

Created by Kaha:wi Dance Theatre \* Artistic Director: Santee Smith



Co-produced by the Banff Centre for the Arts  
Playwright: Drew Hayden Taylor

Calgary International Children's Festival, May 19-24  
Surrey International Children's Festival, May 28-30  
Saskatoon International Children's Festival, June 3-4

PRESS CONTACT: Santee Smith

TELEPHONE: 416-708-4238

TOLL FREE FAX: 1-866-823-8665

EMAIL: [santee@kahawidance.org](mailto:santee@kahawidance.org) WEBSITE: [www.kahawidance.org](http://www.kahawidance.org)

DOWNLOADABLE HIGH RES JPEGs available on WEBSITE

## THE PRODUCTION: A STORY BEFORE TIME

---

Kaha:wi Dance Theatre is telling Aboriginal stories at this summer's International Childrens' Festivals...



Entertaining and insightful, the Iroquois Creation Story comes to life in *A Story Before Time*. Original music, dance and theatre unite to weave a rich narrative including the characters of Skywoman, Hanging Flower, West Wind, Twin Brothers and animals. The journey begins as a wondrous Sky World is revealed and Sky Beings dance like stars in the cosmos. It is when Skywoman falls through the roots of the Celestial Tree to the Water World below that Life on Turtle's back takes shape. Skywoman sings and dances her world into existence. During the show, animal characters swim across the stage and trees grow from silk. This incredibly powerful cultural story is explained through the movement and actions of the dancers and through the narration of the Storyteller. The exquisite musical score blends traditional Iroquoian social songs and contemporary music incorporating both Mohawk and Cayuga

languages. Visually stunning, musically rich and theatrically compelling for young audiences, *A Story Before Time* explores the metaphors, symbols, dreams and beliefs of a people.

The world premiere of *A Story Before Time* occurred at the Banff Centre's Margaret Greenham Theatre during the Banff Summer Arts Festival, Banff, Alberta.

***A Story Before Time* was nominated for two Dora Mavor Moore Awards for Outstanding Production and Outstanding Performance (Ensemble) in the Dance Division in June 2008.**



## SHOWTIMES

CALGARY, AB:

<http://calgarychildfest.org>

CITY	Date	Time
Calgary	Tuesday, May 19	12:45pm
Calgary	Tuesday, May 19 (50 min)	7:00pm
Calgary	Wednesday, May 20	12:30pm
Calgary	Thursday, May 21	12:30pm
Calgary	Thursday, May 21 (50 min)	7:00pm
Calgary	Friday, May 22	12:45pm
Calgary	Saturday, May 23 (50 min)	4:30pm

SURREY, BC:

<http://www.surrey.ca>

CITY	Date	Time
Surrey	Thursday, May 28	9:45am
Surrey	Friday, May 29	1:00pm
Surrey	Saturday May 30	11:00am

SASKATOON, SK:

<http://saskatchewanchildrensfestival.ca>

CITY	Date	Time
Surrey	Thursday, May 28	9:45am
Surrey	Friday, May 29	1:00pm
Surrey	Saturday May 30	11:00am

---

## STORY BEFORE TIME CREDITS

---

<b>Creation and production by</b>	<b>Kaha:wi Dance Theatre</b>
<b>Co-production by</b>	The Banff Centre for the Arts
<b>Artistic Director/ Choreographer/Dancer</b>	Santee Smith
<b>Playwright</b>	Drew Hayden Taylor
<b>Composer</b>	Donald Quan
<b>Set/Costume Designer</b>	Linda Leon
<b>Original Lighting Designer</b>	Harry Frehner
<b>Tour Lighting Designer</b>	Alaina Perttula
<b>Narrator</b>	Cheri Maracle
<b>Dancers</b>	Emily Law, Louis Laberge-Côté, Semiah Smith, Mariana Medellin-Meinke, Piotr Biernat, Zhenia Cerneacov
<b>Musicians</b>	Rick Shadrach Lazar, David R. Maracle, Bob Doidge
<b>Singer/Songwriters</b>	ElizaBeth Hill, David R. Maracle, Santee Smith, Amos Key Jr.
<b>Singers</b>	Faron John, Semiah Smith, Ol'Mush Singers, Chris Warner
<b>Production Stage Manager</b>	Kevin Olson
<b>Assistant Stage Manager</b>	Alaina Perttula
<b>Language Translator</b>	Frank Miller, Amos Key Jr.
<b>Photography</b>	Don Lee
<b>Wardrobe Assistant</b>	Leigh Smith

---

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

---

<b>Kateri (Narrator)</b>	Cheri Maracle
<b>SkyBeings</b>	Emily Law, Piotr Biernat, Mariana Medellin-Meinke, Louis Laberge-Côté, Zhenia Cerneacov
<b>Teyotsi'tsyane:karen (Exploding Flower) SkyWoman, Goose</b>	Santee Smith
<b>Great Chief, Goose, West Wind, Deer</b>	Piotr Biernat
<b>Katsi'tsyani:yonte (Hanging Flower) younger , Fawn</b>	Semiah Smith
<b>Katsi'tsyani:yonte (Hanging Flower) older, Raccoon</b>	Emily Law
<b>Muskrat, Otter, Chipmunk</b>	Mariana Medellin-Meinke
<b>Goose, Otter, Taharonhawa:kon (Holder of the Heavens)</b>	Zhenia Cerneacov
<b>Goose, Tawiskara (The Bent One)</b>	Louis Laberge-Côté



KDT is a dynamic Aboriginal dance company that creates, produces and presents original dance theatre works while drawing inspiration from innovative contemporary and Aboriginal dance and culture. Founded by Artistic Director/choreographer Santee Smith the company aims to create innovative contemporary work founded in Aboriginal aesthetics that engages both artists and audiences on an emotional, physical and spiritual level. Aboriginal aesthetics may refer to but is not limited to areas of: content/theme, belief/world view, quality/style of movement, design images, protocol, essence/tonality of music and oration/language. KDT's Artistic Director has become known as a choreographer who successfully blends elements of traditional and contemporary movement to create a new form of dance expression. This new style can only be described as contemporary Aboriginal dance.

**Our Vision** Our vision is to be a dynamic force in Aboriginal dance in Canada and a centre for creativity, innovation, artistry and Aboriginal expression that reflects, honours and celebrates the integrity of Aboriginal culture.

**Our Mission** Our mission is to increase awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal artistic expression among diverse audiences through the genre of dance and its associated disciplines of music, storytelling, theatre and design while drawing inspiration from both innovative contemporary and traditional Aboriginal culture.

Kaha:wi Dance Theatre (Kaha:wi means 'she carries' in Mohawk). The company was founded on the artistic leadership of Mohawk artist Santee Smith. Ms. Smith is the Artistic Director and company choreographer for KDT. She is an innovative Aboriginal artist that is bridging the gap between contemporary and traditional dance in Canada. Operating as an artist run sole proprietorship since 2001, KDT officially incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in June 2005 and received charitable status in 2006. KDT is currently located on Six Nations reserve and the National Ballet School in Toronto, Canada.

#### **Statement from the Artistic Director: Santee Smith**

*As a Haudenosaunee person I believe that song and dance were gifts given to us by the Creator, to celebrate our lives on Mother Earth. Song and dance are the ultimate expressions of who we are. Dance is the oldest form of communication. Contemporary Aboriginal dance is a continuation of celebrating our lives through music and dance and linking traditional and contemporaneous existence. It is my goal as the Artistic Director of Kaha:wi Dance Theatre to share this perspective with a wide and diverse audience. Creativity and the continuation of cultural knowledge and practice is the foundation of my artistic expression. I aim to create artistic work that is engaging, meaningful and symbolic which can be shared with audiences and experienced on an emotional, physical and spiritual level.*



**Santee Smith, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/ CHOREOGRAPHER  
Kaha:wi Dance Theatre**

Santee began dancing as a young girl after lessons were prescribed as part of rehabilitation from a serious car accident. Santee is from the Mohawk Nation, Turtle Clan and lives on Six Nations Reserve, Ontario. Ms. Smith is the founding Artistic Director and choreographer for Kaha:wi Dance Theatre. She holds a Masters Degree in Dance from York University and has spent most of her life committed to dance and creative expression. Since 1996 she began creating her own choreography and developing a movement style that reflects who she is as an indigenous artist. Santee creates, produces and presents her choreographic work nationally and internationally. Santee is the recipient of the K.M. Hunter Award for Dance administered by the Ontario Arts Council. She received Canada Council's Victor Martyn Lynch-Staunton Award for the most outstanding mid-career artist in the field of Dance in 2006 and the first-ever John Hobday Award for Arts Management in 2008.



**Drew Hayden Taylor, PLAYWRIGHT**

Drew Hayden Taylor has done everything from stand up comedy at the Kennedy Centre in Washington D.C. to lecturing on the films of Sherman Alexie at the British Museum in London England. He is also an award winning playwright (with over 75 productions of his work in four countries), journalist, filmmaker, and humourist. He has had 17 books published, and has had plays translated into four languages. An Ojibway, he currently lives on the Curve Lake First Nations in Central Ontario.



**Donald Quan, COMPOSER**

Donald Quan is well known and respected for his involvement in world music, his CD releases "Tear of the Sun" and "Invocata" having garnered critical acclaim worldwide. Donald was also involved in the production of Loreena McKennitt's current bestseller "An Ancient Muse" has just returned from a world tour. He is currently serving as world music consultant for the Disney film "Tinkerbell" and continues his role as Musical Director for the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards. Donald has been nominated for 4 Gemini Awards, and is this year's honoured recipient of the SOCAN award for International Television Music for the third time.



**Cheri Maracle, NARRATOR**

Cheri Maracle is a multi-award nominated actor/singer/songwriter of Mohawk ancestry from the Grand River Territory. Selected Stage credits include *Death of a Chief*, The National Arts Centre, *The Only Good Indian*, Tarragon Theatre, *Buz'Gem Blues*, Trinity Repertory Company, and *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout*, Western Canada Theatre Co., to name a few. Selected TV credits include; *Blackfly*/Global (two seasons), *Moccasin Flats*/APTN (two seasons), *Dead Man's Gun*/Showtime, short film *Indian: Suite* and feature film *Tkaronto*, to name a few. Cheri is currently writing her 2<sup>nd</sup> album *If I am Water*, slated for a fall of '09 release. Upcoming Cheri will perform in Alameda Theatre Co.'s world premiere of *Refugee Hotel*, at the Tarragon Theatre, September 2009. [www.myspace.com/cherimaracle](http://www.myspace.com/cherimaracle)



### **Louis Laberge-Côté, DANCER**

Louis Laberge-Côté is a Toronto-based dancer, choreographer and teacher. In 1999, he joined Toronto Dance Theatre, and he danced with the company for 8 seasons, under artistic direction of Christopher House. As an independent artist, he has worked with CORPUS, the Chimera Project, the Danny Grossman Dance Company, DNA Theatre, Kaha:wi Dance Theatre and Pro Arte Danza, working with some of Canada's most renowned choreographers including Peggy Baker, Serge Bennathan, Peter Chin, Robert Glumbeck, and Michael Trent, among others. In 2007, he was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Performance in *Heaven* (choreography: Sasha Ivanochko). An award-winning choreographer, his work has been presented in many venues to critical acclaim across Canada.



### **Emily Law, DANCER**

Emily Law was born in Toronto and started dancing while attending the Etobicoke School of the Arts in 2000. She has many passions including contemporary dance, various styles of street dance, and visual art. She is a graduate of The School of Toronto Dance Theatre, where she formed two collectives: cube3 (with Masuyo Higashide and Jennifer Lécuyer) and Octamerous. She is a founding member of the Toronto house dance crew Warehouse Jacks and the street dance/theatre dance company Gadfly. Emily has also worked the Chimera Project, the Parahumans Dance Theatre, Event Horizon Dance, Piotr Biernat and was a resident artist at Sound Travels 2006.



### **Piotr R. Biernat, DANCER**

Piotr R. Biernat, originally from Poland, moved to Canada in 1996 after completing Master of Fine Art at the National Theatre School in Wroclaw. He continued to train in contemporary dance and choreography with Anna Wyman, Main Dance Studio and the School of Toronto Dance Theatre. He has had the privilege to dance with many great artist and dance companies including: CORPUS, Kaeja d'Dance, Peter Chin and Danny Grossman. He has been featured in dance films, promotional and music videos. He presented his own choreography through body of work, *Past Perfect*, *To-get-Her*, *Black and White*, *Bodies and Motion*, at the Toronto Film School, Canadian Children Dance Theatre and independently at Toronto International Dance Festival, Guelph Contemporary Dance Festival, The Wrecking Ball, Young Street Festival.



### **Zhenya Cerneacov, DANCER**

Born in 1986, in Chisinau, Moldova, Zhenya grew up in a household of musicians and from an early age developed a great passion for the arts. After studying ballroom dance for eight years, he was invited to become a member of Moldova's renowned Show Ballet Theodor where his versatility in a range of dance styles had a chance to shine. In 2006 Zhenya arrived in Canada where quickly became an active member of the contemporary dance scene. He has danced with AKA Dance Projects, Bouchardanse, Cadence, City Dance Corps, Corpus, Danny Grossman Dance Company, and Tilt Sound+Motion. For the past two years he has been a core member of the Dusk Dances touring company.



### **Semiah Smith, DANCER**

Semiah Smith is from the Mohawk Nation, Turtle Clan and resides on Six Nations Reserve, Ontario. She attends Independent School: Braemar House School located in Brantford and is currently in grade 5. Semiah is a featured singer on the *Kaha:wi* soundtrack (2003) and *A Story Before Time* (2007) singing the Rabbit Dance song. Semiah is reprising her role as Hanging Flower and the Fawn in this production of *A Story Before Time*. At the age of 9 she was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Best Performance in the Dance Division (Ensemble).



### **Mariana Medellin-Meinke, DANCER**

Mariana travelled to Canada in 2000 for her dance studies. She has trained professionally in ballet at La Escuela Superior de Musica y Danza (INBA), The Quinte Ballet School and contemporary dance at the School of Toronto Dance Theatre. Regarding creation she has presented work at fFIDA, LANZATE, A choreographer's Ball, Series 8:08 and other venues. Mariana has worked with Trish Beatty, Sylvie Bouchard, Roberto Campanella, Danny Grossman Dance Company, Kaha:wi Dance Theatre (Santee Smith), Kaeja d'Dance, Sebastian Mena, Jonathan Osborn, Brian Solomon and William Yong. She has an ongoing artistic collaboration with Nicole Dupuis, Daenin Godfrey, Whitney Hewitt, Maya Postepski, Brian Solomon and Brendan Wyatt. She is currently working on her latest multi-disciplinary solo.