

OHIO INDIAN TIME OHIO

A Voice From The Eastern Door

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The Peacemaker's Journey colorfully depicted in Lotus production

By Shannon Burns

Whether your interest was in the arts or in Iroquois history, the Lotus Music & Dance production of THE MESSAGE OF PEACE: EXCERPTS FROM THE PEACEMAKER'S JOURNEY was a gripping masterpiece. Combining art with history created a brilliant outcome that both educated and entertained.

"The 'Message of Peace' is a work-in-progress," writes Mohawk Elder Tom Porter, who not only narrated the production but also served as the Chief Consultant. "It is not a project that can be rushed. It takes fifty-five hours to tell the story in the Longhouse. It's so big

that we can never tell the whole thing in two hours. Instead, we are representing segments of the story. It is such a deeply spiritual story that we are taking great care to be sure that it is presented in an honorable way and is embraced by all of the Iroquois Nations."

As Mr. Porter says, the story of the Peacemaker is not a short one. However, the theatrical production impressed upon its viewers the core events and lessons from the story and left audience members with vivid pictures in their minds to match the stories they might have heard throughout their life.

Two public performances were given at Salmon River Central's auditorium and guests filled the theatre to watch as

dancers from as far as New York City and as close as Akwesasne performed the story.

Lotus Music & Dance is a non-profit organization based in New York City. Its founder, Kamala Cesar, served as the Artistic Director of "The Message of Peace." Her dance studio is devoted to supporting "multi-cultural program that further the understanding, appreciation and preservation of traditional arts and the creation of new work that evolve from traditional art forms."

Many of the performers are regular dancers and actors from New York City. Cesar and Porter, however, wanted to include as many local performers as possible and held auditions earlier this summer in Akwesasne. The hope is to have the production travel around the state to other reservations where the story of the Peacemaker has historical meaning.

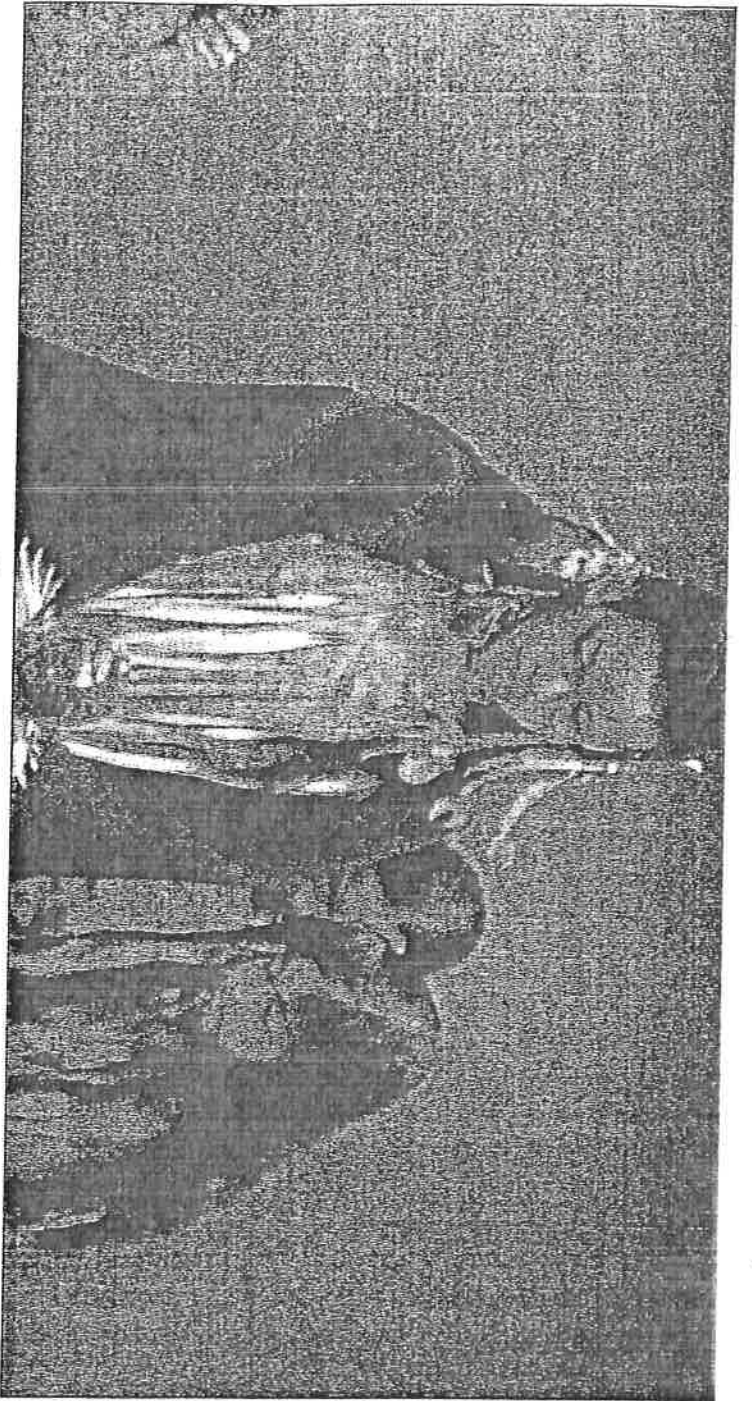
From the first scene of "The Message of Peace" the artistic direction is evident. A war dance is performed and the actors dance their way across the stage in symbolic representations of fighting. While the scene is tragic, its portrayal is beautiful.

Local actors included Tsiehent Herne, Sateokwen Cole, Karoniot Fox, and Ioherase Ransom. Other Akwesasne Natives were thanked in the productions' program for their varying contributions.



Tom Porter





Tom Porter, Kamala Cesar, and Tom Buckner

