

SYMPOSIA AT ELAGAIA

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I am prepared to tell a story that recalls an ancient tradition of praise song, one that calls us to remember the wisdom of the ancient voices for the present day. The harp is considered by many to be the oldest musical instrument in the world. It was used to accompany the myths and sacred stories in the third millennium B.C. As a contemporary praise singer, I wish to present a rendering of voices from various oral traditions that give emphasis to voice of women and address the themes of love and war. With existing fragments of ancient music and original composition at the harp, I draw from the hymns of ancient Sumer in the 3rd millennium, the ancient Greek oral tradition with respect to lyric and epic poetry, sacred verse from the Old Testament, and finally, with drum in hand, I celebrate my own Native ancestor with a praise song of for an unsung Cherokee woman's act of compassion during the forced march of the Cherokee people to the West in 1838.

Dedicated to mothers who have lost children in the conflicts of our times, this presentation of verse reacquaints the contemporary audience with an ancient art. From the cradle of civilization, we begin with what scholars believe to be the world's most ancient song. With song, recitation, we move through different oral traditions. From the ancient Sumerian All Mother who "loves us in her heart," to the ancient Greek Homeric Hymn to Gaea; and from the martyred Jephthah's Daughter in the Old Testament to Meryem, or Mother Mary, honored both by Muslims and Christians alike. Included are voices that remind us of our own place in time and our own obligation to the moment at hand. Voices include those from the greatest denunciation of war in ancient literature, *Trojan Women* by Euripides, and song from the oral tradition of various Native American tribes.

Presentations involve both concert harp and drum and celebrate the voices of struggle and faith that are our collective inheritance. In keeping with the ancient tradition, I strive to achieve a fitting musical punctuation that roughly approximates what might have been a suitable accompaniment for the ancient verse. At the same time, I answer these voices from my own time, with poems that resonate with the words from Alcmán's hymn: *For peace we cry, O Artemis, Grandmother of Lions!* and those of Hagar the Egyptian whose voice: *Let me not see the death of the child*, remains the cry of millions.

REPERTOIRE

In a time of religious war, it may be timely to reflect on some of our religious roots and better acquaint ourselves with a sweep of poetry and song that speaks eloquently to the deepest yearnings of humanity. This presentation of verse from various oral traditions celebrates a shared cultural and spiritual legacy. It has never been my intention to present views that conflict with one's religious beliefs, but to provide that glimpse of an ancient tradition of praise song that dates to the third millennium B.C. As an incitement to greater tolerance for the beliefs of others, presentations highlight verse from the following oral traditions:

I. THE ALL MOTHER: From the Ancient and Middle East: (Harp)

Babylonian verse Sumerian Akkadian hymn

The myth of Inanna and the Huluppu Tree

Egyptian love poem Selections from Lament for Tammuz

**In response: I, The All Mother or News from the Queen of the Morning Star*

II. LOVE & WAR: DEBORAH & JEPHTAH'S DAUGHTER

Sacred Verse From the Old Testament (Harp)

Hebrew Song at Daybreak Victory Song of Deborah

From Judges: The story of Jephthah's Daughter

Selections from Genesis, Job, Psalms, Song of Songs

** In Response: A Lament for Jephthah's Daughter in the New Millennium*

I, Hagar

III. LOVE & WAR: SAPPHO & HECUBE

From the Ancient Greek Oral Tradition of Praise Song (Harp)

Verse from Sappho Selections from Euripides' Trojan Women

Verse from The Cypria and Homer: poets Pindar, Alcman and Simonides

In Response: I, Earth Mother

IV. QUATIE: Praise Song for an American Hero (DRUM/DANCE)

A Walking Song: Excerpts from eye-witness accounts of "Trail of Tears"

Verse from America's Native American Oral Tradition

In Response: "Song To The November Moon" for Quatie

*Presentations may also include verse from the Norse epic, *The Elder Edda*.

Hymn to Odin Song of Sibyl Lay of Baldur