

Chicago; a Musical Mosaic

Excerpt – The First Settlers

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Low, dramatic music at opening, pulsing, dark

Voiceover In the beginning, there was a river. And a lake. And millions of acres of forests and prairies, stretching out as far as the eye could see. *(pause)*

And that was it, for thousands of years. Fields and forests, and a stinking muddy river with a peculiar weed growing on its banks, but not much else. But then, at last, came the Indians.

(two guys in Cleveland Indians caps come on stage, each carrying a canvas bag with furs in it: they speak with Chicago accents).

Indian A: Running Dog, long time no see.

Indian B: Wounded Bear, how are you?

Indian A: I'm good. How's the wife....what's her name? Bright Feather? Shining Brow?

Indian B: Nancy.

Indian A: Right, Nancy. How is she?

Indian B: She's good. How are your little guys?

Indian A: Great. Sly Fox caught a muskie last week that weighed more than he did. So, whaddya got in the bag?

Indian B: 3 beaver, 2 raccoon, and a couple of squirrel. You?

Indian A: A couple of jackrabbits and half of a deer. It was a slow week – and a slow deer.

Indian B: I hear ya pal. *(pause)* So.....enough with the small talk.....what do we do now?

Indian A: We trade! *(fanfare)*

Indian B: Great! *(pause)* Who do we trade with?

(pause)

Indian A: *(Looks off into distance)* That guy! *(Marquette enters to the sound of Gregorian chant, with a staff featuring a big crucifix at the top)*

Marquette: Bonjour, vous sauvages. Je suis père Marquette, juste vers le haut de mon voyage sur le Mississippi. C'est beau pays que vous avez autour ici, et je pense que nous Français ferons très bien ici. Vous avérez-vous justement savoir où la salle de bains est ?

Indian B: *(looks at A)* I have a feeling this is going to be a really long afternoon....

Marquette: Parlez vous Francais? Oui?

Indian A : *(look at B)* What did he say?

Indian B: I think he asked where the bathroom was. *(to Marquette)* “Oui?”

Marquette: Ah, magnifique! Tres bien! *(Marquette begins animated dialog with the Indians under the following...)*

Voiceover: And so it was that in 1673, Pere Marquette and his band of hardy French explorers came through the area now known as Illinois, mapping the rivers and seeking an expeditious trading route to the north. *(Marquette blesses the Indians quickly, then moves on)* Then they went away, never to return.

Marquette leaves the stage, leaving the Indians holding their bags, calling after him “hey, don’t you wanna trade?....”.

Voiceover: And it wasn’t until many years later that the land of the lake and the river and the stinking weed saw another non-native visitor. And his name was Jean Baptiste Point du Sable.

Indian A Look – a new guy!

Indian B: As long as he’s not French, he’s ok by me.

DuSable: *(enters)* Bonjour!

Indians: Oy....

Du Sable: My name is Jean Point Baptiste du Sable!

Indian A: Well, pardon me, but you don’t exactly look like most of the Frenchmen we’ve seen.

DuSable Ah, zat is because I only *speak* French. I’m from Haiti, by way of New Orleans. My friends Choctaw and Clemorgan and I have come here to

open a trading post at za mouth of zis stinking river. By za way, what do you call zis place?

Indian B: We call it Checagou.

DuSable: Shee cuh goo....I've never heard of it...what does zat mean?

Indian A: *(looks at B, then together)* "Skunk Cabbage"

DuSable: Ah....what an unusual name for a place. But I sink zeh may be great sings ahead for Skunk Cabbage. *(stirring music starts underneath)* I can see zat some day, with ze river flowing and ze big lake to ze east, zat zis place could be a crossroads of America, taking ze furs and grains and sending zem to ze great trading centers of ze east. I can imagine sousands of people living here, all of zem working together to build a great city, wiz many beautiful wooden buildings!

Indian B: Should we tell him about the prairie fires?

Indian A: Forget it, he's on a roll.

DuSable: A place where people of every color can join together to create a tapestry of music and art, where sousands of animals can be turned into steaks and shoes, where great sports will be played – on ze south side at least - , and little children will grow up saying "yes, I am a Skunk Cabbager!" *(he breaks into song to the tune of "My Kind of Town")*

Zis...is.....MY kind of swamp, Skunk Cabbage is
My kind of bog, Skunk Cabbage is
My kind of people too
Savages who'll Trade - Wiz – You

And each time I roam, Skunk Cabbage is
Saying "make me home", Skunk Cabbage is
Why I just sing like a frog
It's My....Kind....of....Bog