



## **STORY: HOW MUSIC CAME TO THE WORLD**

An Aztec Myth retold by Dianne de Las Casas

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NOTE: This story appears on Dianne de Las Casas' *World Fiesta: Celebrations in Story and Song* Children's Audio CD with music by Betsy Braud

Shhhh. Do you hear that? It's the sound of silence. Long ago, the world was filled with silence just like this. There was no laughter and there was no music. Tezcatlipoca, Lord of the World, walked the earth and noticed the heavy silence that blanketed the world. From the four corners of the globe, he summoned Quetzalcoatl, the feathered Lord of Spirit, who controlled the wind.

"Quetzalcoatl, hear my call, come as swift as the wind!"

Quetzalcoatl answered Tezcatlipoca's call and stood before him in feathery brilliance.

The lord of the world said, "Earth is sick with sad silence. The people have lost hope and laughter because there is no music to brighten the nights and days. Sun has all the music. His musicians create beautiful songs that ring through the heavens. We must bring these musicians to Earth."

Quetzalcoatl preened his colorful feathers, "Yes, my Lord, I will do as you ask."

Quetzalcoatl readied himself for the long journey to the heavens, where the Sun lived. He commanded the cold winds from the North, the warm winds from the South, the temperate winds from the West, and the cool winds from the East to carry him up, up, up towards the heavens.

Higher and higher, the winged Lord of Spirit ascended. The sun saw Quetzalcoatl approaching and he glowed with fury. He knew that Tezcatlipoca sent him to steal away the Sun's treasured musicians. The Sun's musicians were circling him in cheerful dance, playing their beautiful music.

The musician of gentle lullabies wore robes of billowy white. The musician of passion flaunted robes of fiery red and drummed music of love and war. The musician of dreams donned robes of fleecy blue as light as clouds. The musician of the heavens flowed in robes of bright yellow and played a golden flute, creating songs to honor kings and gods.

The Sun harshly ordered, "Hush, my musicians. The Lord of Spirit is coming to take you Earth, where it is lonely and sad. Stay here with me, my children, in the brightness of my kingdom."

The musicians quieted down just as Quetzalcoatl began climbing the stairs of the Sun's palace. He called out softly, "Oh musicians of brilliance, come with me to Earth, where the people need you."

The musicians cowered at the foot of the Sun as he gave them a glowering glance. The feathered lord called out once again, "The world needs your music."

Afraid of the sun, the musicians remained silent. Down below, Tezcatlipoca was furious. "Sun won't share his music, so I'll take it from him." From the depths of Earth, he launched flashes of lightning and a cacophony of thunder. Together with the power of Quetzalcoatl's winds, Sun was suddenly besieged.

"It's a war! We're being attacked!" Sun cried. Quetzalcoatl offered his feathered wings to protect the frightened musicians.

"Come," he gently coaxed, "Come to Earth where it is peaceful." The musicians followed Quetzalcoatl and sailed down to Earth on the edge of the winds.

Suddenly, the sad silence lifted. Earth's people rejoiced as they listened to the joyous sounds of music. They laughed and again filled the world with hope. Quetzalcoatl gathered the four winds and music soared to all the corners of the world.

Listening to the musicians, all of Earth's creations learned to sing and create music, from the babbling brooks to the twittering birds to children playing outside. From then to now, all of Earth celebrates with the sound of music and that is how music came to the world.

