

LYRICS · Φ · THE · RED · MAN

BY · HARVEY · VORHINGTON · LOOMIS



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*"The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering it?"*
—Walt Whitman.

FOREWORD.

IT is rather remarkable that with the wealth of Indian melody in this country it has not until now begun to lend its share to the musical development of our composers. Before the inauguration of the Wa-Wan Press, it had taken practically no part in the history of American music and yet the Red Man's song has always been within earshot, but we have listened with unlistening ears, and it is only lately that ethnologists have called the attention of musicians to the interesting melodies of our forests and plains. The former popular idea that the Indian had no music was fully as unfounded and ignorant as is the popular conception of the Indian in general. As a matter of fact it has been found that music has always been a passion with the Red Man and has been a pervading ingredient in almost every relation of the American aborigines.

If composers of this country had chosen Indian themes as a basis for some of their work in the past, it is possible that they would have escaped ere this from the narrowing thrall of European tradition. The negro melodies with their plaintive beauty and our more modern street-music—street-music is folk-music—with its wonderful new rhythms of re-syncopated syncopation within syncopation, commonly known as "rag-time," have given us already a distinctively Cis-Atlantic characteristic. We are beginning to open our ears to the swan song of the Red Man and the rude chant of the cowboy and it is inevitable that the next generation will be able to show the Europeans symphonic developments of music from our own soil,—heretofore it has always been a more or less scholarly imitation of Schumann, Wagner or Grieg. Until we speak a language of our own we may not hope to claim the serious attention of the musical world.

The question is frequently put: "The Indians have no harmony; why should we harmonize their melodies?" This is not an intelligent objection. No folk music was ever sung to harmonic accompaniment in its original state. But consider what a wealth of beauty would have been denied the world had composers refrained from giving harmonic substructure to folk-song. "Aida," "Carmen," Liszt's Rhapsodies, Kelley's "Aladdin Suite," Stanford's "Shamus O'Brien" and many other masterpieces would have remained unimagined. An imposing proportion of the work of Grieg, Saint-Saens, Rubinstein, Dvorak, Tschaiikowsky, Rimsky Korsakoff—the list is far from complete—belongs in the category of idealized folk music. But in every instance it has been either the harmonic or the orchestral color that has put the ethnological stamp upon the melodic specimen. A negro song often resembles an Irish tune. Dvorak will place the former where it belongs and Stanford the latter by means of harmonic differentiation. Scotch music is frequently suggestive of Chinese, but Mackenzie leads you into a field of heather while Kelly invites you to a Feast of Lanterns. Indian music may smell of sweet-grass or a revival meeting according to who harmonizes it. For the esthetic purpose the revival meeting is the last *milleu* where we should care to see the Red Man, but unfortunately the existing harmonizations of his melodies generally smack of the tawdry Gospel Hymn tune. The smug plausibility of tonic and dominant can never express the untamed music of the mesa and the prairie.

These melodies *alone* say nothing to us*—no melody speaks if it lack some imaginable harmony.

Melody is the skyline of a melody, a mere silhouette against a silence, the cornice of a structure, one flat surface of a cube, for music is a solid. The notes that the Indian sings are the smallest part of his music. It is the *vibrato* of his voice, the rhythm of the chant, the warring scheme of drum beats, his refined disregard of pitch, and of that conflicting tonality which his neighbor essays—these things go to fulfil the true beauty of its barbaric ugliness. The gnarled oak is none the less lovely. As well attempt to represent a cat purring by rattling a tambourine as to characterize Indian music by thumping upon the piano a few naked notes of melody. When we hear the Red Man singing among the sounds and silences of forest and sky the musical picture is complete, but if we are to translate it into terms of art we must use the artifices of civilization. We can not spread the sky upon our canvass until we have mixed it on the palette. If we manage our brushes skilfully we may sometimes get the moon without crying for it.

It comes to this: if we would picture the music of the wigwam and the warpath we must aim by means of the imagination to create an art work that will project, not by imitation but by suggestion, the psychological impression we have ourselves received in listening to this weird savage symphony in its pastoral *entourage* which, above all makes the Indian's music sweet to him.

The harmonizations which follow may possibly be found of value as hints to some composer who would carry the development of American Indian music into broader symphonic fields.

HARVEY WORTHINGTON LOOMIS.

*The editor does not hold himself responsible for this opinion.—A. F.

NOTES

PRAYER TO WAKONDA

Certain warriors met about once a month and performed special ceremonies dedicated to Wakonda, the Thunder God. Their first act was to blacken their faces in honor of the deity. The second act was to fill the pipe with tobacco and present it to the four corners of the heavens while this solemn melody was sung. Its rich cadence is as impressive as the ancient Hebrew Kol Nidri.

ON THE WAR PATH

gives us an example of where the melody counts for practically nothing. The rhythmic scheme and emphasized dissonance are relied upon for ethnological verisimilitude.

RIPE CORN DANCE

Here, as in the foregoing, the melody is of inconsiderable value. Warring rhythms and effective interpretation give the only musical interest. This should be played in a spirit of comedy.

EVENING AT THE LODGE

is a song which relates to the gentler sex—the bearers of burdens. Although the Indian possesses many noble traits, gallantry is not one of them. The melody here is not barbaric nor is it even true to its vernacular. Its cadence is so distinctly Scotch that no attempt has been made to depart from European idiom in the harmonization.

THE CHATTERING SQUAW

We are indebted to Mr. Alfred C. Farrell (devotedly espoused to the Indian cause) for this melody, and it is recorded here for the first time. The suggestion is rather Oriental than Occidental. The consecutive fifths and fourths if harmonically shocking are ethnologically true. When two Indians sing, they frequently start a melody on separate tones of the scale and each pursues undisturbed his cacophonous way.

SCALP DANCE

Note the carefully indicated system of emphasis in the left hand passages upon which a realistic interpretation depends.

THE THUNDER GOD AND THE RAINBOW

This is another invocation to Wakonda. The composition is frankly an attempt at "program music" rather than in any sense a prayer. In the suggestion of a thunder storm it exceeds the Indian's intention but as he is always at home in the tempest he would doubtless concede the artistic excuse. Here, as in all these harmonizations, the original melody remains unchanged though it is to be found in varying registers. Unless much skill is employed there is danger of its being lost in the mass of figure work and sequence of harmonic surprises. The secondary theme (typifying the rainbow) is original with the composer, but it is constructed upon characteristic particles of Indian melody. A sort of composite photograph of the gentler type of the Red Man's music.

THE WARRIOR'S LAST WORD.

The death wail of the Irish is strongly suggested in this number. The shivering triplet figure should be brought in parenthetically.

Throughout all these peculiar compositions, as there is no tradition to go by, and no music of the kind with which to compare them, it is urgently recommended that the metronome indications be followed, and that close study be given to the interpretation as expressed in the dynamic terminology. It should be borne in mind that the piano of today has marvellous orchestral qualities, and it is possible to characterize each voice in the harmony as though it were a separate instrument. Above all, it should be remembered that the pedal is the soul of the piano. You will not "get there" on a bicycle nor a piano if you cannot manipulate the pedals.

H. W. L.