



Mother-Daughter Walk for Heart & Stroke

entertainment

PHOENIX ARTS Sundays

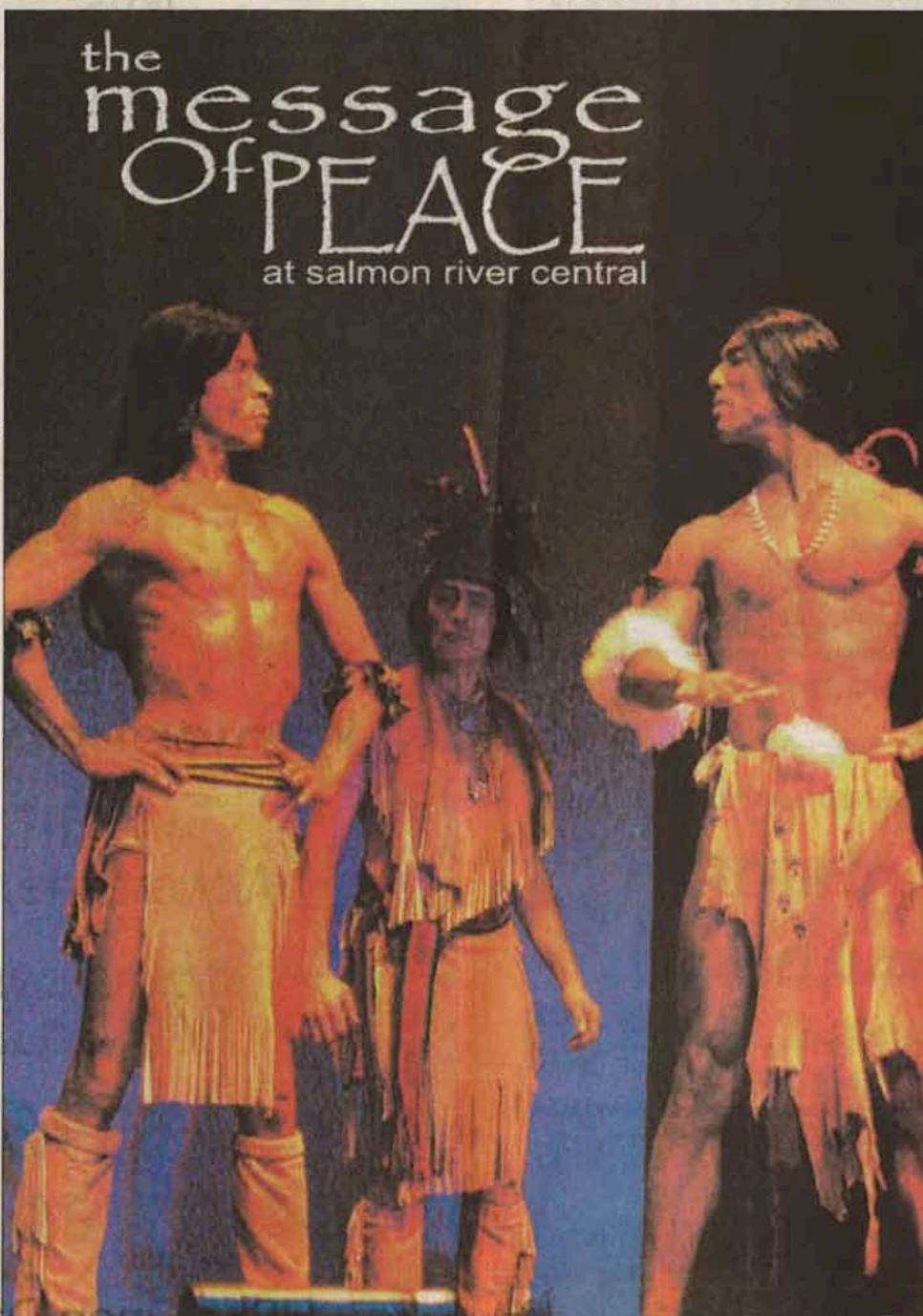
akwesasne

OCTOBER 2, 2005

SECTION B

AKWESASNE- The story is an old one, an ancient code of conduct that continues to govern a people to this day. It is the Great Law of Peace, the Gaienerako:wa, and it was brought from the west before the Haudenosaunee confederacy was formed. It is more than any collection of words and images; it is the balance and harmony of the entire Creation, the proper nature of all things. It is not a "Law" because somebody announced or enacted it one fine day, but because it is the way things are... No one knows for sure how long ago the Peacemaker brought this message, but it survives through the determination of those who came before us. As Narrator Tom Porter explains, "many of our elders were forced to go underground, but they would continue the traditions, the songs, and the culture by remembering and sharing them. Today, there are a few elders who know the story, which takes 55 hours to tell in the longhouse. It has been a vision of mine to make sure the story continues." Porter, who has worked collaboratively with Lotus Music & Dance in the past [an 18 part series called "*Mohawk Heart-song: Journey through the Longhouse*" and "*Eagle Spirit: A Tribute to High Steel workers*"], suggested the company produce a story on Peacemaker. "I suggested it to Kamala [Artistic Director] and she ran with the idea." The result has been a continually evolving work in progress; "*The Message of Peace: Excerpts from The Peacemaker's Journey*" was presented to the community of Akwesasne this weekend and received many positive accolades. Students in the AMBE school districts could take in a morning performance on Friday, and high school students were able to view an afternoon performance before the show's debut on Saturday.

There was no script written for the theatre production, just the simple story with a powerful message that speaks for itself. "It started out with the recording of the story as told by Tom Porter. We did not add or edit anything in the recording. The show has evolved as different dancers bring their own interpretation to their characters," states Artistic Director Kamala Cesar, who is of Mohawk and Filipino descent currently living in Brooklyn. "Lotus is a multi-cultural organization, and we have dancers from Brazil, Venezuela and the Phillipines, and we would like to



have more Native American dancers. I think when people see familiar faces in the production, it makes them comfortable and remember the story."

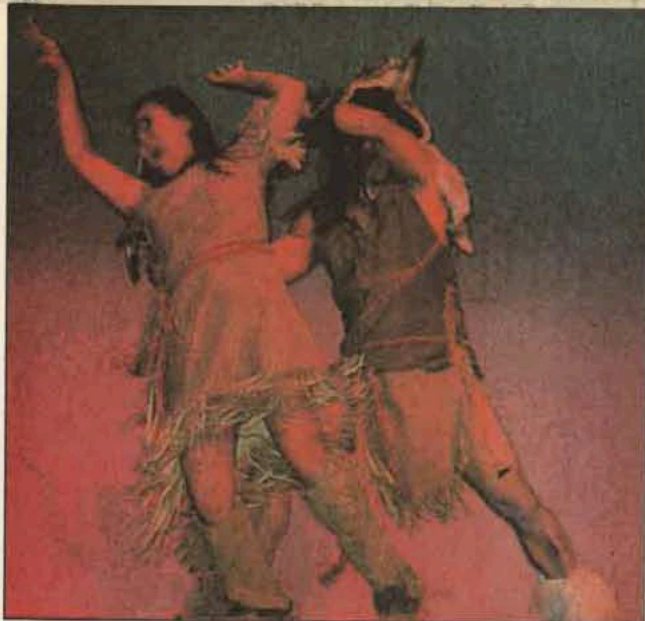
Cultural Consultant Alan George, Cayuga, agrees, "It is very useful as a way to teach the story of the Peacemaker to our own people and we can use their help in the production. I would like to see the production in all of the territories of the Haudenosaunee. Even though it was a strange concept at first to see it adapted for the stage, it is better than reading a book or watching a movie, in theatre people pay more attention."

"Working on this project has changed my life," states Lotus Executive Assistant Sarah-Jane Ripa. "I just started working with the company about six months ago, but it is an often overlooked fact by Western society that real peace has been achieved by a group of people. As a non-Native person, I have a great humbleness that I am here because of what the indigenous people have gone through."

Using elements of ballet and traditional Haudenosaunee dance, screen projections as a background, live music, and incredible choreography, "*Excerpts from the Peacemakers Journey*" is unlike anything ever done before. Ramon Thieland portrays the part of the Peacemaker, and Jerry McDonald is the ever loquacious Aionwatha. McDonald was also one of the regalia designers. "We wanted to keep the wardrobes as traditional as possible and close to the time period. Many of the dancers designed their own regalia," McDonald said. His wife, Jeannie, was one to design her own. She portrays a part of the village ladies and spirit dancers and has been a part of the production since the beginning. She says, "it is rewarding to see it evolve and it is important to keep the story going. I am glad to see Tom Porter happy in that his vision is realized to have the story come to life."

Because of the historical and spiritual nature of the Peacemaker story, every effort is being made that the performance and production of the *Peacemaker's Journey* is presented in an honorable way and is embraced by all of the Iroquois Nations.

AKP Photos and article:
R. Harris, 9-30-05



A Long time ago, many nations were corrupt and made war against one another. The Hurons were disrupted by violence, chaos, and turmoil. There was much blood shed and death....



A mother flees with her daughter to safety in the area of what is now called the Bay of Quinte. Here she lives alone with her daughter, who grows up and mysteriously becomes pregnant. The mother, unsympathetic, rejects her daughter in her greatest time of need because she thinks the daughter is lying. The daughter gives birth, but the grandmother tries to take the life of the child three times for fear of witchcraft. She cannot destroy the child, but a messenger appears to her...



*T*he messenger tells the grandmother that the child has been sent to end violence and bloodshed and to bring peace and unity to the warring nations. The grandmother recognizes her wrongdoing and asks for forgiveness. The seeds of peace have been



*W*hile in the land of the Mohawk, the Peacemaker has a vision of a man named Aionwatha, whose family was killed by Tadadaho. Aionwatha will become the helper of the Peacemaker. The Mohawks were the first to accept the Great Law.



*T*he Peacemaker meets Tsakonsaseh, a controlling and manipulative woman who knows medicine. Her home represents neutral ground, and she feeds the warriors who come from both east and west. She encounters the Peacemaker, who displays his powers and tells her of his plan to bring the Great Law of Peace to the Mohawks. She agrees to support his plan and he proclaims her the Mother of Nations.



*T*he Atotarhoh is confronted by the Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas, and Senecas at Onondaga. He overcomes his evil ways, is healed, and becomes the head of the confederacy. The five nations are born, and the government structure is in place.