

Ghost Waters of Detroit

The Procession is led by the Water Spirit, who initiates River actions, determines when and what the Water orchestra plays, and stops the procession at various moments to allow the Ghosts of the River to be seen and heard. The Water Spirit carries a megaphone and is the narrator of certain stops.

Stop 1

1. The Mouth of the River: This occurs at the point where the Savoyard River meets the Detroit River. Here the ancient ballet of Bear and Sturgeon is played out. The Water orchestra plays fluid, gently, rolling music.

Narration:

After the Great Ice leaves, there is a long time where only animals dance in this river. Each year, the grandmother sturgeon leave the great river and travel to quiets of the little river to leave their blessing of eggs.

Dance:

The River units line the River Walk of the Detroit River, one after another. The Sturgeon, including the Sturgeon General, enter the river and begin a slow, circling tour up the river. This consists of walking four steps forward, then completing a full circle to the right, then walking four steps and completing a full circle to the left. The Sturgeon General remains at the mouth, gently swaying to the music.

After the sturgeon have completed one line of the stream, the narration resumes

Narration

Bears come from miles around for this spring feast. They come from the high country in the woods, down the ancient path which will one day be named Woodward Avenue. They scoop up the delicious eggs and if they are lucky, catch a whole fish.

The bears enter the river at the head of the column, moving down stream opposite the circling sturgeon. The bear reaches in with a swipe of the right paw to the mouth, then the left paw to the mouth, then a full turn and repeat. The bear moves down the river repeating the action until he comes across a sturgeon. It takes the sturgeon and holding it aloft, moves up and down the river, holding its precious prize. After one circuit, it takes the sturgeon and leaves, following the Woodward path.

Narration:

We leave this ancient dance to visit the First People who call this place home.

Procession

Turning left at Civic Center Drive, the river flows to Stop 2 at Cobo Hall, the Potawatamie Village.

Narration:

On the shores of the Little River, People of the Fire, the Potawatami of the Anishnabeg, have come to make a new life, away from the troubles of the north.

Stop 2

2. The river stops in front of Cobo Hall on the site of the village which seems to have been called Seginsiwiniawang.

Speaker

We live here now, but have not been here long. It is good here, with fish, and deer, and places to grow our corn, beans, and squash. It is not far from our recent home, but far enough from the fight with the Iroquois to find some peace and raise our children. Across the big river, the Odawa and the Ojibway, our family in the People of the Three Fires, make their new home. We breathe a simple peace in the land by the Big River of the Narrows and follow the cycle of the year, sharing our drums and honoring the earth that gives us life.

Dance

Tim Seneca performs the Grass Dance, with a live drum accompaniment.

Procession

The river moves north along Washington Blvd, and goes through several of its maneuvers. At the junction of Washington and Congress, a large group of people join the procession in canoes.

Greeting

Some people say Boozhoo! And some say Bonjour as the canoes enter the stream.

Narration

(At the alley between Larned and Congress Street)

We pause here for a moment to listen for the river beneath our feet as it follows its channel in the alley between these streets.

Procession

The river turns right at Congress Street and flows until it reaches Griswold.

Stop 3

3. At the junction of Washington Blvd and Congress.

Narration

Soon a village appears on the banks of the Little River, and protected by waters of the Strait, whose name it bears. It is Detroit. The Little River, called Savoyard, shapes the daily lives of its people. The channel is 10 feet deep here, and the crossing it is not easy. One day in 1832, a boy named Lee Dolsen tried to make his way across the Little River.

Puppet Show

Two performers enter, each carrying 8 foot ladders. One carries a banner, the other a river. After placing the ladders, the river carrier hands the banner carrier the end of the river. They climb the ladders. Near the top of the ladders, the banner carrier unfurls a sign emblazoned "Ten Feet".

Two additional performers enter and situate themselves in front of the ladders. They begin waving another river which is painted with a variety of water plants. Another puppeteer carries a board, which is placed between the ladders. This is the precarious crossing. Another puppeteer, bears a rod puppet of the boy. The puppet boy attempts to walk across the board, but loses his footing, and falls down among the river plants. He flails and splashes and is in danger of drowning.

Narration

How shall we save Lee? What can we do?

Someone from crowd: *I have a rope. Let's pull him out.*

The rope bearer gathers as many volunteers as possible. They go near the ladders, pass the rope over the ladders, and attempt to pull the boy free. The effort fails.

Narration

We need your help ! Everyone shout "Pull" One,two, three... Pull! Again.. " One,two, three... Pull!

(Follow the same pattern until the boy is pulled from the river.)

At this very spot, L. E. Dolsen was saved from a watery death. We recall river buried beneath our feet and that boy and move on.

Procession

The procession continues eastward along Congress.

Along the way it encounters several fishers, who occasionally pull a fish from the river and shout. The first and third calls in French "Je me tien un/I caught a (walleye, perch, pike, trout, sturgeon, as the case may be). The second, fourth and fifth, speak in English.

Stop 4

4. At the plaza of One Detroit Center, the river stops to witness the Empire Dance.

Dance:

An Anishnabeg drum and dance is gradually taken over by a French country dance. The French country dance is taken over by a minuet as voyageurs and traders give way to the French colonials. This dance becomes an English march, which eventually becomes a Virginia reel. If possible, there is brief incursion of Native drums, in the midst of the English march. At the end of the dance, the music, dancers, and dance are Americans.