

Inside Desert View Watchtower

A music project celebrating the most ancient sounds to emerge from Grand Canyon recorded inside one of its most significant structures, helping to connect people – past, present and future – to this special place.



The Project

Music has the power to connect people to place unlike anything else. With the Desert View Watchtower offering one of the world's most renowned cultural and geographic landscapes, a trio of musicians with a strong connection to Grand Canyon would like to record inside Desert View Watchtower. Through traditional Hopi vocals, the ancient sounds of the Southwestern Rim Flute and clay pot percussion, *Inside Desert View Watchtower* will feature the oldest instruments from this corner of the world through original compositions inspired by Grand Canyon.

Clark Tenakhongva, Gary Stroutsos and Matthew Nelson use their mastery of voice, flute and percussion to bring the acoustics within the building to life and use the watchtower itself as an acoustic vessel. This is music created on-site with reverence for the space that could never be replicated in a music studio far from the views of the inner canyon.

Inside Desert View Watchtower will be the first recording of its kind for this special location – an acoustic soundscape intended to match the surrounding landscape.

The Watchtower

Perched on the edge of Grand Canyon in a culturally significant location, Desert View Watchtower represents the place where Hopi emerged from the Third World into the Fourth World, and left the canyon for the mesas. Mary Colter's Puebloan-inspired style of architecture and use of traditional Hopi images furthers the connection between Hopi and this particular location. There is no better location for creating music inspired by the Grand Canyon with natural acoustic properties than Desert View.

The location also lends itself to future musical performances, celebrating the Grand Canyon and the native cultures intrinsically connected to this place. With Desert View Watchtower now under the management of Grand Canyon National Park and the Park's commitment to the Tribal Heritage Project, the musicians would embrace future opportunities to perform at this location.

The Instruments

Vocals – Clark Tenakhongva

Clark sings traditional Hopi songs and creates new songs in the traditional style, and is widely considered one of the most respected and accomplished Hopi vocalists of his generation. By singing

songs about *Ongtupqa* (Grand Canyon), Clark is able to connect with his ancestors and share Hopi traditions with others in a meaningful way.

Flute – Gary Stroutsos

Gary plays the Southwestern Rim Flute, a replica of an instrument found in caves in the Four Corners area and archaeologically dated to AD 828 – 1126 (Pueblo Bonito, Room 33) and 1620 – 1670 (Broken Flute Cave). Ethnomusicologists consider this flute to be the oldest known wind instrument in North America, outdated only by the clay flutes of Mesoamerica. Southwestern Rim Flutes are much older than the popular Plains Flutes of the early 1800s, which have come to define the sound of the “Native American flute” for many non-native listeners. Since they lack a reed and require the flute player to create an embouchure with the muscles of the mouth and blow across the rim of the flute to get a tone, Southwestern Rim Flutes are much more difficult to play.

Percussion – Matthew Nelson

Matthew plays clay pot drums from a variety of indigenous cultures. Thousands of years before skins were stretched over wooden frames to create membranophones, clay pots were used to carry water, cook food and create rhythms. The sounds of clay drums are subtle, organic, and provide an earth-based complement to flute and vocals.

The Musicians

Clark Tenakhongva was born in Keams Canyon, 1957 and was raised in the Third Mesa village of Hotevilla. His father is of the Corn and Water clans. His mother is of the Rabbit and Tobacco clans. He is a respected traditional cultural practitioner and has a lifetime of experience singing Hopi songs. Clark has been invited to sing on stages around the world, has three recordings on Canyon Records, and has won numerous awards for both his music and kachina carvings. Clark is committed to the preservation of Hopi culture through art and music. Upon being introduced to Gary Stroutsos by their mutual friend Matthew Nelson in 2016, Clark became further interested in bringing the old style of Hopi flute songs back to the mesas and culturally significant places around the Southwest. Clark considers the Southwestern Rim Flute a Hopi instrument, and is excited to share its story with native and non-native people alike.



Gary Stroutsos is a master flute player whose live performances have captivated audiences around the world. His contemplative flute music and time-honored stories evoke the lands and cultures that he has studied over the course of his 35-year career. His talents flow through a variety of world flutes, but his mastery of the Southwestern Rim Flute transports listeners to a spirit of place unlike any other. His music can be heard on the soundtrack of Ken Burns’ PBS documentary, *Lewis and Clark: Journey of the Corps of Discovery*, which led to a command performance at the White House for President Bill Clinton.



He is also showcased on Jan Nickman’s *Living Temples*, an intimate study of man’s relationship to nature. Gary has been featured on NPR broadcasts, New York Evening at the Pops, and the syndicated radio program *Echoes*. His music also provided the soundtrack for the widely distributed nature documentary *Desert Dreams*. His discography includes over 30 acclaimed recordings. Gary’s mission is to carry the music forward to future generations and to promote stewardship of diverse cultures and the natural environment. He traces his roots to Greece, Italy and Lebanon, and lives in the Pacific Northwest... although his connections to the Southwest regularly bring him to Arizona.

Matthew Nelson is an ethnomusicologist who has studied indigenous music traditions for over 20 years. He was host of the popular Global Rhythm Radio radio show on KXCI-FM from 1995 – 2010, and worked as a special presenter for students in middle schools, high schools and colleges, helping to introduce many individuals to the music of the world. Matthew has written for numerous newspapers and magazines, and has penned liner notes for numerous CDs. He has studied a variety of drumming traditions with master musicians, including Pandit Sharda Sahai of the Benares baj. While working as an archaeologist, Matthew became interested in the ceramic tradition of the Southwest, and combined with his love for music, began an exploration of clay pot percussion. He worked as a Grand Canyon backpacking guide for over 10 years, and served as a NAGPRA Consultant and interim Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Bishop Paiute Tribe in 2011. He lives in the Sonoran Desert southwest of Tucson.



The Story

With their combined knowledge, experience and passion, the musicians will contribute material to liner notes that will help tell the story of Grand Canyon from the Hopi perspective, as well as the somewhat forgotten history of the Southwestern Rim Flute. With an emphasis on the instruments themselves and the Hopi cultural connection to Desert View, the musicians feel this project presents an opportunity to tell an important chapter of American history through music and words. While liner notes and inspiring images will present an opportunity to educate listeners, the real value of *Inside Desert View Watchtower* will be through the sonic experience of the music itself. Unlike photographs taken at the South Rim, this recording has the power to transport the listener back to Desert View long after they have returned home.

Due to the New Age music movement of the 1990s and the popularity of musicians like R. Carlos Nakai, many people associate “Native American music” with the sounds of the Plains Flute and/or the powwow drum – both are Lakota Sioux musical traditions from the Dakotas. *Inside Desert View Watchtower* tells the story of music from the Grand Canyon region. Not only does this set the record straight about native music of the Southwest, but allows people to hear instruments and vocals rarely heard on the world stage.

The Recording

The musicians request a six-hour period of time in mid-October 2017 to record songs inside Desert View Watchtower. The location will need to be closed to the general public during this time to ensure sound quality. The musicians and sound technicians can certainly work around the 9 am – 5 pm normal hours of operation.

After the music is recorded within Desert View Watchtower, 7 tracks will be produced onto a full-length CD that will be available for sale to the general public. These CDs can be sold at Desert View Watchtower, giving visitors an opportunity to listen to music created on location, inspired by Grand Canyon, from instruments that originated from nearby.

The Concert

After the Desert View audio recording has been produced into a compact disc and is available to the general public, the musicians will be available for special concerts at Desert View Watchtower and/or other locations upon request by Grand Canyon National Park and its partner organizations. These concerts will further the vision of the Desert View Tribal Heritage Project, can raise funds and awareness for Grand Canyon Association, and bring native and non-native people together to immerse themselves in the sounds and scenery of Grand Canyon within this significant structure. The musicians

would also be honored to participate in the Cultural Demonstration Series at the Watchtower if there is an opportunity to do so.

With increased interest in traditional music on the Hopi Mesas, Clark Tenakhongva would like to use Desert View Watchtower as a destination for Hopi youth as well. This could support inter-tribal tourism opportunities, increased visitation, and cultural connections between Hopi youth and Grand Canyon National Park.

The Benefits

Aside from the obvious benefits of connecting people to place in a meaningful way, *Inside Desert View Watchtower* has exciting benefits for Grand Canyon Association, The Hopi Tribe, and other tribes with cultural connections to Grand Canyon.

Grand Canyon Association

5% of all CD sales will benefit Grand Canyon Association and support their mission to inspire people to protect and enhance Grand Canyon National Park for present and future generations.

Hopi Tribe

This project will give the Hopi Tribe an opportunity to tell their story of the Grand Canyon and the Southwestern Rim Flute, and to share their music with the world. In addition, 10% of all CD sales will benefit the promotion of Hopi music and culture among youth living on the Hopi Mesas.

Other Tribes

Inside Desert View Watchtower will be shared with educators, musicians, traditional cultural practitioners, and others with the 10 other traditionally associated tribes that have cultural connections to Grand Canyon, encouraging them to tell their stories about this special place and bring those stories to life through music, dance, art and other cultural art forms.

Contact

For more information or to help with this project, please contact:

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Matthew Nelson is the appointed representative for logistics, permits and general coordination.

