

# *Get to know the plants who make this music possible*

(written by Liam Connolly - SEAS MM 23')

‘O, Great Mullein!’ is a piece inspired by:

## **Mullein**

Ojibwe: *Nookaadiziiganzh* (animate noun.)

Scientific: *Verbascum thapsus*

Non-native to North America, mullein is often considered a weed or invasive, though it doesn't pose a significant threat to limiting community function in ecosystems. Known by many names and for its fuzzy, lambs ear-like leaves, this plant has had important uses for Indigenous peoples. As a biennial, mullein overwinters in the first year, its basal rosette of leaves standing out in a dead landscape. In Anishinaabe practice, the outer leaves of this rosette have been harvested to treat bronchitis, bronchial pneumonia, and chest colds, mindfully leaving the inner leaves to ensure the plant can flower in the second year. Oil can be extracted from the flowers produced on the tall seedstalk in mullein's second year. This oil can be used to treat internal bleeding and fresh leaves can be used to pad sore feet. In all stages of life, mullein has plenty to offer— certainly enough to offset its reputation as a weed.

The dried inflorescence stalk left at the end of its mullein's life has been dipped in tallow and used as a torch.

“It did not matter what one called a plant as long as one did not use a derogatory name because that would insult the plant.”

*(Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do Is Ask)*

“Lots of folk love the mullein!”

Cameron's drums are made from:

## **Birch Tree**

Ojibwe: *Wiigwaasaatig* (animate noun. particularly referring to paper birch, *Betula papyrifera*)

Scientific: *Betula sp.*

The birch tree has earned its place in Anishinaabe storytelling thanks to its pliable, many-ply bark. Panels of bark were lashed together to construct canoes and cover structures. Bark was used to make *makuks*, food containers, and to make canvas for art. One of birch's most significant uses from a historical perspective is birch bark scrolls: scrolls were marked to record historical events, legends, origins of life and religion, instructions for rituals, and to record songs. This broader context is indispensable to the expression of song through Cameron's birch drums in today's performance.