

SINGING SPIRIT

DANINOGIGV ADANVDO

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American Indian Music and its History
Biographies of two musicians

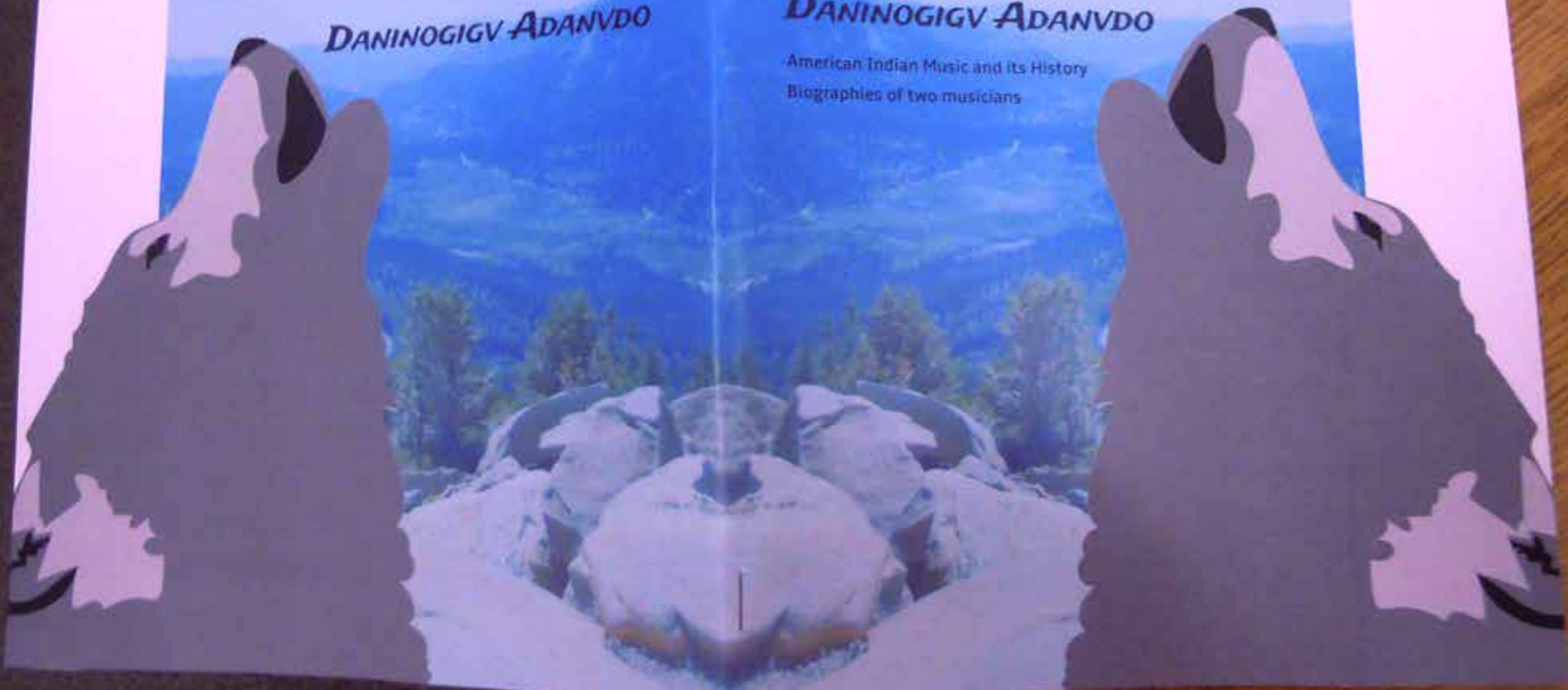


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Daninogivv Adamvdo (Dan-ee-no-gee-ga A-dan-u-doe)
means Singing Spirit in Cherokee

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NATIVE AMERICAN MUSIC

In an effort to understand the Native American culture, we can use music to construct pre-history.

There is virtually no written information about the history of Native American history prior to 100 years ago. There is also little archaeological information. Some say that the songs consisting of short tunes with few pitches repeated or varied many times may be a remnant of a highly archaic stratum of human music.

Their argument centers around the fact of the use of vocables (nonsense syllables), the limited number of musical instruments used, and the fact that there are no harmonies used. However, since this music is measured by its ability to integrate society, ceremonial and social events, I believe that technical complexity is not a valid criterion. For example, the Blackfeet of the northern plains believe that, "the right way to do something is to sing the right song with it." Every activity has its appropriate song.

Music and the supernatural

Music has supernatural power in many native American traditions. Among the Blackfeet, supernatural power resides in the song itself and is activated when the song is sung. Songs are not "composed," but given to humans by guardian spirits in dreams or visions. Once they exist, songs are associated with particular activities. For example, each object in a medicine bundle has its appropriate song. A person who owns many songs is a spiritually powerful person. Even game and dance songs may be part of rituals that are concerned with thanksgiving, the growing of crops, the healing of sickness, or the search for sacred power to meet life's crises.

Song forms

The song forms are usually strophic (with several stanzas), short songs with a pair of lines repeated many times, or two alternating, contrastive sections

pitch, one higher than the other. Repetition is a prominent feature of most Native American Indian music. In the Northwest, lexical text, and in melodic and rhythmic patterns.

Musical instruments

Native American music is actually mostly vocal in nature. It is monophonic, has vocables instead of text, (meaningless nonsense syllables) used for musical ornamentation, generally sung by men, usually male, in robust "outdoor" style. Strong emphases, sharp attacks at the beginning of phrases, sometimes shouts and animal calls lend excitement to melodies, and the melodic structure is heavy on the tonic.

Most instruments are percussion (drums & rattles, in particular). They use large double-headed drums, small frame drums, water-filled (for tuning) kettles with a wooden backskin drumhead, and various rattles (gourds, deer hooves, turtles shells, etc.). An interesting fact is that all American Indian drumming is done with a single drumstick for each player. In the case of certain large drums, there may be several players beating the accompaniment together.

The Native American flute is one of the few important melodic instruments. It is often associated with courting rituals. It was also a gender-specific instrument in that only men played it.

The musical bow is similar or identical to the hunting bow and was typically found in some southwestern areas. It was eventually replaced by the "Apache fiddle" or "Navajo violin," a bowed instrument with one horsehair string and a cylindrical body (a hollowed out plant stalk). It could be considered a combination of the musical bow and the western violin.

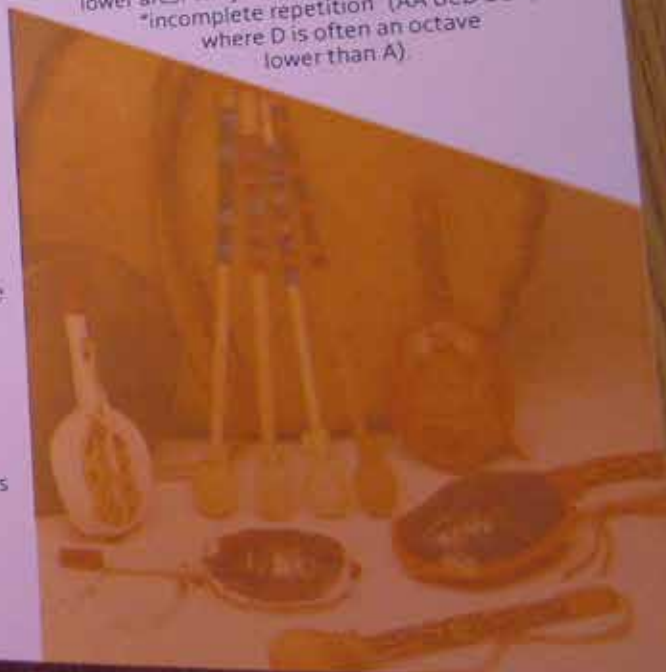
Many wooden whistles, flutes, and horns are found in the Northwest. Some of them work by squeezing a bladder of air (the bagpipe method). A double reed cedarwood "horn" found in the

Northwest is the only instance of this member of the aerophone family in North America.

Cultural / Musical Regions

We can divide the Native American culture into several distinct musical areas. There are 1000-2000 different tribal groups, each with its own culture and language. The average tribe was around 1000 members (some larger, some smaller). The smaller tribes had approximately 100-200 members. These could be grouped into 6-8 major culture areas distinguished by housing, religion, political structure, food preparation techniques, and clothing. The musical styles generally coincided with these cultural areas.

Plains (such as the Sioux, Kiowa, Cheyenne) These were the horseback riders and buffalo hunters. This group was the basis of the inter-tribal powwow style. They usually have brief meaningful texts in a setting of vocable patterns. The singing emphasizes high pitch, rhythmic pulsations on long tones, and a tense, piercing vocal style. The music is often sung in a powerful falsetto, starting at the upper limit of the singer's range and following a descending melodic contour in successively lower arcs. They use a song form called "incomplete repetition" (AA BCD BCD, where D is often an octave lower than A).





The Plains War Dance has become the generic symbol of Indian dance. In this dance, the dancer's body movements are open for personal variation, but the head always remains erect with a rapt expression and the eyes staring into space. The costume is an essential part of the dance and music; it will have lots of bells, feathers, ribbons, beads, small mirrors, etc. decorating it.

Eastern Woodlands (such as Iroquois, Ojibway, Algonquin)

The music of this group employs a more relaxed vocal style. A characteristic Iroquois feature is a pulsation of the voice at the ends of the phrases. Some call and response patterns (antiphonal)-this is rare in other Indian music. Occasionally we see some polyphony. The typical forms consist of several short phrases.

Stomp Dance

This dance usually takes place in the Longhouse (a meeting house with a stove at each end of the hall and benches along the side. It is a recreational dance song where the leader conducts the dance and the song at the same time. As he improvises the calls, he leads a line of dancers in a fast step, in time to the music; more and more of the audience joins the dance until the line is winding exuberantly all over the longhouse floor. They do this follow-the-leader routine for a while, rest, then do it again.

California-Yuman

This region uses a very relaxed vocal style, and a song form in which one section (a phrase or short group of phrases) is repeated several times but interrupted irregularly by another, slightly higher, contrasting section, called the "rise."

Athabaskan (Northwestern North America)

This region includes the Navajo and Apache peoples since they came to the southwest several hundred years after the Pueblos had established their farming communities there. The Navajo tribe has about 150,000 members, most of whom are farmers & shepherders. Many Apache and Navajo songs are based on the open triad. Some of the other traits include a wide vocal range, a rather high, tense, and nasal vocal style, and even rhythms that can be transcribed using quarter or eighth notes. The music unfolds in a sequence of song cycles in which melody alternates with chant. They begin with a chorus of vocables, settle into a recitation of long texts, and then end with another chorus.

Navajo chanting is usually accompanied by several kinds of rattles or a shallow basket turned over and thumped with a drumstick made of woven yucca leaves. Apache music may be accompanied by the large kettledrum, various rattles, and sometimes a rasp made of manzanita wood.

Navajo Yeibichai (gods-their-grandfathers) refers to ancestor deities who come to

dance at one of the major ceremonials, known as Nightway. The masked dancers who impersonate the gods bring supernatural power and blessing to help cure a sick person. The dancers form two parallel lines and have a clown which follows the dancers, imitating them with antics and tumbling, and getting lost in the audience. The teams of dancers compete for a prize given by the family hosting the ceremony. The representation of the presence of the gods brings god-power to the ceremony and helps the sick person get well.

Pueblo (northern and western New Mexico and northeast Arizona)

This group has strong ties to the Spanish Catholic church, due to Spanish colonization in this region. Their ceremonies are focused on their agricultural needs (rain and successful crops). They share features with Athabaskan and Plains styles, but has a deep, low pitch and a harsh, pulsating vocal style. The music has long, complex forms and developments of musical ideas.

Papago (southwest)

This group inhabits the desert regions of southern Arizona and northern Sonora, a state of northwest Mexico. The music is related to the Plains and Pueblo styles.

Great Basin (Nevada, Utah, and northern California)

Due to the inability to farm this region, extraordinary knowledge of natural history and animal behavior was necessary for survival. The music is characterized by a small range and a

typical form in which phrases are repeated in pairs (AA BB CC, etc.) It is also notable for its open, relaxed vocal style.

Ghost Dance songs

The Ghost Dance movement is a messianic cult that began in the Great Basin and was adopted by Plains tribes as a way of combating and defeating the white people. (It was thought that prayer and dance would make the invaders disappear.) The song style, derived from the Great Basin style used in Utah and Nevada, is characterized by a small range and a typical paired-phrase form (AABBCCDD etc.) It was performed in a large circle to the music of plaintive songs of suffering and pleas for help.

Northwest Coast (includes some Eskimo & Inuit peoples)

The music of this region is distinguished by complex rhythms and larger number of wind instruments than other regions. This is also one of the few Native American regions that has a polyphonic choral tradition. They also developed the idea that songs belonged legally to one person or family. Their drums and rattles were often painted or shaped in the form of birds, especially the mythical raven. The music has close-knit melodies (stepwise and even chromatic progressions), extended melodic development (which led to long phrases).

The Inuit Eskimos (in the Arctic region) frequently use unique drums that vary in diameter from 1 to 5 ft., are made of walrus stomach or bladder, struck with a slender wand, and used mostly during winter ceremonies.



Inter-tribal styles

A new style has emerged in recent times, which mixed elements from several different areas create a new, distinctive genre.

Peyote songs

These songs are used to accompany Peyote cult ceremonies (religion based on the hallucinogenic buttons of a cactus native to Mexico). They are ordinarily sung solo with a relaxed vocal style (Navajo). The rhythmic structure uses two note values (Apache), and the form is "incomplete repetition" with descending contours (Plains). There are a special set of vocables combined in "words" such as heyowane, heyowitsinayo, and kayatinayo. All songs end with four long notes and the syllables "he ne yo we" (possibly southern Plains).

A water drum and a special rattle (possibly southeastern) provide accompaniment.

Using the Plains style "incomplete repetition," each strophe ends with the typical long syllables (an obvious difference between Peyote and Plains Indian songs)

Unlike Plains-style songs, the drum and rattle accompaniment is on the beat. These are songs that must be sung at the beginning

and at sunrise of this night-long ceremony

In recent years, other tribes all over the country adopted the Plains musical style (and costumes) for use in a new context. New ceremonies, (such as North American Native American Days) based on traditional midsummer religious ceremonies, are symbolizing pan-Indian identity. One type of song that are sung at these gatherings are 49 Songs (forty-niner songs). These have amusing and mildly romantic words in English such as "When the dance is over, sweetheart, I will take you home in my one-eyed Ford" or "I don't care if you're married sixteen times, I will get you."

Powwow

The Powwow style is based on the Plains region, and is the modern successor of midsummer religious ceremonies. It has grown to symbolize the broad Indian identity to both Indian and white audiences. The Powwow is essentially an occasion for singing and dancing to which the zest of competition is added. Prizes are often given for costumes, performances, and practically any reason at all. The ceremonies will last for a full day or a weekend.

Music for powwow dance competition and other activities is provided by a "Drum," a group of performers who play a large, specially designed drum and sing traditional songs. The number of members of a drum group may vary, but is usually at least four people, and can be far more. Some members of the drum group may wear traditional regalia and dance as well as drum, other times drummers simply wear street clothing.

The Host Drum of the powwow is a drum group primarily responsible for providing music for the dancers to dance to. At an Intertribal powwow, two or more drums are hired to be the host drums. Depending on the size of the powwow and the region where it is held, there may be many drums, representing nearly every tribe or community attending the powwow. At some powwows, the drums are judged on the quality of their performances, with prize money awarded to the winners.

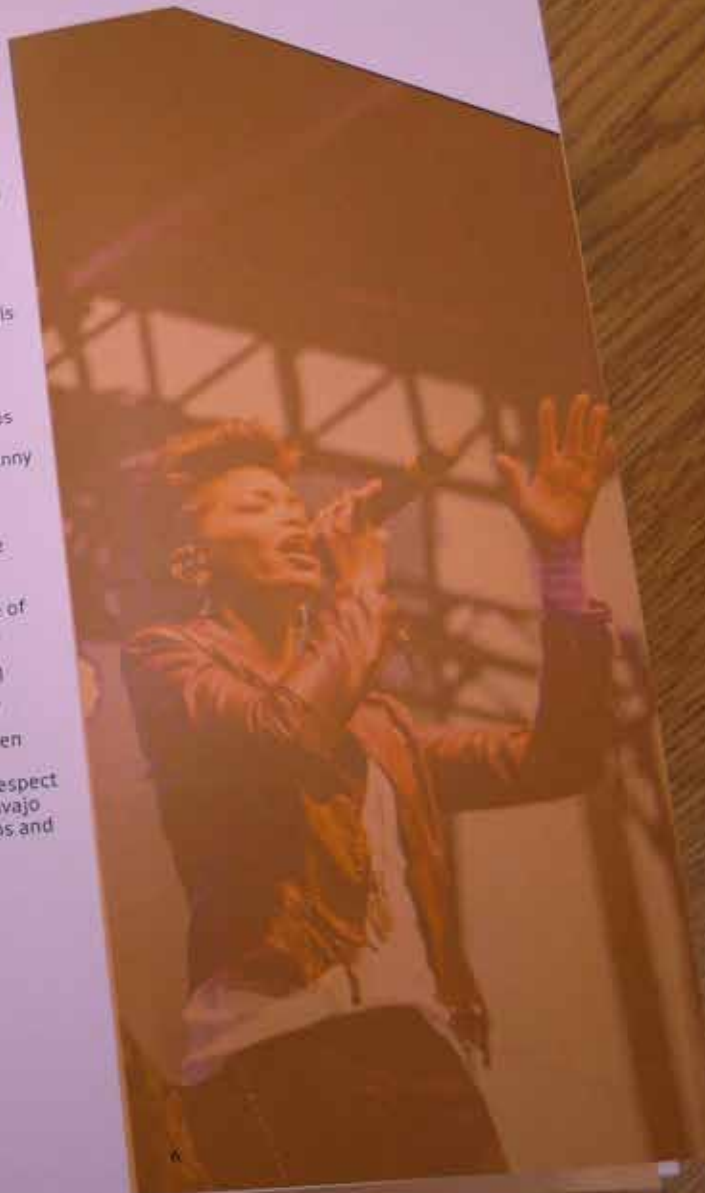
Each drum has a Lead Singer who sings to the drum and leads the drum while singing. Host drums are responsible for singing the songs at the beginning and end of a powwow ceremony, possibly a starting song, the first victory song, a flag song, and a retreating song to end the powwow. The host drums are often called upon to sing special songs during the powwow.

Contemporary Native American Music

A substantial number of Native Americans enjoy country western music (the original) because it appeals to the love of the open life and the excitement of the roundup and the rodeo. Many Native American bands have emulated popular country western singers. One of these groups is the Fenders - an all Navajo band from New Mexico did a cover of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues"

Another type of music that has emerged has newly-created Native American texts and melodies. Contemporary instruments and musicians often use the language of their people to create new music.

The Native American flute revival began in the 1970's with Navaho, Carlos Nakai. He wrote moving, improvisatory compositions, often with synthesizer or orchestral accompaniments. He stresses respect for the environment and the Navajo celebration of tribal connections and harmony with nature.



Pow Wow SINGING

One of the most important things in the life of a Native American is the Drum. Our whole culture centers around the Drum. Without the Drum and the singers around it, the Native Americans could not have pow wows. The Drum brings the heartbeat of our Earth Mother to the pow wow for all to feel and hear. Drumming brings everyone back into balance. Whether dancing, singing, or just listening, people around the Drum can connect with spirit. It is no wonder the Drum should be treated with great respect.

Being head singer is a great honor. The man who receives this honor is chosen for his experience. He has the right to lead all songs unless he chooses other men to lead and help carry the load. The head singer may open the Drum at his discretion. This means anyone may lead songs at any time. Once a singer takes his place at the Drum, he should stay until there is a break. If he has to leave, he should inform the head singer.

While at the Drum, the singers should keep their thoughts on the songs and should keep the beat of the Drum. Generally singers should not leave the Drum to dance. However at many contest pow wows, many singers are beginning to compete. When a head singer is chosen to sing for a dance, he will naturally do his best. Therefore the singers he has chosen should do their best for the head singer.

Songs are started with a lead line sung by the head singer. This lets the Drum and the dancers know what song is coming. After

the lead line, the second (another person at the Drum) will take up the lead line, and everyone will join in with him. At this point the dancers begin to dance. The loud beats during the songs, sometimes called "honor beats" are a time for dancers to honor the Drum. In Northern Singing, these beats are generally during the verses. For Southern Singing, the honor beats are generally between verses.

The head singer has the first and last word and has complete control of what goes on at the Drum. He must know many songs.

A closed Drum means the head singer has chosen the singers he wants to sing with him. The dance arena could be filled with good singers but they should not sit at the drum unless they are asked by the head singer.

Some additional things to remember: Liquor is never permitted at the Drum.

Women, usually do not sit at the Drum and beat the Drum, if women sing, they may sit in the second row behind the men singers—there are some Women Drums emerging now.

If a special song is called, those asking for the song should donate to the Drum.

If money is given to the Drum for a special song, the head singer may divide the money with the singers immediately or wait until after the dance, he divides the money among the singers according to their ability, he knows who carried the load and made his job easier.



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO PLAINS INDIAN SINGING

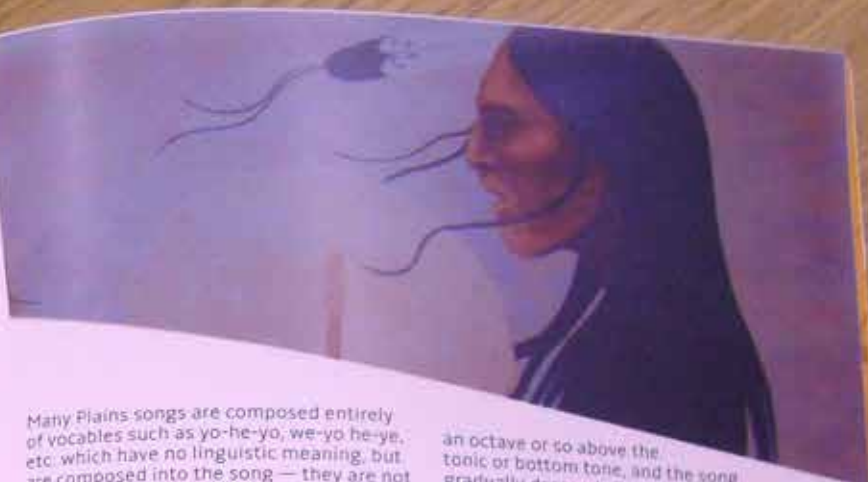
Upon one's first visit to a Plains Indian powwow, all the songs by the different singing groups may "sound the same."

While it's true that the compositional form of the songs is the same, and the singing styles of many groups are similar, the songs themselves are quite different. This introduction is designed to help the new listener get into the music, to better understand what the singers and dancers are doing, and enjoy the powwow that much more.

First, the most popular form of Plains powwow singing and dancing today is the war dance or grass dance. This form of

song and its associated dance originated from a ceremonial men's warrior society in the Central Plains many years ago. Originally called *Helushka* or *Hethoshka* from the name of the society, this form of song and dance spread to other tribes throughout the Northern and Southern Plains over the past century, and more recently into the Southwest. Today it is most often described in English as war dance or grass dance.

Indian songs are not written, but are composed and learned orally from singer to singer, and in recent years from tape to singer. All war dance songs have a very definite compositional form which is recognized and accepted by all Plains singers and dancers, regardless of tribe. It is within this traditional framework that talented composers make new songs, sometimes creatively doing the unexpected for artistic surprise.



Many Plains songs are composed entirely of vocables such as *yo-he-yo, we-yo he-ye*, etc. which have no linguistic meaning, but are composed into the song — they are not improvised. Within this "musical language" of vocables, a truly amazing number of songs and variety of musical expression has been and is still being created. There are literally hundreds of songs composed entirely of vocables, each with its own musical statement. Songs can express sadness, happiness, remembrance of long ago, pride in tradition — all kinds of feelings are expressed entirely with vocables.

This widespread use of vocable composition in Plains singing has enabled songs to be passed from one tribe to another throughout the Plains for hundreds of years, regardless of language. Today it is not uncommon for singers of different tribes and languages to sing together at the same drum, and for singers of one tribe to quickly learn songs from another.

Most Plains songs do not have formal names or titles. The song's identity, the nucleus of its melody, is usually contained in the lead phrase sung by the person starting the song. When the rest of the group hears the lead phrase, they recognize which song is being started, and then "second" the lead by repeating the phrase. This demonstrates support for the leader, and shows that they know the song, and are ready to sing it. Most lead phrases in Plains songs start high,

an octave or so above the tonic or bottom tone, and the song gradually descends through the second, third, and fourth phrases to the bottom tone (tonic) which ends with the traditional *he-e ye-e yo!* in the middle of the song. The second half of the song is a repeat of the second, third, and fourth phrases, ending with *he-e ye-e yo* at the end. This five beat *he-e ye-e yo* is a "formula" ending phrase for the war dance and grass dance song form, and is recognized by all dancers young and old.

The observer at a powwow will soon notice that most of the dancers are careful to stop on the last beat of the song. In order to do this, they are listening to the song, and for the ending phrase. In dance contests, stopping on the last beat is essential, or the dancer can be disqualified. Songs are usually repeated from four to six or eight times through, but the number of repeats is not announced to the dancers. Instead, the lead singer will take up the lead phrase just a few beats before the group would have come to the end of the song. When the dancers hear the lead singer come in, they know the song will continue at least another time through. If they don't hear the lead singer come in, then they assume the song will end. Occasionally some lead singers will try to trick the dancers by waiting until the very last beat to take up the song, and many dancers will be tricked into stopping when the song continues.

There are some songs which are composed with "short endings," such as a three beat "he-ye-yo." They do not follow the expected pattern, and are known as "trick" songs for this reason. Lead singers will intentionally come in a little earlier than usual on these songs in order to conceal the ending phrase from the dancers. Other songs are composed with breaks right in the middle of the song where it is not expected at all. Dancers must continually learn the new songs which have these breaks, and remember them in order to dance to them properly.

Traditionally, especially in Southern Plains singing, war dance songs are sung several times through, and then ended. After a slight pause, the second half of the song is sung once more, and ended again. This is called the "tail" of the song. About 1970 it became fashionable on the Northern Plains to start the song again "off the tail." This has now become a widespread practice in powwow singing, although it is rarely done in the older-style war dance singing.

Sometimes words are put into a song for a specific purpose such as an honor song, a memorial song, or a song commemorating a particular event. Since these songs are

in the specific language of the composer, they are more difficult to learn by singers of another language who must learn to properly pronounce the words in the song. Word songs are often sung at powwow events to honor the flag, veterans, tribal leaders, elders, and for the old-style "traditional" dancers.

Experienced singers have hundreds of songs stored in their minds to draw from as the occasion requires. One of the merits of a good lead singer is the ability to quickly come up with the right song at the right time.

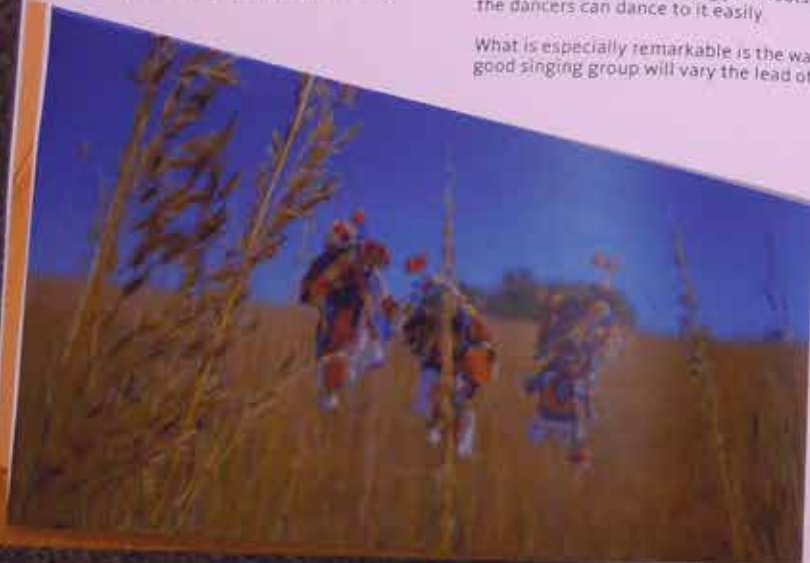
Drumming technique for Plains war dance and grass dance might sound deceptively simple to the novice listener. Actually it is a very difficult rhythmic style to master. In good Plains singing, the drum beat precedes the vocal beat of the song by a slight margin. Different tribes have different styles of drumming to a song — that is, a slightly different way the drum beat relates to the vocal beat of the song. Thus a group might be described as having a good grass dance beat, or a good war dance beat. When the drumming is not right, even the best song is difficult to dance to; but when the drumming is good, the song just floats, and the dancers can dance to it easily.

What is especially remarkable is the way a good singing group will vary the lead of the

drum beat against the vocal beat during the song, thus varying the amount of rhythmic tension of drum against voice at different parts of the song. Since there are usually six to ten or more singers in a group, each with a drumstick on the same drum, all the singers must "fean together" when varying this rhythmic tension. This kind of "fean" is best learned by singing with experienced singers for some time.

Since there are two beats, drum and vocal, going on at the same time, it might well be asked which beat the dancers follow. In a way, both of them. Traditionally, the dancer moves to the beat of the song, the vocal beat, but is also supported and strengthened by the beat of the drum. Occasionally, to challenge the dancers' ability to dance to the song alone, the singing group will stop drumming while continuing to sing, letting the dancers move entirely to the rhythm of the song. From a traditional point of view, there is really only one beat — the song and the drum together.

When the singing starts, people's hearts and spirits are lifted, and they begin to feel good. We hope that you enjoy the powwow and the singing — it all goes together.



How Music Came to the Earth

A great medicine man, who studies the four quarters of the world and the skies, walked the Earth and, noticing how silent it was, cried out with great sadness and pity for the people of the world.

He called out for the winds from the four quarters of the Earth,

"Come oh Wind!" "Come oh Wind!"
"Come oh Wind!" "Come oh Wind!"

The vast sorrowful winds gathered from over the face of the Earth and rose up, high into the sky. It whisked up the dust of the Earth into a cloud and whipped the seas into a froth. The trees too, bent one way and another, in the wake of the wind, until it arrived at the medicine man's camp.

The medicine man spoke.

"Wind, the world is sad and without hope. Earth is sick from silence. Here we have light and color and sweet fruits aplenty, but we have no music. We should give music to the world, to accompany the dawn, to brighten the dreams of the people and lull the infants in their mother's arms. There should be music in the flowing rivers and the playful breezes. Life should be all music! Go, Wind, through the boundless sadness that lies between the blue smoke of the sky and the vastness above, to the Mansion of the Sun. There our Father Sun is surrounded by musicians, and their music is sweet and broadcasts the sunlight in all directions. Go there and bring us back the best of those musicians and singers."

The wind launched himself up with all his strength to reach the roof of the world, where all melody resides in a hot hive of light in the Mansion of the Sun.

The Sun's musicians were of four colors. White for complexity, red were those of hot passions, love and war, blue of drifting clouds, dreams, trees and streams and yellow-gold were the melodies of gentle lullabies. All were bright and nowhere was there darkness or sadness.

When Father Sun saw the wind approaching he warned his musicians to stop their playing and their singing. For any who raised their voices would have to leave the Mansion of the Sun and go down to Earth.

The wind alighted on the stairs of the Mansion of the Sun and called to those inside.

"Come oh musicians!"

"Come oh Singers!"

None made answer. All were a silent, a silent Rainbow of glittering, circling dance of colors caught in the blazing glow of the Sun. Wind was enraged at the selfishness of sun and from the farthest corners and the deepest depths he launched forth swarms of blackened clouds, spun around and ripped through with his lightning lash. Flashing and rumbling they besieged the Mansion of the Sun.

From the endless deeps of his throat roared black thunder, and everything roundabout crumbled. The Sun was caught up in the seething blackness in the sky, a bleary redness in the dark.

The musicians and singers ran in great fear to seek shelter in the wind's embrace, and bearing them gently lest he jar their delicate melodies, with his arms full of joy and brightness, he dove down through the sky to Earth.

The wind beamed with happiness as all the Earth below raised its eyes up to heaven. Its whole face shone with anticipation, each tree lifting its arms up in welcome. The quetzal birds flew up and the faces of the flowers and the cheeks of the fruits, and all the voices of the people cheered as the company of musicians landed on the Earth.

The wind, no longer sorrowful, but all happiness now, sang through the air, kissed the seas and the high places, caressed the valleys and whistled through the trees, distributing music to all the four quarters of the Earth.

And so was music brought to Earth in the arms of the wind and all creation learned to sing. A chorus to accompany the dawn, a lullaby in the mouth of a parent, songs to brighten our dreams and lift the spirit. There is music in the flowing rivers and in the playful breezes.

Life was full of music from that time on!

BRULÉ

Native American musical traditions are fused with contemporary rock influences by pianist/keyboardist Brulé (born: Paul La Roche)

A member of the lower Brule Lakota nation who was adopted as an infant and raised in a non-Native family, Brulé uses music as a way to bring together the two cultures of his past. During a telephone interview, Brulé explained that his 2001 debut album, *We the People*, was "a means to bridge the gap between small town Americana and the Native American experience." His second album, *Lakota Piano*, released in 1999, featured piano interpretations of songs by '70s Native American rock band, XIT. Brulé's third album, *One Holy Night*, released the same year, was recorded with Robby Bee, the son of former XIT member and owner of the Native American-oriented SOAR label and its Natural Visions subsidiary, Tom Bee. With his fourth album, *One Nation*, released in September 1999, Brulé took a more global approach. "It's a further step in the evolving story of my life," he explained, "a way to bring all the people of the world together."

Brulé didn't discover his Native American heritage until he was in his thirties. Although born on the Lower Brule Sioux reservation in South Dakota, his Sioux parents, who raised him in the small farming town of Worthington, MN, did not tell him of his heritage. It wasn't until the death of both of his adoptive parents in 1987 that he became aware of his ancestry. He was reunited with his Lakota parents in 1996.

Brulé's music is the product of two cultures. Although he studied accordion as a youngster, he had little interest in music before hearing The Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand" at the age of eight. Inspired by what he heard, Brulé switched

to piano and became more serious in his musical studies. By the age of 14, Brulé was performing with a rock band that played throughout Minnesota and Iowa. Within two years, he was making enough money as a musician to devote his life to playing music. His earliest influences included rock bands such as Pink Floyd, the Rolling Stones, Deep Purple, and Uriah Heep and pop singer/songwriters including Billy Joel and James Taylor.

After discovering his Lakota heritage, Brulé began to incorporate Native American influences into his music. He adopted his stage name as a tribute to the tribe to which he was born.



ARVEL BIRD

Arvel Bird's "Celtic Indian" brand is a reflection of his mixed-blood American Indian and Celtic heritages—

With his violin, fiddle, Native flutes and Irish whistles, Arvel weaves a powerful tapestry of music and stories. From music festivals to concert halls, audiences get a glimpse into his Native American heart and Scottish soul.

Classically trained as a violinist, Arvel Bird's compositions and performances are a confluence of styles informed by his extraordinary love of diversity—from traditional Celtic tunes and bluegrass standards to his original Native American folk and Celtic rock orchestrations.

Arvel's first private violin teacher in Salt Lake City, UT encouraged him to play from his soul. Prophetically, she said, "Arvel, no one will remember if you're the best or the fastest, but they will remember your passion."

For two years, Arvel attended Arizona State University on music scholarship and later transferred to Champagne, Urbana, IL, where he

CELTIC INDIAN

studied classical violin with renowned Hungarian violinist and teacher, Paul Rostand. Although he had been playing for several years, Arvel credits Mr. Rostand with perfecting his performance technique.

As he worked to develop his own music style and a large following, Arvel went wherever the music called him, which led him away from classical and towards Bluegrass, Appalachian, Folk and Celtic. During his years in the Midwest, Arvel won the Indiana State Fiddle Contest four times while still perfecting a variety of performance styles.

In 1986 Arvel returned to Arizona and was hired by Glen Campbell to tour worldwide for the next six years. When the time came for him to make Nashville his home, he continued touring with Campbell and later added tours with Loretta Lynn, Tom T. Hall, Ray Price, Louise Mandrell, and Clay Walker.

During his 13 years in Nashville, Arvel built a master recording studio to help him launch his own independent record label, Singing Wolf Records. Initially the studio provided him with a haven to write and record his own music, and later recorded hundreds of songs and album projects for songwriters and independent artists.

One of Arvel's favorite aspects of touring is the worldwide travel to Scotland, England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and in prestigious locations including the Sky Dome in Toronto, Ontario, Royal Albert Hall in London, England, Smithsonian Museums in DC and NY, Hochstein Performance Hall in Rochester, NY and the Kennedy Space Center in Cocoa, FL just to name a few—with symphonies, chamber orchestras, large festivals and more, logging over 500,000 road miles.

A prolific songwriter, Arvel released

his 24th and 25th CDs in 2015 adding to his two EPs and two DVDs. Five of his releases have earned him international music awards. One of his most cherished is for his classical recording, Tribal Music Suite: Journey of a Paiute, a Celtic and Native American concerto for violin and Native American flute, that earned him Best Instrumental Album and Best Producer/Engineer (with Grammy-winning producer Tom Wasinger and Nashville engineer Chas Williams) at the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards. Other awards include Artist of the Year as voted by peers and fans as well as numerous Best Instrumentals.

Arvel's continuously evolving music is delighting audiences worldwide. In November 2015, he released "Celtic Indian," a reflection of his live shows. Arvel compiled many of the songs he performs and that have been released on other CDs, including two previously unreleased but popular performance songs. His latest release, Animal Totems 3, is a World Music CD reflecting the mood, environment and flavors from around the globe.

While enjoying the life of concerts and festivals, Arvel is also active in community outreach projects for local schools, community centers, and social clubs where he facilitates music and spiritual workshops, performances at retirement centers, nursing homes and more.

Although based in Nashville, TN, Arvel is permanently on the road, connecting with audiences the old-fashioned way, live. This is where Arvel's emotionally driven performances thrive, igniting concert venues, symphony halls, festivals and more, leaving his audiences inspired, transfixed and transformed.

CHEROKEE MORNING SONG

An example of a vocal song.

We n de ya ho

We n de ya ho

I am of the Great Spirit, Ho!
I am of the Great Spirit, Ho!

We n de ya

We n de ya

I am of the Great Spirit,
I am of the Great Spirit,

Ho, ho ho ho

He ya ho

He ya ho

Ya Ya Ya

Ho! It is so, it is so.

Great Spirit, Great Spirit, Great Spirit

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Singer-Photo by Mean Shadows on Unsplash

Native American Dance costume-Photo by Andrew James on Unsplash