

The Medicine is in the Music - Arvel Bird and One Nation

Story by Rachel R. Peine; Photographs by Rich Peine

The auditorium at Key Largo School was transformed into a Native American ceremonial lodge on January 29, as 200 second and third-graders were mesmerized by the violin, flutes and drum of Arvel Bird and John Lone Eagle.

Interspersing the music with stories, Arvel spins tales of animal totems and Indian medicine, accompanied by the heartbeat of Eagle's powwow drum. Do you often hear a crow on a branch speaking to you with a loud "caw!!!"? Does it seem like redtail hawks appear wherever you go? These birds may have a message for you. Listen in your heart as well as your mind to the message of the animals. The redtail is a spirit messenger, whose feathers take our prayers to the Creator. His keen eyesight can give you insight into your life's purpose. He represents optimism, a chance to start over.

From the badger to the bear to the buffalo, Arvel's stories focused on animal totems (which he told the children are like guardian angels) as he wove his spell on the stage. In full Native regalia, including knee high moccasin boots and a concho belt, Bird described how the Indians' lives changed when they defeated the Spanish Conquistadors, who fled, leaving their herds of ponies. The Indians had been receiving visions of an animal they could ride, and they called the pony the "holy dog". Bird's violin is his pony, and he painted it to look like one.

Imagine 200 children completely silent, listening intently to every word and note, some drumming with their hands or tapping their feet. For the last song, Arvel invited children to join him on stage,

giving several aspiring musicians the thrill of playing percussion instruments. The finale of the program was a question-and-answer session, where practically every hand in the audience was raised urgently. "Why did the white people kill the Indians?" "Because they

series, whose mission is to educate and inspire the children of the Upper Keys community. In addition to presenting programs in the schools, SFCA raises funds for the "Arts for Youth" Scholarship Fund to help budding Upper Keys musicians

keyboards. The audience heard many of the animal totem music and stories, enjoying the group's eclectic blending of Native American, classical, Celtic, folk, jazz and new age music.

Arvel's unique mix of music evolved after years of classical violin study, when he began exploring his Paiute Indian and Scottish heritage. Arvel Bird and One Nation formed in 2006 and debuted at that year's Native American Music Awards at the Seminole Hard Rock Café just up the road a piece from Key Largo. As new as they were, they were so impressive they won the award for Best Instrumental.

Arvel Bird has released 10 CDs and one DVD since 2002. In 2007, Animal Totems 2 earned Arvel the title of Native American Music Awards Artist of the Year and the re-release of Animal Totems 1 was named the 2007 Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards Best Instrumental Album.

CDs by Arvel Bird and One Nation are available from www.arvelbird.com, www.singingwolfrecords.com, www.amazon.com and downloaded from www.itunes.com and other online retailers.

SFCA's upcoming concerts at Coral Shores PAC include: A Night at the Opera - Puccini's "La Boheme" on Tues. Feb. 12, Marcus Belgrave and the New Orleans Jazz Celebration, Tues Feb. 26, and pianist Stanislaw Drzewiecki Sat. March 8. They're also presenting a benefit concert for Youth School programs and Scholarship Fund - "Yesterday" - A tribute to the Beatles - Sat. Feb. 16. You can get tickets and other information online at www.sfca-arts.org.



Arvel Bird on his pony Violin.



Eagle and Arvel performing at Key Largo school.

wanted the land." The group also supplied teachers with follow-up material for class sessions about Native American traditions and history.

The program was part of the South Florida Center for the Arts "Arts for Youth"

follow their dreams.

That evening, grownups had their chance to feel the magic of Arvel Bird and One Nation at Coral Shores Performing Arts Center, where Arvel and Eagle were joined by Vlas on guitar and Chris James on

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Growing Pains: Difficult Times

It can be very challenging to maintain a positive attitude and a measure of faith when you are in the midst of difficult times. This is partly because we tend to think that if the universe loves us we will experience that love in the form of positive circumstances. However, we are like children, and the universe is our wise mother who knows what our souls need to thrive better than we do. Just as a young child does not benefit from getting everything she wants, we also benefit from times of constriction and difficulty to help us grow and learn. If we keep this in mind, and continue to trust that we are loved even when things are hard, it helps us bear the difficult time with grace.

This period of time in history is full of difficulty for a lot of human beings, and you may feel less alone knowing you are not being singled out. There are extreme energy changes pulsing through the universe at every level and, of

course, we are all part of the growing process and the growing pains. It helps if we remember that life is one phase after another and that this difficult time will inevitably give way to something new and different. When we feel overwhelmed we can comfort ourselves with the wise saying: This too shall pass.

At the same time, if you truly feel that nothing is going right for you, it's never a bad idea to examine your life and see if there are some changes you can make to alleviate some of the difficulty. Gently and compassionately exploring the areas giving you the most trouble may reveal things you are holding onto and need to release: unprocessed emotions, unresolved transitions, or negative ways of looking at yourself or reality. As you take responsibility for the things you can change, you can more easily surrender to the things

you can't, remembering all the while that



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