

# *Celilo Falls: We Were There*

for chamber or full orchestra, in 11 movements

Music by Nancy Ives

With text & narration by Ed Edmo, and images by Joe Cantrell

## Program Notes

### 1. *N'CheWana*

Spelled and pronounced in various ways, N'CheWana is the word for the Columbia River in the Sahaptin language family. An overture of sorts, the movement begins with woodwind solos, since all great rivers start with smaller rivers coming together. Along the way, aleatoric (quasi-improvised or random) elements in the strings populate the river with fish, especially salmon, which make their way out to sea and back along the river. Brass chorales evoke the majestic cliffs of the gorge, and the entire orchestra reaches a peak of volume and activity to represent huge volumes of water rushing through canyons and over multiple cataracts. The piece concludes with air sounds created by the orchestra, depicting the mighty roar of Celilo Falls in the distance — or perhaps, its ghost.

### 2. *Celilo Fishermen*

This movement emerges without pause from the distant roar of the Falls. Interlocking leaps by successive instruments evoke the weaving of the nets. More active, flowing music rises and subsides, ending with a lone cello whispering an arpeggiated figure that fades out as the next movements begins.

#### **Celilo Fishermen**

**you made your nets  
& tested the knots  
seeing that they held.**

**little did you know  
what was to hold you  
after the sound of  
water falling  
over what  
used to be.**

### 3. *Deep Time*

This movement contemplates a landscape has been shaped by cataclysmic floods and inhabited by the People of the River for at least 10,000 years and is dedicated to Joe Cantrell, whose vision of universality and timelessness forms a crucial underpinning to this work.

#### 4. *Grandfather Storyteller*

A rhythm meant to evoke but not imitate the Heart Drum continues through much of the movement.

#### **Grandfather Storyteller**

**Grandfather  
storyteller  
I come to you  
with thirsty  
ears**

**Grandfather storyteller  
weaving words  
of ancient strength**

**words  
colored with  
ageless time  
words  
that are carried  
on welcome wind  
words  
floating  
on rivers  
of purity**

**Grandfather  
storyteller  
I come to hear  
wisdom  
wisdom that is  
not yours alone  
wisdom that  
you share  
wisdom I shall  
pass to the children**

#### 5. *What I miss most is the mist*

Ed Edmo's reminiscence of his childhood near Celilo Falls is interlaced with text painting and musical quotes — for example, a snippet from “Ballet of Unhatched Chicks” from Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

**What I miss most is the mist from Celilo Falls. On a spring shine day, when I would stand on the East side of Celilo Falls to watch my relatives fish, there would be a light breeze pushing the mist softly on my youthful cheeks.**

**I saw my Grandpa fish, my Dad fish, my cousin fish, and even my older brother fish on scaffolds over the thunder of the river, for hours upon hours, pulling King Salmon out of the water with a net and striking them on the head to stun them, so that the salmon wouldn't suffer.**

Now I tell legends. I learned legends from my Dad, who is Shoshone-Bannock. He learned legends from his elders. My family and I were raised poor, in a house my Dad built out of railroad ties, with two rooms, a wood stove and a kitchen. Outside was the out-house, and boy, that outhouse really stank in the hot summertime and I was afraid that ugly spider would climb up the hole and bite me on my ass! We didn't have what people have in their houses nowadays, like home computers, iPads, cell phones -- not even electricity or running water! But my Dad would tell me legends at bedtime to put me to sleep. I would feel bad for that trickster Old Man Coyote, because it seemed like he was always in trouble, just like me!

In the winter time it was cold, with no heating in the house. I would watch my Dad get out of bed at butt crack early, crawl across the floor through the long room, which was our bedroom, with an upright piano and my brother's bed. Dad would crawl into the kitchen in his long-johns, take a wooden match, open the wood stove and light a fire to get some heat. I thought to myself, "Boy, when I grow up, I want to be as strong as my Dad!" Nowadays, I just walk over to the wall, pull my bathrobe tight around me and turn that thermostat up!

We raised chickens and rabbits to eat. During fishing season, we ate a lot of salmon. Dad would also bring home some lamprey eels. They looked like gray snakes. Mom would cut them up, making 3 to 4 inch eels, and put them in the oven to bake, with a pan underneath to catch the grease that cooked out of them. Someone told me that eel oil is good for healing cuts! I haven't tried it yet...Hopefully I will someday.

I remember when my Grandpa Joseph Cook brought us some bear meat from Mt. Adams. There was a big bone sticking out of a large pot on our rickety table, and I remember that the taste was really gamey. In my memory, I can still see that large bone sticking out of that pot.

We sometimes ran out of food and had to go to the missionary's house to eat. When I was a kid, I hated that, because my Mom and my Grandma would sit; they would talk, sing hymns, pray, and sing some more. I was really hungry and wanted to eat! I remember one time in particular...The women were saying a long prayer, so I pulled a chair over to the stove and pulled out the bacon-rind and began eating on it. When the missionary got done praying and saw what I was doing, she got a shocked look on her face and said, "Oh! I was saving that for my dog, Rags!"

## 6. *Grandfather Echo*

The child from the previous movement has grown up to be Grandfather Storyteller.

## 7. *Inundation, Flat Water*

One of the most magnificent features of the Gorge, a place of leaping salmon and roaring water and a place of enormous significance to Native Peoples, is inundated and silenced in a short time.

## 8. *Celilo Blues*

This movement features a poem that directly references the events leading up to the construction and completion of The Dalles Dam. For more, Ed Edmo highly recommends a documentary on YouTube, "Echo of Water Against Rocks." To proceed with The Dalles Dam, the US government had to reach settlement agreements with the four Tribes (Nes Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Yakama) with whom

they had a treaty dating back to 1855. The government basically told the tribes they had two choices: Either you settle with us or we condemn your villages. When the Dalles Dam was authorized by Congress in 1950, there was public concern about the potential impact of the dam on Native American fishing and on the salmon, but the authorities, including the Head of the Army Corps of Engineers, promised that the fishing would be better than ever.

### **Celilo Blues**

**he came automaton-atomic-government-man with briefcase in hand**

**wire rimmed glasses that hung from his nose his whining voice came out in a never ending drone**

**promising promises again & again**

**deafened ears that are paid not to hear mouthing words of pre-recorded briefing sessions behind armed guards**

**again**

**we drowned**

### *9. She Who Watches*

This is a meditation on She Who Watches, whose face is depicted in a large and very beautiful petroglyph of sacred significance on one of the basalt cliffs just west of and overlooking where Celilo Falls used to be. It is part of her legend that she shall stay there forever, watching over her people and the river.

### *10. Grandfather Storyteller reprise*

This is a lighthearted version of *Grandfather Storyteller* for solo string quartet. The people are still here.

### *11. There has been something*

The People of the River, to whom this composition is dedicated, have not forgotten what was lost when Celilo Falls was flooded in 1957. Its loss resounds throughout our region. Still, they continue their ancient traditions, and salmon remain of central importance. They are still here.

### **There has been something**

**sometimes it is a song sometimes a whisper sometimes it appears to be an animal then other times weeping I hear it there has been something that has disappeared from my mother earth I'm not sure what it was but sometimes at night I can hear it in the wind or it comes to me in my dreams like the smell of salmon cooking**

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