

Edie Hill

LAST OF THE CURLEWS

a set from *Spectral Spirits*

for SSAATTB chorus with Soprano and Alto soli

N°42.

PLATE CCVIII



Desin. Edm. Sauer by J. J. Audouin T. B. F. F. L. J.

NUMENIUS BORNEALIS. Linn. Male ♂. Female ♀.

Engraved by E. B. Kirk

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

LAST OF THE CURLEWS

Eyewitness: Lucien M. Turner and the migration of the Curlews

"A most graceful undulation...like a cloud of smoke wafted by the lightest zephyr.
The whirl and rise...(Their) aerial evolutions...(are) most wonderful..."

-Lucien M. Turner (1848-1909) - American ethnologist and naturalist
-adapted from "Where Have All the Curlews Gone?" by Paul A. Johnsgard

The Naming

Numenius borealis. Swiftwing. Sweetgrass. Little Sicklebill.

Last of the Curlews

I grew up reading *The Last of the Curlews* before bed,
your crescent-moon beak beckoning me north.

Even then you were almost gone, though millions of you
once filled the skies, migrating from the northern tundra

to South America, feeding on grasshoppers along the way.
Within twenty years, your vast flocks were brought down

by market hunters, fire suppression, tilling of the prairies,
eradication of grasshoppers. Before hunting was banned,

two million curlews were killed each year.
Here's the part that still makes me weep:

You were wiped out because you stayed
by your fallen companion, from you

I learned what loyalty means. Today, birders
search for you along Galveston's shore,

sometimes catch a glimpse, memory being so strong.

No one knows for sure you're gone. You live on

in the pages of a book, a waning crescent moon.

-Holly J. Hughes

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*Spectral Spirits (of which Last of the Curlews is an excerpt) was commissioned for
The Crossing - Donald Nally, conductor - with generous support provided by John Hawthorn and Danielle Macbeth.*

LAST OF THE CURLEWS

EYEWITNESS: LUCIEN M. TURNER AND THE MIGRATION OF THE CURLEWS

Eyewitness: Lucien M. Turner (1848-1909) - American ethnologist and naturalist
adapted from "Where Have All the Curlews Gone?" by Paul A. Johnsgard

♩ = c. 65 Sublime

Sop. Solo

S1

S2

A1

A2

T

B

like wind whistling through a ship's rigging

* *n* ————— *p* ————— *n*

ss. _____

n ————— *p*

n ————— *p*

oo _____

oo _____

* place tongue just back of hard palate and/or front of soft palate to create quiet whistles mixed with "ss" sounds.
The sound should move/be variable.

Sop. Solo

8

p *mp* *p*

The whirl _____ and rise _____

S1

* like wind whistling through a ship's rigging
n *p* *n*

S2

ss _____

A1

* like wind whistling through a ship's rigging
n *p* *n*

ss _____

A2

T

8

B

14 *mf* *pp* *p* *p* *ppp* *other-worldly echo*

Sop. Solo a most grace-ful un-du-la-tion, a most grace-ful un-du-la-tion,

S1 a most grace-ful un-du-

S2 oo

A1 *n* *mp* *pp* *p* *n* *n* oo

ss oo

A2 * like the jingling of countless sleigh bells *ppp* *n* oo

ch ch ch

T 8

B

* "ch" as in "chocolate", but a soft, distant "ch". Imagine sleigh bells and what they would sound like when they are so far away in the open sky, barely audible.

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available for purchase.

24 *mp* *pp* *p* *ppp shadow-like*

Sop. Solo
most won - der - ful, a most grace - ful un - du - la - tion, —

S1
a most grace - ful un - du - la - tion, —

S2

A1
** like the jingling of countless sleigh bells*
n *p*
ch ch ch

A2
** like the jingling of countless sleigh bells*
n *p*
ch ch ch

T
8

B

27

Sop. Solo

p 3 3 3 3 3 *mp* *p*

a most grace - ful un - du - la - tion, like a cloud of smoke

S1

ppp other-worldly echo

3 3 3 3

a most grace - ful un - du - la - tion

S2

n *pp* *pp*

oo

A1

n *pp* *pp*

(ch-ch-ch) oo

A2

n *pp* *pp*

(ch-ch-ch) oo

T

8

B

Sop. Solo

30 *p* *mp* *> pp* *p* *mp* *> p*

waft-ed by the light-est zeph-yr. _____ The whirl _____ and rise _____

S1 *n* *p* *n*

oo _____

S2 *p* *n* *n* *n*

ss _____

A1 *p* *n*

A2 *p* *n* *n* *p*

ch ch ch

T

B

Sop. Solo

mp *pp* *pp*₃ *ppp*

36

a most grace-ful un-du-la-tion.

S1

n *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *n*

ss

S2

n *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *mp* *n*

ss

A1

A2

n

(ch-ch-ch)

T

8

n

B

n

FOR PERUSAL ONLY

THE NAMING

Alto Solo *mp dolce*

Nu - men - i - us ___ bo - re - a - lis. ___ Swift - wing. ___ Sweet - grass. ___ Lit - tle Sic - kle - bill.

LAST OF THE CURLEWS

HOLLY J. HUGHES

EDIE HILL

mp tenderly *acc.*

I ___ grew up read - ing The Last of the Cur - lews ___ be - fore bed, ___ your

rit. *c. 95* *c. 65*

cres - cent - moon beak ___ beck - on - ing me north. E - ven then you were al - most ___ gone, ___ E - ven north. E - ven E - ven then you were al - most ___ gone, ___ E - ven

♩ = c. 80 *accel.* -----
pp

9

S1 mil-lions of you once filled the

S2 mil-lions of

A then you were al-most gone, though mil-lions of you once filled the skies,

T then you were al-most gone,

B then al-most gone,

12

S1 skies, mil-lions filled the skies,

S2 you once filled the skies, mil-lions once filled the skies,

A1 mil-lions of you once filled the skies,

A2 mil-lions of you once filled the skies,

T1 mi - grat - ing,

T2 mi -

B

♩ = c. 86-87

mp *p* *mf*

15 *p* *p* *mf* *p*

S1 you once filled the skies,

S2 *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*
ah mil-lions of

A1 *mp* *mf* *p*
ah

A2 *p* *mf* *p* *p*
mil-lions of you mil-lions of you once filled the

T1 *mp* *mf* *p*
mi - - - - grat - ing,

T2 *mf* *p*
- - - - - grat - ing,

Bar

B

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accel. -----

18

S1

S2

A1

A2

T1

T2

Bar

B

mf *p*

mp *mf* *p*

mf *p*

mp *f* *mp*

mp *mf* *p* *mp* *f*

mf

mf

you once filled the skies, _____

ah _____

skies, _____

mi - grat - ing

mi - grat - ing, _____ mi - grat - ing

mi - grat - ing from the north - ern tun - dra, _____

mi - grat - ing from

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available for purchase.

28

f

S1
mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

S2
mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

A1
vast flocks were brought down by mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

A2
vast flocks were brought down by mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

T1
vast flocks were brought down by mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

T2
vast flocks were brought down by mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

Bar
vast flocks were brought down by mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

B
vast flocks were brought down by mar - ket hunt - ers, fire sup - pres - sion,

36 *mf* *p* *rit.* -----

S two mil-lion cur-lews_ were killed each year.

A *mf* *p* *p* *mp* *p*
 mil-lion cur-lews_ were killed each year. Here's the part that still makes me weep:

T *mf* *p*
 two mil-lion cur-lews_ were killed each year.

B *mf* *p*
 two mil-lion cur-lews_ were killed each year.

41 ♩=75 *p* ♩=80 ♩=70

S be-cause you stayed, _____ you stayed by your fall-en_ com -

A *p*
 you stayed, _____ stayed by your fall-en_ com -

T *mp* *p*
 You were wiped out, You were wiped out you stayed by your fall-en_ com -

B *mp* *p*
 You were wiped out, You were wiped out you stayed

45

S pan - ion; from you _____ I learned

A pan - ion; from you _____ I learned what loyal - ty means.

T pan - ion; loyal - ty means.

B pan - ion; loyal - ty means.

48 $\text{♩} = c. 65$

S *mp* To - day, bird - ers search for you a - long Gal - ves - ton's shore,

A *pp* oo

T *pp* oo

B *pp* oo

51

S some-times catch a glimpse, mem-³o-ry be-ing so strong. No one knows for sure you're gone.

A

T

B

54

S You live on in the pag-es of a book, a wan-ing cres-cent moon.

A moon.

T moon.

B moon.



Described as "...bold...radiant, deftly crafted..." (Musical America), Edie Hill's music is performed all over the world. Venues have included Lincoln Center, Met Cloisters (NYC), Carnegie's Weill Recital Hall (NYC), Musis Sacrum in Arnhem, Holland, LA County Museum of Art, Library of Congress, Minneapolis' Walker Arts Center, St. Paul's Schubert Club, Berwald Hall (Stockholm Sweden), Liviu Cultural Center (Romania), Feszek Művészklub (Budapest), St. Peter's Basilica (Vatican City).

A three-time McKnight Artist Fellow and a two-time Bush Artist Fellow, Hill has received grants from the Jerome Foundation, ASCAP, New Music USA, Meet The Composer, Minnesota State Arts Board, Chamber Music America, and was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. The album, *Born: music of Edie Hill and Michael Gilbertson* won the 2023 GRAMMY® for "Best Choral Performance" for The Crossing (Donald Nally, conductor). She has a B.A. from Bennington College and earned her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Minnesota.

Composer in Residence at Schubert Club from 2005-2017, she ran and grew the Mentorship Program for high school composers. She was Composer Mentor for MN Varsity for composers 14-18 years of age co-sponsored by The American Composers Forum and Classical Minnesota Public Radio. She has lectured at colleges, universities and various institutions in the States and abroad.

For Hill, writing music is an opportunity to research, learn, muse, reach down deep, and allow inspiration to come from the stuff of life. Her compositions are fueled by her experiences, passions and curiosities.

for complete biography as well as works for perusal and sale, visit ediehill.com

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