Winds of Heaven
Emily Carr, Carvers and The Spirits of the Forest

A Cine Metu/White Pine Pictures Production

Directed by: Michael Ostroff
Producers: Peter Raymont & Michael Ostroff

Produced by Cine Metu in co-production with White Pine Pictures and in association with Bravo!, TVOntario and Knowledge Network Corporation, with the participation of Rogers Documentary Fund, Rogers Cable Network Fund and the Canadian Television Fund, and in association with the National Gallery of Canada, the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, the W. Garfield Weston Foundation, Heffel Gallery, Masters Gallery, and the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Running Time: 90 Minutes

“Winds of heaven is far from the standard bio... it's a visually sumptuous eye-popping, inspiring story”

John Doyle The Globe and Mail Jan 29, 2011

“This is a substantial film, and a beautiful one ... John Walker's cinematography flows like acrylic paint across canvas.”

Peter Goddard The Toronto Star Jan 29, 2011


“This is a must-see, possibly one of the best films ever made about our province, these forests, and our history as newcomers. It’s the story of Emily Carr and what inspired her: the love of the people, the places, and the love of art. It is, for us, a very important story well-told, and surely for everyone, a sight to behold.”

Alan Franey, director, Vancouver International Film Festival.
SHORT SYNOPSIS

*Winds of Heaven* is a ninety-minute filmic journey into the deep brooding mystery and inner beauty of Emily Carr’s paintings - a lyrical, luminescent and entertaining impression of the life of Carr and her connection to the First Nations people of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. Michael Ostroff’s direction of John Walker’s award-winning camera and Edmund Eagan’s intimate music brings a sense of movement, grace and energy to the film. Diane D’Aquila’s layered and textured read presents a portrait of a living, breathing, tough, vulnerable, smart and ultimately sympathetic Emily Carr as has never before been brought to the screen.

LONG SYNOPSIS

*Winds of Heaven* is a ninety-minute filmic journey into the deep brooding mystery and inner beauty of Emily Carr’s paintings - a lyrical, luminescent and entertaining impression of the life of Carr and her connection to the First Nations people of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia.

The film moves from the rebellious acts of a young Emily Carr against the socially stifling constraints and repressive atmosphere of her Victorian childhood, through the fifteen-year period of solitary retreat from the art world, to her re-emergence as a determined individual and modern artist.

With *Winds of Heaven*, Michael Ostroff proves to be one of the finest practitioners of the narrative historical documentary film. Working from first-hand accounts, letters, diaries and Emily Carr’s published writings, the film delivers evocative anecdotes and emotional narratives in a layered and fascinating scenario of the complexities and contradictions of the time and the artist.

John Walker’s gorgeous images and Edmund Eagan’s intimate music brings a sense of movement, grace and energy to the paintings and archival images used throughout the film. In Diane D’Aquila’s layered and textured read of Carr’s writings, we have a portrait of a living, breathing, tough, vulnerable, smart and sympathetic Emily Carr as has never before been brought to the screen.

The film dispels a number of myths about Carr’s life and her contradictory relationship with and attitude towards the First Nations people of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. While she resisted the predominate white attitude of portraying natives as “savages”, devoid of cultural sensibilities, the film explores the critique of Carr that she did contribute to the “traffic of native images.” It also recalls the racism of the day – the Canadian government’s celebration of the ancient native arts and its determination to preserve the totem poles, while ironically advocating and implementing policies that were determined to assimilate Native peoples and eradicate their way of life and culture. The film features commentary by authors Gerta Moray and Susan Crean, native art critic Marcia Crosby and museum curator Laurel Smith Wilson.
THE CAST

Diane D’Aquila – the voice of Emily Carr.

One of Canada's most respected stage and TV actors, Diane D’Aquila is best known for her 15 seasons as a member of the company at the Stratford Festival and most notably for her portrayal of Elizabeth I in Timothy Findlay’s Elizabeth Rex for which she won both an ACTRA Award and a Gemini.

Ms. D’Aquila has also appeared as Maria in The Twelfth Night, Constance in King John, Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra, Jocasta in Oedipus Rex, and Goneril in King Lear. She has been a part of a number of Soulpepper Theatre productions and a member of the National Arts Centre English Theatre Acting Company. (Harelip in Saint Carmen of The Main.)

Other notable film and television work includes the recurring role as the Minister of Culture in the hit TV series Slings and Arrows.

Jani Lauzon – Native Narrator

Jani is a member of the National Arts Centre English Theatre Acting Company, (A Christmas Carol; Mother Courage; Saint Carmen of the Main) and a three time JUNO nominee, twice for her two solo albums (Blue Voice/New Voice and Thirst) and also for her contribution to the compilation Hearts of the Nations. Her latest release Mixed Blessings received a CAMA nomination for Best Traditional Female.

Other Special Mentions

Secondary characters were read by Little Mosque’s Sheila McCarthy, the late Stratford veteran Peter Donaldson, Dawn Greenhalgh, Ottawa veteran bilingual actor Paul Rainville and Michael Ostroff as Lawren Harris.
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I've always believed that documentary film can be an extraordinarily effective medium to convey a sense of how memory and storytelling shape us as a society and a people. The films I make are referred to as narrative historical documentaries because they rely on archival photographs and motion pictures, first hand accounts, diary entries and letters to structure the shape of the story. There is no “unfolding story” to be filmed - all action has already taken place, and the role of the director is to reconstruct the story. It is not the dry dates, facts and events of the historian that I seek, but rather an “emotional archaeology”, searching through the archival material for a higher emotional theme.

When poking about the past and investigating stories once told, I have often learned of events that we have chosen to forget – incidents, for example, of inequality or exploitation. But if stories are the foundation of the history of who we are as a people, community and nation – and I believe they are – then to hide, or selectively suppress important details is a dangerous denial that can lead to a lack of understanding. It is this tension that drives the scenario of Winds of Heaven.

The film features two parallel stories – one follows the development of Emily Carr as an artist, and the other story explores the government’s efforts to force assimilation on the First Nations people of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia during the time that Carr comes into contact with them.

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It has been suggested that no other Canadian artist, dead or alive, approaches Emily Carr's renown. As well, perhaps no other artist has been surrounded and enveloped by such an array of myths and legends as Emily Carr. For too many people, the mention of Carr’s name conjures up the ready image of an elderly, stout, dour curmudgeon – this is “Emily the eccentric” – the predictable freak show that reduces the complexities of a life to a simplistic caricature. In Carr’s case, it’s that of a woman who kept animals and had a pet monkey, and seemed to make paintings on the side.

The parallel storyline of the white community’s intrusion into Native affairs culminates in the ten-year period following World War One. At that time, a number of influential individuals and government officials such as Marius Barbeau of the National Museum, were concerned that Canada lacked a national consciousness. In the film, commentator Susan Crean refers to Confederation as “being little more than a real-estate deal.” Barbeau was convinced that an “indigenous” Canadian culture could emerge from the inspiration of the monumental art of the First Nations people of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia. The irony is that as Barbeau and the government celebrated Native art as an important aspect of our Canadian heritage, much like Stonehenge in England, government bureaucrats simultaneously enacted assimilationist policies determined to drive the Aboriginal communities out of existence. Their view of First Nations culture was distorted and self-serving.
First Nations culture and First Nations people, they argued, did not have a future. Assimilation was the answer and edicts and legislation banned Aboriginal celebrations, created reservations and placed limits on the type of work that First Nations people could legally undertake.

Barbeau and the other premature eulogizers proved to be as inaccurate in their assessment of the persistence of the First Nations communities as the people of Victoria proved to be parochial and simplistic in their portrayal of Carr. The trouble with these misrepresentations is that when repeated often enough, people begin to believe them.

At the very heart of Winds of Heaven is my desire to dispel these myths. Winds of Heaven shows an indomitably spirited and feisty Emily Carr. What was dismissed as Carr’s incomprehensible behaviour by Victoria’s society, is seen in the film as the logical decisions and choices of a woman resolutely determined to succeed as an artist, even at the cost of the support and admiration of family and friends.

The approach to the portrait of Carr in Winds of Heaven is to assemble bits and pieces of her character, not to present a ‘whole character’ and completely answer intellectually for her behaviour, but rather to present a living, breathing, tough, vulnerable, smart and ultimately sympathetic Emily Carr complete with her foibles and contradictions. Winds of Heaven presents an Emily Carr as never before seen on the screen.

It is Carr’s contact with the First Nations people and her understanding and misunderstanding of their life and culture that leads the film into an exploration of the tensions of that turbulent period whose truths still need to be appreciated today. Inevitably we all struggle with contradictions and paradoxes. Carr was no exception. Her self-designation as a “friend of the Indian” is carefully scrutinized, contextualized and critiqued to provide as complete an image of this extraordinary woman as we can.

This approach should not suggest that Winds of Heaven is a didactic, 90-minute illustrated lecture. I am a filmmaker first and start with the belief that when we go to the movies we want to be entertained; that we enjoy being overwhelmed by the flush of emotion when – as only the cinema can do – the image, language, movement and music merge. Winds of Heaven is an evocative and contemplative impression of a time and a person.

I expect the film will surprise people. Who knew, for example, that Emily Carr had stopped painting for nearly fifteen years in the middle of her life? I expect the film will also delight audiences with its beauty, and gracefully understated style and rhythm.

To capture the beauty and complexity in Carr’s works, as well as the mystery of the great Northwest coast forests, we wanted a painterly atmospheric look for the film. Working with the incomparable John Walker, the director of photography, we determined we needed the softening and darkening of the colour that comes from shooting on 16 mm film. The advantage of shooting on
film and not using high definition video, with its hard analytical tone, is seen in the gorgeous, lyrical and poetic images of the landscape and the true reproduction of the natural colours of Carr’s works. It’s especially pleasing to know that John was awarded the Canadian Society of Cinematographers Award for Best Documentary Photography (April 2011) for his work on *Winds of Heaven*.


Educational Inquiries should be directed to: [http://www.mcnabbconnolly.ca/titles/4661/winds_of_heaven___emily_carr___carvers_and_the_spirits_of_the_forest](http://www.mcnabbconnolly.ca/titles/4661/winds_of_heaven___emily_carr___carvers_and_the_spirits_of_the_forest)

**CREDITS:**

Director: Michael Ostroff
Producers: Peter Raymont & Michael Ostroff
Featuring: Diane D’Aquila as the voice of Emily Carr, Jani Lauzon as the Native Voice, Peter Raymont as the Narrator, Sheila McCarthy as Kate Mather, Peter Donalsdon as Walt Whitman and Michael Ostroff as Lawren Harris.
Editor: Tai Zimmer
Photography: John Walker
Sound: Leigh Uttley
Music Composer: Edmund Eaga
Supervising Producer: Kelly Jenkins
Production Supervisor: Helene Valinsk
Writer Michael Ostroff
FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

MICHAEL OSTROFF

Michael Ostroff has been producing documentaries and educational videos since 1973 when he joined Crawley Films as a film editor and assistant director. Michael had just completed two years of intensive film studies at the Programme in Film (York University) with James Beveridge, Jay Leyda and others. His interest in exploring aspects of Canadian culture was influenced and encouraged by Beveridge, Leyda, the legendary Canadian filmmaker Budge Crawley.

Of late, Michael has specialized in narrative historical documentaries exploring issues relating to history and development of Canada’s cultural voice. His films are known for their emotion and intelligence and the understated, lyrical approach he takes to storytelling; relying on sequences of atmospheric and poetic ruminations and impressions to drive the narrative structure.

Ostroff’s previous work as a director, the feature length documentary, Pegi Nicol: Something Dancing About Her was premiered at the National Gallery. It was an Official Selection – In Competition – of the prestigious Festival International du Film Sur L’Art (2006) and was referred to as ‘quite simply one of the best films ever made about an artist.’ (Ottawa Xpress)

The affectionate but unblinking portrait of Canadian pioneer filmmaker Budge Crawley, Budge, released in 2003, was described by the Globe & Mail as ‘a gift...a long-overdue but terribly well-executed profile of one of this country’s groundbreaking filmmakers.’ Ostroff is about to release Winds of Heaven, a ninety-minute documentary about Emily Carr and her relationship with the Native Peoples of the Northwest Coast. The film will premiere at The National Gallery this spring and is produced with the support of BRAVO, Knowledge Network, TV Ontario, Rogers Documentary Funds, Telefilm Canada, the National Gallery of Canada, the Vancouver Art Gallery, The Art Gallery of Ontario, the McMichael Gallery, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, the Art Gallery of Hamilton and the City of Ottawa.
PETER RAYMONT
Filmmaker, journalist and writer Peter Raymont has produced and directed over 100 documentary and drama films and series during a 39-year career. His films have taken him to remote corners of Africa; North, South and Central America, the High Arctic and throughout Europe and Asia.

Raymont is the recipient of 35 international awards including the Emmy for Best Documentary, the Canadian Genie, several Gemini Awards, Gold and Silver Hugos, The Sesterce d'Argent and many other international honours. His documentary feature, Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire was honoured with the Audience Award for World Cinema Documentaries at The Sundance Film Festival. Raymont's films are often provocative investigations of "hidden worlds" in politics, media and business. His films are informed with a passion for human rights and social justice and are regularly broadcast on private and public TV networks worldwide. In recent years he has explored the life of world-renowned writers, artists and musicians through his documentaries made with and on Ariel Dorfman, Glenn Gould and Emily Carr. He is currently producing and directing a film on Canadian painter, Tom Thomson.

His career began at age 21 at the National Film Board of Canada in Montreal where, from 1971-78, he worked as an editor, director and producer. While at the NFB, Raymont also taught film and video production in the Canadian Arctic. In 1979, Raymont moved to Toronto and established his independent film and television production company now operating as White Pine Pictures. He co-partnered the company with his late wife, award-winning filmmaker and author, Lindalee Tracey.

Raymont's feature documentary, A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and was short-listed for an Academy Award Oscar for Best Documentary. Raymont is also the co-creator and Executive Producer of The Border, a 38-episode TV drama series, broadcast in 22 countries in 11 languages.

ABOUT WHITE PINE PICTURES:
White Pine Pictures is an independent Canadian film, television, and new media production company based in Toronto, Canada. Headed by award-winning filmmaker, Peter Raymont, the company is recognized internationally as a high quality production house with a reputation for compelling visual styles and depth of content. White Pine has produced over 100 films, including the Oscar-shortlisted A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman. White Pine is also producer of the hit TV drama series The Border, which aired for three seasons for the CBC. Seasons One and Two of The Border are airing across Europe and have recently been licensed to ION Television in the USA.
www.whitepinepictures.com

ABOUT CINE METU PRODUCTIONS:
Based in Ottawa, Cine Metu specializes in documentary films exploring aspects of Canada’s culture including To Think Like a Composer; Pegi Nicol: Something Dancing About Her; Budge: The One True Happiness of F.R. Budge Crawley and Speaking of Movies.