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DRUG-FREE LIVING FOR TEENS



Evren Ozan: The Accidental Musician

The award-winning Native American flute player talks about the cross-country trip that changed his life.

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Evren Ozan: The Accidental Musician

When Evren Ozan's family moved from Massachusetts to California, his life changed—and not just because he was living on the West Coast instead of the East.

During the Ozan family's cross-country drive they stopped to visit the Grand Canyon. In the gift shop Evren (pronounced EHV-ren) spotted a cedar flute—a Native American instrument—that he wanted so much, he used his entire allowance for the trip to buy it. (Part of Evren's heritage is Osage Indian, though his name is Turkish—his heritage from his dad's side of the family.)

He began playing the six-holed flute immediately. In his new hometown in Orange County, California, he played the flute anywhere and everywhere—at home, in parks. He was just enjoying himself, but it captured people's attention! When they heard him playing, they came closer to listen.

Then Evren started getting to know other flute players—including Guillermo Martinez, a Native American musician and instrument maker.

"He's kind of been my mentor," says Evren, now 15.

Martinez taught Evren about the Native American flute tradition, and about the instrument itself and how to make one (Evren has made two so far). Martinez introduced Evren to other Native flute players, and the teen is now part of a "flute circle" that Martinez hosts so instrumentalists can gather to talk with and perform for each other.

From the start, Evren has been comfortable performing for other people. He was a featured performer at the Native American Music Awards in 2001—and he's released three albums.

Focus on the Music

When Evren made his first album, he didn't even realize that was what he was doing!

It happened on another cross-country trip. The Ozan family headed back to Massachusetts, and while they were there they visited a world music shop in New Hampshire. The Ozans showed the proprietors some of Martinez's flutes that they'd brought along with them, and then Evren started to play.

"It turned out that the people who had the store also had a recording studio," Evren recalls. "They asked us to come see it. I just started playing [music] with them. I didn't know he was recording! We were just playing—and then a few months later [the producer] sent the disc."

That disc turned into Evren's first album, *Images of Winter*. It was released when he was 7 years old, and won him the title of "Rising Star" at the Native American Music Awards.

Two years later, Evren returned to Possam Hall Studios to record another album—this time, on purpose! As *Things Could Be* garnered Evren another "Rising Star" and was nominated for Best Instrumental and Best Album by the Native American Music Awards.

His latest album, *Alluvia*, was released shortly before his thirteenth birthday, and it won Best Instrumental Recording at the Native American Music Awards the same year Evren was nominated for Flutist of the Year.

"I just enjoy playing the music," he says. But when he receives awards, he adds, "I'm really honored."

The recording process is an interesting one. It starts out with a melody or idea in Evren's head, which he expresses to the producer while in preproduction. Evren suggests different accompanying instruments and a rhythm bed for each piece. When recording begins, Evren and the producer have already established a starting point to work from.

"If we want to change key or change something, we'll go from there," says Evren.

Besides recording and releasing albums, Evren also performs in concert. He's played across the United States and in Belgium, England, and Germany. After a performance at an academic conference in the U.N. Plaza in New York City—the Turkish consulate was exploring the similarities between Turks and Native Americans—Evren was even featured on Turkish television!

Sharing His Joy

Native American flutes are built very differently from silver flutes—the kind you see musicians playing in marching bands and orchestras. Native flutes are often made of wood, but can also be made of bamboo, gourds, or clay. A musician holds his flute so the end of the flute points at the ground—and the mouthpiece is at the very tip.

Though orchestra flutes may be made of wood, they are often made of metal. Performers hold the instrument perpendicular to their bodies—parallel to their shoulders—and the mouthpiece is a short distance away from the flute's tip.

Native flutes don't have any keys for performers to press, as silver flutes do. They just have holes for players' fingers to cover. Each Native flute is tuned to a pentatonic scale—which sounds like the black keys on a piano—and it will have a more limited range than a silver flute.



Evren doesn't take lessons for the Native flute, but he does for the silver flute. But music and schoolwork aren't the only items on his agenda! He also likes to skateboard, fly radio-controlled airplanes, and hang out with his friends. Substances like drugs, alcohol, and tobacco are not part of his world—for a lot of good reasons.

Most important, he says, "I would rather play the flute. I wouldn't want anything to jeopardize me playing the flute and my music."

Is there music in Evren's future? "Absolutely," he says. But he isn't sure he will pursue it professionally. "I just enjoy playing the flute. I [just] hope [people] enjoy the music," he says. "If I can play the flute—which I enjoy doing—and people enjoy listening, then I'm happy to continue."