

# GARY'S STORY

*Bio courtesy of White Swan Records*

In the tradition of one of his mentors, jazz flutist Paul Horn, who in the 1960s journeyed inside the Taj Mahal and the pyramids to make music with these pillars of time, **Gary Stroutsos** creates odysseys of sound with the world of nature.

Gary Stroutsos performs world flute music drawn from many traditional cultures. Evoking a spirit of place and the voices of the land, his work includes internationally acclaimed recordings at sacred sites, using the unique acoustics and history of each great space as the starting point for musical exploration: A shared moment in a timeless place, where flute melodies, ancestral and modern, play off one another and songs come alive, buoying and breathing through the generations.

Originally trained as a Jazz flutist (studying with Jazz master flutist and composer James Newton, and Afro-Cuban flute master Danilo Lozano), Stroutsos' work now features American Indian music, as well as Chinese, Cuban and American Jazz stylings - all styles and traditions reflecting his diverse musical influences. His audiences have the rare opportunity to hear ancient Chinese Bamboo flutes, the Xiao and Dizi, seldom heard outside the walls of China, and has created an interest in these flutes among both modern flute players and flute makers.

However, Gary Stroutsos has become perhaps best known for his haunting work on the Native American Flute and is acknowledged to have made a significant contribution to the preservation of American Indian music and culture. Himself a Greek Italian American, Stroutsos has had the rare opportunity to journey into the indigenous cultures and communities of North America, where he learned how to play the Native American Flute. During this time, Lakota, Mandan-Hidatsa, Navajo and Salish Kootenai Elders asked him to set their songs to his flute, which has undoubtedly been invaluable in the development of insight and the character of authenticity that his recordings embody.

Stroutsos has worked and recorded with many American Indian artists, including collaborating with Navajo flute maker Paul Thompson, a work which expresses the enduring legacy of the American Indian flute and its recent reintroduction into today's society.

Stroutsos has brought his music and his stories to audiences throughout North America, as well as in Japan and Korea. He 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 CDs *Distant Shores*, *Winds of Honor*, *The Native Heart*, and *Echoes of Canyon de Chelley*, with Navajo Elder Paul Thompson, have received national acclaim as benchmark recordings of Native American flute music. Stroutsos has also released a number of recordings aimed at the preservation of Native story, music and culture: *People of the Willows*, *The Elder Speaks*, and *Heart of the Bitterroot: Voices of Salish & Pend d'Oreille Women*, which all exemplify his understanding of not only the cultural context, but of the muse and spirit of the people's voices he complements.

In Stroutsos' latest project, he is featured in a documentary, *Remembering the Stories*, portraying the lives of American Indian Flute masters largely unknown to American or International audiences outside Native American circles. Through interviews, performance and narration, viewers are offered a rare glimpse into the heart of American Indian culture, past and present. In a recent interview about his work, Stroutsos comments: "I have had a unique career of recording flute music inspired by travels and really awesome masters. My passion is to share with listeners the cultural legacies that my teachers have shared with me, particularly my journey with my friend and mentor, Navajo flute maker Paul Thompson. We brought to life traditional love songs learned from American Indians and recorded these flute songs live inside Canyon de Chelly, the spiritual ancestral lands of the Navajo. I continue to discover more of the wealth of flute traditions, these time-honored traditions which span many generations. This history is the real mystery of the flute, both haunting and enduring. Bringing music to life for new listeners is part of my vision of my own work, because music touches the soul, making it our true universal means of communication."

Stroutsos is a master of playing music from the heart: "As improvisers, we challenge ourselves to explore new sounds to imagine, new feelings to embrace." In over thirty recordings, including a number of recordings made on location from the plains of the Dakotas, to the canyon lands of the Southwest, to the shores of the Pacific Coast, Stroutsos has created a body of work which expresses a passion for sound traveling: Music without borders.