

## **THE CONQUISTADOR'S WIFE**

### **CHORUS 5: CITY OF GOLD**

Rising from the emerald waters of Lake Texcoco in the Valley of Mexico, stood a magnificent island city. Capital of the mighty Mexica empire. Tenochtitlan.

When Cortés and his men laid eyes on this sight, they surely had never seen anything like it: three causeways—straight as arrows—leading North, South and West across the water into the city; courtyards brimming with flowers; canals and boulevards to rival Venice and Rome; two magnificent temple pyramids soaring into the azure sky. And at its heart, the palace of Moctezuma II, with over 100 rooms—each with its own bath—and complete with a zoo, botanical gardens, even an aquarium. Not to mention the gold!

Cortés' historian wrote, soon after arriving there: "When we saw their city built on the lake, the great buildings rising from the water all made from bright white stone, it seemed like an enchanted vision, too beautiful to be real!"

But, real it was. Nearly five square miles in size, and home to a quarter million people, Tenochtitlan was not only the most beautiful capital of its day but, quite possibly, the largest city on earth when Cortés' arrived in 1519. And all of it built without iron, steel tools, or the wheel.