

A Hopi in Two Musical Worlds

Jacob Coin

When our people first emerged onto this, the Fourth World, they came upon Massau, guardian of this world. Our people asked to live here and were given permission to do so with certain conditions. Massau instructed that to live here we must adopt four basic guides for our lives. First, we must have *na'wakinpi* (prayer), a way of communicating with our Creator. Second, we must have *tup'tseuni* (a religion) for spiritual guidance. Third, Massau said we must have *ka'tsi* (a culture), a way of life that distinguishes us from others. Finally, Massau said we must have *navo'ti* (prophecy) to guide our people into the future.

Massau might also have instructed the people that to live in balance in the Fourth World, we must have music and song as a vehicle for integrating the four basic guides into our lives. As long as humanity has been here, music and song have been a primary means of teaching and learning the ways of the Fourth World.

As a young boy, I came to expect songs of the kachina to be a vehicle for learning the ways of the Hopi. Their songs told of the virtues of waking before sunrise and giving prayers; of having a good heart and respect for the environment and all living things. We understand that these virtues and others are basic to the Hopi way. At a young age all Hopi learn that teaching is one of the many roles music and song have in traditional Hopi life.

Universally among Indians, music is a part of the social environment, a medium for teaching the ways of tribal life, and a means of passing tribal and clan histories from one generation to the next. It is an instrument for learning the natural order of the world and of the universe and for understanding humanity's relationship with the earth and other living things. Indian people

use music and song as a guide and a gauge for social conscience; music and song keep tribal mores and social expectations visible for all of the people. Music has certainly always been a key to spiritual growth among Indian and Native peoples. Above all, music is an invaluable entertainment medium and food for the heart and soul for all mankind.

For the most part, contemporary Indian and other Native musicians and songwriters accept and remain true to the traditional roles of music. For the contemporary Native musician, music is more than simply entertainment. Like their ancestors, today's Native artists agree that a commitment to music in its role as teacher is an important responsibility to be upheld.

Being a Hopi Indian and a musician/songwriter, I find guidance and inspiration for my music in traditional Hopi roots. I experiment with a matrix of techniques in using traditional Native musical forms and styles to create contemporary songs. In the end, I believe that traditional music and contemporary music are extensions of each other. The primary challenge is to bridge the gap between traditional and modern music effectively.

I have tried to do this by three methods. First, I pull the meaning of a traditional song into a contemporary piece by translating the song's lyrics into English and then composing a melody and defining a beat that conveys the meaning of the song as it was originally intended by the traditional composer. This is perhaps the easiest method, since it amounts to composing new music for existing lyrics without having to be faithful to the all-important original melody.

Second, I score a traditional song in its entirety for Western instrumentation, including guitar, piano, vocals, and the like. In this process

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Members of a group of *Pai-a-kya-mûh*, or Tewa clowns, one of the priesthood fraternities at Walpi, Hopi Reservation, appear to be adjusting regalia. In place of masks, these clowns wear close-fitting white caps with long horns tufted with corn husks. Among their duties is to sprinkle corn pollen on kachinas to honor Mas-sau. Photo ca. 1891, courtesy National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

I try to be faithful to the original melody, which is often difficult because traditional songs are composed solely for voice, and instrumentation often cannot exactly replicate notes produced by the human voice.

Third, I weave traditional songs together with contemporary musical forms, allowing both to express themselves in the composition. This practice is most innovative — and preferred — since it allows an artist complete freedom to create new music and new songs utilizing both influences.

For the most part, the drum was the primary instrument for Native music. Over time, drums were supplemented with flutes and rattles of various kinds. As the use of these instruments evolved, so did traditional music. The pattern of this evolution is created by traditional music's continual reaching out to embrace its developing contemporary relative.

Today, other instruments besides the drum have become accepted vehicles for the musical thoughts of Native artists. Guitar and other stringed instruments, flutes and various percussion instruments have become the norm in the orchestration of contemporary Native songs.

What would really rock (and shock!) our ancestors would be the revolution brought by electrified instruments and electronic special effects. Of all Native musicians and songwriters, Keith Secola (Ojibwa) of Phoenix, Arizona and Buddy Red Bow (Oglala Sioux) of Pine Ridge, South Dakota, have been most successful in

maintaining the integrity of Native sound patterns while expanding on them with electric instrumentation and special effects.

Ronald Smith of Minneapolis, Minnesota, a Mandan/Hidatsa traditional singer/composer with the Eagle Whistle Drum, suggests that the inevitable evolution of music, both Native and contemporary, is a good reflection of social change at any given time. Without judging it, Ron describes today's music as a snapshot of society. According to Ron, the evolution of Indian music reflects the dynamism of Indian peoples — "We are not a people even close to extinction."

Has traditional music changed? It has really evolved. Traditional music has reached out and touched the 21st century. The fortunate result for both worlds is that Native musicians still understand and value the many social roles of music. Native musicians will continue to compose songs that have meaning, that have their genesis in traditional ideas and inspirations. Native musicians are to be recognized, just as their ancient predecessors have been, as teachers of thought conveyed through music and song.

Massau surely knew the importance of music in the Fourth World. He would never have insisted on people having Prayer, Religion, Culture and Prophecy without assuming music as a medium for carrying them forward. Good for us, music continues to fill our hearts and minds with the good things of the Fourth World.