

Courting Song

Source:

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Moving Within the Circle

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♩ = 96



COURTING SONG ORNAMENTS



Background Information

"Sometimes called 'Wedding Song,' this is a song from the Lakota people of the northern Plains. Among the Plains communities, the cedar flute [*wi' ikizho* in the Dakota language] developed as an important instrument to be used in the courtship rituals of young people. The Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota peoples (named according to the dialects they speak, whether Santee, Teton, or Yankton) are one of the largest tribes. The Pine Ridge, Rosebud and Standing Rock Reservations are among the largest of the many areas where Lakota live in South Dakota, but other groups also live on the Fort Totten Reservation in eastern North Dakota, Fort Peck in northeastern Montana and even in Minnesota. The song presented here is frequently performed at weddings among Lakota people in the states of North and South Dakota and a version appears in the musical score for the movie 'A Man Called Horse.'

This song is sometimes used in performances of the 'Ribbon Dance.' Using three long colored ribbons - red representing Man, blue representing the Creator, and yellow representing Woman - three couples dance with subtle movements and patterns that weave the ribbons into a braid. Braiding the ribbons represents the forces working together for the good of the tribe. When the braid is complete, the dancers reverse directions, unbraiding the ribbons until they are separate again. This represents individuality and freedom, the responsibility each person holds for making choices without disrespecting others. The dance continues as the ribbons are rolled into a bundle, which is returned by the man to the woman as a sign of her final authority - a reflection of the matriarchal society of the Lakota."