

Hidden Medicine: Grammy-and-Emmy-nominated Native American flautist coming to Alton

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - John Two-Hawks has been given many musical merits in his life.

Two-Hawks has been nominated for an Emmy and a Grammy after the release of *Wind Songs*, a collection of 21 first-take flute solo improvisations. Two-Hawks said he went into his recording studio and allowed the spirit to guide him to whichever of his collection of more than 70 flutes needed played. He then played what his heart desired and recorded everything in one take. He has also been given the honor of being called Shiyotamka or "Big or Great Flute" by one of his Lakota elders.

"Big or great in this context is not what it seems to mean in English," he said. "Big means large in size and great means awesome and powerful, but in this context it means more of a spiritual power. The man who gave me that name was a very respected elder and spiritual leader. It's a real honor for me to carry that name. It speaks to the whole

journey I've taken for the flute to come into my world and change it. I like to say it wasn't an accident."

The flute was first presented to Two-Hawks more than 25 years ago while he was studying and teaching living history. As a Lakota man, Two-Hawks said he would teach in elementary schools, high schools and universities regarding the living history of the Lakota people and other wisdom of indigenous American cultures.

He is going to be bringing that love of the Native American flute to Alton on March 30, 2018, when he plays the historic Mineral Springs Ballroom. Hosts Donna and Dave Nunnally from It's Raining Zen said they are awarding a chance to win tickets to the show for anyone who spends \$10 or more at their shop as a chance to give back to the community. They are giving away 10 pairs of tickets, or 20 tickets total, before the show. Tickets without the giveaway are currently on sale for \$15 each – down from \$20. They can be purchased directly from Two-Hawks here: <https://www.johntwohawks.com/store/p180/Ticket - JTH Concert - Alton IL - Mar 30.html>

This is not Two-Hawks's first trip into Alton. The Nunnallies said they have hosted him previously and he had a great time meeting with people and experiencing the city.

"He loved playing with the backdrop of a window looking out into the river," Dave Nunnally said. "And it was around sunset last time, so the colors were so pretty."

Two-Hawks agreed with that assessment, adding Alton had something he treasures anywhere he goes – a rich history.

"It's a cool town with a lot of history," Two-Hawks said. "I love the lay of the land. I love the way it sets on the ground. I have always been a person whose heart and interest is in history. Alton has rich history and great architecture, and the people there are really, really cool. I've met some beautiful people there."

At the March 30 show, Two-Hawks said people should expect more than just beautiful flute music. He said additional instruments will be included through tracking, adding one of the largest portions of his show is not the music itself, but also the sharing of what it means. He said he shares stories with the audience to bring better context to the music itself.

"It's a lot of sharing about the spirit of what the music is about and those kind of things," he said. "It's really the people who come to the show. My whole hope is always that they will leave inspired, moved and hopefully a little more healed than they were when they came in."

Music has always been a language Two-Hawks could speak. He said his father found him playing harmonica when he was only 4 years old. From that point to now, Two-Hawks said he could pick up an instrument and make it speak, whether it be percussion, strings or woodwinds.

“When I picked up an instrument, I could just understand it,” he said. “It's just always been that way. As a kid with musical talent, of course I wanted to be a rock star. I've been in and out of several bands over the years with various levels of success, but as bands go, sometimes people don't get along and things like that, so I got tired of the band thing and did some of my own solo folk music.”

It was not long after that Two-Hawks was gifted his first Native American flute, and the rest has been history. Two-Hawks has played music and shared his wisdom all around the world.

Wisdom will be another part of Two-Hawks's upcoming stay in Alton. On Saturday, March 31, he will be instructing two classes at It's Raining Zen. The first is called “Native Flute: Lessons in Wisdom,” and will include the story of the Native American flute, including how it was almost lost forever during the Reservation Period and how it is experiencing a new renaissance through players such as Two-Hawks.

Those who are musically-inclined may also get a few beginner lessons and pointers on the playing of the flute, but Two-Hawks emphasized the class is mostly dedicated to the flute's history and historical context as well as its current purpose.

The second class will be Wisdom from the Sacred Hoop, which Two-Hawks said will be a small course based on how the sacred symbol of the hoop or medicine wheel can help direct lives and creative energies including using the four sacred directions.

More information on the concert can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/159824487978472/>

More information on the Sacred Hoops class can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/106483370142692/>