CREATION'S JOURNEY: Native American Music
Presented by the National Museum of the American Indian

1 Prairie Chicken Dance (Blackfoot Crossing Singers) 1:57
2 Scalp Dance/Victory Dance (Comanche) 4:05
3 Two Step: Inform Your Grandma (D. J. Nez, Navajo) 1:59
4 Crown Dance (White Mountain Apache) 2:32
5 Butterfly Dance (Tewa) 10:15
6 New Women's Shuffle Dance (Young Nation, Seneca) 6:22
7 Constitution Breakdown (Lee Cremo Trio, Micmac) 2:08
8 Sheehan's Reel/Pigeon on the Gate (Lee Cremo Trio, Micmac) 2:24
9 A Beautiful Life (Kingfisher Trio, Cherokee) 2:04
10 On the Jericho Road (Kingfisher Trio, Cherokee) 2:52
11 Helana (Yup'ik) 1:28
12 Hello Song (Yup'ik) 2:40
13 Ladies Dance (Kwakiutl) 5:59
14 Peace Dance (Kwakiutl) 2:17
15 Sata Kallta (Comunidad Aymara de Laqaya, Aymara) 4:26
16 Axawiri Imilla (Comunidad Aymara de Laqaya, Aymara) 6:52
17 Son de la Danza de los Mixes (Zapotec) 4:52

Ceremonial, social, and contemporary music of Native Americans, who present ancient, living traditions along with innovations and crossovers to Euro-American musics.

These 1992 and 1995 recordings of music from the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Bolivia were selected by noted ethnomusicologist Charlotte Heth (Cherokee).

“This music is an elegant expression of the vibrant cultural life and diverse creativity of native peoples throughout the Americas.”

—Rick West (Southern Cheyenne), Director, NMAI

Smithsonian Folkways
Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings
Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies
955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC 20560

© 1994 SMITHSONIAN/FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS
Creation's Journey: Native American Music
Presented by the National Museum of the American Indian

1 Prairie Chicken Dance
   (Blackfoot Crossing Singers) 1:57
2 Scalp Dance/Victory Dance
   (Comanche) 4:05
3 Two Step, Inform Your Grandma
   (D. J. Nee, Navajo) 1:59
4 Crown Dance
   (White Mountain Apache) 2:52
5 Butterfly Dance
   (Tewa) 10:15
6 New Women's Shuffle Dance
   (Young Nation, Seneca) 6:42
7 Constitution Breakdown
   (Lee Creno Trio, Micmac) 2:08
8 Sheehan's Reel/Pigeon on the Gate
   (Lee Creno Trio, Micmac) 2:24
9 A Beautiful Life
   (Kingfisher Trio, Cherokee) 2:04
10 On the Jericho Road
    (Kingfisher Trio, Cherokee) 2:32
11 Helana
    (Yup'ik) 1:28
12 Hello Song
    (Yup'ik) 2:40
13 Ladies Dance
    (Kwakwutl) 5:59
14 Peace Dance
    (Kwakwutl) 2:17
15 Sata Kallta
    (Community Ayamara de Laquaya, Ayamara) 4:26
16 Axawiri Imilla
    (Community Ayamara de Laquaya, Ayamara) 6:52
17 Son de la Danza de los Mixes
    (Zapoteco) 4:52

FOREWORD

No cultural or artistic expression is more central to Native American life than music and dance. Children are taught to respect the ways of their people through songs and dances. Indeed, Iroquois tradition maintains that children who can't dance well were born of mothers who didn't dance when they were pregnant. Perhaps no form of native creativity is more enduring than music—the songs of the Aymara contain echoes of the beautiful Andean flute and ocarina music described by Spanish chroniclers, while the haunting synthesis of Baptist hymns and the Cherokee language captures one native group's response to the challenge of contact with European culture. Nor is any art more diverse—Native American music encompasses social and ceremonial dances, oral histories and personal stories passed on in song, and traditional and Christian religious music. Finally, no art is more immediate than music.

It gives great pleasure, as director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, in helping bring to a wider audience the musicians and singers on Creation's Journey: Native American Music Presented by the National Museum of the American Indian. Dedicated to the preservation, study, and exhibition of the histories and lifeways of the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere, the museum is committed to fostering living native cultures—by reaffirming traditions and beliefs, encouraging contemporary artistic expression, and empowering the Indian voice.

The museum will ultimately comprise three facilities, each born of consultations between museum staff and native peoples. The George Gustav Heye Center at the Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House, opened in October 1994, serves as an exhibition and education facility in New York City. The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C., is scheduled to open in 2001 on the National Mall. A tribute to the heritage and continuing contribution of Native American peoples, the museum will be a center for ceremonies, performances,
and educational programs, as well as an exhibition space for Indian art and material culture. The Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland, scheduled to open in 1997, will welcome scholars and non-scholars, Indians and non-Indians, who wish to study the museum's collections. Of equal importance are extensive outreach programs that will provide access to the museum's cultural and educational resources to audiences who may never have an opportunity to visit the East Coast facilities.

We are pleased to have had the opportunity to work with Smithsonian/Folkways on this first recording produced by the National Museum of the American Indian. Likewise, we are delighted to have had the guidance of Charlotte Heth, who chose the material on this recording and provided all text on the music. Dr. Heth, former chairperson of the Department of Ethnomusicology and Systematic Musicology at the University of California, Los Angeles, former director of the American Indian Program at Cornell University, and former director of the American Indian Studies Center at UCLA, has just joined the staff of NMAI as Assistant Director for Public Programs. She was also the general editor of the museum's first major publication, *Native American Dance: Ceremonies and Social Traditions* (1992, Fulcrum Publishing).

This recording and its companion book *Creation's Journey: Native American Identity and Belief* (1994, Smithsonian Institution Press) complement the exhibition *Creation's Journey: Masterworks of Native American Identity and Belief*, on view at the Heye Center until February 1997. Yet the music presented here also stands alone as an eloquent expression of the vibrant cultural life and diverse creativity of native peoples throughout the Americas.

W. Richard West, Jr.
Director
(Southern Cheyenne and member of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma)
The voice is the most important instrument in Native American music, embracing many kinds of performances—solas, call and response, unison chorus, and multi-part songs, some with instrumental accompaniment. The singers typically perform in their native languages, but often include “vocables” (non-translatable syllables, such as ke, ya, ho, oo, etc.) to carry the melody and fill out the poetic and musical lines. Solo contemporaries and instrumentalists complete the repertoires. Some Indian groups use simple, short songs with many repetitions while others prefer lengthy song cycles. The choices of scales, rhythms, meters, and vocal styles vary according to area, tribe, ceremony, and genre, and sometimes even reflect individual preference.

The musicians choose from a variety of instruments—mainly rattles, drums, scrapers, flutes, whistles, and strings. Singers and dancers use hand-held vessel rattles or clappers, and tie rattles on their arms and legs, or attach them to their clothing. Performers play many drum types, from small water drums to large bass and box drums of many shapes and varieties. Frequently, several persons play the same drum simultaneously or play similar drums in concert. Other instruments like rasps and bullroarers are less common. Flutes, whistles, panpipes, musical bows, fiddles, guitars, and other plucked strings are more common in Central and South America than in North America.

NORTH AMERICAN PLAINS

1. Prairie Chicken Dance / Blackfoot Crossing Singers / Blackfeet (Chorus: Fred Breaker, Radak Blackrider, Joe Weaselchild, Eldon Weaselchild, Herman Yellow Old Woman, Larry Whyte)

The Blackfoot Crossing Singers from the Siksika (Blackfoot) Nation in Montana, perform the old songs and songs that were composed both by relatives and by members of their drum group. Their song style is typical of Northern Plains music with the singers starting high, his chorus echoing him, and all singing together to the end of each repetition. The melodies typically descend in terraced fashion throughout the piece.

According to Eldon Weaselchild, the Prairie Chicken Dance is a song that was passed on from generation to generation. It was given to a high-ranking warrior by the spirit of a prairie chicken. The dancer mimics the mating movements of a prairie chicken. The shifts and variations in the drum beats accentuate these changes.


In the setting of a powwow or gathering of tribes, music and dance highlight the activities. Each event is marked by many social dances, honoring dances, and specialty dances. While the forms resemble those of the Northern Plains, the Southern Plains vocal style heard here is different—there is a lot of syllabic register, no falsetto, and are more relaxed. Even so, the songs ordinarily start in the tenor range and descend throughout.

The Scalp Dance, presented here by Comanche people from Oklahoma, showcases women who wear war bonnets and dance with war lances to celebrate victory. Counting coup (striking a warrior) in hand-to-hand combat and scalping a man under extremely dangerous circumstances were proofs of bravery. The scalp was a trophy, proof of success to be used in the Victory Dance. In a public setting like this one, the voices of the women are loud, both in singing and in agriculturally-induced (high-pitched wordless cries). The varied drum patterns signal changes in the dance movements.

Of the Scalp Dance, Elton Yellowfish writes, “This dance is to recognize the spoils of war, namely human scalps taken during hand-to-hand combat. And the scalp return to the campsite, the women would take the scalp which had the scalp tied to it. The women usually were relatives of the returning warriors. . . They would take the dance and dance with it, holding it high so all could see the trophy. It was a good sign and caused a successful feeling among the women that their sons or husbands returned alive. As they danced, they would let out a shrill yell as an expression of victory. The Scalp Dance usually lasted for a brief period of time, perhaps an hour. The songs were specially designed for the Scalp Dance. Words in the songs told of the battle or described the character of a warrior.”

“The Victory Dance,” writes Yellowfish, “was performed by both men and women. They danced side by side in a circle, counterclockwise. The same lance and scalp were used as symbols of victory. The Victory Dance songs told stories of battle encounters, including a description of
the enemy. It was a happy occasion for everyone to dance the Victory Dance, which usually lasted for several hours. The dance was performed in full regalia. Both dances and songs are not usually performed within the present-day powwow activities. They are indicative of the songs and dances of yesteryear. Today, these dances are performed upon special request and on special occasions."

SOUTHWESTERN UNITED STATES

5. Two-Step: Inform Your Grandma
D.J. Nez / Navajo

The Two-Step is one example of a social dance associated with the Navajo Ndaau or Enemy Way Chant (Ndau). A healing ceremony, to purify Navajos who have encountered the ghosts of non-Navajos, the Enemy Way is performed many times between spring and fall, and features nighttime public social dancing. In recent years, returning veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces have been purified through this dance.

The 'Two-Step, or jop ashí (literally, "two walking"), involves male/female partners dancing within a larger group circle. The entire group reverses directions between songs. The Two-Step shows several new compositions. This piece, "Inform Your Grandma," was composed by Mr. Nez.

Dan Jim "D.J." Nez, a well-known singer from Mariano Lake, New Mexico, accompanies himself on a small water drum.

4. Crown Dance (Gaan Yiyayu) / White Mountain Apache (Singer: Ramsey Burnett)

Other participants: Lyndon Guy, Mathias Hoffman, Samson Hoffman, Christopher Perry, Corrine Perry, Edgar Perry

The Crown Dance is an important event among the White Mountain Apache of Arizona. The dance invokes the power of the gaan, potent spiritual beings who once lived among the White Mountain Apache and whose spirits now dwell in the mountains. Dancers, wearing elaborate headdress or crowns, have the power to drive away evil, grant blessings, and heal the sick. Although Crown dances today take place largely in conjunction with the Sunrise Ceremony, a very sacred White Mountain Apache ceremony that helps to prepare an adolescent girl for adulthood, the music and dance can be presented publicly with certain aspects modified or omitted.

The music resembles, to some extent, the Navajo selection, with some major differences. Although we have alternative vocals and Apache words in the text, the words are treated differently. They are declaimed in a recitative style on one or two pitches only, for emphasis. In a traditional setting the singer would use a water drum (instead of the rawhide drum heard here) and would have other singers to help him.

5. Butterfly Dance / Tewa (Drummers/singers: Peter Garcia, Carpio Trujillo, San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico. Other participants: Lorri Adams, Tanya Lopez, Cecilio Martinez, Jenelle Masarenas, Jeff Montoya, Daniel Moya, Robert Grosco, George Rivera, Rebecia Virrrial, Poirajque Pueblo, New Mexico)

The Butterfly Dance is an example of a song that has changed little throughout time. It is performed in the spring by a couple; the woman wears an outfit with feather wings and antennae resembling those of a butterfly, while the man wears white pants, shirt, otter-skin frontlet, rain sack, and ankle bells. He carries a war club made of white obsidian that he brandishes during the faster portions of the dance. The entrance, called the wassa, allows the couple to enter the plaza in a zigzag pattern, the woman following the man. The dance proper features faster, more vigorous movements and steps by the dancers.

EASTERN UNITED STATES AND CANADA

6. New Women's Shuffle Dance (Askaayoe Gagnayosay) / Young Nation / Seneca (Leader: Gary Parker; Chorus: Darrin Jimerson, Mike Henry, Scott Logan, Aaron Jacobs, Jr.)

As d'matriarchalSociety, the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) revere women because of their life-giving gift, bestowed by the Creator. As an expression of respect, exclusively female songs and dances are dedicated to women's sustaining role in society.

There are two types of Women's Shuffle Dance songs—the older ceremonial songs and the later, newly composed social dance songs. The repertoire is extensive, as newer women's dance songs are composed and added, increasing the number of songs shared and exchanged throughout Haudenosaunee communities.

This piece, which consists of several songs, begins with the water drum, cow-horn rattles, and a solo singer. Then the chorus joins in, and all sing in unison through several repetitions to the end of the song. The second, third, and fourth songs spin out in the same way as the first. The vocal style is relaxed, with some tension on the highest pitches. Women dance by shuffling their feet on the ground to keep in touch with the earth.

Young Nation, from the Tonawanda Band of Senecas, New York, participate in private Longhouse ceremonies as well as taking part in the powwow circuit.

7. Constitution Breakdown / Lee Creno Trio / Micmac (Lee Creno, fiddle; Vincent Joe, piano; Wilfred Paul, guitar)

Centuries ago, settlers, primarily from Scotland, brought their music to Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. Today, Scottish/Irish traditional music remains very popular and widespread. The fiddle is the dominant lead instrument, with backup rhythm played on piano and, sometimes, guitar. Lee Creno, Vincent Joe, and Wilfred Paul, all Micmac Indians from Cape Breton, have been playing traditional Celtic music all their lives, and are highly regarded by their non-native musician counterparts. Because the Micmac have been playing this music for so long, they now regard it as their own.

"Constitution Breakdown," a composition of Lee Creno's, is a fast fiddle melody that alternates between leaps and adjacent tones to create a lively piece, with fiddle adding ornaments and double stops throughout. In 4/4 time, this polka is the kind of tune commonly heard at dances and house parties.
This medley has the same ensemble quality as the previous selection, and is also in 4/4 time. Featuring the variety and complexity characteristic of Irish reels, with modulations and several shifts into minor keys, this piece displays the virtuosity of the players. Both of these reels are standards in the repertoires of Irish musicians on either side of the Atlantic.

CHEROKEE CHRISTIAN SONGS

9. A Beautiful Life / Kingfisher Trio / Cherokee (Jack Kingfisher, guitar; Betty Kingfisher, Wesley Kingfisher)

Members of the Johnson Prairie Indian Baptist Church near Tahlequah, Oklahoma, the Kingfisher Trio synthesize Baptist hymns and the Cherokee language in their singing.

The Christianization of many members of the Cherokee Nation has created a new kind of Indian music—hymns and gospel songs. While both Cherokees and missionaries adapted some of the songs directly from Protestant models, others are unique. All are sung in Cherokee, and the translations of the Cherokee texts often do not match their English counterparts. The first Cherokee hymnbook was printed in the Sequoyah syllabary (commonly referred to as the Cherokee Alphabet) in 1829 without tunes and has been revised throughout the years. Some tunes have been passed down through oral tradition since the 1820s. In addition to the published hymn texts, there are new songs being composed constantly for Cherokee "sings," particularly by family groups.

The vocal quality, for the most part, is nasal, as are the vowels of the Cherokee language. Characteristically, the hymns also feature some glottal stops along with many sliding attacks and releases. The vocal line is broken up with chorus echoes and responses. Guitar accompaniment here reinforces the harmony.

As with many metric hymns, the words can be sung to several tunes. These words appear also with "Jesus My All." Translated as "God's son, to Heaven he went, on whom I depend. Where he went, I will follow. The narrow road where Christians have gone, where God's throne is, now, I'm surely going." The woman's response emphasizes the word "heaven" (galunlaf). The verse and chorus here are sung twice.

10. On the Jericho Road / Kingfisher Trio / Cherokee (Jack Kingfisher, guitar; Betty Kingfisher, Wesley Kingfisher)

A direct translation from the English into Cherokee by Joe O'Field, "On the Jericho Road" (original composed by Donald S. McCrossan, ©1955 by the Stamps-Baxter Music Co.) tells of how Christ, while walking along the Jericho Road, ministered to the people on his travels there. "Jericho" becomes jeligo in Cherokee. Again, the singers repeat the same verse and chorus.
morning when I take a walk I see one of my huddles, my cousin, and he recognizes me and shakes hands with me.' And then another chorus in which he says it's early morning when he took a walk and saw his old girlfriend, and she recognized him and said hello to him, and shook hands with him. After that I don't think it was true. 'That's what the song is about. That's all.'

The frame drums underscore the unison ensemble singing in the piece. The singers alternate singing with retributive and play a variety of drum rhythms with many stops and starts.


This selection is performed by Kwakitul people from Alert Bay in British Columbia (Canada), all of whom represent the Umista Cultural Society. Bill Cranmer, Board Chairman of the society, explains that the Ladies Dance is part of the Ts'ek'a or Red Cedar Bark Ceremony. There are many different songs for the Ladies dances and other dances that are part of the Ts'ek'a.

In this dance, the women move in time with the music and follow the words with their hands. The song starts with a leader and several drummers playing a large drum. A chorus answers, and then the leader and chorus alternate throughout, with their parts sometimes overlapping. The drum remains a constant but plays different patterns as needed. Often the drummers play a tremolo to emphasize the leader's part.


Bill Cranmer explains that "the Peace Dance Song is one of the many songs sung during the Peace Dance Ceremonies, which are quite separate and distinct from the Red Cedar Bark Ceremonies [see previous selection]. These songs are handed down from generation to generation, although there are some new songs composed for special occasions."

Although similar to the previous selection, this piece adds rattles to the ensemble, and shouts are interspersed.

MEXICO AND SOUTH AMERICA


This a capella song, performed in a call-and-response fashion, is called Axxawiri Imiila (Axxawiri is a type of potato; Imiila is a young woman). It is sung during the Quachwa or Night Ceremony, which is held during the late spring-early summer (December-January) when the potato fields are maturing. Young men and women go into the potato fields in the evening and sing Quachwiri (songs of the Quachwa Ceremony) all night, asking Mother Nature to bring good weather and abundant crops. In the song, the women represent the potato, while the men represent the frost and hail that can destroy the potato crop. These two opposing forces fight for control, but eventually they join together in the song—saying, let's bring these strengths together to promote a good harvest. The Quachwa Ceremony also has social importance because it is time to sow the fields and ask for a fruitful crop. The song is like a prayer to Mother Nature to bring good weather and an abundant potato harvest.

Musically, the dance rhythms underlay the entire song, with the men's flutes and women's voices alternating on the melody. The unison voices are tense, loud, and fall into a narrow range.

is an opportunity for the single men and women of the community to meet and fall in love.

17. Son de la Danza de los Mixes / Zapotec

In the province of Oaxaca, in Mexico’s Northern Sierras, the Zapotec are one of sixteen different ethnic groups; the Mixes are neighbors of the Zapotec. This musical piece, called a son, is played as an accompaniment to the Danza de los Mixes, or Mixes Dance, one of the many traditional dances performed by the Zapotecs during their ceremonial fiestas. Each dance has its own son, which determines the rhythm and type of movement performed. The music reflects the humorous way the Zapotecs depict the Mixes. The brass band instruments are not out of tune—their sound is deliberate and reflects the Zapotec tuning style.

Unlike many of the other pieces on this album, the dancing here is to instrumental music. Because the ensemble moves with the dancers, we hear many changes in sound levels throughout this selection, with the musicians leading us and the dancers gently in and out of the piece. The main section of the son is loud and joyous. Played in 6/8 time, the form has alternating AABB sections with minor variations throughout. The instruments featured here include bass drum, snare drum, cymbals, tuba, French horn, two trombones, two saxophones, two trumpets, and two clarinets.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anthologies, Collections, and References


North American Plains


Native American Music on Folkways

Between 1949 and 1987, when the Smithsonian Institution acquired the label, Folkways Records issued more than 60 albums of the music of American Indians from North and South America, and of Inuit music. These include live recordings made in traditional contexts and contemporary social music. All titles are available on cassette through Smithsonian/Folkways Mail Order.

Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings has issued several Native American titles, available through Smithsonian/Folkways Mail Order and in finer record stores. These include:

Naraajo Songs. SF 4045.
Mountain Music of Peru. SF 4020.
Mountain Music of Peru, Vol. 2. SF 4046.
Borderlands: From Conunto to Chicken Scrutch. SF 4048.
Music of New Mexico: Native American Traditions. SF 4048.
Plains Chippeua/Metis Music from Turtle Mountain. SF 4041.