Commissioned by the Cincinnati Children's Choir Robyn Reeves Lana, Founder/Managing Artistic Director

JOAN SZYMKO



for ssaa chorus treble soloist & piano Notes to the CCC from the Composer.

Cincinnati Children's Choir mission is "Building Tomorrow's Leaders, One Voice at a Time" and so I wanted to give CCC an opportunity to sing a new work that has significance *beyond* presenting a "world premiere." I selected texts that I hope will resonate with you as we all—young people in particular, face an uncertain future together on Earth, our only home. As you carry this song out into the world, my hope is that those who listen will feel the urgency of these present times. We can no longer hold on to the shores of "business as usual" or cling to the banks of indifference. The "river" is our destiny; it is the inevitability of change— and the river won't stop and wait.

I also wanted to compose a choral work that may instill a joyful hope in both singer and listener. I came across this E.E. Hale quote while researching the source of the Native American, "Hopi Elders" text: *I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.* I looked a bit further and found the rest of the quote, which I set as the turning point in this piece. Hale's most famous saying, while not in this work, certainly inspired me: *Look up and not down, look forward and not back, look out and not in, and lend a hand.* Yes," I am only one," but as Hale often said, "Ten times one is ten!" We can each do our part, and— we have one another. As the Hopi elders text says: *Create your community. Be good to each other. And do not look outside yourself for your leader... Gather yourselves... push off into the middle of the river; see who is there with you and celebrate!*

See below the song lyric and my text source known variously as "Message from the Hopi Nation," "Wisdom of the Hopi Elders," and "Hopi Prophesy." It has made its way across the internet, showing up in blogs, quoted in sermons, heard on YouTube, etc. The authorship is unverifiable and there exist different versions of the same text. The last line has been widely quoted and misattributed. I first came across it in the 1980's while singing the phrase in a song by Sweet Honey in the Rock. We are the ones we have been waiting for is a line from "Poem for South African Women" by the late African American poet June Jordan, published in 1980. It was picked up by many speech writers; also by Bernice Johnson Reagon who made the phrase into a song in the 1980's and Alice Walker who took the phrase as title for her most recent collection of essays (2006). More recently sthe phrase has been used in speeches by President Barak Obama.

Joan Szymko
 January 1, 2014

RIVER

There is a river now flowing very fast.
It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid.
They will try to hold on to the shore.
They will feel that they are being torn apart.
There is a river now flowing very fast.

I am only one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something.
And becasue I can't do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can do.
What I can do, I should do. And what I should do, by the grace of God, I will do. (Edward E. Hale)

Let go! Let go of the shore! Push off into the middle of the river. See who is there with you and celebrate! We are the ones we have been waiting for.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOPI ELDERS (text source material)

You have been telling people that this is the Eleventh Hour. Now you must go back and tell the people that this is the Hour. And there are things to be considered. . . .

Where are you living?
What are you doing?
What are your relationships?
Are you in right relation?
Where is your water?
Know your garden.
It is time to speak your truth.
Create your community.
Be good to each other.
And do not look outside yourself for your leader.

This could be a very good time.

There is a river flowing now very fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid. They will try to hold on to the shore. They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly. Know the river has its destination. The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water.

And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate. At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally, least of all ourselves. For the moment that we do, our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt. The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves! Banish the word 'struggle' from your attitude and your vocabulary. All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. We are the ones we've been waiting for.

River

Native American Elder(s) circa 2000 Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909)

JOAN SZYMKO













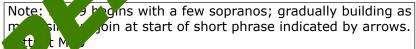


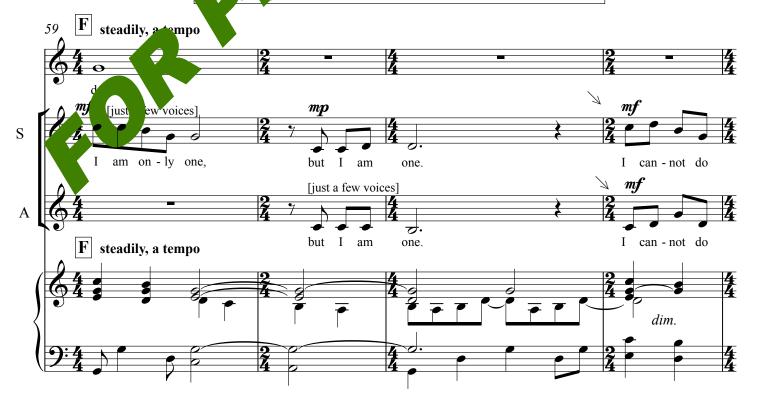














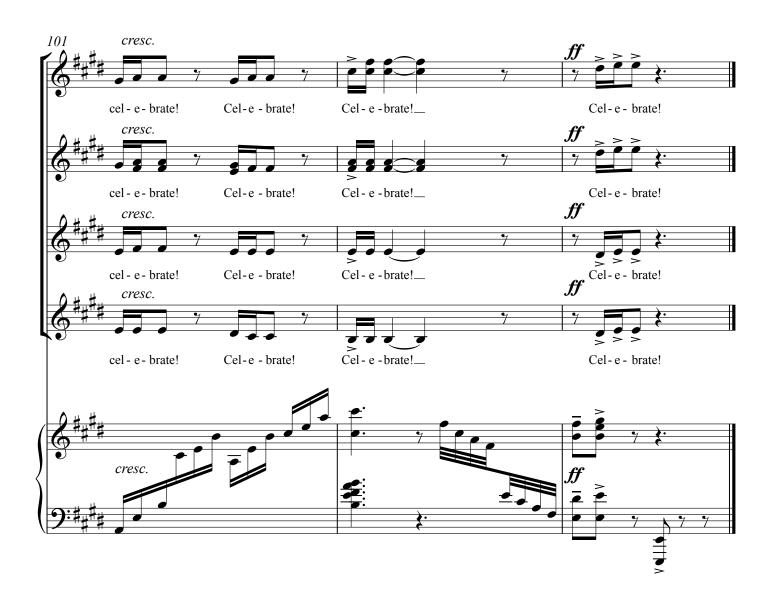












January 1, 2014 Portland, Oregon