

English Translation of Harry Somers's *Kuyas* (1967)

Harry Somers composed the three-act opera *Louis Riel* for the 1967 Canadian centennial. It concerns the Métis leader Louis Riel, who was executed in 1885. *Kuyas* (*Long Ago*), the lullaby sung in Act II by Riel's wife to their child, was used prior to the opera's premiere as the test piece for the Montreal International Competition in 1967. About the piece, Dr. Réa Beaumont writes, "*Kuyas* ... is neither Cree nor a lullaby. ... Written for voice, flute and percussion, Somers' *Kuyas* is an amalgamation of material, including several First Nations influences. The melody is based on a haunting Nisga'a lament, transcribed by ethnomusicologist Marius Barbeau and composer-conductor Sir Ernest MacMillan during their visit to the Nass River region of Northwestern British Columbia in the late 1920s. *Kuyas* is a Cree story, as recounted by a member of Saskatchewan's Sweetgrass First Nation. Somers added text that he wrote himself using Cree grammar books, consulting a member of Alberta's Cree First Nation, to whom the song is dedicated." ("Deciphering Harry Somers' Opera *Louis Riel*," *La Scena Musicale Spotlight*, April 1, 2017, <https://myscena.org/rea-beaumont/deciphering-harry-somers-opera-louis-riel/>).

Kuyas	Long ago
hano, â-o, yī-e, ī-e, â	(no specific meaning)
Sâkâstâo	It is sunrise
Numoowunaw.....	It is fair wind.
Kēsamuneto,	Great spirit,
Numoowunootâo.	He walks with fair wind.
Kēsamuneto,	Great spirit,
Numoowunasâo.	He sails with fair wind.
"Kēsamuneto,	Great spirit,
ka kesika'k	now that it is day
ne-yu ka notâutâyan	I who am hungry
ne ku machen.....	will hunt.
Ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
Ne-yu ka notâutâyan	I who am hungry
ne ku machen –	will hunt -
muskwâ.	bear.
Ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
Ne-yu ka notâutâyan –	I who am hungry -
âmisk	beaver
Ka kesika'k –	Now that it is day -
mooswâ	moose
Ne-yu –	I
wâpoos	rabbit
Ka –	Who -
uppische moos-soos	jumping deer
notâyutâyan –	am hungry -
âhtik.....	Caribou.
Ka, ka kesika'k	Now that it is day
ne-yu ka notâutâyan	I who am hungry
ne ku machen –	will hunt -
wâwâskâsêo.....	elk.
Kēsamuneto	Great spirit
Pu'kisimoo	Sunset
Mêkisâo	An eagle.
Kuyas,	Long ago,
kuyas.....	long ago.
Āwuko ā ke okimawit.....	That one was a chief
kuyas	long ago
kisāyīnewu.....	among old men.
Āwuko kuyas achimoowin.....	This is an old story.
Āwuko.....	This
o tu uskek	In this land
ka pā'tuman	is what I heard
omu achimoowin.	this story.
Kuyas,	Long ago,
Kuyas	long ago
Āwuko ā ke okimawit.....	That one was a chief
kuyas.....	long ago