

VMP059 / SZYMKO / River / SSAA, treble solo, pno / dur: 5:15

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

JOAN SZYMKO

RÍVER

for ssaa chorus
treble soloist
& piano

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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 Prophecy." 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 the 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 because 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

♩=68 with urgent intensity

p There is a riv-er. There is a riv-er now

p

4
flow ing fast, flow-ing ver-y fast. There is a riv-er, there is a riv-er flow-ing

6
ver-y fast flow-ing ver-y fast. There is a riv-er. There is a riv-er now

mp There is a riv-er.

p

mp simile

8

mp there

flow ing fast, flow - ing ver - y fast. There is a riv - er, there er flow - ing

mf

mp There is a riv - er now,

10

mf *mp*

riv - er flow - ing ver - y ing ver - y fast. It is so great and swift that there are

mp *mf* *mp*

ver - y fast, g ver - y fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will

mp

ere is a riv - er flow - ing ver - y fast, ver - y fast, flow - ing ver - y fast.

12

those who will be a - fraid, be a - fraid, they'll try to hold on, _____
be a - fraid, they will be a fraid They'll try to hold on, they'll hold on to the
flow-ing ver-y fast. _____ They'll try _____

mf *mf* *mp* *mf*

This block contains the musical notation for measures 12 and 13. It features four staves: three vocal staves and one piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts are in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The piano part is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *mp*. A large green watermark 'FOR PERUSAL ONLY' is overlaid diagonally across the page.

14

they'll try to hold on to the shore. _____ They'll feel that they are be - ing torn a - part _____
shore _____ They'll feel that they are be - ing
to hold on to the shore. _____ They'll feel _____

mf

This block contains the musical notation for measures 14 and 15. It features four staves: three vocal staves and one piano accompaniment staff. The vocal parts are in treble clef with a key signature of two flats and a 3/4 time signature. The piano part is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present. A large green watermark 'FOR PERUSAL ONLY' is overlaid diagonally across the page.

16

torn a - part, torn a - part, torn a - part, torn a - part,

that they are be - ing torn a - part, torn a - part...

18

B *mf*

There is a riv - er. There is a

torn a - part.

There is a riv - er. There is a riv - er now

B

20

f

riv - er now flow-ing ver - y fast. There a
 There is a riv - er
 flow-ing fast, flow-ing ver - y fast. There is a riv - er, there is a riv - er flow-ing

mf *cresc.*

22

riv - er flow-ing ver - y fast flow-ing ver - y fast. It is so great and swift
 There is a riv - er now. There is a riv - er.
 flow-ing ver - y fast. It is so great and swift that there are those who will

f

8 24

that there are those who will be a-fraid, they will be a-fraid. They'll try to

There is a riv - er now.

be a - fraid, they will be a-fraid. They'll try to hold on; they'll try to hold on to the

26

hold on. They'll try to hold on.

They'll try to hold on.

shore. They'll try to hold on.

29

A1 There is a riv - er. There is a riv - er now flow-ing fast, flow-ing ver - y fast.

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31 *mf*

S2 There is a riv - er. There is

A1 There is a riv - er, there is a riv - er flow - ing ver - y fast flow - ing ver - y fast

A2 There is a

33 *f*

S1 There is a riv - er.

S2 riv - er. There is a riv - er.

A1 It is so great and swift that there are those who will be a - afraid, they will be a - afraid

A2 er. There is a riv - er.

There is a riv - er;

There is a riv - er; hold

They'll try to hold on, They'll try to the

There is a riv - er; hold on,

37

hold on, hold on, They'll feel that they are be-ing torn a-part, torn a-part,

on, hold on, hold on, torn a-part,

share They'll feel that they are be-ing torn a-part, torn a-part,

hold on, hold on, torn, torn a-part,

cresc. poco a poco

40

D *ff*

torn a-part, torn a-part... There is a riv-er, there is a riv-er now

torn a-part, torn a-part...

torn a-part, torn a-part, torn a-part...

torn a-part, torn a-part...

f *ff*

3 4 1 3 4 2

43

There is a riv-er, there is a riv-er now. There is a riv-er. There is a riv-er now.

there is a riv-er now. There is a riv-er

There is a riv-er, There is a riv-er,

There is a riv-er, There is a riv-er, There is a riv-er,

ff

46

f There is a riv-er flow-ing ver-y fast, ver - y fast, *mf* flow-ing ver-y fast

f There is a riv-er flow-ing ver-y fast, *mf* ver- fast.

f There is a riv-er flow-ing ver-y fast.

mf There is a riv-er flow-ing ver-y fast.

f There is a riv-er flow-ing ver-y fast.

48 *E* *mf* *mp* hold back a bit *A tempo*

dim. I can not do one, but I am one. I can - not do

E *calmo, sostenuto e espress.* *colla voce* *A tempo*

mp *dim.* *p* *mp*

Solo:

52 *mf*

Solo: ev-'ry - thing, — but I can do some - thing. — And be - cause do

56 *hold back a bit* *poco rit.*

ev-'ry - thing, — I will not re - fuse do the some - thing — I can

colla voce *mp* *poco rit.*

Note: [56] begins with a few sopranos; gradually building as more sopranos join at start of short phrase indicated by arrows.

59 **F** *steadily, a tempo*

S *mf* [just a few voices] *mp* *mf*

I am on - ly one, but I am one. I can - not do

A [just a few voices] *mf*

but I am one. I can - not do

F *steadily, a tempo* *dim.*

63 *hold back a bit*

Solo

S

A

but I can do some - thing.

ev-'ry-thing_ but I can do some - thing.

ev-'ry-thing_ but I can do some-thing. What I can do, I should do

colla voce

68 *dim.* *mp* *poco rit.* **G** *A tempo*

And what I should do, by the grace of God, I will do.

S *dim.* *Tutti mp* S2 only

A *Tutti mp*

by the grace of God,

poco rit. **G** *A tempo*

dim. *mp*

S1

S2

A1

A2

mf Let go! Let go of the shore! —

pp *p* There is a riv-er, — *p* flow-ing fast, flow-ing ver-y fast.

pp *p* Let go! Let go of the shore! — *p* Let *mp*

pp *p* There is a riv-er, — *p* flow-ing fast, flow-ing ver-y fast. *mp*

pp *p* There is a riv-er, — *p* flow-ing fast, flow-ing ver-y fast. *mp*

p *mf* *p*

cresc. *f* Push off in - to the mid-dle of the riv - er. — Let

cresc. *f* go! Push off in - to the mid-dle of the riv - er. — Let go!

mf *cresc.* Push off in - to the mid-dle of the riv - er. —

mf *cresc.* Push off in - to the mid-dle of the riv - er.

mf *cresc.* Push off in - to the mid-dle of the riv - er.

77

molto legato e sost.

go! Let go! See who is there with you

[soloist rejoins choir]

f Let go! See who is there with you

Let go! **f** See who is there with

Let go! See who is the with you

(roll extravagantly)

f

80

poco accel.

and cel - e - brate!

and cel - e - brate!

and cel - e - brate!

and cel - e - brate!

H *poco accel.*

82

♩.=48 *con vivo!*

We are the ones. We are the ones.

♩.=48 *con vivo!*

84

We are the ones. we have been wait-ing for. We are the ones.



87

— We are the ones. — We are the ones — we have been

See — who is there with you — and cel e-brate! Cel-e-brate!

We are the ones. — We are the ones. — We are the ones we've been

We are — the ones, We are — the ones, We are — the ones,

90

wait-ing for. We are the ones — We are the ones —

Cel - e - ate See — who is there with you —

wait-ing for. We are the ones. — We are the ones. — We are the ones

Cel-e-brate! See — who is there with you — and

R.H. L.H.

Cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate! —

and cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate!

we have been wait - ing for...

cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate!

95 **I**

98

See — who is there with you — and

See — who is there with you — and

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101 *cresc.* *ff*

cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate!_ Cel - e - brate!

cresc. *ff*

cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate!_ Cel - e - brate!

cresc. *ff*

cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate!_ Cel - e - brate!

cresc. *ff*

cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate! Cel - e - brate!_ Cel - e - brate!

cresc. *ff*

January 1, 2014
Portland, Oregon