SONGS AT THE WOODS' EDGE

The Earth Songs of the Seneca Nation

DRAFT

Bill Crouse, Sr., and Andrew A. Cashner

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Genesee Vallee Park Golf Course in Rochester, NY, just east of the Genesee River, Early Spring 2022 (All photographs by Andrew Cashner unless noted otherwise)

1.1 Significance and Contribution

Songs at the Woods' Edge: The Earth Songs of the Seneca Nation is a digital-humanities project on the subject of the traditional social-dance songs of the Onöndowa'ga:' people. This website and book, a work in progress, is being created by Andrew A. Cashner, PhD, musician and musicologist

at the University of Rochester, in collaboration with Bill Crouse, Sr., the renowned Seneca singer and faithkeeper.

The original inhabitants of the land now occupied by western New York, the Senecas are one of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. Traditional Seneca music is primarily vocal, supported by water drum and rattle, and usually combined with dance; the songs are divided into ceremonial and social functions. Ceremonial songs hold sacred power as part of longhouse ceremonies including healing rituals; they are closed to non-Senecas and many are even kept private within the Seneca community, reserved only for those who need them. Social songs, by contrast, are shared openly.

Known as Earth Songs (*yöëdza'ge:ka:' gaë:nö'shö'*), these songs have been used for centuries to build reciprocal relationships within the Seneca community and with outsiders. The earliest European interlopers in Seneca country report being greeted at the woods' edge with songs. At Ganondagan, the Seneca Arts and Culture Center near Victor, New York, visitors pass through an entryway designed around the traditional woods'-edge greeting to hear regular presentations of Earth Songs by Seneca singers like Bill Crouse. These presentations create a space like the woods'-edge clearing of earlier days in which to share Seneca teachings and values with outsiders. To sing at the woods' edge means to stand at the boundary between indigenous traditional knowledge and modern experience under colonization, and between Seneca communities and Euro-American ones. As an ancient oral tradition that practitioners are constantly finding new ways to employ to meet present needs, the Earth Songs sung in that space connect history and tradition, memory and creativity.

With the ongoing collaboration of Bill Crouse and other Seneca practitioners, this project will present Seneca Earth Songs to the academic community and general public for the first time accurately, sensitively, and on Seneca terms. Through a website and digital book of public scholarship, the project will present high-quality videos of the songs and dances with information about the songs' origins, structure, and significance. It will draw on Bill Crouse's expertise as a practitioner of the oral tradition, and my archival research into historic accounts of Seneca song and dance from

the Jesuit Relations through Lewis Henry Morgan and William Fenton.

Relationship to Existing Studies

This study aims to address a lack of trustworthy, in-depth resources for learning about this type of Native American music. According to Peter Jemison, recently retired director of Ganondagan, the cultural center staff were flooded in the last two years by requests from educators for information on how to include Native culture in their curricula (panel presentation, University of Rochester, 2021/11/17). For Haudenosaunee and Seneca music, though, there are few reliable sources available. In the first scholarly description of Haudenosaunee dance (based on Seneca sources), Lewis Henry Morgan wrote in 1851 that the dances "contain within themselves a picture and a realization of Indian life," to the extent that when the dance "loses its attractions, they will cease to be Indians" (Morgan 1851, 262, 263). Morgan viewed the dances as static relics of a traditional past that Native people would have to surrender in the face of progressive "civilization." Twentieth-century ethnographers William Fenton and Gertrude Kurath made no distinction between privileged ceremonial songs and social-dance songs, and as a result their books are full of information that Seneca faithkeepers today do not want to share with the public—not to mention the inaccuracies and non-indigenous categories of their analyses (Fenton 1998; Fenton and Kurath 1953; Kurath 1964; Caldwell 2008; McCarthy 2008).

The proposed project differs from these previous studies because it focuses on music that Seneca people are actually willing to share, and builds on the way they are already using this music to build intercultural relationships. The methodology follows the model of recent collaborative work between non-Native scholars and Native experts, such as Beverley Diamond's excellent though brief introduction to Haudenosaunee music (Diamond 2008) and with a growing literature that emphasizes the modernity and creativity of Native music as a contemporary practice (Browner 2002, 2009; Levine and Robinson 2019). This project has a more historical focus than those, however, as it combines ethnographic fieldwork with archival re-

search, including seeking out indigenous perspectives on the archival documents. Even the best historical studies of early American music that include Native peoples focus primarily on archival documents from Euro-American colonial communities rather than drawing from traditional indigenous knowledge and oral tradition (Goodman 2012; Eyerly 2020). No history of American music can claim coherence without including the music of indigenous Americans, and no attempt at inclusion can succeed without the collaboration of practitioners of the oral traditions.

Benefit to Scholars and the Public

This project will benefit humanities scholars, educators, and members of the public by providing them with reliable information on Native American music. The knowledge shared through this project will help all of us to gain a deeper understanding of the land we share. Some indigenous people may deepen their connection to their own traditions; non-indigenous people will be better equipped to build relationships with Native American communities. The interlinked nature of a website is well suited to the relational and participatory character of the Earth Songs and the way they are shared in Seneca communities. The digital format will allow the book/website to be freely accessible to a wide public audience.

1.2 Organization, Concepts, and Methods

The key concepts in this project are three pairs of terms: Earth/land, relationship/reciprocity, and tradition/history. Seneca social songs celebrate and enact a relationship with the Earth in both ecological and spiritual terms, while also connecting Seneca people to the land of their ancestry (Mohawk 2005; Deloria, Jr. 1985). Relationship and reciprocity are widely acknowledged core values for Native North Americans, and they define the way Haudenosaunee people teach and present songs. The concept of the Covenant Chain—linking the first European ship to the Haudenosaunee longhouse—recurs throughout colonial treaty negotiations (Richter 1992). Both sides had an obligation to keep it free from rust.

For me, an Indiana native descended from German settler-colonialists, this project provides a way to take up the long-overdue work of polishing the chain of friendship, working toward restoration of mutually beneficial relationships between indigenous and settler Americans. Exploring the complex relationship between history and tradition in both indigenous and Western conceptions, this project will demonstrate that Native song is neither stuck in a primitive present tense nor lost to the past. At the same time, the goal is not simply to fit Native music into a Western historical framework; for indigenous North Americans, singing itself constitutes a form of historical knowledge and provides its own ways of connecting past, present, and future (Diamond 2013).

1.3 Components

The website will feature new high-quality videos of Bill Crouse and others singing Earth Songs in beautiful and significant outdoor locations across ancestral Seneca territory. For each type of song there will be a written introduction, video interviews or stories about structure and use of the songs, and philosophical reflections on their relation to Seneca worldview. The website will also provide users with information about issues of cultural sensitivity, appropriation, and ethical use; and I will consult with indigenous contributors to ensure that all materials are made available with appropriate licenses (Christen 2018). Sources include contemporary performances, interviews, and fieldwork observations; ethnographic recordings at the American Philosophical Society (APS) in Philadelphia and the Library of Congress; and archival documents at the University of Rochester (Lewis Henry Morgan papers), the Rochester Museum and Science Center (Morgan and Ely Parker collections), the APS (Fenton papers), and the New York State Museum. One of the chief benefits of the site to Seneca people, according to Bill Crouse, would be to make accessible in one location a full library of historic recordings, effectively repatriating the ethnographers' materials (Fox 2013).

The book will include five chapters, with the first three based primar-

ily on interviews with Bill Crouse and the last two based more on my historical research. The first chapter will focus on the songs' relationship to the earth and the land; the second will explore the musical structure and patterns of these songs, emphasizing Seneca understandings of music. The third chapter will trace genealogies of teaching and methods of oral transmission, showing how the Seneca people kept their songs alive in defiance of land dispossession, boarding schools, and the Kinzua dam tragedy, and how younger generations are still responding creatively to tradition including through the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter four will trace the origin and history of the songs, connecting indigenous oral traditions with written archival documents from Euro-American perspectives, reading Morgan and Fenton's field notes together with indigenous practitioners. The final chapter will look at the earth songs within the context of a long history of intercultural exchange, preceding European encounter and continuing today, in which Haudenosaunee people have used songs at the woods' edge to share their community with outsiders and build mutually beneficial relationships.

1.4 Final Product and Dissemination

The final product will a born-digital book and website (www.senecasongs.earth). Readers may experience the book as an online, non-linear, experience or as a more traditional book, downloadable as a PDF. The website will be built on the core standards supported in every browser (HTML5 and CSS3), minimizing scripts and plugins that can break or become obsolete; the print form of the book will be typeset with the stable LaTeX document-preparation system. Through adaptive design the site will be equally accessible and ADA-compliant on desktop and mobile devices and via screen readers. The website will be regularly updated subject to new discoveries and community feedback.

The book and website will be generated from the same sources, using a sustainable workflow based on free and open-source technology. Using open-source software is essential when serving an economically under-

privileged community, and provides the "liberation technologies" that Haudenosaunee activists have demanded to give them control over their own representation (Mohawk 2005, 123). The source files are written in XHTML with custom extensions for automatic bibliography and citation generation. The build system converts the source files to two output formats: HTML5, and PDF (via LaTeX).

Given the collaborative nature of a project focused on protected indigenous cultural heritage, the review process must necessarily be distinct from the traditional academic model. I plan to assemble a panel of consultants, including both indigenous academics and non-academic experts. After their own initial peer review, the panel will be empowered to seek out additional, potentially anonymous reviews. I will hire proficient Seneca-language speakers to review the linguistic elements and I will invite Seneca community members to test the site.

Chapter 2

The Seneca Nation

Bill Crouse (in green) prepares to compete in the Marvin "Jœ" Curry Memorial Veterans Pow-Wow on the Allegany Territory of the Seneca Nation of Indians, Salamanca, NY, July 2022

This project focuses on a particular type of traditional song and dance of the Onöndowa'ga:' or Seneca Nation. Bill Crouse is a member of the Seneca Nation of Indians and lives in Salamanca, New York, on the Seneca Nation's Allegany Territory. Though much of what we present here will be similar to song and dance practices of Seneca people elsewhere, Bill's expertise is specific to the practices on his own territory.

2.1 The Onöndowa'ga:' People: A Living Community with Deep Roots

The Seneca Nation is a living community of people, indigenous to northeastern North America, who share kinship, culture, language, and history (Hauptman 1999, 2019, 2014). Seneca people continue to live in their ancestral homelands as well as many other places. For at least a thousand years before Euro-American settler-colonialists invaded, Senecas were the caretakers of more than six million acres of land: its approximate bounds stretched from Lake Ontario on the north to the Allegany River in the south, and from the Niagara River and Lake Erie on the west to Seneca Lake on the east (Richter 1992; Fenton 1998).

The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy

When Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century, the Seneca Nation was one member of a longstanding confederacy of indigenous nations who called themselves *Hodínöhšö:ni:h* ("They Extend the Longhouse"). Following the teachings of the Peacemaker, they governed themselves through a representative democracy, which today is the oldest continuously operating democratic government in the world (Mohawk 2005).

These nations lived in longhouses, with multiple families arranged along a row of fires. Peacemaker taught them to see themselves as all living in one longhouse stretching across the territory claimed today by New York State: the Senecas were the Keepers of the Western Door for the confederacy, which also included, moving west to east, the Cayugas, the Onondagas (keepers of the central fire), the Oneidas, and the Mohawks (keepers of the eastern door). The Tuscaroras were added in the eighteenth century (Tehanetorens [Ray Fadden] 2000; Hertzberg 1966).

Names and Identities

Those tribal names are still used today, but they were imposed by Euro-American based on their mishearings and distortions. In their own lan-

guage Seneca people call themselves *Onöndowa'ga:'* (people of the great hill). The Seneca word for the Six Nations Confederacy is *Hodínöhšö:ni:h*, which means "they extend the longhouse." Because there are six related but distinct languages in the confederacy, each with its own variation on the term, many writers today use the Anglicized spelling *Haudenosaunee*.

Seneca people differ on whether they prefer to be called Native American, Indian or American Indian, or First Nation. In any case, most people prefer using their tribal or national name (in this case Onöndowa'ga:'/Seneca and Haudenosaunee/Iroquois). The Seneca language does not have a term for Native Americans as a race or category of people; instead a Seneca person is an *ögwé'o:weh*, a "real person" (Bardeau 2010; Chafe 2015).

2.2 Tribal Governments since Colonization

Through the colonialist policies of Great Britain, the United States, and Canada, Euro-American settlers stole most of the historic Seneca land-base through forced treaties and fraudulent land deals. The US and Canadian governments forced many Seneca people to emigrate, and instituted their own governments that fragmented the Seneca nation. Nevertheless today more than two thousand Seneca people still live on their ancestral territory, and more than eight thousand more live elsewhere across North America. Today there are four distinct political entities that represent Seneca people living on several territories:

1. the Seneca Nation of Indians, three primary territories (Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Oil Spring) within southwestern New York State (US); government headquarters in Salamanca, NY; 8,000 enrolled members (figure 2.1)
2. the Tonawanda Band of Seneca, one territory within western New York State; headquarters, Basom, NY; about 1,200 enrolled members
3. the Seneca-Cayuga Nation of Oklahoma (US), one territory with headquarters in Grove, OK; about 5,000 members (including Cayu-

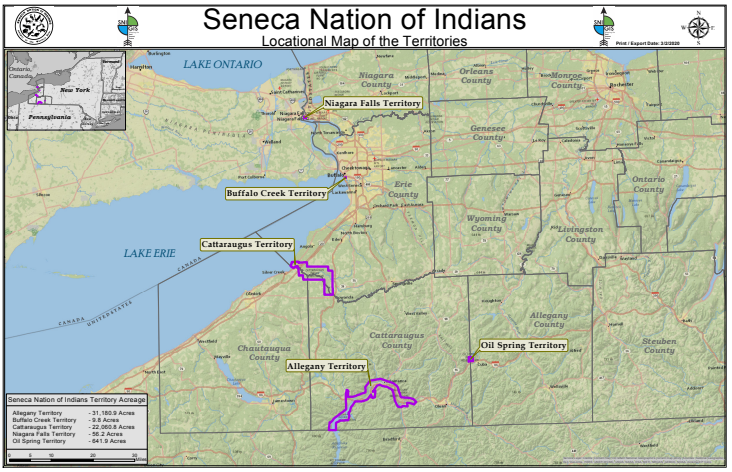


Figure 2.1. Present territories of the Seneca Nation of Indians (Map by Seneca Nation Geographic Information Services)

gas)

4. Six Nations of the Grand River, one territory in Ontario (Canada) shared with the other Haudenosaunee nations; headquarters in Ohsweken, ON

The Tonawanda Band of Senecas maintain their traditional form of government by male chiefs, appointed by clan mothers, and send representatives to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy councils at Onondaga. The Seneca Nation of Indians was founded after a revolution in 1848 in which the people rejected the traditional government by chiefs and adopted a representative democracy (Hauptman 2019).

2.3 Belonging to the Seneca Nation

Beyond the administrative reality of the tribal governments, though, Seneca people have a broader sense of belonging to a Seneca Nation that

includes all Seneca people, as well as an affiliation to the other five Haudenosaunee nations. This attitude is rooted in the belief that indigenous peoples have the right, affirmed by the United Nations, to determine their own identity, independent of the history of colonization (United Nations 2007).

This broader sense of identity is also important because the United States did not negotiate its federal treaties with the tribal governments listed above but with the Seneca Nation as part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The Canandaigua Treaty of 1794 was an agreement between the United States under President George Washington and "The Six Nations," including "The Seneka Nation" (Nëhdöwes [Randy A. John] 2018). This treaty is still the only legally valid treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the United States: unlike later treaties, this one alone was ratified by both the consensus of the Haudenosaunee Council and a two-thirds majority of the US Senate, as required in the US Constitution (Hauptman 1999; Deloria, Jr. 1985). That treaty provided all the territory now in New York west of the Genesee River to the Seneca Nation. Pretending the Seneca Nation no longer exists is one way for the US government to dodge its historic treaty obligations.

Seneca identity is not determined by blood quantum or family legend, but by community standards of establishing genealogical kinship based on the maternal line. A person is a member of the Seneca Nation if they are an enrolled member of a tribal government that represents the Seneca people. The United States and Canada grant dual citizenship to members of the Seneca polities within their borders, but not all Seneca people consider themselves to be citizens of those colonial nations.

Chapter 3

Earth Songs

Oak trees along what is likely an ancient Seneca pathway on the east bank of the Genesee River, in Rochester's Genesee Valley Park, May 2022

This project focuses on one particular type of Seneca music, but before describing the Earth Songs it is important to point out that Seneca people make and enjoy all the kinds of music that other North Americans do. On the reservations, hip hop, classic rock, and country music are especially popular. (Bill Crouse is a Lynyrd Skynrd fan.) Many Seneca people think about music and use it in the same ways as their non-indigenous neighbors.

At the same time, other Senecas hold those widespread Western concepts of music in tension with those they have inherited from their own tradition (Diamond 2008). Those views are also shaped by interactions with other Native nations, particularly through intertribal pow-wows (Browner 2002).

3.1 Onöndowa'ga:' Concepts of Music

The Seneca language does not have a single general word equivalent to *music*. Singing and dancing are usually linked so closely that there are not clear ways to distinguish them linguistically; if someone is singing, someone else is probably dancing. Traditional Seneca singers tend to think of different types of singing according to their purposes and occasions rather than lumping them together into an abstract category. There are general words for singing, dancing, and fiddle-playing, and many more precise terms for specific traditional songs. Those more particular terms all point to specific reasons, times, and methods of singing and dancing.

Seneca singers assume that the whole created world, including humans, animals, and other spiritual beings, is listening whenever they sing. Bill Crouse would say that you do not sing a song; you "send" it. Songs are spoken of as being "made," not composed.

Bill Crouse distinguishes two main types of traditional Seneca song and dance: **ceremonial** and **social**. There are two main types of ceremonial singing, in turn: singing in **seasonal** ceremonies and singing for **healing** ceremonies. Seneca ceremonies are only open to members of the Haudenosaunee nations, and some healing ceremonies are restricted even within that community only to people in need of a particular ceremony (see below). Social songs, the subject of this project, are open to anyone to hear and enjoy, though their performance is generally limited to Seneca people.

Season	Ceremony
Winter	Midwinter Ceremonies
	Okhi:we' (Remembrance of those who have died)
Spring	Thunder Dance
	False Faces (House-to-house cleansing)
	Seed Dance
Summer	Strawberry Festival
	Green Corn Ceremonies
Fall	Harvest Dance
	False Faces (House-to-house cleansing)
	Thunder Dance
	Gaiwi:yo:h (Code of Handsome Lake)

Table 3.1. The Annual Ceremonial Cycle

3.2 Ceremonial Singing

Though ceremonial singing is closed to non-Haudenosaunee people and Seneca faithkeepers limit what can be shared, it is important to know how Earth Songs fit into the basic pattern of ceremonial life. The annual cycle of seasonal ceremonies celebrates and maintains human beings' connection to the rest of Creation (table 3.1). These rituals are linked to seasons such as the Midwinter Festival or Strawberry Festival. In the healing ceremonies, members of different medicine societies bring specific kinds of physical and spiritual healing to people in need.

The ceremonial center is the **longhouse**. Today a typical longhouse is an ordinary-looking one-story frame building, not the birchbark-covered structure seen in historic illustrations.

The Handsome Lake Longhouse Religion

Most traditional Senecas today follow the *Gáiwi:yo:h*, the "Good Message" of *Sganyodaiyo'* (Handsome Lake). Sganyodaiyo' was a Seneca reformer who, around the year 1800, experienced visions of four heavenly messengers. These "Sky Dwellers" (*Hadiöya'ge:onö'*) revealed to Handsome Lake

that Senecas had lost track of the Peacemaker's Great Law. They needed to ban dangerous vices such as drinking alcohol, gambling, domestic violence, and abortion, and adopt practices like farming that would help them survive in their new situation after colonization. They also needed to purify their ceremonial system to avoid superstitions and anything connected to witchcraft. The teachings of Sganyodaiyo' are preserved in oral tradition, which is recited annually in the fall.

Originally Sganyodaiyo' taught that Senecas should dispense with all their old ceremonies except for four:

1. Great Feather Dance
2. Drum Dance
3. *Adö:wë'* (a personal chant)
4. Dish Game

Sganyodaiyo' later allowed the community to restore some older ceremonies in modified form; and after his death the Senecas revived almost all of the traditional ceremonies. Today the four Gáíwi:yo:h ceremonies are integrated into the Midwinter and Green Corn Ceremonies.

3.3 Social Songs and Dances

Social songs are sung for social dances. These dances can be held in connection with a ceremonial festival (such as in the evenings during the Gáíwi:yo:h ceremony in the fall), in a social event known as a Sing, or in other public events such as presentations of Seneca culture at schools and community centers. Social songs are also used in modified forms for Smoke Dance competitions, often as part of a pow-wow.

Participants in a dance follow a traditional dance step and movement pattern specific to that dance. One group sings and plays instruments, while the rest of the people are invited to dance. There must be at least one singer, but preferably there is a lead singer and an accompanying group of singers. One or two people are also needed to play the necessary instruments; often a few people play or sing at the same time.

Terms: Songs vs. Dances

The name of a dance refers to the whole dance event that uses that physical dance pattern. It also refers to the collection of songs that the singer "sends." For one Old Moccasin Dance, there might be fifteen songs. The songs all share the same basic tempo (speed), beat, and other characteristics, which enables the dance can continue from song to song. Each song is typically around a minute long. All of the songs used for a particular dance are traditional and learned orally, and it would be bad form to use the songs for one dance with another. The precise selection and order of the songs for one dance, however, is the lead singer's choice. Sometimes oral tradition requires that the same song always be used at the beginning or end of a certain dance, while the inner ones are flexible. A social dance always begins with *Ga'da:šo:t* (Standing Quiver Dance) and includes *Ë:sgä:nye:'* (New Women's Shuffle Dance).

The songs are all selected from a vast library preserved in the singers' memories through oral tradition. Only in the New Women's Shuffle Dance can singers contribute new songs, as long as they fit the style and structure of the dance. *Ë:sgä:nye:'* can include completely new songs, songs created by other singers of recent generations, and older songs whose makers no one can remember anymore.

A Seneca Sing

A *Sing* is an event focused on social-dance songs, typically held twice a year (spring and fall). Members of groups known as Singing Societies gather together with other members of the community and compete.

Earth Songs are also sung for Smoke Dance, which is a competitive dance demonstration done at intertribal pow-wows or special Smoke Dance events. Singers sing traditional Earth Songs sped up with a faster beat to enable dancers to do athletic show dances similar to those cultivated by Plains Indian nations in the pow wows.

3.4 Instruments

Most traditional Seneca music, ceremonial or social, is vocal. The voices are accompanied by water drum, rattles, or sometimes other kinds of drums like frame drums. The turtle-shell rattle is used in ceremonial song only. *The turtle-shell rattle is a sacred instrument and images of it should not be shared.*

Ga'nöhgo:öh (Water Drum)

A water drum is made from a small cylinder of wood, about six inches in diameter, and closed on one end. The open end is covered with a deerskin top. There is a small hole in one side, and a straw is inserted into the hole. Through the straw, the drum is filled with water, and the drum is turned to wet the skin. The amount of water changes the pitch of the drum. As the skin dries during a song the pitch will rise, until the player turns the drum over and wets the hide again.

Onö'gä:' Gasdöwë'sä' (Horn Rattle)

A horn rattle is made by filling a section of cow horn with beads—today, steel bee-bees are commonly used.

3.5 Protocol: Privileged vs. Public Knowledge

It is important to know that the whole category of ceremonial singing is closed to people outside the Seneca community. These ceremonies are the most sacred traditions of the Seneca nation, and the faithkeepers no longer allow non-Seneca people to observe or record them. Faithkeepers are people entrusted with safeguarding these ceremonies and using them for the good of the people. (Bill Crouse is one of the head faithkeepers of the Seneca Nation.) Ceremony is privileged knowledge, not open to all even within the Seneca community (Diamond 2008).

When the ceremonies were more open, several generations of white anthropologists in the twentieth century abused the trust that Seneca com-

munity members placed in them; they gained access to these longhouse ceremonies and then made recordings and transcriptions. They went on to publish books and articles with their own interpretations of what they meant, often far removed from the correct traditional teachings. They filed their recordings away in university and institution archives and did not give Seneca people access to them. Some even claimed to know more than Seneca practitioners did about their own traditions. With an arrogant posture sometimes linked to racist attitudes, these researchers assuming authority and ownership over traditional knowledge that was not theirs to use (McCarthy 2008; Smith 2012; Deloria, Jr. 1969)

Not only were their interpretations incorrect and inappropriate, from a Seneca perspective what they were doing was dangerous. To Seneca participants, ceremonial rituals and their songs give people access to extraordinary power. (One might like to say supernatural, spiritual, or religious power, but those terms are inaccurate for a way of life that sees humans as an integral part of the natural world, recognizes spirit in all living things, and does not distinguish a religious sphere from the rest of the world.) When that power is directed in the right way it can do great good, but if abused or misused it can also cause harm.

Healing rituals, for example, are meant only for people in need of a particular kind of medicine. Even within the Seneca community, the only people who will ever hear the Bear Dance are people who need the kind of healing that the Bear Dance Society provides. Once they hear it and are healed, they belong to that society for life. An ordinary person cannot, and should not, want to hear the songs of the Bear Dance, any more than they can just walk into a Walgreens and demand OxyContin without a prescription.

This project does not deal with ceremonial song, beyond what has been shared in this chapter. Seneca people who want to learn more about longhouse ceremonies are encouraged to contact Bill Crouse or other faithkeepers. Non-Seneca people should know that the information they can find about Seneca ceremonies in books by white anthropologists is not reliable or accurate. Relying on that incorrect and inappropriately-shared information will only make it harder to connect with real Seneca people.

In contrast, this project focuses on a kind of song that Seneca people are comfortable sharing, social-dance songs. In fact, Seneca singers like Bill Crouse often use these songs specifically for the purpose of sharing Seneca culture and values with outsiders, such as in school and community-center presentations.

Who Can Sing Seneca Songs?

That said, we should note one more caution: *Seneca people in general do not welcome non-indigenous people to sing their songs*, of any type. All are welcome to hear and learn about social-dance songs through this project, but all are not welcome to *take* the songs and use them in a setting that does not include any Seneca people. The transcriptions in musical notation are provided for learning and study only. They are not to be used for performance by non-Seneca people, including school or university choirs.

These songs and dances are part of the cultural heritage and patrimony of the Seneca nation. The United Nations has affirmed indigenous peoples' inherent rights to preserve, safeguard, and set bounds for sharing of their own intellectual property, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions (United Nations 2007).

Part II

Songs and Dances in Depth

Chapter 4

Ga'da:šǒ:t (Standing Quiver Dance)

On Huyck Road near Farmersville Station, NY, May 2023

The Standing Quiver dance is always the first dance whenever Earth Songs are sung. It is distinct from many other Earth Songs because it features a call-and-response (or antiphonal) texture throughout. The song originated from the way Seneca men would recruit parties to go out hunting or traveling: the leader would take his arrow and drive it into the

Figure 4.1. Seneca quiver basket and arrows, made of wood, woodsplints, feather, and sinew, from the collection of Joseph Keppler, Jr. (National Museum of the American Indian 2/9741, used by permission)

ground, and as he went around the village enlisting other men, they would drive their arrows in next to the leader's, resulting in a "standing quiver" (figure 4.1). In the same way then, this dance calls everyone in the community to gather together and join in the dancing.

The music imitates the actions: the leader calls out and the other singers respond. Sometimes their melody is the same as the leader's but more often there are two separate phrases, like a question and an answer. The first song features short call-and-response pairs, each repeated multiple times. The same pattern continues in the other songs but the phrases tend to get longer as the song continues. The singers and dancers maintain a steady, walking beat, which distinguishes this dance as a kind of stomp dance.

4.1 Story

Bill Crouse tells the story of how this dance came from the practice of a leader calling his community to form a traveling party. 4.2

Bill Crouse's teacher Ed Curry told the same story to William Fenton in 1951: in earlier times, the people danced Standing Quiver when assembling for travel. (Note that it is Fenton who supplies the detail of a "war party," which was only one of several possible reasons to gather.) Curry emphasizes that the dance was for "rejoicing." 4.1

> WILLIAM FENTON: *Ga'da:šo:t* comes from an old Indian word meaning "quiver." Tell us about that, Mr. Curry.
>
> ED CURRY: *Ga'da:šo:t* is the quiver used in the olden days. When they used to gather, they always carried the quiver, you know. And, they'd gather 'em and bunch 'em up, in whole, one big stack. Then they'd start this *Ga'da:šo:t* and they'd dance around this quiver, *ga'dä:shä'*.
>
> FENTON: *Ga'dä:shä'* is the quiver where the arrows go.
>
> CURRY: Yeah, they'd dance around that. That's the reason they give it the name *Ga'da:šo:t*.
>
> FENTON: What about this song that's "They come making a big noise" and "they come rowing a boat"?
>
> CURRY: Well, that is probably meant on their way coming on their journey, you know. Sometimes they come in loud—
>
> FENTON: Is this a war party coming?
>
> CURRY: Yes, yes. And they have times to rejoice from day to day and they take their quivers and stack them up and they start the *Ga'da:šo:t* and dance around it.

Jesse Cornplanter gave a slightly different explanation to William Fenton in 1954, situating the dance in the war party's campsite during a break while traveling: "In the old days when the Indians used to go on the warpath and they rest on their march, they stand up their quivers where 4.7

Figure 4.2. Seneca quiver, bark with incised decorations, from the Cattaraugas Territory of the Seneca Nation, collected in 1939 by George Gustav Heye and Joseph Keppler, Jr. (National Museum of the American Indian 8/7819, used by permission)

they rest their arrows, just like the soldiers stack their arms on their marks when they rest. And as they stand up the quivers in a row, then the leader leads this stomp dance or the Standing Quiver Dance."

According to oral tradition, originally each singer had his own song in this dance, reflecting his own style and personality. Hearing the Standing Quiver Dance now we can imagine a portrait of a whole team of hunters or warriors setting out, proud of themselves and enthusiastic to start their adventure together.

The story about Standing Quiver mirrors the way that Bill was taught to learn long sets of songs. His teachers told him to picture a line of people coming before him, each to sing a different song. So when he thought of each new song in his mind, he pictures the next person coming forward. In this way the song links memory and relationship, tradition and community.

As Bill explained to music-history students at the University of Rochester, this dance embodies the pride that Seneca men felt in their own strength, pride which continues to be reinforced through this dance as it has been passed down despite the trauma of colonization. 4.3

> So think about those guys paddling along, wearing their good clothes... maybe they're going to trade somewhere, or going somewhere; maybe they're dressed for war—maybe that's what they call it—but as they're going along, they're singing this. **How cool is it to have history like that?**
>
> I think about music and ceremony and social dance that it's a miracle that we have anything, because I know a lot of tribes don't have that. [...] So to me it seems that all the stuff that happened in our past, **no matter what happened, they kept singing.** [...] There was times when they didn't feel like singing and dancing, you know, but they kept going, and they kept it going. They kept that ceremonial circle going.
>
> So to us, we look at it not as a job but as a responsibility, I guess, to pass it on, 'cause they didn't let it go, so there's a reason that they did that. And now, when I do that and sing that and everybody dances that, it's like, **it's strong: we're still here, and we celebrate that.** So that's what music is about for us.

4.2 Songs

Words

As in other Seneca Earth Songs, most of the words are vocables. Though meaningless, they are always sung the same way and are an integral part of each songs. Standing Quiver also includes some Seneca-language words in a song that appears in every version on this page. In Dowdy's song 10 (same as Bill's song 4) they sing "Hodigawenöje/henögwe:' doges daweda:ke'/henögwe:'." This is the song Fenton asked Ed Curry about.

Henögwe:' means "men," referring to the members of the traveling group. *Hodigawenöje* means roughly that they are coming in a canoe, and *doges daweda:ke'* means that they are sounding good. With these words this song preserves a memory of older times when Onönodowa'ga:' people traveled confidently within territory stretching from Ontario south to the Carolinas and west into the Ohio valley and beyond, for trade, hunting, and, when necessary, war.

Musical Structure

As with all Seneca social dances, the participants dance while singers sing a set of songs specific to that dance, accompanied with instruments. The lead singer selects which songs to include based on the time available and personal preference. In general for Seneca social dances, most songs last between one and two minutes, and it is common to select between ten and fifteen songs, making a full dance of fifteen minutes or more. In the version of Standing Quiver recorded by the Allegany Singers in 2002, Kyle Dowdy selected ten songs.

Ga'da:šo:t always begins with the first song in that recording. The leader and singers sing short phrases in a call-and-response (or antiphonal) pattern: *ah*/*hwih*, *eyo'*/*hwe*, *ahe'*/*ahe'*, *wiha'*/*wiha'*, *ë-ë'*/*ë-ë'*, *hayo'*/*hayo'*. The whole set begins on a single pitch sung in a two-beat phrase (one beat for the call, one for the response). The first three phrases are sung on one pitch, approximately A_4 in this recording. (The precise pitch level is not significant for Seneca singers and can vary across performances and even within a single song.) The next phrase dips down to a pitch just below the center and the following starts a half-step above it.

Rhythmically, the song moves at a slow walking pace, without any drum accompaniment, just the sound of stomping feet. (Bill used to like to wear cowboy boots to a singing session to make a stronger sound.) The stomping begins with slow beats that line up with the call and response, then (as in most Earth Songs) begins playing one subdivision below the main beat. In other words, if we would notate the singers' phrases in quarter notes, the drum would be playing eighth notes. With a tonal center on

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	A	B♭	B♮	C	C♯	D	D♯	E	F	F♯	G	G♯
1	■	■										
2	■		■	■	■			■				
3	■		■			■		■				
4	■		■		■			■				
5	■		■		■			■		■		
6	■		■		■	■		■		■		
7	■			■		■		■		■		
8	■		■		■	■		■		■		
9	■		■		■			■				
10	■		■		■			■		■		

Table 4.1. Pitches included in *Ga'da:šo:t* songs, Kyle Dowdy's version

A, most of the songs emphasize the pitches A, B, C♯, D, and E (in solfége, *do re mi fa sol*; or in pitch-class set notation, `/0 2 4 5 7/`), but some include fewer pitches and others more (table 4.1).

After this introductory song, the remaining songs follow the pattern of song 2. The call-and-response pattern continues, now with longer phrases. The singers do not repeat the leader's phrase but sing a separate response. The melody has two phrases, which Andrew labels A and B: A is the first antiphonal phrase (or two), repeated several times; and B is the one or two contrasting phrases that follow, usually with a higher pitch center. The song closes with another repeat of A, so the pattern is ABA. Many singers, however, repeat the AB to create a total form of ABABA.

Most of the Standing Quiver songs follow a pattern we can hear in Song 5 (example 4.1). The A phrase is a three-beat call (*hogea:ne'*) followed by a two-beat response (*hodiganeye'*); this is repeated four times. The B phrase consists of two call/response pairs also 3 + 2 beat pattern. The A phrase emphasizes the tonic pitch and the notes below it, then the B phrase contrasts by going higher, to the notes above the tonic. All of this is then repeated, and then at the end the A is repeated again. Bill says he does not count repetitions and there is no rule about them, but Andrew notes a consistent pattern in these recordings where each time the singer sings the A section

Song	Phrase A	Phrase B
2	2 + 2	2 + 2, 2 + 2
3	3 + 3	3 + 3, 3 + 3
4	3 + 2, 3 + 2	3 + 2, 3 + 2
5	3 + 2	3 + 2, 3 + 2
6	2 + 1	2 + 1, 2 + 1
7	3 + 3, 3 + 3	6 + 3
8	4 + 3, 4 + 3	4 + 3
9	5 + 3	3 + 3, 5 + 3
10	3 + 2	3 + 2, 3 + 2

Table 4.2. Length of Call-and-Response Groups in *Ga'da:šo:t,* Kyle Dowdy's version

again he repeats it fewer times: for example, in song 5 of this recording, Kyle sings A four times, then three, then two.

The other the songs in this recording follow a similar pattern, but in songs 4, 7, and 8 only, the A phrase has two subphrases. Among these songs 7 and 8 compensate by having only one subphrase in the B phrase (table 4.2).

Because Andrew was trained in Western music to look for patterns across large compositions, he hears a pattern in this recording where the songs get longer over the course of the set, from 35 beats for song 1 up to 100 beats for song 9. Similary song 1 starts on a single pitch and the subsequent songs include more pitches (table 4.1). This is just "coincidence," counters Bill: each singer chooses the songs and arranges them according to personal preference, so it does not make sense to analyze the set like a single composition.

Other Versions

Bill Crouse, 2022

In September 2022 the Allegany Singers recorded two different versions of the songs: the first was the version led by Bill Crouse, based on continuous

oral tradition. The second was an alternate version led by Jake George, who though much younger than Bill, has studied earlier recordings by some of his relatives, and based this new/old version on the way they sang it.

Bill's version follows the same basic pattern as Kyle Dowdy's: an opening call-and-response section followed by songs in ABABA form. With a shorter video length in mind, Bill selected a smaller group of four songs: "Those are ones I just picked out that seemed to flow good." In other circumstances he might choose more or order them differently, and each singer makes these choices based on how he learned the songs, personal preference, and the needs of the occasion.

The character and rhythmic feel are consistent across versions, though Bill's is a tad slower in tempo and higher in pitch. The opening section is partly the same and partly features different vocables and melodic gestures, notably an ascending fourth leap on *weheya'* that breaks out of the limited pitch selection in Kyle Dowdy's version. Bill says that the individual call/response pairs within the opening song are interchangeable much like way the other songs are in the set and selected by the lead singer on the occasion.

Bill's song 2 is the same basic tune outline and words as Kyle's song 4, though small details differ. Bill's song 3 was not included in Kyle's set, but the singers' response (on *yahodinë:'*) matches the lead's call in Kyle's song 6. Both sets end with the same song (Crouse song 4 and Dowdy song 10).

Bill attributes minor differences in words and pronunciation between him and Kyle to the fact that Kyle was not equally familiar with all the songs on that recording. He and Kyle normally alternated lead on Standing Quiver, but Bill was not there for that recording, so Kyle was leading the songs that Bill usually led, including the one beginning *Hodigawenöje*.

Jake George, 2022

Jake's version begins with yet another variation on the opening call/response section, then his song 2 is closely related to Kyle Dowdy's song 2, with different words and slightly different pitches in the lead part. Jake's remaining songs are all unique, not included in the other versions.

Song 3 is notable for its syncopated rhythms (example 4.2).

Jake's songs are all pentatonic (/0 2 4 7 9/), without the contrasts of pitch collections notable in the Dowdy version. Jake's singing is a bit clearer and sweeter in tone than Kyle and Bill, partly because he is more of a tenor voice type than their baritone. Bill Crouse and fellow Allegany Singers member John Block hear the influence of Western pop music in Jake's singing. Bill says his own style is "smoother" than that of some of his teachers, while Jake's is smoother yet.

Jesse Cornplanter, 1954

Jesse Cornplanter (1889–1957) sings according to his distinct Tonawanda
4.7 Seneca traditions, in 1954 recordings by William N. Fenton. In the first recording he has to sing both call and response parts, with some awkward pauses between. A second singer, possibly Charles E. Bartlett (1904–1976), joins on the second recording. They sing five songs: the first is almost identical to Kyle Dowdy's opening song and fits the pattern of the opening in all versions; the third song is the same as Dowdy's second song; and the others are unique to this recording.

Ed Curry and Avery Jimerson, 1951

Ed Curry and Avery Jimerson were Bill's teachers, and Avery was his uncle. With Ed taking lead they sang a full set of songs for William Fenton to
4.2 record in 1951. The recording was made at Quaker Bridge, a place on the Allegany Territory that was since flooded by the Kinzua dam, in violation of the United States' treaty agreements with the Seneca Nation. Ed was a generation older than Avery, and Bill notes that some of the songs in this set are so old that Bill had never heard them before.

A Full Quiver of *Ga'da:šo:t* Songs

Except for their openings, these are not really variant versions—that is, alternate ways of singing the same songs—as much as different selections of songs from out of the vast storehouse of songs preserved in oral tradition. Where there is true variation, the basic outline of the melody is preserved

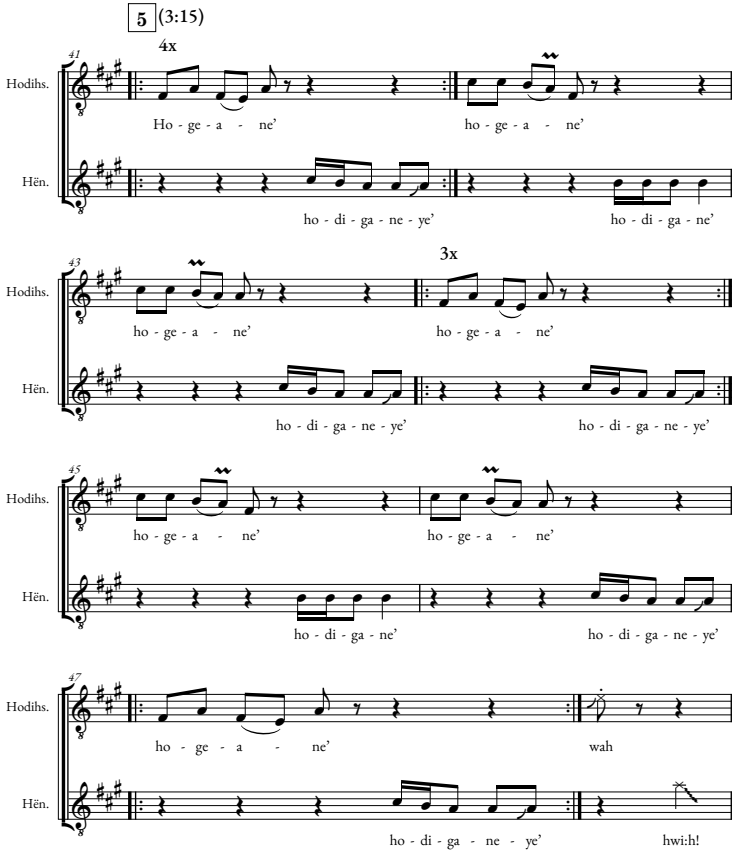
Figure 4.3. Jesse Cornplanter in 1935 (photo, Rochester Museum and Science Center RM2141u; used by permission)

and the main vocables, and most of the variation happens in the shorter note values often at the beginnings of phrases. The overall structure of the song set has to follow a predictable pattern in order for the dance to work, but the selection of songs, number of repeats, minor melodic variations or embellishments, and pitch level can be set by the lead singer without disrupting the community's expectations. Keeping in mind both the story of this dance as a way of summoning the community, and Bill's memory practice of recalling the faces of individual singers, each of these song selections may call to mind the voice and character of singers in ages past, from Kyle Dowdy, Bill's cousin and one of his teachers, back to hunters and warriors of ancient times.

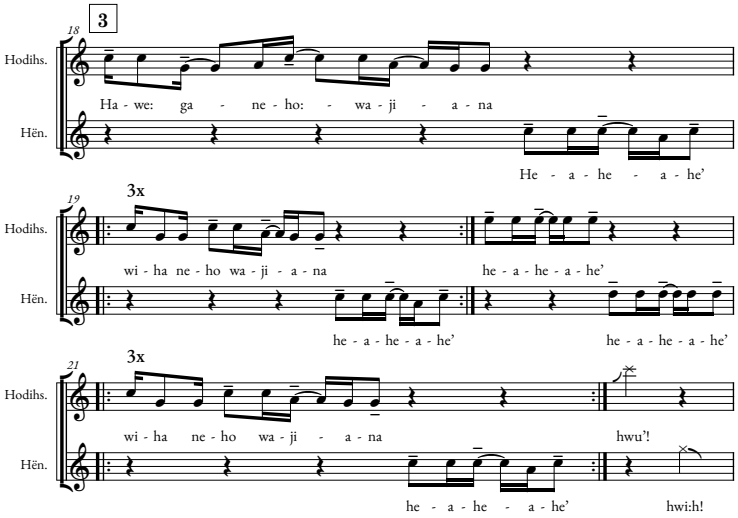
4.3 Movements

The dance follows the story of a men recruiting a band to go out traveling from the village. The leader begins dancing with a shuffle step in a counterclockwise circle, and he is followed by pairs of men and women. As Bill explains, "even though the women aren't going, they're supporting their men."

Each song has an AB structure with an initial call-and-response, then a section that often starts with a higher pitch and then returns to the tonic. When the higher-pitched B section begins, the dancers turn and face the middle. At the repeat of the A, they turn back to face in the direction of movement around the circle. The basic step for Standing Quiver is the same one used for several other dances of the stomp-dance type.



Example 4.1. *Ga'da:šo:t* song 5, as sung by Allegany Singers, Kyle Dowdy, lead (2002) (all transcriptions by Andrew Cashner unless indicated otherwise)



Example 4.2. Syncopated rhythm in *Ga'da:šo:t* song 3, as sung by Allegany Singers, Jake George, lead (2022); transcribed by Andrew Cashner

Chapter 5

Gayó:waga:yöh (Old Moccasin Dance)

A farm in Livingston County, NY, September 2022

Gayó:waga:yöh or Old Moccasin Dance is a lively dance for pairs of men and women moving together around the circle. This dance is of the same type as Fish Dance and Sharpen Stick Dance, in that it features pairs of men and women who dance facing each other. In the middle of each song, the members of each pair switch places with each other. Old Moccasin Dance

5.1

Figure 5.1. Beaded and quilled Seneca moccasins, ca. 1840–1880 (National Museum of the American Indian cat. 13/5376)

can be sung on any normal social-dance occasion and at any point in the set. This dance can also be used as a medicine ceremony as part of the Midwinter Ceremonies.

Bill speaks of Earth Songs like Robin Dance or Corn Dance as a means for people to honor and give thanks to elements of Creation, in just the same way that Haudenosaunee people extend gratitude to these elements in the daily *Ganö:nyök* or Thanksgiving Address. Old Moccasin Dance, like Standing Quiver, focuses directly on the dancing of the human community, and this fits with the first traditional element of the Thanksgiving Address: *ha'deyögwe'da:ge:h*, all the different kinds of people. Human-centered Earth Songs provide a way to celebrate human beings and their relationships with each other, including male–female relationships.

5.1 Story

Bill's great-grandfather Richard Johnny-John used to tell a story about Moccasin Dance when he presented it in shows, and other presenters still repeat this story. One time in the old days they were having a social at the old Coldspring Longhouse, and since it was open to the public and not far from the highway sometimes outsiders would sit in. On this occasion there was a white man that no one else knew, there with his family. He listened and took lots of notes in his notebook. Years later Bill's great-grandfather saw this white man in the news and realized he was Arthur Murray. He was doing the Charleston, which he said he invented. Bill's great-grandfather realized he had based it on the Seneca Moccasin Dance.

What connection could there be between the Seneca Old Moccasin Dance and the Charleston? The Charleston dance first emerged in the 1920s, and oral accounts and documentary evidence all point to an origin among African-American communities of the early twentieth century (Conyers 2013). The Charleston became famous after it first appeared on 5.2
the Broadway stage in the 1923 musical *Runnin' Wild* with words and music by prominent Black composers Cecil Mack and James P. Johnson (Mack and Johnson 1923). While the song and dance probably descend from earlier Black dances (of the "Buck" and "Wing" varieties), Mack and Johnson's song emphasizes the song's newness: it is "a new tune,/ Funny blue tune," "Made in South Caroline." Johnson said he was inspired by the dance routines and ring-shout calls of Gullah Geechee dockworkers, and other accounts of the time suggest these dances were popularized by tours of Charleston's Jenkins Orphanage Band (Butler 2020).

What about Arthur Murray, then? Could he have profited from appropriating Seneca dances? At the time the Charleston was surging in popularity, Arthur Murray (1895–1991) was busy expanding his franchise of dance studios aimed at common people until his name had become synonymous with dance in the United States. He grew up in New York City, the child of Jewish immigrants from Austria, and started his first dance studios in North Carolina (Pace 1991). Arthur Murray certainly had nothing to do with creating the Charleston, but he did much to popularize it. As he

lived many years in the Hudson River Valley, he may have passed through the Allegany Territory at some point, but it seems unlikely that he ever observed enough Seneca dancing to be able to draw on it in any significant way.

On the other hand, it is not at all far-fetched that an American pop culture trend should be inspired by Native culture, since so many have been. Indeed, the vogue of "playing Indian" in white communities was at its height in the 1920s (Deloria 1998). The fashion trends embraced by "flappers" centered on unstructured, tunic-like dresses with long fringe, and headgear that often featured headbands. Feathered headdresses could still be seen (a holdover of Edwardian fashions from the preceding decades), some of which featured close-fitting hats with one or a few upright feathers (Thomas 2022). These trends seem clearly inspired by Native American clothing as it was known then, and a Seneca observer could easily see the round-cap-with-feathers fashion as resembling a Haudenosaunee *gasdo:wä'* (figure 5.2, 5.3).

Some aspects of the Charleston do parallel those of the Old Moccasin Dance: both are lively dances with repeated pulses on a single foot while the other foot is free to move, and both feature partners facing each other. You can, in fact, do the moves of Old Moccasin Dance to the music of the Charleston, and vice versa. (See the section on the movements below.) For a Seneca traditional singer of the Jazz Age, the Charleston would stand out as the American popular dance most like the Old Moccasin Dance.

Even if this particular example was not appropriated from indigenous culture, then, so many other things before and since have been that it seems reasonable to look at another hot new trend in mainstream US culture and say, "hey, we made that!" Arthur Murray represented dance as a popular commercial enterprise and would therefore be an obvious target in a story about profiting from appropriation. Of course, even in Bill's story, the Charleston connection is presented as something of a guess, as is the link between the Charleston and *Gayó:waga:yöh* specifically.

Making this connection could express a desire to acknowledge the indigenous roots of American popular culture, to see a Seneca contribution in the mainstream spotlight. The story insists that Seneca dances are as

Figure 5.2. Mæ Murray in just one example of her feathered headgear in *A Broadway Rose* (1922) (public domain, courtesy Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 5.3. Bill Crouse wearing *gasdo:wä'*, ribbon shirt and traditional regalia, and beaded moccasins (At the University of Rochester, April 2023; Photo by Andrew Cashner)

modern as any and that Seneca people are not stuck in the past. As Haudenosaunee singer Sadie Buck declares, "Today I'm modern; tomorrow I'll be modern 'til tomorrow; yesterday I was modern for yesterday" (quoted in Avery 2019, 198).

The story also reminds Seneca hearers that their culture is a treasure that outsiders will want to exploit. The teller highlights the pattern, well established by scholars from Morgan to Fenton, in which white men visit the Seneca community, take things that they learned away with them, and then profit from those things in the outside world without acknowledging the source (McCarthy 2008). Outside observers in the community are likely to steal and misrepresent what they see. Andrew hopes that his involvement in this project as a settler musicologist breaks that pattern of exploitation and instead helps to strengthen Native sovereignty and promote greater respect and deeper understanding in the non-Native world.

Speaking of Lewis Henry Morgan, that nineteenth-century ethnographer singled out "the moccason" as the greatest type of footwear ever invented, one of few aspects of Native culture that he believed were superior to European civilization (Morgan 1851, 359–360):

> The moccason [...] is preëminently an Indian invention, and one of the highest antiquity. It is true to nature in its adjustment to the foot, beautiful in its materials and finish, and durable as an article of apparel. It will compare favorably with the best single article for the protection and adornment of the foot ever invented, either in ancient or modern times. With the sanction of fashion, it would supersede among us a long list of similar inventions. Other nations have fallen behind the Indian, in this one particular at least. The masses of the Romans wore the calceus ligneus, or wooden shoe; the masses of Germany and Ireland, and of many of the European nations, formerly wore the same. With the cothurnus and sandal of the ancients, and the boot of the moderns, the moccason admits of no unfavorable comparison. It deserves to be classed among the highest articles of apparel ever invented, both in

usefulness, durability, and beauty.

The Minnetonka Moccasin company, whose annual revenue in 2022 was $37.5 million, would seem to agree with Morgan that the old moccasin still holds plenty of value in the modern world. Whether or not Arthur Murray stole Old Moccasin Dance, white businesses certainly have made plenty of profit from indigenous inventions.

5.2 Songs

Words

As with most other Seneca Earth Songs, the words of Old Moccasin Dance are vocables without linguistic meaning. A given song is always sung to the same words, such as *We:hanayögeh* for the traditional first song, but these words do not signify anything. The lyrical text in Andrew's transcriptions are phonetic, according to Wallace Chafe's orthography (Chafe 2015). The division between "words" is somewhat arbitrary: the spelling reflects the relative length of the vowels as sung, so the same vocables may be spelled differently. The traditional second song is a good example of both problems, as the words repeat the sounds *weno* and *yane*, but each time with a different length and emphasis in the song: one of several possible transcriptions is *Wenoyane: weno:yane: wenoh ya:ne:*.

There is Seneca language in the closing song (in both recordings by the Allegany Singers): the single word *gayó:wah*, moccasin. Other songs include vocable words like *gayoweh* that sound similar, but this may just be coincidence since variants of *gayowaneh* are among the most common vocables in Seneca songs. The vocables help singers remember the songs by preserving (one might even say encoding) aspects of their sound and structure, though much more research is needed in this area.

Musical Structure

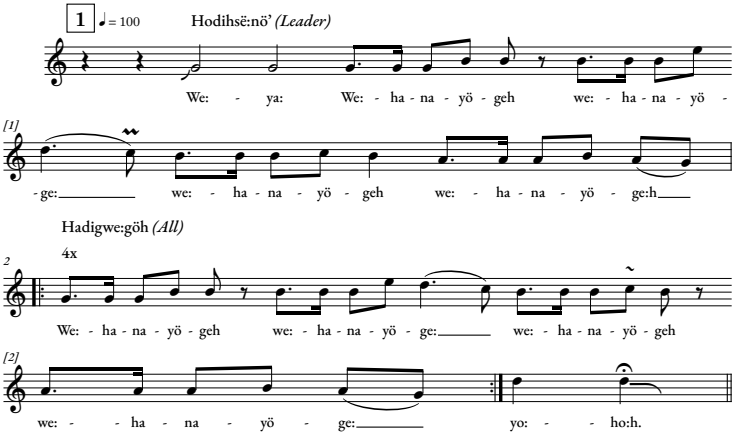
The basic structure of the song features an introduction by the lead, a refrain sung by all two or more times, and a concluding *yo:ho:h!*, as demon-

Figure 5.4. Beaded Seneca moccasins, velvet and deerskin (National Museum of the American Indian cat. 24/3505)

strated by the first song (example 5.1). The lead singer introduces each song by singing the first phrase. Beyond that, though, these songs do not feature call-and-response; the singers continue in unison. The singers repeat each song at least once and there are no other internal repeats. Most of the songs have three or four phrases; the phrases contrast but also echo each other, with small motives repeated or varied in subsequent phrases. The rhythmic patterns in song 1 and song 2 recur throughout the other songs. See the analysis for a more detailed look at the patterns that tie together these songs.

Versions

Bill's teacher Avery Jimerson taught him always to begin *Gayó:waga:yöh* with the specific songs heard first on both Allegany Singers recordings. Kyle
5.3 Dowdy led with these in their 2002 recording. After that, Kyle Dowdy's choices as lead in the earlier recording featured more songs that he had learned from singers on other territories, particularly Six Nations in On-



Example 5.1. *Gayó:waga:yöh,* first song as sung by the Allegany Singers, Kyle Dowdy, lead (2002)

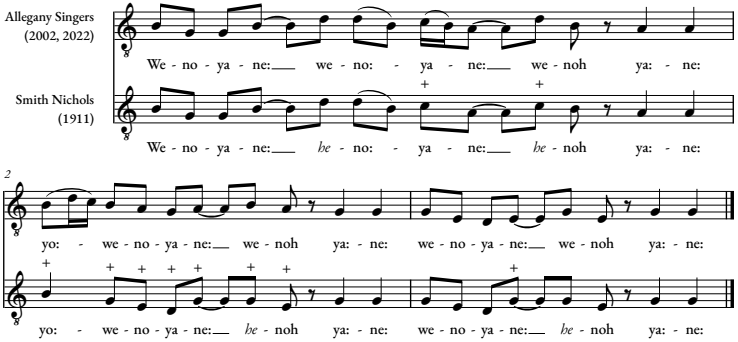
tario. The song selection in the more recent recording (with Jacob Dowdy singing lead) are more traditional to *Ohi:yo'*, according to Bill.

One of the oldest known recordings of Haudenosaunee songs includes at least one song from Old Moccasin Dance as known today. In 1911 a Huron (Wyandot) man named Smith Nichols sang several songs for Canadian ethnologist Marius Barbeau. The wax-cylinder recordings are preserved today at the Canadian Museum of History, and one is recognizable as a *Gayó:waga:yöh* song still in living oral tradition. 5.1

Barbeau transcribed the "burden" or refrain of this song (his number 119) as "wenuyane henuyane," and the recording is nearly identical to song 2 in both recordings by the Allegany Singers (example 5.2). The earlier singer's words differ by only one syllable: his sixth syllable is *hë* rather than *wë*. The rhythms are identical except that Nichols sings a long note instead of a sixteenth-note run on the second *yane:*. His pitches are different in the second phrase, but follow the same contour.

In addition to the matching music, the description and context of this song in Barbeau's archive suggest this was part of Old Moccasin Dance. The transcriber described Song 119 as a "dance around the fire" for men

Example 5.2. Comparison of Allegany Singers' Old Moccasin Dance song 2 with 1911 recording by Smith Nichols (different words in italics, differences in melody marked with +)



and women, which would fit this dance (though not excluding others). The title of the previous entry (Song 118) in the notes also points to Old Moccasin Dance, though its melody does not correspond with one of the songs recorded by the Allegany Singers. Barbeau cataloged it thus:

> Kăyúwa (no meaning) is the name of that song: hiyeyuwahine, wenuyiehine hiyuweyuwahine ... (burden) ... Men's + women dance, around the fire. It is probably the property of the Wyandot originally.

Gayó:wah is Seneca for moccasin, of course; the song after this is an Old Moccasin Dance song today; and the vocables for other songs in this series closely resemble Moccasin Dance songs. Further research would be needed to evaluate the claim that this song was originally Wyandot (Huron) and not Seneca.

Place in Song	Position	Rhythm and Step
First refrain	Dancers facing forward in line	 R R L L
Second refrain	Male-female pairs, first facing partner (steps reversed)	 R R L R L
End of final song	Pairs facing each other	 ga yo wa:h R L R

Table 5.1. Dance steps in *Gayó:waga:yöh*

5.3 Movements

Old Moccasin Dance starts with a circle of only men dancing counterclockwise as usual. Women line up and step into the circle in between the men, in the pattern female-male-male-female (so the first woman steps in front of the first man and the second woman steps behind the second man). In the middle of each song, the two members of each pair will switch places. Thus the head of the line at the start will be two couples arranged FM–MF; when they rotate it will become MF–FM; when they rotate again in the next song they will be back to FM–MF.

Each song starts with an introduction by the lead singer, in relatively free rhythm, with the rattle shaking continuously; during the intro the dancers just walk forward at a free pace. Next the rest of the singers join in to sing the melody and the rattle and drum begin to play a regular beat, typically emphasizing the smaller rhythmic subdivision (eighth notes in the transcription; table 5.1). During this section, which we will call the first refrain, the dancers begin to dance with a slow step, right–right, left–left, one step per beat (quarter note). When the singers repeat the melody, the rattle and drum shift to a "half-time" feel, emphasizing the main beat (quarter notes); this is the second refrain.

Now the second dancer in each pair moves ahead of their partner and

turns around to face them. Men moving forward should go on the outside of the circle while women should go on the inside. The dancers shift to a faster step that includes a step and shuffle on the right foot, a quick change to the other and back, and ends with a longer step on the left (table 5.1). The rear-facing dancer does this step in reverse. When the song ends with *yo:ho:h*, the front dancer turns again to face forward and the dance repeats for the next song. The traditional last song features a special rhythm and a step to match: the dancers stop and hold their step for a quarter note on the words *yo:h ga:yowa:h*, while the rattle and drum also stop.

The fast dance step is a three-beat pattern, while the other steps are in two-beat groups. These groupings do not cause any metrical problem for the dancers, though, because individual dancers do not all begin the fast step at exactly the same moment, and the songs do not have regular metrical groupings.

The pattern of when to dance, when to rotate positions, and the basic steps are all prescribed, but within that this type of dance allows people freedom to move in their own ways. There is freedom and opportunity for creativity in moving the upper body and arms, and dancers can also do more complex variations on the basic step.

Other than the traditional gender pairings, there are no restrictions on who can dance with whom in Old Moccasin Dance, and no one assigns any meaning to the pairings. The exact pairings of men and women results somewhat randomly from the way women line up and insert themselves into the circle of dancers, though Bill says some women have been known to time their entry just right to end up with someone in particular. Even then, however, this is not any kind of lovers' dance, but an energetic, even athletic, dance of the whole community.

5.4 Musical Patterns in Depth


5.3

Listening to the set of *Gayó:waga:yöh* songs recorded by the Allegany Singers, why do these songs can sound so varied and yet still seem to have a close family resemblance? They sound like they belong to the same dance

Figure 5.5. Seneca moccasins, before 1912, Cattaraugus Territory of the Seneca Nation (National Museum of the American Indian cat. 2/9623)

even though there are different types of melodies and rhythms. This analysis explores musical patterns in Old Moccasin Dance and suggests some possible ways that these songs are related to each other, which might further point towards understanding how they were created.

I (Andrew) would stress that these are my own interpretations of what I hear. I am trying to listen in a way that is informed by Seneca worldview, and to avoid importing Western categories and methods, but I also believe that there is value in sharing my own way of hearing, as what I hope is the beginning of a discussion with others who may hear differently.

Melodic and Rhythmic Patterns

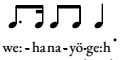
I hear recurring patterns of pitches, rhythms, and phrasing within each song and across the set, so that the individual songs seem to have been built in similar ways from a small set of musical ideas, and some of those musical ideas recur in other songs. One common thread is that all the songs draw from the same set of pitches, like a limited palette of colors in visual art.

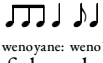
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	G	G♯	A	B♭	B	C	C♯	D	D♯	E	F	F♯
1	■		■		■	■		■		■		
2	■		■		■	■		■		■		
3	■		■		■	■		■		■	■	
4	■		■		■	■		■		■	■	
5	■		■		■	■		■		■		
6	■		■		■	■		■		■		
7	■		■		■			■		■		
8	■		■		■			■		■		
9	■		■		■	■		■		■	■	
10	■		■		■	■		■		■	■	
11	■		■		■	■		■		■		
12	■		■		■	■		■		■		
13	■		■		■	■		■		■		
14	■		■		■	■		■		■		
15	■		■		■	■		■		■		

Table 5.2. Pitches included in *Gayó:waga:yöh* songs, Kyle Dowdy's version

These songs are consistently diatonic, with most songs using six notes of the major scale (i.e., a major hexachord) and a few adding a ♭$\hat{7}$ (table 5.2).

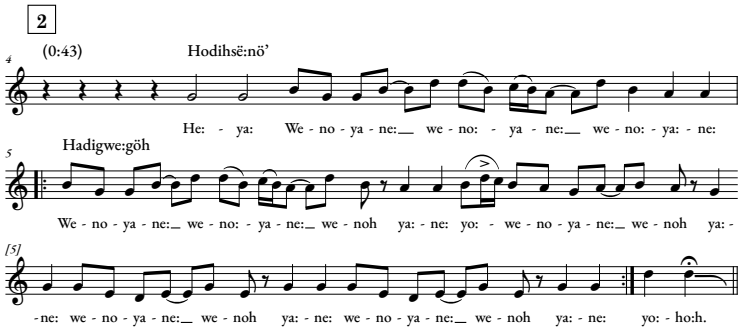
The songs are similar not just in the general palette, though, but also in the process by which they build on small rhythmic and melodic patterns. Repeated vocables highlight repeated musical elements. The refrain of the first song, for example, consists of just the vocable *we:hanayöge:h* repeated four times. Each of those times makes up one of the four phrases in the refrain. All four phrases have the same basic rhythm matching with the word:



Similarly, in song 2 (example 5.3), the words repeat *wenoyane* with different accents and lengths. The basic rhythmic motive is 

, which recurs at the beginning of the first phrase and the end of the other three. This motive is syncopated against the underlying duple pulse played by rattle and drum, and in relation to the strong emphasis on the long notes of 

. Even though songs 1 and 2 are built from different rhythmic motives, then, they use those motives in similar ways. Melodically, both of the first



Example 5.3. *Gayó:waga:yöh*, song 2 by the Allegany Singers, Kyle Dowdy, lead (2002)

Label	Main Pattern	Phrase Ending
Dotted		
Syncopated		
Tresillo		

Table 5.3. Rhythmic patterns in Old Moccasin Dance songs

two songs trace a basic melodic outline B–A–G (*mi–re–do*).

The rhythmic patterns in songs 1 and 2 recur in the rest of the songs. I hear every song in this set as a variation on either the dotted, duple eighth-note pattern of song 1, or the syncopated quarter-eighth-quarter rhythm of song 2 (table 5.3). There are also characteristic patterns at the ends of phrases, which mostly coincide with the other two patterns.

At first song 10 seems distinct from all the others, with its fast syncopated rhythm like a Caribbean *tresillo* with 3+3+2 groups of sixteenth notes. Its long-short-short ending pattern is also unique. Bill says that Kyle Dowdy learned this song from singers of Six Nations, Ontario, and thinks it does not fit as well with the other songs. The Allegany Singers did not include this one in their more recent recording. While acknowledging the

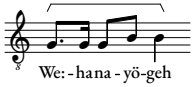
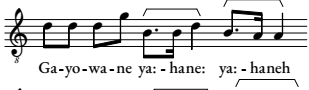
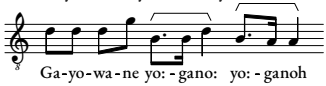
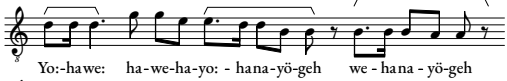
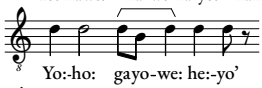
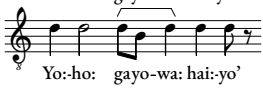
Song	Beginning
1	
7	
8	
12	
14	
15	

Table 5.4. Old Moccasin Dance songs with Dotted rhythmic pattern

different style of this song, I hear this rhythm as a highly elaborated version of the Syncopated pattern from song 2 (example 5.4).

Phrase Structures

Finally, as we noted in the first two songs, the phrases in each song are built from limited musical elements, and we can also identify two basic patterns of phrase structure across the set. These songs have either three or four phrases. In some of those with four phrases, the last phrase is unique (making an ABCD pattern), whereas in the others, it is a repetition of the second or third phrase (ABCB or ABCC; table 5.7). The phrases contrast but also echo each other, with small motives repeated or varied in subsequent phrases, as can be seen graphically by separating the phrases and aligning the similar ideas (example 5.5).

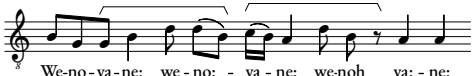
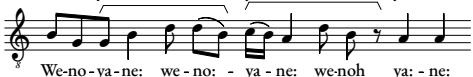
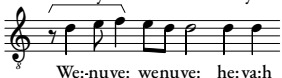
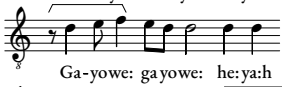
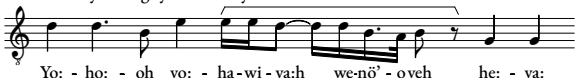
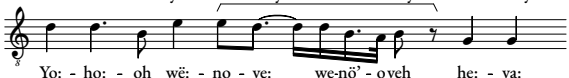
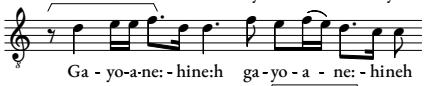
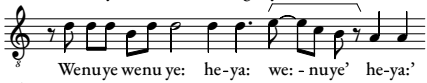
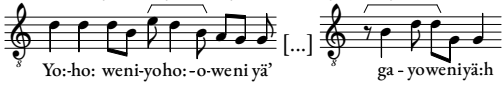
Song	Beginning
2	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
9	
11	
13	

Table 5.5. Old Moccasin Dance songs with Syncopated rhythmic pattern

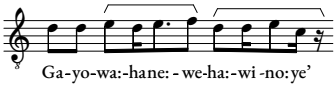
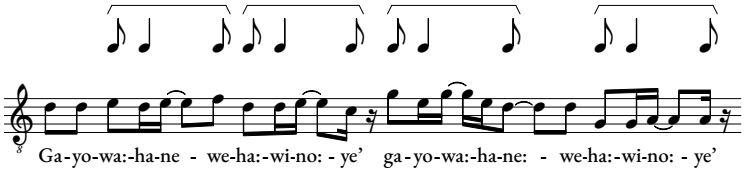
Song	Beginning
10	

Table 5.6. Old Moccasin Dance song with Tresillo rhythmic pattern

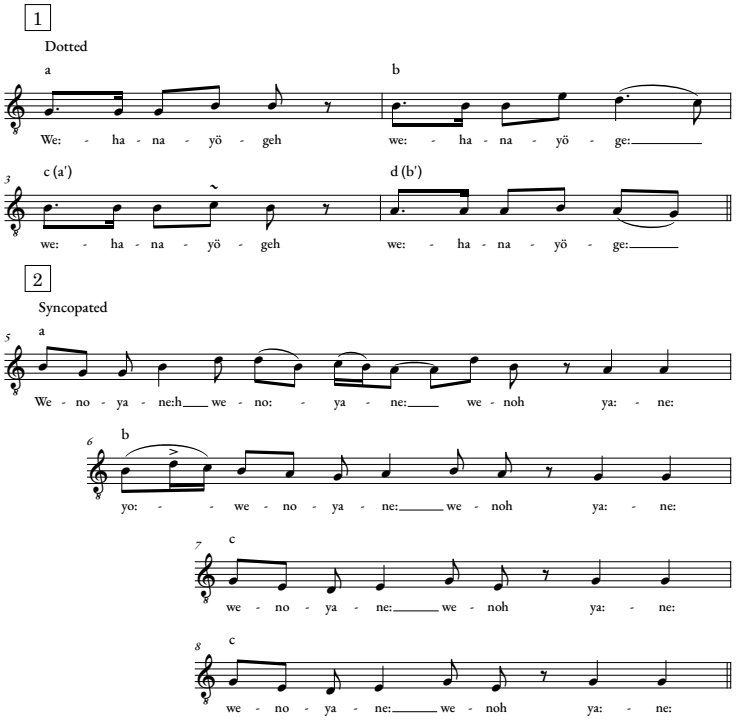


Example 5.4. Old Moccasin Dance, song 10 as elaboration of Syncopated pattern

Type	Pattern	Songs
3 distinct	ABC	9, 10, 11, 14, 15
4 distinct	ABCD	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13
4, last repeated	ABCB	7, 8
	ABCC	2, 12

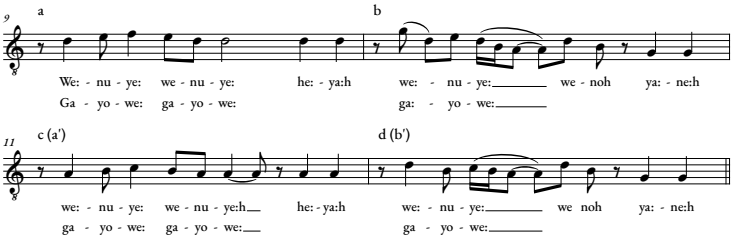
Table 5.7. Phrase structure (degree of difference of musical ideas in each phrase) in Old Moccasin Dance songs

Example 5.5. Phrase structures with repeated and varied musical elements in Old Moccasin Dance songs


1
Dotted
a
b
We: - ha - na - yö - geh
we: - ha - na - yö - ge:
3
c (a')
d (b')
we: - ha - na - yö - geh
we: - ha - na - yö - ge:
2
Syncopated
5
a
We - no - ya - ne:h we - no: - ya - ne: we - noh ya: - ne:
6
b
yo: - - we - no - ya - ne: we - noh ya: - ne:
7
c
we - no - ya - ne: we - noh ya: - ne:
8
c
we - no - ya - ne: we - noh ya: - ne:

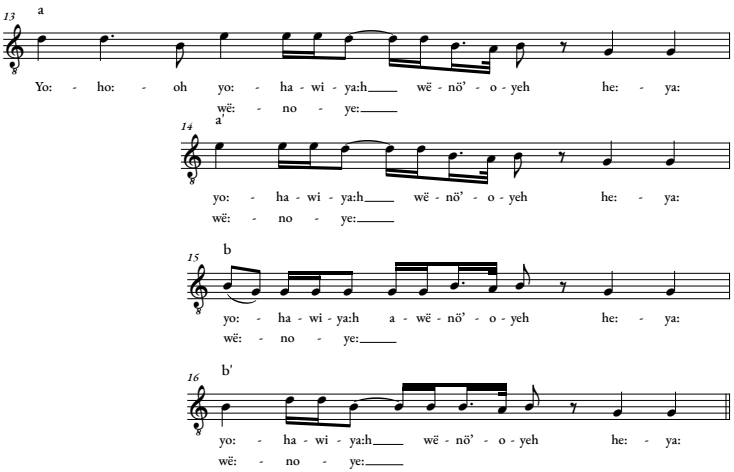
3, 4

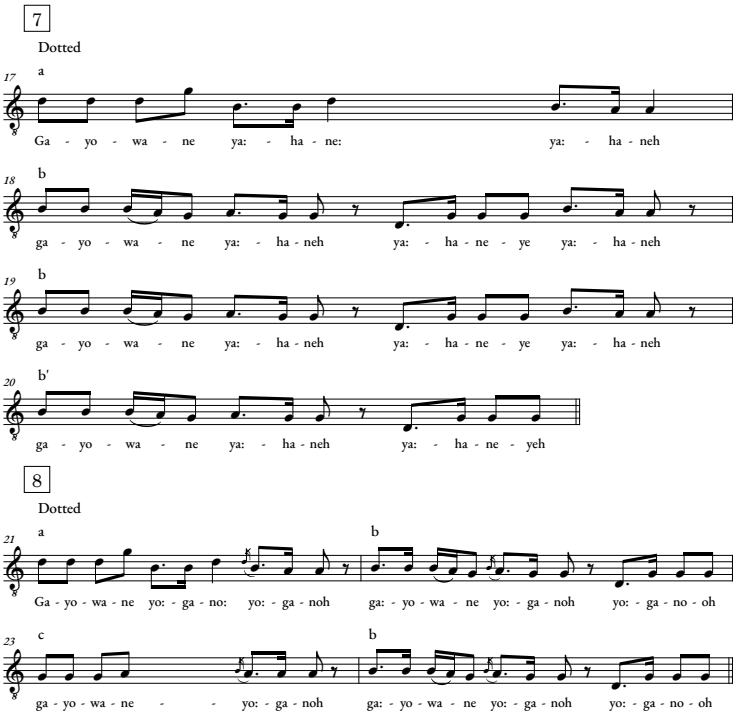
Syncopated



5, 6

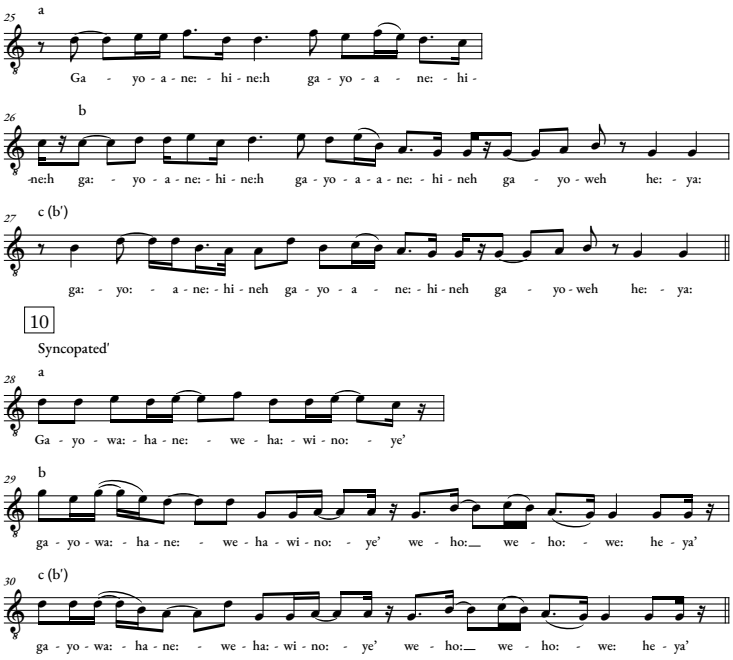
Syncopated




7
Dotted
17
a
Ga - yo - wa - ne ya: - ha - ne: ya: - ha - neh
18
b
ga - yo - wa - ne ya: - ha - neh ya: - ha - ne - ye ya: - ha - neh
19
b
ga - yo - wa - ne ya: - ha - neh ya: - ha - ne - ye ya: - ha - neh
20
b'
ga - yo - wa - ne ya: - ha - neh ya: - ha - ne - yeh
8
Dotted
21
a
b
Ga - yo - wa - ne yo: - ga - no: yo: - ga - noh ga: - yo - wa - ne yo: - ga - noh yo: - ga - no - oh
23
c
b
ga - yo - wa - ne - - yo: - ga - noh ga: - yo - wa - ne yo: - ga - noh yo: - ga - no - oh

9

Syncopated

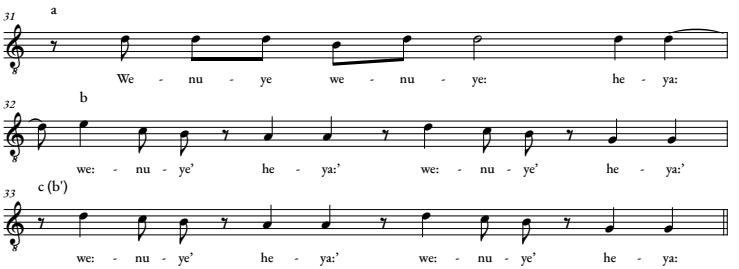


10

Syncopated'

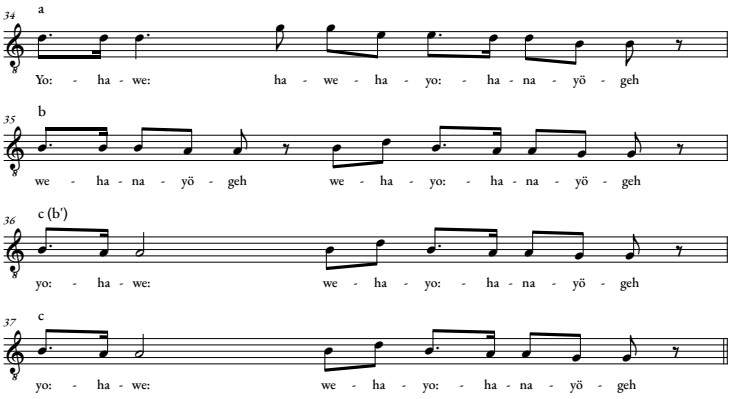
11

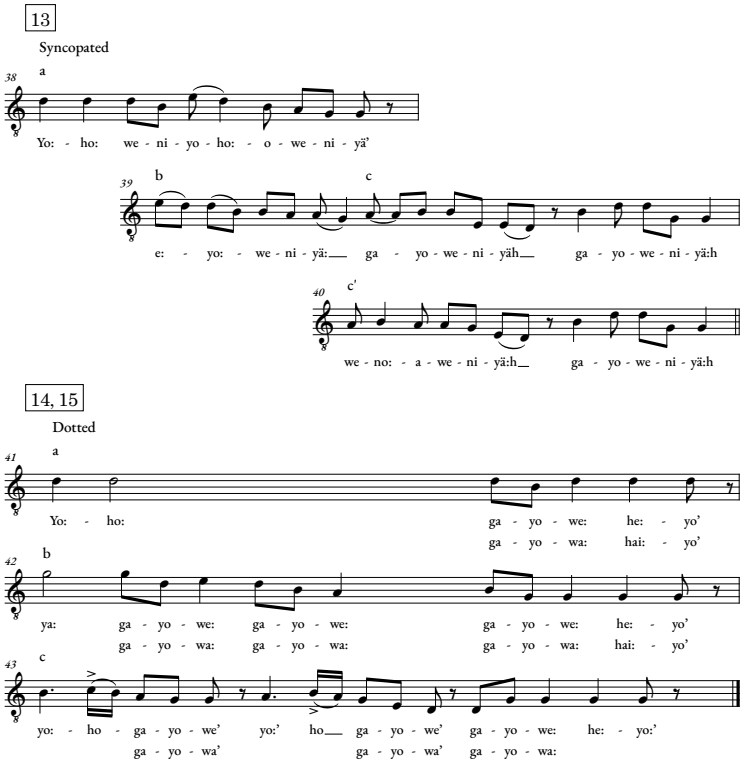
Syncopated



12

Dotted





Songs 7 and 8 provide an example of how the same musical ingredients can be mixed together into different phrase structures. Song 8 has a relatively simple structure of ABCB, while in song 7 the first B phrase is extended and there is no C phrase.

Chapter 6

Jö:yaik θËnö' (Robin Dance)

Mendon Ponds park near Rochester and Honeoye Falls, NY, May 2023

Robin Dance is sung to honor the robin, especially at the start of spring, though it can be sung throughout the year. The song acknowledges and thanks this familiar bird as a harbinger of spring after the long winter: as Bill explains, "We're honoring the robin, so we welcome it back." 6.1

The Robin Dance songs seem to imitate the song of the *jö:yaik* (Amer-

Figure 6.1. *Jö:yaik,* an American robin, making an alarm call (in Lenape territory, Brooklyn, NY, in 2022, photograph by Wikimedia contributor "Rhododendrites," used by permission)

ican robin), while the side-to-side dance might suggest the bird's hopping movements. The story of Robin Dance, in which a boy transformed into the robin gives his song to humankind, highlights the role of Earth Songs in maintaining reciprocal relationships with created beings and with each other.

6.1 Story

According to Seneca oral tradition, the Robin Dance was a gift to the people from the robin, and the robin was originally a human boy. That boy went out into the woods with his uncle on a vision quest, and while he was fasting and waiting for a vision, he grew ill and began to waste away. His uncle found him on the point of death, with his chest painted red, but the

boy begged to wait another day. When the uncle returned the last time, he found a bird who told him, "I am your nephew. I am *jö:yaik*," the robin, and from now on he would be the sign that spring was returning. He gave the people his songs as a way of honoring him and celbrating the promise of spring.

The Seneca Robin Dance is evidence of a long, close relationship between humans and robins in this region, which Western science confirms. The American robin (*Turdus migratorius*) already lived all across North America when humans first arrived, but robins seem to have lived close by humans since (Vanderhoff, Pyle, et al. 2020). They prefer to hunt in grassy, open areas with plenty of sunlight, and so they thrive in human-settled landscapes or at the "woods' edge." In recent times scientists robin populations have been documented to expand following patterns of human settlement (Vanderhoff, Pyle, et al. 2020). Robins show awareness of people and their habits: city robins allow people to come much closer to them than their country cousins do, and they are less frightened of people walking on paths without looking at them, possibly because they have learned the predictable pattern that people tend to stay on paths (Eason, Sherman, et al. 2010). Human behavior and culture shapes robin behavior: robins sing earlier in the morning when there is more light pollution (Miller 2006), and robins are quicker to run away from people in cities where people treat are more aggressive toward them (Clucas and Marzluff 2012).

Because robins live in such close proximity to humans and because their return signals spring, they are widely recognized even by urban denizens of this region who do not otherwise pay much attention to birds. Their song is familiar even to those who have never taken particular note of it. "Because the species is so widespread, virtually all North Americans hear, and are warmed by, the lovely melody of the robin during the spring and summer, although many people do not recognize its song as such. Those who do, however, widely regard the early migrating American robin to be a longed-for harbinger of springtime and warmer weather, because this bird often arrives at the northern parts of its range and sings while there is still snow on the ground" (Freedman and Frost 2023).

The difference between the common folkloric ideas of robins and the

Seneca Robin Dance is that Seneca people and their ancestors have lived side-by-side with this species of bird in this territory for thousands of years, and the song was developed and preserved through oral tradition as a sign of their close relationship. That sense of intimacy with robins may be reflected in the way the Seneca story says that the robin was originally a human boy. It is not clear whether this was the first robin, or whether the robins perhaps chose this boy as an intermediary and transformed him into one of them. Either way the story emphasizes kinship with the robin, who shares something beneficial with humankind. The Robin Dance can help us understand how Seneca people understand the relationship between Earth Songs and the Earth.

Relationship and Reciprocity

The story of Robin Dance recalls several other Seneca stories in which nonhuman beings share songs or dances with people. Often they come through an intermediary person who was isolated and separate from the community. Beings like a bear, frogs, or the Three Sisters gave their songs to this person to take back to the people. The songs were not a human's artistic creation, but a gift from these beings to be used for a specific purpose. The beings gave people a way to relate to them and to draw on their power for the good of the human community.

In a way this pattern recalls the way Haudenosaunee people treated Euro-Americans in the treaties of the early colonial era. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy was willing to treat with specific ambassadors from the colonial community who they knew and recognized, and who had enough knowledge of their language and culture, and enough humility, that the Native leaders believed they could communicate with them (Richter 2001, 129–150; 1992; Fenton 1998) The Euro-Americans did not know how to relate to Native people, so the confederacy chiefs provided protocols for them to follow. They adapted the Condolence Council that they had used to mourn fallen chiefs and effectively gave it to the colonial ambassadors as the proper way to relate to them. They gave them the concept of the Covenant Chain, the imagery of the Tree of Peace, the Two-

Row Wampum, and other cultural elements to enable a relationship on terms both sides could accept. Their diplomacy between *ögwé'ö:weh* (Original People, Natives) and Euro-Americans was built on the model of relationships between humans and their non-human relatives like corn and the robin.

Robin Dance, like other Earth Songs, provides a way for Seneca people to renew reciprocal relationships with the non-human world and with each other. The dance also provides a way for Seneca people to teach those non-Native neighbors who will listen, how to relate to them and to the natural world in a healthy way.

6.2 Songs

The Allegany Singers recorded six Robin Dance songs in 2002. In contrast to Standing Quiver and Old Moccasin Dance, where one song can differ widely from the next, these Robin Dance songs sound more like variations on a single theme. 6.3

The set begins with a slow introduction in free time, started by the lead singer and continued by the whole group. This introduction lays out the basic shape of the melody that will recur in all the songs. This melody includes a smaller collection of pitches than some other songs (table 6.1): just *do*, *re*, *mi*, and *sol* or *la* (songs 5 and 6 include both). Though under Western training Andrew thinks of these pitches as belonging to a scale starting on E, the songs actually emphasize B much more strongly, both by stress and by including both the lower and higher B. When Robin Dance is sung in a reverberant space like the cookhouse used for both 2002 and 2022 Allegany Singers recordings, the repetition of only four or five notes, in short, looping phrases with brief rests between, greatly reinforces the overtones resonating in the room to where Andrew found he could clearly hear the melody an octave and sometimes even two octaves higher resounding in the space.

The melody in song 1 (example 6.1) begins with repeated long one-beat notes (transcribed as quarter notes) on *yo:ho*, on *sol* ($\hat{5}$), then moves down

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	E	F	F♯	G	G♯	A	A♯	B	C	C♯	D	D♯
1	■		■		■			■				
2	■		■		■					■		
3	■		■		■			■				
4	■		■		■			■				
5	■		■		■			■		■		
6	■		■		■			■		■		

Table 6.1. Pitches included in *Jö:yaik oënö'* songs, 2002 Allegany Singers version

to a syncopated pattern on *mi–re*, followed by a dip down to low *sol* and back up to the middle register. There are three melodic phrases, and the second and third repeat the last portion of the first. This structure could be analyzed A-A′-A′ or AB-B-B.

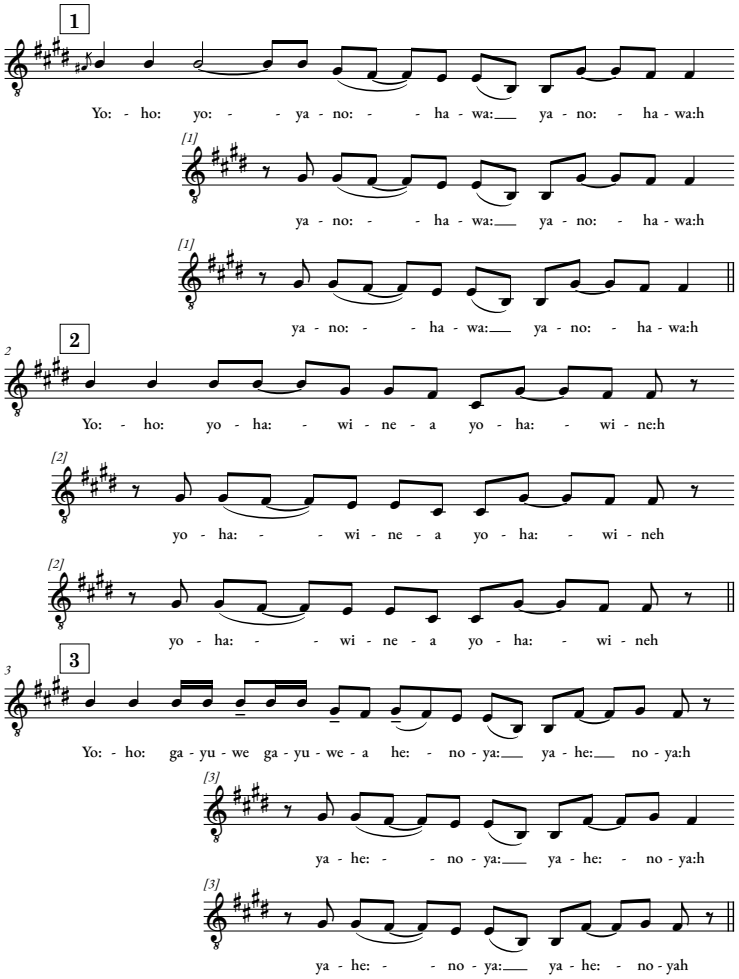
Songs 2 and 3 vary the melody in song 1 in different ways: song 2 shortens the first phrase and alters one pitch (going down to *la* instead of *sol*). Song 3 expands the first phrase (from vocables of 11 syllables in song 1 to 16).

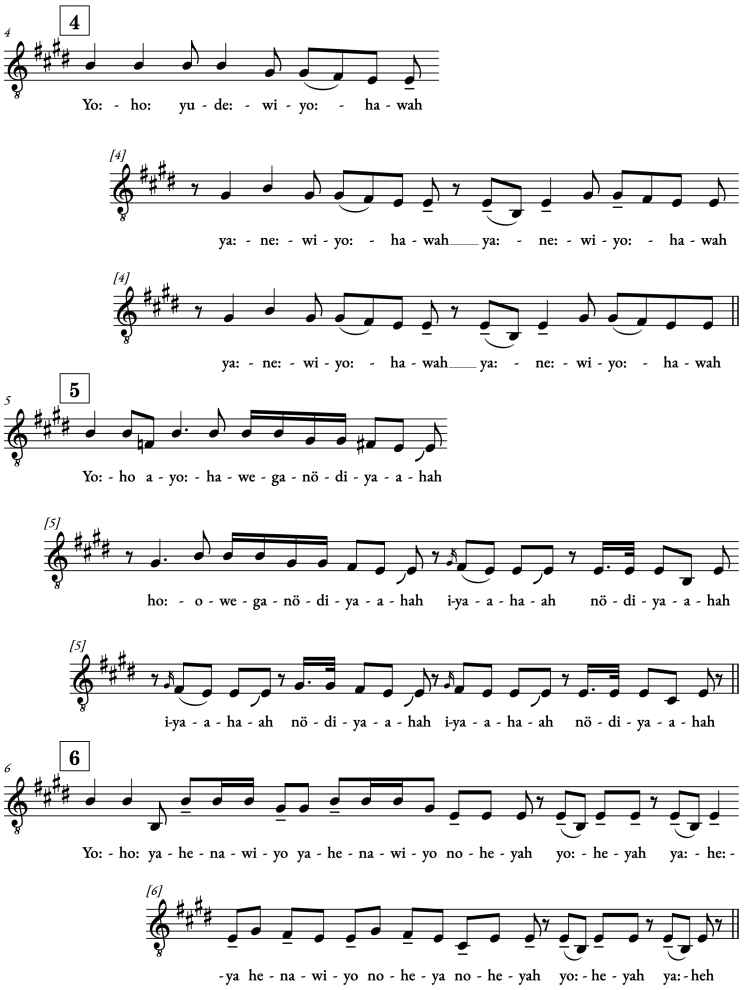
Layout out the melodies graphically to show the repeating portions demonstrates that in each song the second and later phrases start by repeating the latter portion of the first phrase. Songs 4, 5, and 6 all have slightly different patterns of phrasing and repeated motives: song 4 could be labeled A-BC-BC, song 5 as A-BC-C′C, and song 6 as A-B-C-B. What all the songs have in common is that the subsequent phrases repeat and vary some element of the preceding phrases. The effect of these partial repetitions and variations, especially with the frequent rests between phrases, seems to Andrew to create an effect similar to listening to repeating fragments of birdsong.

The rhythmic patterns feature increasingly complex syncopation over a steady, moderate water-drum and horn-rattle beat at 100 beats per minute. The initial eighth-quarter-eighth syncopation in songs 1 and 2 expands in songs 3 and 4 into what sounds (to Andrew) like mixed meter, switching between groups of 2 and 3 eighth notes. In song 4, these syncopations ac-

tually shift the sense of pulse by an eighth note, so that the vocable *ya:ne* sounds like it is on the beat even though it does not actually coincide with the beats played on drum and rattle. The last song is the most syncopated, and here the rattle and drum players actually shift their beat to match with the melody, by adding a third eighth-note subdivision in between beat accents.

Example 6.1. Phrase structures with repeated and varied musical elements in Robin Dance songs





Imitating Robin's Song?

Could the Robin Dance songs have been created by imitating the song of the actual bird? Andrew speculates that it might, though Bill had never thought of it. The bird's own songs feature three or more repeated chirrups at a certain pace, about 100 beats per minute. The first two chirrups stay 6.4

fairly constant in timing and pitch across the sung. When robins vary the song it is usually in the "syllables" after that (discrete vocalizations that are part of a larger song), so that for example there might be four vocalizations and the last one would have a different type of contour (Vanderhoff, Pyle, et al. 2020, "Sounds and Vocal Behavior").

The Seneca dance songs also being with a repeated high-pitched call, *Yo:hoh yo:*, at a similar pace to the bird's, and in both of the Allegany Singers' recordings, settles into a steady beat at 100 beats per minute. The rest of the Seneca melody is built of short, repetitive phrases of just a few notes each. That these phrases come after the opening call may imitate the pattern in which the robin's song variations happen after the first three chirrups. Moreover, the different Robin Dance songs are really variations on one song melody with different vocable lyrics; this pattern is also like bird songs. While this melody does seem to imitate the sound of the bird's song, it could also be inspired by the robin's way of moving, in which it will pause while listening and looking for worms, then hop and run a short distance.

6.1 6.3 6.5

6.3 Movements

In the Robin Dance participants line up with all the men first followed by the women and move in a counterclockwise circle. First dancers face the center and shuffle sideways to their right, stepping first with the right foot then in the next step bringing the left foot over next to it. At the first repeat of each song (*Yo:ho: yo: ...*) the dancers turn around to face outwards, and then continue the same motions but reversed: now they step to their left with their left foot and bring the right foot next to it. In the last song, when the syncopations shift the beat by an eighth note, the dancers match this by taking two quick eighth-note steps on the accented *noheyah* and then continuing with quarter-note steps on the beats stressed by the melody. Perhaps these motions, like the melody, were inspired by the hopping and running of the robin.

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