



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 both a dramatic and historical 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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 Alcman'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.

At present, I write on behalf of myself both as a soloist and in collaboration with other artists who may share a determination to resist the tide of religious intolerance and/or defend against the political divide with music and fellowship. While my own creative work around animating the oral praise song traditions represents decades of research and study, it is at the same time a leap in a new direction, a syllable and dance step for an entirely imaginary ceremony of hope that I am prepared to attempt.