Dawn Avery - Bio

GRAMMY nominated world music artist Dawn Avery creates a contemporary soundscape from electronica, pop and classical elements.  Her sultry vocals and soaring cello lines reflect a deep spirituality rooted in her Native American heritage and love of Sufi tradition.

​ A prolific composer and active performer, Dawn Avery is also an award-winning educator. She has worked with musical luminaries Luciano Pavarotti, Sting, Phillip Glass, John Cage, John Cale, and R. Carlos Nakai.  She has toured the world playing Delta Blues with the Soldier String Quartet and Persian Funk with Sussan Deyhim. Earlier in her career she performed with the New Jersey Symphony and New York City Opera, and played for Broadway musicals.  She performed with Jazz Master Will Calhoun and Grover Washington, Jr., and with Indian/American Karsh Kale. Current performance projects range from musical theatre to world music recordings and performances.

Avery’s recent multi-media projects and recordings include the Global Music Award winning CD *50 Shades of Red (2014*). Tara Gatewood of “Native America Calling” said this downtempo work represents a new genre in Native American music. An upcoming recording *Love Songs for a Changing World* (2018) features chill wave music compositions inspired by Mohawk and Sufi dervish traditions.  On those and many other projects, Avery collaborated with Grammy Award winning producer/guitarist Larry Mitchell. The two artists often perform and tour together.

​ Avery is also composing music for theatre productions. She composed for Spiderwoman Theatre company in NYC, the Alliance for New Music-Theatre at the Dupont Underground and for Heather Henson's IBEX Puppetry. The latter project led to the 2017 release of the album *Crane on Earth, in Sky: a Journey (2017)* which won two silver medals for best album and best World Music for theatre by the Global Music Awards.   She has composed music for award-winning films including *Tadpole* featuring John Ritter and Susan Sarandon and Basquiat, directed by Julian Schnabel on Miramax Films.  She composed and performed on many Native American documentaries, including some produced by Rich/Heape, and the Smithsonian’s *Always Becoming* by Nora Naranjo-Morse.

In addition to touring her spiritual downtempo projects (featuring dance, film, storytelling and ritual), Dawn Avery has toured with the North American Indian Cello Project, premiering contemporary classical works by Native composers.  She has collected awards for her own classical compositions from Duke University, the Ford Foundation's Indigenous Knowledge, Expressive Culture grant program (of the American Composers Forum), the Smithsonian’s Museum of the American Indian, American Dance Festival, Washington Flute Association, NYU and Meet the Composer, among others.

Rarely are performers as at home in Lincoln Center as they are in an Iroquois Longhouse. Committed to Indigenous language and cultural preservation as a musician, educator and participant of Longhouse ceremonies, Avery leads workshops and produces projects as part of the Native Composer’s Project.  Of Mohawk descent, Dawn Avery's Indian name is Ieriho:kwats and she wears the turtle clan.  Her album, *Our Fire: Contemporary Native American Songs (2011)*, won several nominations in the Indian Summer Awards, New Mexico Music Awards, and Native American Music Awards.

​ Avery's exploration of sacred music led her to study the relationship between music and spirituality.  She has led meditation groups and spiritual music performances at the Esalen Institute, the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, Milan Sacred Music Festival, The Open Center in NYC, and *Musicales Visuales* in Mexico City.  As a leader of meditation and creativity workshops, she has worked with great healers such as the Dalai Lama, Rick Jarow, Ron Young, Chidvilasananda and Hilda Charleton. Her CD, *Rapidly Approaching Ecstasy: Music for Movement and Meditation (2014)*, features world grooves on the Hindu chakras along with a guided visualization track.  *Alchemy: Music for Meditation* *(2008)* features tracks with various world music artists in duets with Avery on cello and voice.

Nurturing future generations, Dawn Avery runs a World Music program at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland where she is a full professor.  She holds a BM from the Manhattan School of Music, a MFA from NYU and a PhD in ethnomusicology from the University of Maryland, College Park with primary research in native classical contemporary composition and the application of Indigenous research techniques.  Dr. Avery received the 2011 United States Professor of the Year award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.