COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Friendship played an important part in the lives of both men and women and the intimacies begun in childhood often extended

Images from Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche’s
The Omaha Tribe
From Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche’s *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, inspiration for opening flute tune
Francis La Flesche wrote anthropological and fictional books about the Omaha and other tribes
Francis La Flesche wrote anthropological and fictional books about the Omaha and other tribes.
Charles Wakefield Cadman had became famous for “Indianist” songs by 1910
Act II

Prelude -terra a voce.

1. Flute
2. Oboe 1, 2
3. Clarinet in B flat
4. French Horn
5. Trumpet 1, 2
6. Trombone 1
7. Trombone 2
8. Bassoon
9. Timpani
10. Strings in octaves

At rest in total darkness, a faint light burning brightly on stage.
Cadman and Eberhart’s *Shanewis*

Photograph from the New York Library Digital Collections
Dear Francis,

Will you send me some new Dakota themes similar to a couple you gave me a year ago? You collected them yourself from the new people by yourself and Mrs. Fletcher in the Poncas. You had a very pretty sheet music maker in Vector, I think? I need me very effectively in some but I am at the end of my rope.

I don't know what to do. I have not the music I have lost at the meeting so far. I lost it yesterday. I have a plan, and very hard. I am sure I have used it, but if I can

Letter from Charles Wakefield Cadman to Francis La Flesche, ca. 1909

Photocopy provided by the Nebraska Historical Society
ACT ONE

Scene Two

(Late afternoon of the same day. Taene's fine tepee is in the center of the stage with the flaps open. In the background is seen part of an Indian village. Taene, Ramala, and Megena, handsomely dressed, sit in front. The old woman is beading a moccasin; the cousins are gossipping gullishly, Ramala toying with a game of antelope hoofs. Megena's little dog is with her. A group of serenading girls comes past bearing willow wands. They sway in rhythm to the music.)

YOUNG GIRLS.

Wave, wave, tender willow sprays,
Slow, slow as a nida sways;
Pause here to tell of the woodland ways,
Whisper of love and youth and spring
Breeze, breeze, lightly Blowing by,
Soft, soft as cloudlights floating high,
Pause here awhile where the maidens sigh,
Whisper of youth and love and spring.

(Ballet of the Willow Wands)

Wave, wave, tender willow sprays,
Slow, slow as a nida sways;
Pause here to tell of the woodland ways,
Whisper of love and youth and spring.
PART OF OMAHA VILLAGE (ABOUT 1880)

TIPIS
“[Ramala’s] big scene is in the next scene and Aedeta is allowed to speak in the last scene but this is Nemaha’s only dramatic opportunity in the whole opera and an aria is imperative. Of course no Indian would sing one at such a time, neither would a man of any other nationality but grand operas are never true to life. They exist only to please the eye and to allow singers to exploit their voices. … ‘Lucia di Lammermoor’ is considered a ridiculous opera by all critics, but Tetrazzini can display her voice in it so crowds flock to hear it.”

—Letter from Eberhart to La Flesche, 1910
“May we use the Hako ceremony melodies in any we wish. For instance may the Dawn theme be worked into the overture?” … “Are we restricted to Dakota and Omaha melodies or may we use any Indian melody Hopi etc. As there will probably not be a market for more than one Indian opera and as a grand opera in three acts is a large undertaking would it not be best to use the finest of all melodies, making the opera national, as you might call it, instead of tribal? Need we be too consistent?”

—Letter from Eberhart to La Flesche, 1909
“Shall I or shall I not use the tune we selected for this processional on the Omaha reservation two years ago when you sung it for me and I copied it down. … Now I WANT TO USE THIS SONG FOR I CAN MAKE SOME BIG EFFECTS WITH MY TREATMENT OF IT FOR ORCHESTRA AND CHORUS. Then you remember we use the RATTLES and that will be one of the most barbaric and splendid things in the Opera for it has a savage Pawnee flavor somehow. … If the notes are not absolutely correct or if it happens to ‘savor of one of those Mescal songs’ please tell me who will know but you and Miss Fletcher? Will the public or the critics, or even ANY ethnologists? I think not.”

—Letter from Cadman to La Flesche ca. 1911
Images from Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche’s
*The Omaha Tribe*
It is now sunset. Taene enters the tent; Megena, weeping, leaves the stage with a group of Indian girls who are, for a little way, following the war-party, and Ramala is left alone. Motionless, she watches the warriors ride away over the hills in the gathering dusk. The evening sounds of the camp fall faintly on her unheeding ears, the fire-flies play about her, the night deepens, and still she stands in grief. All at once, as if inspired by sudden thought, she raises her head and starts from the scene. Soon horses' hoofs are heard thudding the prairie grass until they die away in the direction the warriors have taken Megena steals back and sings a lament.
Image from Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche’s
*The Omaha Tribe*
Marriage with a man either on or about to go on the warpath was not permitted; such a union was looked on as a defiance of natural law that would bring disaster on the people for the reason, it was explained, that “War means the destruction of life, marriage its perpetuation.”

—Fletcher and La Flesche, *The Omaha Tribe*
OBESKA, (affectionately.)

Noble and true hast thou ever been, Aedeta,
Take thou the maiden, Ramala.

AEDETA, (turning to the warriors.)

Kinsmen, warriors, have you aught
Against the union?

WARRIORS, (heartily.)

Be thine the maiden Ramala.

OBESKA, (rising.)

Marriage is life's promise;
War is life's destruction.
Therefore war and marriage go not well together
And all the traditions and the customs of our tribe
Forbid the union.

(He pauses impressively sweeping the circle with his glance)

Yet such is my affection for my kinswoman,
Such my regard for the brave Aedeta,
That I put aside the customs of my people
And declare the marriage good.
Man and wife are ye now.

Image from Alice Fletcher and Francis La Flesche’s *The Omaha Tribe*
No. 12. HAE-THU-SKA WA-AN.

Prayer of Warriors.

Double drumbeat. $\mathbf{D}$ = 138. Song $\mathbf{S}$ = 59.

Wakan-da thane-ga thae kae. Wakan-da thane-ga thae kae. Wakan-da thane-

Drum.

ga thae kae, oede Thu-ne thane-ga thae kae. Thu-ne thae kae.

The warriors are seated in a semicircle.

1.

2.

3.

The warriors form the semicircle of

alignment of the front.
Composers would need to “exercise intimate sympathy and understanding—in other words, would have to put himself *en rapport* with the native mind.”

“It is really true that no (primitive) race is more music-loving than the American Indian.”

“…you will find firm conviction that Uncle Sam’s little wards are in the main quite musical.”

Native American music “has sprung into existence on the American continent. It is as much the heritage of America and Americans and of the musicians who live in America as the music of the barbaric hordes of Russia is the heritage of cultured Russians and Russian musicians. We could mention several ingenious members of the Russian school of music whose veins are without a drop of blood of those wild tribes and who have, nevertheless, caught and reflected the lilt, the life and the love of the strange and elemental peoples that make up the great Russian Empire.”

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