



The Porcupine Singers and
Dakota Chamber Orchestra Present
The Lakota Music Project



Wednesday, May 20, 2009 - 7:00 pm
Crystal Theatre, Flandreau

Thursday, May 21, 2009 - 7:00 pm
Multi-Cultural Center, Sioux Falls

Friday, May 22, 2009 - 7:00 pm
SGU Multi-Purpose Building, Mission

Saturday, May 23, 2009 - 6:00 pm
Red Cloud Indian School, Pine Ridge

Sunday, May 24, 2009 - 2:00 pm
1st Congregational Church of Christ, Rapid City

BLACK HILLS OLOWAN by Brent Michael Davids

“Black Hills Olowan” is a concert work for American Indian singers and orchestra that honors the Black Hills of South Dakota, and features the Porcupine Singers. In the introductory portions of “Black Hills Olowan,” the singers are integrated with the symphonic instruments, almost as if they are another instrumental section of the orchestra. However, the concluding moments of the work feature the singers as a leading voice, driving the symphony along to its rousing conclusion. The importance of the Black Hills to the original inhabitants of the land, is well articulated by Dr. Ronnie Theisz:

“The Black Hills of western South Dakota and Eastern Wyoming known to the Lakota as Paha Sapa (Black Hills) and He Sapa (Black Mountains) hold a revered place in the history and culture especially of the Lakota and Cheyenne nations, but also for others such as the Mandan, Arikara, and Kiowa. For the Lakota, sacred oral tradition has preserved the significance of the Black Hills as “the heart of everything that is.” Many sites in and around the Black Hills still vibrate with geomythological significance. The 19th century confrontation with the expanding United States made the Black Hills into a flashpoint, a place of confrontation, exploitation, and conflict in military, legal, spiritual, economic, environmental, and symbolic terms. The Black Hills was taken from the Lakota in the Act of 1877, a taking found ultimately to be illegal by the United States Supreme Court a century later. The refusal to relinquish their Black Hills, guaranteed by the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, has become a Lakota cause célèbre still today.

The intertribal dancing song called Heart Butte Special was originally composed by the Dine singer and composer Arlie Neskahi. The widely known Porcupine Singers on a trip to the Browning Montana celebration in the early 1980s requested permission to perform and record this song which was to become one of their trademark and most popular intertribal songs” (R. D. Theisz).

“Black Hills Olowan” was commissioned by the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra for a Native American tour with support of the American Composers Forum and the National Endowment for the Arts.



Concert Repertoire

Delta David Gier, Conductor

Barry LeBeau, Narrator

JOHN STAFFORD SMITH *Star-Spangled Banner*
Lyrics by **Francis Scott Key**
Robert Moore, tenor

ELLIS CHIPS *Lakota Flag Song*
CHRIS BIG EAGLE
BEN BLACK ELK

COURTSHIP AND LOVE

BEN SITTING UP *Rabbit Song*
PIOTR TCHAIKOVSKY *Romeo and Juliet Overture—Fantasy*
(excerpt)
RICHARD WAGNER *Siegfried Idyll*
(excerpt)

THE SPIRITUAL WARRIOR/SOLDIER

ANON. *World War II Veteran's Song*
SERGE PROKOFIEV The Death of Tybalt
from *Romeo and Juliet* (excerpt)
ARAM KHACHATURIAN Sabre Dance from *Gayneh*

DEATH AND MOURNING

SAMUEL BARBER *Adagio for Strings*
SEVERT YOUNG BEAR, SR. *Mourning Song*

JOY AND AFFIRMATION

GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL Overture from *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (excerpt)
AARON COPLAND Variations on a Shaker Melody from
Appalachian Spring
SEVERT YOUNG BEAR, SR. *Intertribal Special Song*

Intermission

JEFFREY PAUL *Desert Wind / Harmony's Song*
MELVIN YOUNG BEAR
BRENT MICHAEL DAVIDS *Black Hills Olowan*

DESERT WIND by Jeffrey Paul

The inspiration for “Desert Wind” comes from an atmosphere that ties together both physically and emotionally, and is largely introspective. That atmosphere is loneliness.

Loneliness is both depicted and dealt with in the piece, and in the end the “loneliness” becomes “aleness” which provides more opportunity for one to find beauty, comfort, and enlightenment in it—overall a very positive outlook on a landscape that appears barren and desolate on the surface. We are meant to revel in it, finding peace and even warmth inside ourselves.

I first decided to explore this idea musically after having lived in South Dakota for a year or two, before which I was in Southern California for most of my life. I was fondly remembering my various road trips that happened frequently through late high school and college, and even during my family’s move to the Midwest. The desert landscapes of the California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah interstates were always particularly poignant to me, and I was surprised to discover that the high plains and prairie landscapes in South Dakota were really quite similar (after you factor out the temperature) and that the feeling I got from the Dakotan prairies was intimately related. I came up with the piece, and was hopeful that the melody would be able to reach anyone who has had a certain intimacy with the prairie environment, including Lakota communities. I felt that the sound of my piece and the sound of traditional Lakota song, though very different, would complement each other profoundly, and have been working hard to weave and integrate the two together in my new expansion.

Formally speaking, the piece is mono-thematic, and I have sewn together a sort of consilient theme and variations, being extremely careful not to abstract the theme very much, as my intent is to maintain the singularity and clarity of the melody and atmosphere with only the most minute changes. It might be better described as a “Theme-and- Varied-Repetitions” sort of thing. I have drawn notable inspiration from the music of Neil Young, and some from Flamenco guitar music. My textures are intended to toe the line, sometimes crossing from one side to the other, between the constant and constantly changing winds (physically), and some of the feelings you might get from them, from the solemn to the invigorating, all the while maintaining the fundamental oneness beneath the variations.

When hearing the piece **Desert Wind** by Jeff Paul, I had this feeling of peace, comfort, aloneness to think. When I was asked to help with this project, I instantly thought of a song that I composed for my granddaughter Harmony. When composing this song, I was holding her on my lap and suddenly I felt peace, comfort, happiness and this song came about. The tone, rhythm and meaning of these two songs that will come together in Jeff Paul's piece is a dream come true.

My name is **Melvin D. Young Bear**, my father is the late Severt Young Bear I and my mother is the late Rachel LeClaire. I was born in Pine Ridge, SD and raised in Porcupine, SD. I am the Oglala Sioux Tribal Cultural Liaison. I'm currently the drum keeper and lead singer for the Porcupine Singers. I began singing in 1980 and I'm one of the founders of the drum the Brotherhood Singers. Before my father Severt Young Bear I passed on, he told me to carry on the drum and not to let it die out, because he sacrificed a lot to keep on the tradition of our music.

In the 1960s, 70s, and early 80s one of the pre-eminent drum groups on the North American powwow circuit was the **Porcupine Singers** from the Pine Ridge Sioux reservation of South Dakota, led by Severt Young Bear, Sr., the 'Keeper of the Drum.' The Porcupine Singers were known for their vast repertoire of old sacred Lakota music as well as their own compositions for the wacipi (dance celebration) and drum contests. Now headed by Keeper of the Drum Melvin Young Bear, the 'new' Porcupine Singers are honoring their mentors by staying true to the traditional—and correct—presentation of the old songs and entertaining powwow dancers and audiences at tribal celebrations around the country. Because of the heritage that they keep alive and the legacy of their forefathers that they carry on, the Porcupine Singers were asked to participate in a bold new direction for the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra—the **Lakota Music Project**.

Incorporating the sounds of the traditional Lakota drum and vocals with the Euro-classical orchestra will prove that music has no national or political boundaries, that music has no barriers to expression. You will hear the sounds of the prairie, you will hear South Dakota.

Robert D. Moore, an enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, is serving his second consecutive term as an elected Council member of the Tribe. Musically, and as a "preacher's kid," Robert has been singing since early childhood and credits his parents as his first music teachers! He went on to study voice at the prestigious Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver as well as with private voice coaches throughout the US. He has performed in concert in churches and secular venues throughout the United States. He has distinguished himself by performing the National Anthem for President Clinton and twice for the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1996 and again in Denver in 2008, making him the first to do so. In all the many exciting places and the many audiences who have heard him, Robert adds that his favorite place to sing is at home on the Rosebud at the church founded by his father and for events around the reservation.

Thank you to everyone who made this tour possible!

Flandreau: South Dakota Arts Council member Karen Tufty, Chuck Tufty, The Crystal Theatre, Sara DeClerk, Flandreau Senior Center, Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe

Sioux Falls: Qadir Aware, Sioux Falls Multi-Cultural Center

Rosebud: Sinte Gleska University, Lionel Bordeaux, Jack Herman, Delores Barron, Connie One Star

Pine Ridge: Red Cloud Indian School, Peter Strong, The Heritage Center staff, Angie Stover

Rapid City: 1st Congregational Church of Christ, Rev. Ted Huffman, South Dakota Arts Council member Ruth Brennan

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