

WORKS BY FARWELL/OREM/CADMAN

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Notes adapted from New World reissues:

WILLIAM PARKER: *An Old Song Resung*

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Text by Nicholas Tawa

BEACH, FOOTE, FARWELL, OREM

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Text by Gilbert Chase

ARTHUR FARWELL (1872-1952), born in St. Paul, Minnesota, came to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the nineties to train as an electrical engineer. After attending concerts in Boston, he turned permanently to music as an avocation and studied with Homer Norris, a lover of French music, and Chadwick, and took advice from MacDowell. At this time, the fiercely independent composer Henry Gilbert became his friend. Both men believed in America's cultural independence and the utilization of whatever music--African-American, Amerindian, ragtime, British-American-- would strengthen this independence.

Nevertheless, Farwell would study briefly in Europe, with Engelbert Humperdinck, Hans Pfitzner, and Alexandre Guilmant. When he returned to the United States in 1899, the MacDowell- MacDowell controversy absorbed his attention, as also did Alice Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America* (1900). He then continued his study of Amerindian myth and music, a study in which Charles Wakefield Cadman, Carlos Troyer, Harvey Worthington Loomis, and Charles Sanford Skelton were also engaged. Especially during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, Farwell remained dedicated to this area of Americana. Later, he would decide that the Amerindian idiom represented only one aspect, and an unusual one, of our national music.

During the years that he examined traditional Amerindian myths and songs, Farwell gave them a transcendental and highly personal interpretation. He detected a strength of will that pointed individuals toward otherworldly concerns. Amerindians saw the need to comply with the eternal order of things as determined by a Supreme Being; Farwell feared the pursuit of money, unconcern for others, and the uprootedness he saw in contemporary American life. He recommended the candor, lucidity, and intuitiveness of Amerindian artistic expression as a corrective, and lauded the feelings of ecstasy and mysticism regularly evinced in the music. They made possible insights into one's psyche, a perception of eternal things, and a profound understanding of the purposes of living. Songs preserved the wisdom accruing from a people's past. They summoned forth love, or gave voice to sorrow, or urged individuals to courageous acts. They were not for amusement.

Works like *Folk Songs of the West and South* (1905), where African-American and Amerindian music is treated in unconventional ways, exhibit Farwell's early efforts at handling the vernacular. Farwell said his chord structures and progressions obeyed the emotional and imaginative dictates of the material and did not accord with European harmonic notions. Thus, "The Bird Song Dance" from this series summons forth a characteristic ambiance through odd dissonances that heighten the impression of music frozen in space.

Farwell composed *Three Indian Songs, opus 32* [Track 1], in 1908, based on Omaha tribal music compiled by Alice Fletcher, which he had incorporated into *American Indian Melodies for piano* (1900). The "Song of the Deathless Voice" comes first. In it, a nocturnal warrior spirit materializes on the spot where he died gallantly. Farwell expands the song's impressive spiritual contemplation and introspection. At first the spirit's music is a call more or less detached in effect, although the later passages are meant to emerge trancelike, the summons of a wraith searching for someone alive to imbibe his bravery. Farwell comments that this song concentrates related but utterly different emotions into a small space; the composition "belongs to a dream-world, which he must enter who would truly voice the mystery of its haunting and echoing cadences." The following composition, "Inketunga's Thunder Song," needs an unusual projection of the voice in order to render the feelings of someone in a secluded spot who converses with Wakonda, the Great Spirit, the overseer of downpours, thunderclaps, and strokes of lightning. The last piece, "The Old Man's Love Song," is a tranquil morning serenade that pays homage to the deepest feelings of affection and responses to loveliness as the old man, according to Farwell, seeks a final union with the "Great Mystery." Each song is short, dignified, and involves important human matters. The melodies resemble incantations. Straightforward piano parts with surprising harmonic twists help evoke a distant time and place, and abjure over-refinement.

The Old Man's Love Song, Op. 102, No.2 [Track 5]

Navajo War Dance, Op. 102, No.1 [Track 6]

In 1937 Farwell made arrangements for unaccompanied chorus of the "Navajo War Dance," "Pawnee Horses," "The Old Man's Love Song," and "The Mother's Vow" (this last from the original *American Indian Melodies* of 1900). He also made another choral version of "Navajo War Dance" (No.2) in 1947, for a concert tour by the Westminster Choir directed by John Finley Williamson. Concerning this, Farwell wrote:

This chorus is so notated as to bring out the inner pulsations of the Indian voice, as observed in the Indians' singing of songs of this type in the Southwest. In ordinary notation, the first measure, for example, would be written as four quarter-notes; but if sung so, would be very remote from the effect of the Indians' singing. The measure will indeed present four major pulses, but each will be followed by a secondary eighth-note pulse of lesser accentuation. In "The Old Man's Love Song" and "Navajo War Dance," Farwell went far beyond any other Indianist composer in achieving what may perhaps be best described as "creative authenticity."

Navajo War Dance, for piano [Track 7]

Concerning this piece, Farwell wrote:

Too many people think of the American Indian only as a "savage." I had in my Indian music depicted many phases of Indian life that were far from savage, but true to its quaint, poetic and picturesque aspects, as well as to its mythological conceptions. Being criticized because of these matters, as being untrue to this "savage" Indian nature, I wrote the Navajo War Dance in the hope of gratifying my critics in this respect. . . . I have employed bare 4ths

considerably in this work, as I have heard the Navajos sing this war dance in 4ths. In line with this aim, Farwell directs that the piece should be played "with severe precision of rhythm throughout, and savagely accented." After a brief introduction in 9/8, the music continues in 6/8 to the end. For ears accustomed to the "barbaric" rhythms of Bartók and Stravinsky, this will seem more impressive for its finely controlled artistry than for its "savagery." It was the first of Farwell's compositions to be widely performed and acclaimed.

Pawnee Horses, for piano [Track 8]

This piece, like the "Navajo War Dance," was included in the set of pieces for piano titled *From Mesa and Plain*, published by the Wa-Wan Press. A headnote tells us that it was "based on an Omaha melody sung by Francis La Flesche and transcribed by Edwin S. Tracy." The title page also carries a quotation that explains the context of the piece: "There go the Pawnee horses. I do not want them,—I have taken enough." Marked to be played "with motion," it maintains a consistently syncopated pattern throughout alternating between 9/8 and 6/8.

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PRESTON WARE OREM (1865–1938) was born in Philadelphia, where for most of his life he was active as a teacher, organist, composer, and (from 1900) editor for the music publisher Theodore Presser. From 1889 to 1895 he was organist at St. Paul's Pro-cathedral in Los Angeles. Like MacDowell's, his interest in American Indian music was casual—and much more superficial. But Indianism was in fashion, and this no doubt attracted him. His *American Indian Rhapsody* for piano (also orchestrated), published by Presser in 1918, manipulates themes "recorded and suggested" by Thurlow Lieurance (1878–1963), a composer who spent many years collecting Indian melodies and earned a small measure of immortality by adapting one of these for a song that he called "By the Waters of Minnetonka."

American Indian Rhapsody [Track 4]

Orem's *Rhapsody* is very much a period piece, stylistically conventional and eclectic, post-Romantic and neo-Lisztian in its mannerisms and pretentiousness, its plethora of trills, arpeggios, broken chords, and repeated octaves (often thunderous), and its bravura display of virtuosity, with indications ranging from *molto maestoso* to *allegretto scherzando*, from *andante affetuoso* to *allegro con brio* from *amabile* to *feroce* (the savage!). It is probably the most far-out Indianist composition ever written.

CHARLES WAKEFIELD CADMAN (1881-1946) accepted Romantic practices and their valuation of lyricism and tone color. He found merit in courting the larger American public with "idealized" Amerindian music, that is, music modified so that what otherwise might be rejected as primitive was brought in line with white-American tastes. His hope was that such song writing would win him a large following.

He was born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and studied musical theory under Lee Oehmler, Luigi von Kunitz, and Emil Pauer. About the year 1906, Nelle Richmond Eberhart introduced him to Amerindian music. He soon learned about Farwell's experiments with this music. He then discovered Fletcher's *Indian Story and Song from North America* in a local library and extracted from it tunes he liked and thought potentially attractive to the public. Next, he drew on Francis La Flesche's studies of Amerindian music.

Cadman was not agitated by an artistic desire to carve out an independent American style. His desire was to exploit a novel sound source that would distinguish him from the surrounding horde of songwriters. To emulate the acclaim of Victor Herbert was his goal. This he at last began to do, when John McCormack propelled his song "At Dawning" (1906) to popularity. Cadman's limited aspirations caused twentieth-century art composers, who laid claim to high-minded aesthetic principles, to disdain him, even as the public found much to cherish in his music. Assuredly, had he contributed just the Amerindian-inspired songs on this disk, he would have underlined the idea that music derived from the American Indians can excite the multitude, and can provide worthy, though somewhat exotic, songs that conform to the American-European tradition.

He set the *Four American Indian Songs, opus 45* [Tracks 9 – 12], to words by Eberhart, in 1909. The Cadman rendition of Amerindian melody discards the laconicism of the aboriginal chants in favor of lengthened musical dialogue. In the first three songs, harmony remains simple; piano support, circumspect; the vocal melody moves to the fore. Eberhart's verses have subjects in no way connected with the primary Amerindian texts. Heading the four, "From the Land of the Sky-Blue Water," employs an Omaha tribal tune that Fletcher had noted down. The pianist opens and closes the song on a traditional flute-melody intended as a signal to one's beloved, then the singer intones the melody from a second love song. The tune, of narrow range, is built on a gapped scale, the fourth and seventh tones missing. Much use is made of the Scotch-snap, a brief accentuated note succeeded by a longer note. The unpretentious piano part contains mild syncopations. This song, coming after the well-received "At Dawning," really brought Cadman to the center of public attention. Like its predecessor, it was gratifying to sing and pleasant to hear. The second piece, "The White Dawn Is Stealing," rests on Iroquois music from the Theodore Baker collection, *Über die Musik der nordamerikanischen Wilden* (1882). Bare-bones piano support underlies a simple melody built on a gapped scale. The third piece, "Far Off I Hear a Lover's Flute," derives from an Omaha flageolet love call gathered by Fletcher--yet on hearing it, one is rather taken aback by music that sounds more Celtic than Amerindian. To add to the confusion, Francis La Flesche, whose father was an Omaha chief, thought this was the most Amerindian-sounding of the four pieces. The last song, "The Moon Drops Low," has an Omaha tune from Fletcher. The key is not always clearly defined. Cadman wants it rendered grandly and gravely. However, the impetuous and fiery passages contradict his wishes. A great deal of the

music is Cadman's own and not Amerindian: Here is no soft call of love. Instead, the singer inveighs against the destruction of the Indian way of life. La Flesche criticized it as too complex and scarcely Amerindian at all. Nonetheless, the song makes a powerful impression on the listener.