until he found the perfect spot to lie down. Well that Sun she yelled and hollered and hollered and yelled, *(Sun makes commotion and Narrator reacts)* but that Coyote just rolled over. And with a great big yawn *(Coyote stretches and yawns)* he sighs.

Narrator: I got stuff to do!

Coyote: I got stuff to do! *(puppeteer removes sunglasses from puppet coyote's face and puts them on)*

Narrator: says that Coyote

Coyote: I've got to float on this iceberg all day or else I won't get that perfect tan all them Movie Stars are ranting about, besides Sun, if you come down here who will be up there to give me my prefect tan?

Narrator: So that Sun, she thinks about this and it make sense, it's a pretty clever concept if ya think about it. *(narrator breaks from storytelling voice)* Wait... this makes no sense.

Blackout on puppet world. Lights come up on stoop.

Gran-gran: Of course it does.

Narrator: *(frantic)* Movie stars, *(the current film)*, texting? These things didn't exist at the beginning of the world.

Gran-gran: Who said anything about the beginning of the world?

Narrator: *(in disbelief)* You!...you did remember? We were sitting right here and you were like "Terra, now listen! I'm going to tell you the *(epic voice)* LEGEND OF OUR CREATION" *(both look in opposite directions to see where it came from, Terra sits up more attentively at the bottom of the stoop).*

Gran-gran: *(absentmindedly)* oh...But, this isn't the story of the beginning of the world. Who could know that, *(chuckles)* if it was the beginning there would be no one who knew because no one had come before and they wouldn't have had a concept of time or anything? Heh...time, what a funny thing. Except the creator maybe, but I think you'll find the blueprints got all messed up, so she's not so keen on talkin' about that. No...this here is our story, but not ours alone either. And its not the only one there is, its kinda shared, the characters change but the plot basically stays the same, kinda like them smut books, ooo I love Danielle Steele.

Narrator: Um...ok *(look of disgust that her gran-gran reads smut books)*, But it's not like the last time I heard it...the texting and the moooviiii.... *(snoring, gran-gran has her head down and is asleep)* awww forget it.

Lights up on puppet world diming on stoop. Sun is alone on stage and the scrim is a sorrowful blue that gets deeper. The scene is in tableaux for a few seconds before resuming.

Narrator: But that Sun, she started to get sad, downright blue in fact, and she started to cry.

Lights dim, Sun cries a lone tear, which is projected and as it falls Sun disappears out the top of the frame. The Tear transforms, falling through the sky, bouncing down the iceberg and eventually meeting at the platform where artist #2 and Terra/Tear puppet

continue the tumbling motion down on to lowest platform looking dazed and confused, it should be craggy and raw.

Narrator: That tear Sun cried fell quickly at first, and then began to change. It twisted and warped, first creating a hand that reached up for the stars. Then a foot, no two feet, with black soles searching for earth. That tear warped and twisted and twisted and warped to create the form of a woman. Now Sun didn't want that creature to fall to the world so far below, she wanted to keep her so they could go out. So they could go swimming. So that they could have some fun. But that creature was falling too fast for Sun to catch her.

Blackout. Lights up on stoop.

Gran-gran: Now, Terra you pay attention and take that clover outta your mouth, it's just starting to get good. Go on...go on!

Lights up on puppet world in tableaux, sun peaking in from the upper corner stage left.

Narrator: Well that Tear she continued to fall through the sky, twisting and turning, turning and twisting, reaching out for something...something to grab on to...something to slow her down...something to break her fall. And then she landed on that iceberg and tumbled down to the world below. Where there was nothing but water and ice and a very large turtle. Well that Sun she called and shouted, and shouted and called.

Sun makes commotion and Narrator reacts. Turtle music.

Narrator: Until Turtle weakly shouted back. What are you yelling about ...

Turtle: What are you yelling about Sun? It's too early to go out! It's too early to go swimming! And it is entirely too early to have any sort of fun, of any kind!

Terra as Tear tumbles down onto Turtle.

Narrator: Well just then, as Turtle went to stretch, that creature she landed square on old Turtle's back. Well that Turtle he doesn't want just any old creature just hanging out on his back, so he called to Otter to get this creature some land from the bottom of the ocean and some of those stones that Raven keeps dropping, so that tear can get off his backside. But that Otter didn't hear that Turtle at first, she was so caught up in the curl of the waves, splashing and paddling, paddling and splashing, until all of a sudden she crashed right into that Turtle nearly knocking that Tear clean off.

Otter music accompanies her swimming.

Narrator: Otter, being an over achiever, apologized profusely and then dove deep to the bottom of the ocean...

Blackout.

Gran-gran: ahhhhh...she's gonna drown!

Lights come up on stoop and puppet world. Narrator and Otter both stare at Gran-gran. Tear begins to dance slowly.

Narrator: And returned with some mud. *(Otter holds up paw with mud mimicking narration)*

Gran-gran: *(relieved)* oh good.

Narrator: What do you mean (mimicking) "oh good" you know she doesn't...you know this story...it's your story!

Gran-gran: oh right...I know bum...but, with all the lights and dramatic music...it's just so exciting.

Gran-gran tilts her head to the side and falls asleep again, snoring

Narrator: *(in disbelief)* Really? Your just gonna...okay well...

The Cataclysm. The stage becomes a flurry of motion with tear at the center, crashing thunder and lightning, trees come crashing in, leaf gobos swirl across the stage.

Narrator: As that Otter swam he kept bringing up more and more dirt and rocks and tiny crusty sea creature that were too slow to get away. As she made trip after trip the mud got longer and wider and thicker and stronger. It started to hill and furrow. It started to grow trees! It grew Amur Maples and clovers! The ocean sprung up in the middle and streamed down the hills and over the cliffs. The land began to speak and listen and move. *(Terra/Tear begins to dance faster as the music gets louder and increases tempo)* The trees beckoned that Tear closer and twisted her about, tangling her hair and dizzying her head. Shadows closed in, and that Sun, well she just lost sight of that Tear in the darkness of the growing world.

Dance sequence. The techno pow wow music intermingls with wind, thunder and lighting progressively getting louder. Tear gets violently twisted about by the environment. The other characters and/or large branches fly in and force her down stage until she is deconstructed, the puppet is tossed off and her real life counter part rolls over the edge on to the main stage apron where she continues to dance and be tossed about by branches. The waves are shifted and turned to reveal grass, turtle is removed, land rises, the iceberg dissolves into a waterfall.

Blackout.

Narrator: *(thrilled)* What was that!?

Lights come up on the stoop.

Gran-gran: *(suddenly waking up, confused)* What? ...What?

Narrator: That! ... That...cosmic collision of fury.

Gran-gran: *(indifferent and dozing back off to sleep)* oh that...(yawning and waving it off and then propping her head) you know...big bang...genesis...chinoodin (*big wind in Ojibway*)... création (*French pronunciation*).

Lights come up on depressed Sun and moon rotating about each other in a small circle with faded circling of stars seen at the beginning to show the progression of time, human Tear is hiding in front of the puppet world.

Narrator: Amazing...

Gran-gran: right...right...now back to the story.

Narrator: oh...ok...Well that Sun, she was right lonely now, just the deepest shade of blue in fact, and she searched high and low for that Tear. She called to that Moon.

Narrator: Hey there blue eyes...

Sun: Hey there blue eyes have you seen that Tear? We were gonna go out, we were gonna go swimming and we most certainly were gonna have some fun, no matter what ol' Turtle says!

Lights glitter and swirl with deep blues and purples at center stage.

Narrator: But that Moon she just sat quietly and she watched the world as it moved and changed. The glistening sea of ice and water that once reflected them stars was now dark and deep and shadowy. That Moon had never seen anything like it. And

that Sun, well she was so sad, she yelled and hollered and hollered and yelled, but there was no sign of that Tear. And so she searched, and searched, and searched, but found only darkness.

Blackout. Dim expanding spot on Tear discovering the world anew from stage right. Moving tree gobos in eerie green. One by one Raven, Coyote and Otter leave their puppet counter parts in the puppet world while live actors come into the real world. As each creature enters they begin to check out the new world and then stop, Raven and Coyote circle each other staring each other down.

Raven: humph....oh its you! I've been hearing some wild stories about you!

Coyote: Is that so...well I haven't heard anything about you.

Otter: Really...you two are going to do that now? *(pointing at a frightened tear)*
Look!

One after another they echo each other freezing and stare at tear.

Blackout

Gran-gran: Ooo...ha...ha...I saw an otter in the harbour last week, I wonder if they're related.

Narrator: Well...I'm sure they are. So is that...did you...did you have something else.

Gran-gran: What...oh no why?

Narrator: Ooooh shiny...You know what no reason...so... they are all looking at each other...and...right...right...So that Tear was just so frightened. She looked for that Sun but the shadows twisted and jerked, choking out the light. She didn't know anybody on that Turtle Island and all them creatures, well, they just stared at that Tear. She was kinda funny lookin' to them ya see, with her little square box feet, kinda like yours *(directed to the audience)* with the little nubby toes, and her straight dark hair. She was strange but beautiful and them creatures didn't know what to think. So that Raven she pipes up.

Raven, Coyote and Otter begin to rhythmically surround Tear, investigating and poking at her.

Raven: Well... that Tear there, her hair is shimmerin' black and knotty and twisted like a nest, so she must be a raven, just a funny looking raven.

Coyote: No, no, no

Narrator: Says that Coyote

As Coyote examines tear.

Coyote: Look ... at her skin it's all shimmerin' and silky and bronze, she can't be a raven, she looks too good, she must be a coyote! Just an odd, yet oddly attractive, coyote!

Narrator: But Otter wasn't convinced. *(examining Tear)* she looked at her feet and her face and her hands and her legs. That Tear was like nothin' that Otter had ever seen before and Otter could tell Tear was a little worried that she didn't quite fit in. Tear was all alone in the world , but she was going to give it her best shot.

Raven, Coyote and Otter scare Tear around the edge of the puppet world proscenium where they revert back to their puppet identities and try to figure out what Tear is through skill. The puppets enact the following character music accompaniment.

Narrator: So that Tear she tried to fly with Raven, but she just couldn't get her feet off the ground. *(pause for action completion)* Then she tried to run with Coyote, but that Coyote was just too fast, and Tear's little box feet just couldn't keep up. *(pause for action completion)* So that Otter she took her swimmin', she didn't think that Tear looked like an otter but if she wasn't a raven and she sure wasn't a coyote then what could she be? Oh well, that Tear she loved the water, but Otter swam so deep, she couldn't hold her breath and she swam back to shore and sat on the beach. *(pause for action completion)*.

Lights dim and fade blue, narrow focus on Tear stage right.

Narrator: Now that Tear was lonely, downright blue in fact, and she began to cry.

Tear mimics narration.

Narrator: Now those tears fell to the ground and they mixed with the sand and the clay, they mixed with the dust and the earth, and that Tear began to mold some little box feet just like hers. She molded some hands and a face and some long dark hair. *(Tear pulls stick puppets from behind a rock near the puppet world proscenium)* That Tear she found some raven feathers and tucked them behind that little creature's ear. And she put her strange but beautiful little creation on a rock to dry.

Lights fade up to hot orange yellow, Sun at high noon.

Narrator: Well that Sun, she'd been searching all this time you know, and she saw that Tear on that beach. She hollered and yelled and yelled and hollered until that tear looked up. Now that Sun she was just so happy. She had finally found that someone, someone with time, time to go out, time to go swimmin', and most importantly of all, time to have fun! Tear smiled and her teeth sparkled like the stars. She was so happy to be back with that Sun that she didn't notice that Coyote whispering something in that strange but beautiful little creature's ear. That Tear she didn't notice the little creature begin to crack and grow and shutter and change. *(Artist #6 and #7 lift stick puppet over their heads in circular motion, splitting the puppet in two at the top and exchanging the*

stick puppet for mutated rod sock puppet versions at bottom) Tear didn't notice that little creature begin to move or take its first steps and split in two.

Sun starts a commotion and yells at Tear

Sun: Hey... *(makes a series of commotions)*

The little puppet creatures jump and play all over the land

Narrator: Well that Sun, she saw what was going on, and she yelled and hollered and hollered yelled until Tear turned around to see them strange but beautiful little creatures tumble in the furrows of the earth and play in the streams.

The little puppet creatures dance and partake in lewd actions.

Sun: Hey... isn't someone going to do something. They're running amuck... Grab that little guy he's peeing in the pool.

Raven enters stage left and lures one of the twins while Coyote enters from stage right distracting the other. Tear jumps up and tries get the twins but she is too short to reach the one raven has, so she engages in a tug of war over the other with Coyote and loses following them off stage. She then makes her way over to the stoop and sits attentively playing with one of the twins like a doll.

Blackout.

Gran-gran: chuckles...

Narrator: *(looks at Gran-gran)* Really...amuck?

Gran-gran: chuckles...Hooo Ah ha... do you get it?

Narrator: *(sarcastic)* yeah... I get it a MUCK...they're made of mud...hhhaahha...funny. So anyway *(tilting her head and looking disturbed as tear hold up the twin by one leg)* those little creatures is where we come from and that's why you have little box feet just like me. *(shows audience her feet wiggling her toes)* And that Sun she was so happy to find her Tear and the new world that was created for her, that she stayed with us all this time. So we can have that perfect tan Coyote was talking about, even though we moved far from that creek and covered the earth in concrete and shopping malls.

Tear: So what happened to that Otter? Or that Raven?

Gran-gran: *(dozy)* Well they are all really one in the same...and then again not really either....its tricky.

Narrator: What does that even mean?

Gran-gran: *(startled)* What? Oh... um... well I think you'll find that all of them critters mean different things to different people...they are who you need them to be and then they aren't at the same time, its complicated.

Narrator: Complicated.

Gran-gran: Yes...but Raven dances all along the west coast...*(whispers and looks around)* I even heard he was gonna be on "Dancing With the Stars" this season, eeeeeeeeeee...can you imagine? *(laughs)* Hun hun hun, and I just saw Otter last week at Kits pool.

Narrator: Dancing With the Star...Kits pool?

Gran-gran: Yeah, for my [current day] scuba class (*pulls out a snorkel mask*) which reminds me can we hurry this thing up...I'm gonna be late.

Tear: But what about that Coyote?

Gran-gran: Well I'm sure he's up to all kinds of mischief ...but I heard...

Coyote pops up from behind the stoop in modern fashionable clothes and interrupts Gran-gran

Coyote: But that is a story for another time, *when you actually pay for your ticket. (**line can be adjusted to the production*)

Blackout. "Native Puppy love" by A Tribe Called Red