

Elaine Hagenberg  
MUSIC

# Shadow River

A stream of tender gladness,  
Of filmy sun, and opal tinted skies;  
Of warm midsummer air  
that lightly lies  
In mystic rings,  
Where softly swings  
The music of a thousand wings  
That almost tones to sadness.

Mine is the undertone;  
The beauty, strength, and power of the land  
Will never stir or bend at my command;  
But all the shade  
Is marred or made,  
If I but dip my paddle blade;  
And it is mine alone.

Midway 'twixt earth and heaven,  
A bubble in the pearly air I seem  
To float upon the sapphire floor, a dream  
Of clouds of snow,  
Above, below,  
Drift with my drifting, dim and slow,  
As twilight drifts to even.  
For others Fame  
And Love's red flame,  
And yellow gold: I only claim  
The shadows and the dreaming.



## E. Pauline Johnson (1861-1913)

Emily Pauline Johnson was a defining figure of Canadian literature in the 19th and 20th centuries. Drawing from her roots in both English and Indigenous culture, her poetry recitals and prose garnered widespread recognition.

Johnson spent her early life at home in Ontario, Canada, where she learned from both English literature and Mohawk oral legends. She began publishing poems in her teens to support her family after the death of her father, and gained popularity in 1892 by reciting and performing her works.

After 17 years of touring Canada and giving poetry readings, Johnson settled into writing prose in Vancouver, where she passed away in 1913. The dramatic intensity of her writing and its focus on the natural world lends itself effortlessly to choral settings.



## About Elaine

Elaine Hagenberg's music "soars with eloquence and ingenuity" (ACDA Choral Journal). Her compositions are performed worldwide and frequently featured at distinguished international concert halls from Australia to South America and throughout Europe.

In addition to composing full-time, Elaine actively engages in bringing her music to life as the guest artist and featured clinician for professional conferences and festivals both in the U.S. and abroad as a composer, conductor, and accompanist of her work. Elaine has music in print with various publishers and publishes her concert music independently through Elaine Hagenberg Music.

Elaine lives in Iowa with her husband and four kids and enjoys being in nature, traveling, gardening, and sipping homemade cappuccinos.



## INSPIRATION

As a choral composer, my inspiration always begins with poetry. Words that resonate with me personally often use imagery of nature and also explore themes of joy, hope, longing, and even heartache. As I weave these components together, my aim is to add yet another layer of beauty to the text as we seek deeper meaning and connectivity with one another.

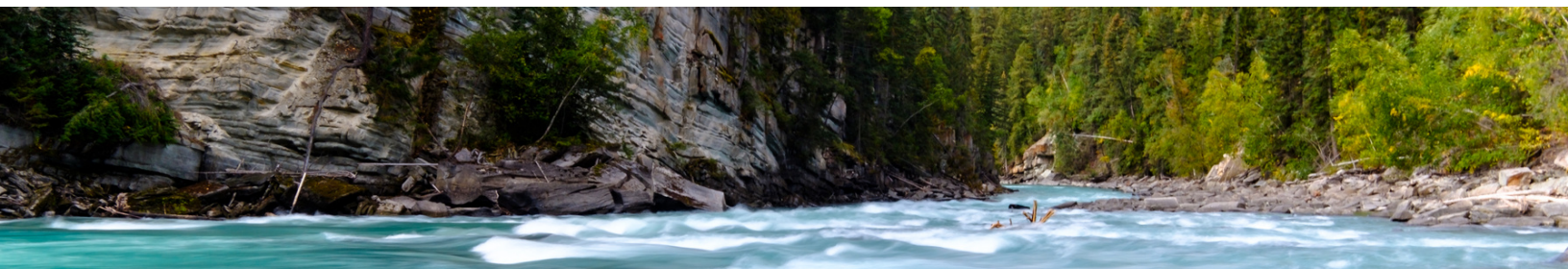
E. Pauline Johnson's writings are especially striking to me with her dramatic and rich portrayals of nature. In *Shadow River*, her vivid depiction of a river on a warm midsummer's day is alive with texture and emotion as she contemplates life, love, and her dreams for the future.

My aim in this composition was to explore this poem by plunging listeners into the thrilling turquoise Canadian rapids. Vibrant 16th notes in the piano portray the first morning light shimmering over the river, and treble voices enter with equally energetic rhythms. Brilliant high harmonies resolve to low peaceful tones—gently gliding across the darkening waters and allowing us to contemplate the "shadows and the dreaming."



## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. As you read the poem "Shadow River" by E. Pauline Johnson, which words or phrases resonate with you personally and why? How do you interpret the phrases "music of a thousand wings," "it is mine alone," and "shadows and the dreaming"?
2. Piano accompaniments are a creative way to set the scene for the story told through the poetry. Where does the piano part play an independent role to enhance the poetry? Where does the piano accompaniment primarily support the voices?
3. How does the piece highlight certain words through the rhythm? Notice words that occur on downbeats or sustained pitches.
4. The form of this piece is considered through-composed. Rather than having a verse one, verse two, etc., through-composed music is continuous and takes the listener on a journey. How would you describe each section of this piece, and what musical elements support each section?
5. How do the tempo changes throughout the piece tell a story and support the poetry? Notice measures 1, 32, 41, 49, 56, 60, 65, 69, and 78.
6. How does the harmony support the text? Are there any surprising harmonic moments or key changes?
7. How are dynamics used to support the main ideas?
8. What emotional response does this piece elicit from you? Or what do you hope your audience will feel?
9. What additional observations do you have about this piece?



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