Native American Music

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***Introduction***

Music has always held a significant role in the Native American’s culture and history. In their lives, music plays an integral part. It is noteworthy to mention that music is a major facet of many Native American’s celebrations and ceremonies. There are different musical styles of the Native American music. There are varieties of musical instruments and styles in every Native American tribe. Their music is often a large part of passing down oral traditions along with the history. Despite many evolvements and changes that America has undergone, the Native Americans apprehended on to their distinct rituals and representations. In the lives of Native Americans, music is used as an oral transmission of their history and culture. For Native Americans, music is integral to the storytelling purpose as it helps them to preserve their language. Here, the focus is to highlight the unique aspects of Native American’s music and how it represent their cultural features.

***Discussion***

It is notable to mention that the vocals are the essential pillars of music made in the Native American cultures. These vocals are passionate, so they are used to invoke spirits. Native Americans have a strong belief that these vocals are used to heal the sick. Native American music is among the most complex ever performed music in the world. In the modern world, Native America musicians are still referring back to their ancestral traditions in their music. Their music integrates aesthetic characteristics of their traditions with new forms of music[[1]](#footnote-1). Whenever someone hears Native Americans music, he/she can easily understand that their music replicates the quality and ability of their ancient traditions.

The Natives Americans welcomed the first Europeans who arrived in America. The culture of the Native Americans intrigued by white complexions of Europeans and their cultural traditions. After the settlement of Europeans, Native Americans copied their chordophones and then tweaked them. Native Americans tweaked the chordophones of Europeans to come up with sounds attractive to their musical sensibilities[[2]](#footnote-2). With time, the chordophones of Native Americans became native. Invasion of European blended the music traditions of the Native American tribes. Undoubtedly, music had played a remarkable place in different rituals and religious aspects of Native Americans. However, the invasion of Europeans made a significant change in the social and religious functions of Native Americans. Due to that significant change, the music that accompanied these functions got changed.

In the Native American culture, secular music is of utmost importance as it is used for honoring a person’s life. Secular music is used in melodies for communal celebrations and pieces of gratitude as well. Sacred music is a vital part of Native American music as it is employed when dealing with the earth’s elements and the spiritual life. The sacred and secular music is perceived as intertwined among Native Americans. Unlike non-American Indians, Native Americans don’t make any major distinction among the secular and sacred music. There are different musical styles in the Native American music. However, for both secular and sacred music, Native Americans used drums as a primary instrument. These people believe that the voice of drums helps in driving the music. Despite using certain types of instruments in the music, Native Americans avoid playing instrumental pieces between their music. According to their tradition, singing is the essential part of music.

With time, Christian missionaries and teachers forced Indians to learn European music traditions. That’s why Indians were systematically taught the traditions of European music. Native Americans tried hard to keep their music traditions separate, but the Europeans found a way to assimilate their music characteristics in the Native American’s music. Europeans were the one who introduces ‘Powwows’ to Native Americans. Singing and dancing were the essential part of ‘Powwows’ that Indians inherited and contributed during later part of their lives[[3]](#footnote-3). In the mid-19th century, ‘Powwows’ got fame in American society due to the relocation of different tribes by the government of the United States. The repositioning of these tribes helps in initiating cultural exchanges. Therefore, it is a new ceremony among Native Americans.

Lullabies are the favored musical genres by American Indians. Lullabies are the integral parts of Native Americans culture as these songs accompany their daily activities. They use lullabies as curing songs and ceremonial songs. They believe that these songs were given to people by their guardian spirits. It is a well-known fact that many cultures in American society have created some sweat lodges. The primary purpose behind the establishment of sweat lodges is to purify the souls, mind, and body[[4]](#footnote-4). When it comes to the Native American cultures, they have used sweat lodges differently. Sweat lodges are small enclosures in Native American cultures that are filled with hot rocks in the center. Native Americans perceived it differently due to their ancestral traditions and values[[5]](#footnote-5). These people crawl inside the small enclosure in which water is added along with the heated rocks. They sing the song as steam fills the lodge. They believe it as a way of saying prayers regarding forgiveness, purification, and healing. In the American Indian Music, there are meaningless fill-syllables as there are no tone-marks[[6]](#footnote-6).

Rare before Europeans came to North America, this communal ritual sprang up around the mid-19th century when tribes were being relocated by the U.S. government and began interacting with one another and initiating cultural exchanges. According to the Native Americans cultures, ‘Powwows’ differ among tribes. First of all, there is a grand Entry of color dancers and after that, certain performers perform. Native Americans have a strong belief in shaman. A shaman is a person, who uses certain musical instruments to cure mental and physical sicknesses in people. In the Native American tribes, shamans are mostly men, but some have female’s shamans as well[[7]](#footnote-7). The Shamans believed to heal people as it is considered to mediate in between spiritual and natural worlds. Sometimes, Native Americans use the process of the shaman to influence the weather.

Moreover, Native American music also includes whistles and rasps. Bone whistles came from the ‘Basketmaker- period’ and were discovered in northeastern Arizona. Native Americans whistles were crafted from the bones of animals and antlers as well. However, the modern music of Native Americans depends largely on European descriptions as colonization influenced the framework of that music. The flute is one of the oldest musical instruments in the entire world which was created by Native Americans. The flute was crafted over time from clay and different types of softwoods and hardwoods. The mellow tone is produced by softwood cedar flute; hence many American Indians chose cedar to make a flute.

***Conclusion***

To conclude the discussion about the significant impact of Native American music, it is vital to mention that this specific paradigm has the potential to influence the phenomenon of culture. Music is recognized as the integral part of the cultural practices of the native Americans as it refers as the mandatory part of their traditional ceremonies and events. Undoubtedly, the entire facet of the cultural and artistic domains of the Native American community can never complete without the keen consideration of their approach to music. The platform of music is effectively used by the Native Americans to convey their specific cultural and traditional perspectives which recognized them different from other parts of the world. Music referred to as the important part of the culture of the Native Americans that are used to represent the traditional features appropriately.

END NOTES

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