

Mt. Shasta Herald~ January 4, 2006

The Sounds of Gentle Thunder

By Earl Bolender

Area artist makes CD with GRAMMY® nominees, plans concert

'Beyond words there is a moment of pure rhythm and harmony wherein the musician becomes the instrument and there is only the music'

-GRAMMY® nominee Will Clipman

Mount Shasta musician Gentle Thunder will be joined by 2005 GRAMMY® Award nominees, Will Clipman and AmoChip Dabney, on stage for a concert in Weed to celebrate the release of their new CD, "Beyond Words". The special CD release concert will be held on Sunday, January 29th at College of the Siskiyous Kenneth W. Ford Theatre at 4 p.m. Tickets are \$12 in advance and \$15 at the door. Tickets can be purchased in Mount Shasta at Village Books and in Yreka at the Chamber of Commerce. For more information or to purchase tickets by phone call Gentle Thunder at (530)925-4495 or visit her at www.1gentlethunder.com.

Gentle Thunder, a drummer, hammer dulcimer and Native American flute virtuoso, has attained an international following with her non-traditional musical style. Her solo recordings, "Winds of the Heart" and "Awakening Remembrance" on Delvian Records, have charted in the top 100 New Age Reporter. Her latest recording will be released this month on Delvian Records, came about after Gentle Thunder met Clipman and Dabney this past summer in Helena, MT.

Clipman, who critics have called a "renaissance man" and "percussionist extraordinaire," has recorded more than 50 albums with various artists, including 16 for the world's leading Native American music label, Canyon Records.

Dabney has recorded on well over 25 albums with artists ranging from several time GRAMMY nominated artist R. Carlos Nakai, who is known for his Native American flute music to Afro pop band leader O.J. Ekemode and his Nigerian Allstars.

Both Clipman and Dabney have been a part of the R. Carlos Nakai Quartet for over ten years. The Quartet's "People of Peace" album, recorded and produced by Dabney, is currently a finalist for Best New Age Album at the 2005 GRAMMY® awards.

"I met them during the Renaissance of the Native American Flute with R. Carlos Nakai and Ken Light at the Feathered Pipe Ranch." Gentle Thunder said. "The event is a week long celebration of the Native American flute. Nakai's 1989 release, "Canyon Trilogy", was my first experience of Native American flute. It spoke to my soul. He has been an inspiration to me so going to this event was a dream come true in many ways."

During that week, she had the opportunity to open in concert for the R. Carlos Nakai Quartet.

Recalling how the three "clicked" from the beginning, Gentle Thunder said when she did her opening set for the R.C.N.Q in concert she was performing one of her compositions on hammer dulcimer when she heard a curious sound.

"Looking around, I realized that it was Amo standing behind the back curtain playing his soprano sax in unison to what I was playing, with just the bell of his horn showing," she said. "He had never even heard the song before. It was two minutes of sheer magic." "Will and I just hit it off from the get go, both being drummers, we spoke an unspoken language." Gentle Thunder said. "They are both enormously accomplished musicians and very fine human beings. By the end of the week I knew that I was destined to record my next album with Will and Amo."

From the moment the three decided to record a CD, everything fell in place, she said. With a mutual week off for all three, Gentle Thunder drove directly from Helena, MT to Tucson, AZ to record with her new found musical soul mates. The album was recorded by Amo at his studio, Completely Bare Studio, by Jim

Pavett at Allusion studio and pristinely mixed and mastered by Lumin at Transformations in Kelowna, B.C.

“We recorded everything in a week!” Gentle Thunder said. “There was no rehearsal, no charts, not even any eye contact at all while recording, and very few overdubs. We simply started playing and everything fell into place. We were just very familiar with each other on some mystical level. It was like we’d played together before.”

““It’s an interesting combination of instruments... myself on grand hammer dulcimer, drums and Native American flutes enveloped in Will’s pan-global percussion and rounded out by Amo’s exquisite piano, bass and soprano sax,” she said. “Will said it best, ‘Beyond words there is a moment of pure rhythm and harmony wherein the musician becomes the instrument and there is only the music.’”

During the January 29th concert at COS, Gentle Thunder said audience members will be treated to music from the new hour-long CD.

“There will also be improvisation as we share our magical connection ‘in the moment’. It will be visually exciting as we move from one instrument to another,” Gentle Thunder said. She said being able to bring two GRAMMY Award nominees, to Siskiyou County is exciting. “I haven’t been able to do what I do alone,” Gentle Thunder said. “I do it with the support of my family and community. I want to thank the community for all they’ve done to support me over the years.”

She said the CD release concert, supported by the Siskiyou Arts Council, is a way to share the magic of what I am doing these days with my community.

Formerly known as Lisa Carpenter, she became Gentle Thunder in 1994, taking her spiritual name when exploring her Native American Cree heritage.

“This name fits my spirit,” she said. “As time went on I could see the connection to how my spirit name fits my musical manifestations as well...Gentle for the soft sound of the hammer dulcimer and flute and thunder for the sound of the drums.”

Gentle Thunder, a largely self-taught musician, said she feels blessed to have been able to share her heart, through her music, with others for more than 25 years.

“I did receive some teaching, but I was not schooled in the general sense,” she said.

While in high school in Kirkland, WA, Gentle Thunder became somewhat discouraged because “I wasn’t playing the way the band director thought I should.”

“My jr. high school band instructor said, ‘Don’t you quit,’ she said. “He said, ‘So you don’t play like everyone else, that’s OK...find your own way, but don’t stop playing. I have never heard anyone who plays with as much heart as you do.’”

She decided to find her own way, listening to albums and playing along with them and began performing professionally as a rock and roll drummer during her senior year in high school. She then went onto record with several Seattle-based original bands.

Her musical career then took her to Memphis, TN where she recorded for two years before moving to Mount Shasta in 1993. Once in Mt. Shasta, she began playing hammer dulcimer and joined Shasta Taiko. “When I was playing with Shasta Taiko, people would come up to me and say, ‘You’re the one with the big smile on your face,’” Gentle Thunder said. “Playing music does bring a smile to my face. There is so much energy and joy in performing. There is a circle created between the artists and the audience. You can say things through music that you can’t say any other way. It crosses cultural and language barriers. I believe in the power of music. I believe in making a difference in the world through music.”

####

Photo: GT sit 300 by Sequoia Miller

Photo: BW cover (the CD cover) with photos by Steven Meckler