

Presenter Name:

Danielle Jagelski

Name(s) of additional presenter(s):

Rhiana Yazzie

Work title:

Little Ones

Composer:

Danielle Jagelski

Librettist:

Rhiana Yazzie

Work Description:

"Little Ones" is a dark-comedic opera that unfolds in 1984, exploring life at Intermountain Indian School, a Native American Residential School in Brigham City, Utah, in the final decade of its operation.

The story is told through the journeys of 6 characters: Marigold- an Ojibwe girl uprooted from her reservation in Northern Minnesota, Lily- a Navajo girl from a sheep farm and Marigold's bashful and boy-crazy best friend; Jackson, Marigold's rebellious boyfriend trying to be a man; Victor, a Navajo boy trying to stay out of foster care; Mrs Ross, a 20-year-old white teacher at the school; and Ruby The Lunch Lady, the caretaker and matriarch.

When the students at Intermountain are told that the school will close at the end of the year, they decide to fight to keep it open, as many of them have no other place to go. The students grapple with the complexities of assimilation guided by the Church and the difficulties of coming of age in a rapidly changing world.

We follow the students through their senior year of high school as they work to keep the school open, and eventually watch them try to figure out what to do next, after their efforts fail. We explore the transformation into womanhood, yearning for family, confusion about whether the residential school is good or bad, and tumultuous relationships to authority, friends, and lovers.

In essence, "Little Ones" examines the evolution of the slogan "Kill the Indian, Save the child" into a more contemporary, ostensibly benevolent version: "Save the Indian, Save them from themselves."

"Little Ones" serves as a tribute to the challenges young people faced during the final decade of the US residential school era, which continue to this day. The opera paints a picture of the struggles of any person conflicted with their place in American society while preserving their individual identity, all within a world undergoing profound change."

Duration:

75

Vocal Forces:

Marigold- Mezzo Soprano

Lily- Soprano

Jackson- Tenor

Victor- Baritone

Ruby The Lunch Lady- Mezzo Soprano

Mrs. Ross- Coloratura Soprano

Mr. Ross- speaking role

Small Chorus of students (optional)

Instrumental Forces:

Flute/Picc

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet

2 Violins

1 Viola

1 Cello

1 Double Bass

Piano

Percussion: Vibraphone, Marimba (4 1/3), Crotales (1 octave), Bass Drum, Drum Set

Approximate budget to produce:

75,000

Production intention - what are you looking for? (i.e. co-producers):

We have been lucky to receive funding from the Oregon Community Foundation for the commission of the piano/vocal version, and have received funding from Opera America for the libretto workshop (which took place November of 2024) and the piano/vocal workshop (which will take place in August 2025). We are looking for a producer to produce the premiere.

Link to work samples:

<https://youtu.be/1OrQBkVWnk8?si=oUdtn8OsLVryOpwo&t=2925>