



Transcript of Video -- Our Stories, Our Traditions, Our Health

BRUJO DE LA MANCHA:

The music that we play—or try to play, or try to preserve—it is the healing to understand nature, to understand yourself, to see that you are One. People can see healing in many ways but for me, healing, how it is taught to the Mexican people, is more than progress [i.e. technology, hospitals], it is also healing—I mean, when you want to heal something or you want to change someone—from the root. You know, they can come back warriors. They can come back even stronger, or as something else, or maybe not the way that they wanted to come back, but so that they can handle it and deal with it.

[TITLE SCREEN]

So, Mexican people, if you hear the songs that they make, they are always kind of happy and all of that. That's the reason that Mexican people make music—to represent the nature around them, where they live, to recreate things, you know.

[FLUTE SONG, DANCE]

It doesn't mean that you are a savage to try to imitate the bird. You can imitate the qualities of the bird: it is free, it is beautiful, it can fly away... you will want to have it, but you cannot have it.

[DANCE]

Well, I found satisfaction making art. I found a satisfaction that cured me, and I don't have that... you know, like a few people I remember four or five years ago, somebody said, "oh, Brujo, you know that it is difficult to be happy." And I said "Yeah, but it is worse to be sad, so what do you want to be?"

[DANCE]

So that is why you have, you know, the ballets [folkloricos] and these other groups who mix a little bit of everything up, because they don't even know, you know? Now, the problem is that now, (that we didn't have before, but that now we have more) is that people don't do their research 100%, don't comprehend the meaning 100%, and after four, six, or eight months they want to start their own dance company, and it's just like, "OK, maybe you dance very well, maybe you have all these connections... but when it comes to the bottom line, what do you do? What are you doing, you know?"

Basically, though, what I have been doing is just trying to educate myself, try to share it with people... But yes, it is about self discovery, you know. That's what Ollin—I mean, the mission

of Ollin is to educate and talk about anything else we can about the native culture of Mexico. And you will see how these ceremonies are being used to heal themselves, to heal everything.

[DANCE]

NATALIE PHELPS:

So he was pretty negative about the whole community until then. It really did change him, I think.

[TITLE SCREEN]

Sometimes this was the only way that you would get to see each other, especially in areas like this where it was so cold and snowy, but somehow you got to that dance and it was very social. When we revived the dances at the Odin Grange two years ago, it hadn't been happening there since 1961. Some of those folks came in there that lived right around here and hadn't seen each other since the Odin dance. Lot of crying went on. Sometimes they're even kinfolk and they haven't seen each other for a long time.

[DANCE]

Years ago, it was sad. The barns were falling in and the square dances were done. I tried to find some other callers who could call over at the Odin Grange hall, which is one of the most famous ones, and no one would travel that far. Some of the older fiddle players and callers were in their 90s and just weren't willing to come out at that time of night and some of the old timers who remembered me as a teenager playing over there said well can't we get those dances going again? So that's how it happened. I became the caller because I couldn't find some one. I wanted to be the dancer, but...

Can I have your attention please? Folks, this is a wonderful get-together and thank you so much for coming out for this. We've got two masters of square dance calling from this region and I'm sure that a lot of you know each of these. So, get ready to have a great time. I'm glad that you are here.

[DANCE]

When Mr. Rigas founded Adelphia he was a Coudersport man. As a matter of fact, he gave me my first job at 40 cents an hour when I was in high school to pay for my first guitar. People liked him because he was well-to-do and he built fences and fixed barns and brought some life back. And when it folded, emotionally even, it was quite a shock. There were people who drove for a couple of hours one way to go to work there. It's been kind of scary, I think, for folks since that folded.

My son-in-law, he has been laid-off from Adelphia since, well, it's been over a year since he worked and he was a computer dude from Boulder, I think, when he had a job, and well, he was just so discouraged because he couldn't find anything that used his skills. So he volunteered to help us and it just really did him a lot of good. He worked hours. That type of lighting was his idea and people were coming up and shaking his hand and he hadn't met a lot of them even

though he has lived here for 18 years. So he had a real good time and was pretty negative about the whole community, until then. It really did change him, I think. And there were several other people who it really gave a boost to—to have something that people were laughing about rather than worrying about. It was good in that way.

When we had that dance at Colesburg back in June, when you all were there, there were people there who hadn't seen each other for decades. One of the old timers there, Sy Pepperman, who was one of the over 90, I saw him a few weeks ago in the bank. He had a tear running down one cheek. And he was saying that he danced with some people that he hadn't dance with in 40 years. He was so emotional about it. He said, "can't we keep them going? But ya'll got to slow down!" He can't dance that fast anymore, but that kind of thing was beautiful. And there were people there of all types that never would get together for any other reason...all economic things and social things. It was an event that most of the people there had never experienced because they are not old enough to remember when the dances happened every weekend. We are still getting calls to please keep them going. They had never experienced anything like that. It was very healing.

VICTORIA ANGELO AND MARTA SAM

[SINGING]
[TITLE SCREEN]

VICTORIA ANGELO: My life, I love songs and dancing. So that's why I teach my kids and also teach in the day care. They feel good, they dance with me, I talk to them and this is my job.

MARTA SAM: Sure, sure, they like it, really. Put on the music, start to dance with them. And now, when they go home, they start to take it from daycare, down there. They're singing and dancing, they're happy to do that, actually.

LESLIE BOHRER: When the Erie Art Museum started their program with the refugees, they called and asked if we could have five or six women come into the center, basically in an internship-type situation to get them exposed to working in the United States and let them bring their culture to us. And I really just said "okay that would be great" and didn't think much about it. And then they came in the door and we fell in love. There were five of them singing and dancing and telling stories, and playing with our kids. They just really have a gift with children. They bring that joy to our kids and to our other staff.

VICTORIA: Because singing and dancing is something very good that can help them feel better. If they start crying, I sing with them, I sing to them, I talk to them and they dance and they calm down. You know singing is like helping somebody to feel better. If there is trouble or no trouble, still it helps heal the heart. And the songs have meanings, very good meanings like to calm the child down and sing about past events in our country and also cheer the child to dance, like go to the center and jump, jump and dance with me and sing.

LESLIE: There was one day I was walking down the hallway and I thought, "well I don't hear her crying" and I just wanted to poke my head in the room and see what was happening and there sat Alba in the chair with this baby in a little chair in front of her and she was just singing. And I looked and not only was that child entranced but the other three infants who were in the room

had just stopped dead in their tracks and they were just looking into Alba's eyes and listening intently. So it's kind of a magic that they bring.

SARA WAYA: It was the night before Christmas and everyone was there and they just played the music. My mom was dancing and then my mom told me to come up and try it and that's when I started learning, learning, learning. And then my Aunt Victoria started saying "come on you can do this" and then my cousins started joining me and that's how come we made our little group and decided to show everyone that they can do anything that they want to do. I'm just so happy and thankful that my mom teaches me. Some other people came in America and they don't know their language but...

[SINGING AND DANCING]

MARTA: I'm teaching my daughters, yes I am. I'm teaching them dancing, language, you know, the important things to teach them so they will know my background as my parents taught me – how to dance traditional, language...

[DANCE]

Actually our dances exercise your body. We feel like, "if I am sick, start dancing" and I will get the healing right away. When my back hurts, I get down to the basement, put the music on and start dancing, jumping, dancing, singing and sweating. That's it. Get health.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel better?

MARTA: I feel better

INTERVIEWER: Your back pain goes away.

MARTA: Hundred percent.

VICTORIA: Singing and dancing, especially dancing, helps the body to be fit. Yes. And singing communicates information to them. Also, it keeps records of, like in Africa, it keeps records of past events like if there is war, and if there is hunting, they communicate by singing. So this one, when I sing to my kids, they understand and they know, it is like story-keeping. It keeps the story records.

LESLIE: I love what they bring to the center, particularly with the women we have now, who have stayed five, six, seven years, now. They were willing to learn what they needed to learn to be here, and in turn, we've learned how to appreciate them and what they could bring to us.

[SINGING]

[CREDITS]

THE END

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