

O.K. The Musical (Dress Rehearsals)

written and directed by
Christopher Kline

February 26, 2015

Presented by insitu
and
dem Netzwerk freier Berliner Projekträume und -initiativen
at
KW Institute for Contemporary Art, BERLIN



Installation views of *O.K. – The Musical (Pre-Production)* at insitu, Berlin
photos by Trevor Good

O.K. – The Musical is an on-going project being developed in collaboration with many people over several years' worth of exhibitions, publications, performances, videos, workshops and social projects.

For tonight's iteration (*Dress Rehearsals*) we present five vignettes from the history of Kinderhook, New York enacted as part of a rehearsal for a much larger and longer musical.

I would sincerely first like to thank insitu for facilitating the development of this performance both in their space and at KW through the Netzwerk freier Berliner Projektträume und -initiativen's platform O.N.S..

A very special thanks is in order to Leanne MacKay who designed and created much of the sets and props over the past eight weeks as well as Elisabeth Wood who oversaw the instrumental and vocal arrangements and rehearsals. Thank you to Derek Howard for his expertise in video and lighting. Thanks as always to Sol Calero for being the glue that holds this whole ship of fools together.

Thanks to Giovanna Munari, co-director of Kita Vielfalter for her and her kids' spirited collaboration on this project.

I've had the privilege of working with an enormous group of wonderful people listed on the following two pages. Without their enthusiasm, talents, time, and support this performance wouldn't have been possible.

This project was also created with kind support from the Berliner Projektfonds Kulturelle Bildung

-Christopher Kline

O.K. – THE MUSICAL
(Dress Rehearsals)

Production Team:

Producer - insitu

Music Director/Co-Arranger/Orchestral Scoring - Elisabeth Wood

Art Director - Leanne MacKay

Wardrobe and Production Manager - Sol Calero

Director of Photography - Derek Howard

Set Department - Sílvia Torrus

Stage Manager - Carolina Jiménez

The O.K. Orchestra, directed by Elisabeth Wood:

Martin Fuller - Guitar

Jesi Khadivi - Flute

Clémence Manachère - Flute

Dominik Noé - Percussion

Theresa Patzschke - Flute

Thomas Romana - Trombone

Abigail Sanders - French Horn

Miriam Siebenstädt - Baritone Saxophone

Graham Thaxton - Violin and Score Transposition Advisor

Aaron Weldon - Piano

Sets, props, posters and buttons created within the kids' workshops by:

Ashanti, Layla, Leo, Lubaba, Nefes, Sophia, Seymen, Sercan, Bozhidar (from Kita Vielfalter, directed by Giovanna Munari) and Anna Maria, Ayana, Ernesto, Ilona, Ingebor, Gaia, Lena, Mercan, Paloma, Pamina, Sophie, Tallulah, and Ylva.

Stage Hands:

Ana Alenso, Max Bach

Prop Assistance:

Emily Friedman, Hanne Lippard, Lorenzo Sandoval, Arístides Santana

With severed heads by:

Sol Calero, Ethan Hayes-Chute, Derek Howard, Barbara Jenner, Leanne MacKay, Jan Pfeiffer, Suzanne Quesney, Lorenzo Sandoval, Sílvia Torrus, and Ron Tran.

Headless Horseman costume by:

Ethan Hayes-Chute

CAST
in order of appearance:

SCENE 1: Henry Hudson Encounters the Mahican Indians

Mahicans: Theodore Glickman, Lena Hulpowska, Arístides Santana, Joanna Szproch, Melanie Velarde.

Henry Hudson: Christopher Kline

Crewmen: Patrick Burkhardt, Alexander Coggin, Pau Pahana

SCENE 2: Don't Lose Your Head, Ichabod

Ichabod Crane: Mario Campos Castellano

Katrína Van Tassel: Sara Løve Daðadóttir

Townpeople/Ghosts: Joe Clark, Matthias Hofmann, Martin Kohout, Betti Kuli

Headless Horseman: Ethan Hayes-Chute

SCENE 3: The Indian Removal Act of 1830

Portrait of Andrew Jackson: Anne-Cécile Desjardin

Megan the Tourguide: Leo Zylberberg

Tourists: Annabella Baptista da Cruz, Olivia Berning, Theodore Glickman, Lena Hulpowska, Léa Lanoë

The Ghost of Martin Van Buren: Adam Joachim Goldmann

The Ghost of Martin Van Buren's Niece: Zoë Claire Miller

SCENE 4: The Ballad of the Kinderhook Creature

Kinderhook Creatures:

Patrick Burkhardt, Sara Løve Daðadóttir, Matthias Hofmann, Christopher Kline

SCENE 5: O.K. Finale

Buildings:

Alexander Coggin, Theodore Glickman, Lena Hulpowska, Léa Lanoë, Arístides Santana

The People of Kinderhook Past and Present:

Annabella Baptista da Cruz, Olivia Berning, Patrick Burkhardt,

Mario Campos Castellano, Joe Clark, Adam Joachim Goldmann, Ethan Hayes-Chute,

Matthias Hofmann, Christopher Kline, Martin Kohout, Betti Kuli,

Sara Løve Daðadóttir, Zoë Claire Miller, Pau Pahana, Katharina Schnäcker,

Joanna Szproch, Melanie Velarde, Leo Zylberberg



SCENE I
HENRY HUDSON ENCOUNTERS THE MAHICANS

It is September of 1609. The Mahican people are going about their business as Henry Hudson and crew sail up the river on the Half Moon.

[Mahicans:]

Seepow Mahecaniittuck

ooo ooo ooo ooo o o ooo oo ooo

Wawyachtibic Wekagjoc

ooo ooo ooo ooo o o ooo ooo ahh oooo

What lay in the distance there
coming through the fog
ghost ship of white devils
(ghost ship of white devils...)
hungry as their dogs

[Henry Hudson:]

Well I have come from a land far away
on the dime of the

[with Crew:] Dutch East India Company
And we do search for a passage to the west
to arrive at the east of the far far east

[Mahicans:](to each other, confused)
Is he asking us for food?
or has he lost his way?

[Henry Hudson:] (to Mahicans)
Do you hear my words?

[Crew:] (to Hudson) They do not hear you,
do not hear you, do not hear you

[Mahicans:] We welcome you to stay

[Hudson and Crew:] "O.K."

[Mahicans:]

Seepow Mahecaniittuck

ooo ooo ooo ooo o o ooo oo ooo

*Wawyachtibic Wekagjoc

ooo ooo ooo ooo o o ooo ooo ahh oooo

*[Hudson with Crew sing over:]

We are the first of many –
Harbingers that one day you
will be forced to move to Wisconsin
and to work at the North Star
Mohican Casino and Resort

[Henry Hudson:]

Well I have come from a land far away
on the dime of the
[with Crew:] Dutch East India Company
And we do search for a passage to the west
to arrive at the east of the far far east

NOTES:

Seepow Mahecaniittuck is the Dutch transcription of the Mahican for “river where there are people from the continually flowing waters”, the original name of what is today called the “Hudson River”.

Wawyachtibic is Mahican for “people of the curving channel”, the name of the people who inhabited the area around what became Kinderhook before Europeans arrived.

Wekagjoc is Mahican for “upper reaches of a river”, another name for the region.

Henry Hudson (b.1565, d.1611) was an English sea explorer who was employed by the Dutch East India Company in 1609 to find a route around the north of Norway and Russia to Asia. After his way was blocked by ice we went against his instructions and turned west to find a route through North America, where he staked territory up the Hudson River to Albany to establish a Dutch foothold for the fur trade.

The Mahicans were pushed off their land to a series of reservations before being completely removed to Wisconsin in the 1820s and 30s. Today there is only one person with Mahican blood still living in their historic territory.



SCENE II
DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD, ICHABOD

Ichabod is attempting to woo Katrina Van Tassel from outside of her window. When he is rejected, the mocking townspeople pretend to comfort him, but as darkness approaches Ichabod finds that the forest is not what it seems.

[Ichabod Crane:]

My lips were made for kissing you
and my heart was built with holes you fit into.
Your touch soft and sweet, how I long to meet
half-way between top and fitted sheet.
My hands were made to melt in yours
and your touch is tender– (interrupted)

[Joseph the Townsperson:]

Don't lose your head, Ichabod
she's just a girl
and if you really wanna make it
in this big bad world
ya gotta lower your standards,
don't set the bar so high...

[other Townspeople join:]

Just use your head, Ichabod, it could be worse
ya could catch yellow fever,
small pox, or a witch's curse
so just remember that all wounds heal in time!
Don't lose your head Ichabod,
and everything will turn out fine...

[Forest darkens, wind picks up, thunder storm approaches. Sung emulating the wind:]

Ah oooooooo oooooooo. Ah oooooooo oooooooo.
Ah oooooooo oooooooo. Uh oooooooo oooooooo.

[Forest Ghosts/Trees:]

Dark caves of solitude now flood with rain–
the desperate tears of hopelessness.
A never-ending night, pitch blackness seeping
infects the mind, obscures the senses

He wants your head, Ichabod it's not a dream!
You can run, you can hide,
you can try to scream
but the decapitated Hessian

will cut your crown off clean.

Don't wet your bed, Ichabod,
the nightmare rides,
the ghosts of Sleepy Hollow
will not heed your cries, keep your wits
[joined by Choir:]
or you'll give yourself a fright!
Don't lose your head, Ichabod,
if ya wanna make it home alive!

Don't lose your head, Ichabod
she's just a girl and if you really wanna make it
in this big bad world ya gotta suck it up
and lift your chin up high

Just use your head, Ichabod
it could be worse, ya could catch yellow fever,
small pox, or a witch's curse, so just
Cut your losses or you'll give yourself a fright!
Don't lose your head! Don't lose your head!
Don't lose your head, Ichabod
if you wanna make it home alive!

NOTES:

Writer Washington Irving lived in Kinderhook for a mere eight weeks in 1809, and based several characters in his famous story “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” on friends of his from the village. His tale's anti-hero, the lanky and frightened Ichabod Crane was based on school teacher Jesse Merwin, and the object of his affection Katrina Van Tassel was based on Katrina Van Alen, daughter of a prominent local farmer. Though the short-story explicitly takes place in Tarrytown, another town about 150km towards New York City, Kinderhook has latched on to its tenuous connection, naming its new centralized school system “Ichabod Crane Central” in 1954. The Headless Horseman has been a familiar sight since then on school apparel and sports team logos.



THE INDIAN REMOVAL ACT OF 1830

as sung by the ghosts of Martin Van Buren and his unnamed niece who appear during a contemporary tour of Lindenwald, Van Buren's historic Kinderhook home

[Niece, spoken:]

Uncle Martin, I don't like the Indian Removal Act, it's RUDE!

[Martin Van Buren, spoken:]

Oh, my dear niece, allow me to explain!

[Sung:]

Ya see, the Indian Removal Act of 1830
was Andrew Jackson's faction's master plan.
They had been out there fightin' Injuns
for our future generations
and they'd had it with the savage's demands.

[Niece:]

Well the Indian Removal Act of 1830
is a crime against humanity, you know.
And your administration's patience
for such abominations
is a stain upon our nation's underclothes.

[MVB:]

Well if they cry a trail of tears
it AIN'T THAT BAD...
a little cryin' never hurt nobody none,
and you will thank the Indian Removal Act
of 1830
for your land, your life, your scalp, your wife,
your mon.....ey.

[Niece, spoken:]

Uncle, I must say to you that it is my earnest
wish that you may lose the election as I believe
that such a result ought to follow such acts.

[MVB:]

Well we'll leave that decision up to the
electorate, won't we?

[Tour group:]

Between the Indian Removal Act of 1830
and Old Van Buren's stance on slavery,
his incessantly defending
all the brutal ethnic cleansing
is inscribed in blood upon his legacy

And to all of his defenders say'n

[Andrew Jackson Portrait on wall sings]:
he AIN'T THAT BAD

[Tourists]:

keep in mind the Spoils System he congealed
and how political considerations
trumped his moral obligations
like in his handling of the Amistad appeal.

[MVB, spoken:]

Well, you can call it evacuation
or plain ol' extermination, but
your condemnation of my administration
fills me with resolute indignation!

[Niece:]

Well I think you're a one term-imbecile
AND a bona-fide war-criminal!"

[MVB:]

I don't give a hoot what you folks say
I gotta feeling my legacy's gonna be O.K.!

NOTES:

Martin Van Buren (b. 1782, d.1862) was the 8th U.S. President, born and raised in Kinderhook. He also died there where his home is now a National Historic Site. Still today thought of as "Kinderhook's Favorite Son", he set up the first political machines in New York State (promising jobs and money for political support), attempted to send the Amistad Slave Mutineers to Spain and furthered the policies of his Indian-killer mentor Andrew Jackson.



BALLAD OF THE KINDERHOOK CREATURE

A family of four big-foots laments the harrowing winter, the scarcity of food and their loneliness in the frozen wilderness.

[Old Kinderhook Creature:]

Oh my children,
come press close to me
and warm these bones filled
with frost and ice and dust.
Forgive your father for the
climate whence we've come
and for the blade of night's
impending... thrust.

[Choir:]

Down, drop drips from the sky
frozen sheets of ice
and death all around in white
Down, the merciless ground
the creaking of lakes
the knives of snowflakes
and sound

[Kinderhook Creatures:]

Will our selves and our souls
get to live forever
(ooooooooo)
or will we stay in this cave
where we freeze together
(ooooooooo)

Will we see the spring?
or will we be with our parents in heaven then?

[Choir:]

Drowned, in chill from the north
the frosty divorce
of blood from the veins and skin
froze, from fingers to toes
ice hangs from the nose
of death's soft approach
(oh those fractals of suffering, suffering)

Will our selves and our souls get to live forever
(ooooooooo)
or will we stay in this cave
where we freeze together
(ooooooooo)

Will we see the spring?
or will we be with our parents in heaven when
They decide if our souls get to live forever
(ooooooooo)
(or) if we stay in this cave
where we freeze together
(ooooooooo)

Will we see the spring?
or will we
be with our parents in heaven then...

Down, drop drips from the sky
frozen sheets of ice
and death all around in white
Down, the merciless ground
the creaking of lakes
the knives of snowflakes
and sound

NOTES:

The Kinderhook Creature is a big-foot-like animal which was sighted in the region mostly between 1980-83. More often reported two hours north in the Adirondack Mountains, it is thought that perhaps the creatures briefly sojourned in Kinderhook looking for a better food supply.



O.K. FINALE

O.K.! It's Old Kinderhook
home of President Martin Van Buren
O.K.! stands for Old Kinderhook
the most popular word in the world

[lines sung by individual cast members:]
When "satisfactory" just ain't enough
And "mediocre" seems too refined
when "alright already" is a little bit much
And articulating your reluctant agreement
feels like a waste of time,
well that's fine.

O.K.! It's Old Kinderhook
Briefly home
to writer Washington Irving
O.K.! stands for Old Kinderhook
The most popular word in the world

Well, what have we learned over 400 years?
To never trust a white man's word!
[Van Buren & Hudson]: Hey!
We've got computers, lawn mowers
and automobiles.
Everything is copacetic,
forget your troubles and your fears,
we're right here.

it's what you want
it's what you need
it's fine, it's satisfactory
it's bound to be...

O.K.! It's Old Kinderhook
Home of President Martin Van Buren
O.K.! stands for Old Kinderhook
The most popular word in the world

O.K.
O.K.
O.K.
O.K.
O.K.
O.K.
O.K.
O.K.

OK! It's Old Kinderhook
Briefly home
to writer Washington Irving
O.K.! stands for Old Kinderhook
The most popular word in the world
O.K.!
The most popular word in the world
O.K.!
The most popular word in the world
O.K.!
The most popular word
in the world

O.K.!

NOTES:

The term "O.K." rose to national (and then international) prominence during Martin Van Buren's 1840 reelection campaign (which he lost). His supporters formed the "O.K. Club". Van Buren had many nicknames besides "Old Kinderhook" such as:

The Little Magician
The Red Fox
Martin Van Ruin
The American Talleyrand
The Careful Dutchman
The Enchanter
The Great Manager
The Master Spirit
The Mistletoe Politician

O.K. ORCHESTRA AND CHOIR





Documentation of workshops at insitu January 15 - Februar 21, 2015

O.K.