

Aurora Chorus

Only LIGHT Only LOVE

Joan Szymko, *Director*
Michelle Bahr, *Assistant Director*
Signe Lusk, *Accompanist*

Oh Light most blessed, fill the inmost heart...

Gloria	Antonio Vivaldi
O Lux Beatissima	Joan Szymko Text: from Veni Sancte Spiritus (12th c) and Veni Creator Spiritus (10th c)
Red & Green	Maddy Prior / arr. Szymko

You, yourself, are the sun brightly shining

“A Return to Love”	Marianne Williamson Reader: Wendy Thompson
Aurora <i>from Dreamers</i>	David York /Text: Judith Barrington Guest conductor: David York
Shen khar venakhi <i>You are a vineyard</i>	Traditional, Georgia Text: King Demetre I Featuring Outreach Ensemble
Hanacpachap Cussicuinin <i>Thou of the Heavens, my joy</i>	Anonymous, 17th c Peru Quartet: Kirsten Hayes, Static Kaeder, Joni Hartmann and Claudia Nadine

Lead me from darkness to light

“Lead Me”	Brhadaranyaka Upanishad- I.iii.28 Reader: Stephanie Colantino
Gamaya <i>Premiere</i> Lead Me	Joan Szymko Text: traditional Sanskrit chant
Gate, Gate	Brian Tate, music & English text Text: from Prajñāparamita Heart Sutra
Dans Nos Obscurités	Jaques Berthier



Let peace be born

Prayer
from "Safehouse: Still Looking"

Ysaye M. Barnwell

Only Light, Only Love

Joan Szymko
Text: Martin Luther King Jr.
Soloist: Colleen Mumford and Michelle Bahr

Christmas in the Trenches

John McCutcheon
Soloist: Margaret Blake (SAT 4 & 7:30)
Chelsea Harper (SUN 4)

O Holy Night

Adolphe C. Adam / arr. Szymko
Text: P. Clappeau, trans. J.S. Dwight
New lyrics by Holly Near

Alleluia

Randall Thompson

Finding faith and common ground...

Hine Ma Tov

Trad. Jewish Shabbat song /arr. Szymko
Text: Psalm 133, vs.1

Christians & Pagans

Dar Williams / arr. Szymko
Soloist: Jenna Scott (SAT 4 & 7:30)
Brenda Brischetto (SUN 4)

If there is light, there will be peace

"We were made for these times..."

Clarissa Pinkola Estés
Reader: Martha Hall

Waitin' for the Light to Shine

Roger Miller /
Arr. Mark Brymer

Light, Beauty, Peace *Premiere*

Joan Szymko /
Text: Chinese proverb
Commissioned by Julie Earnest as a gift to Aurora Chorus

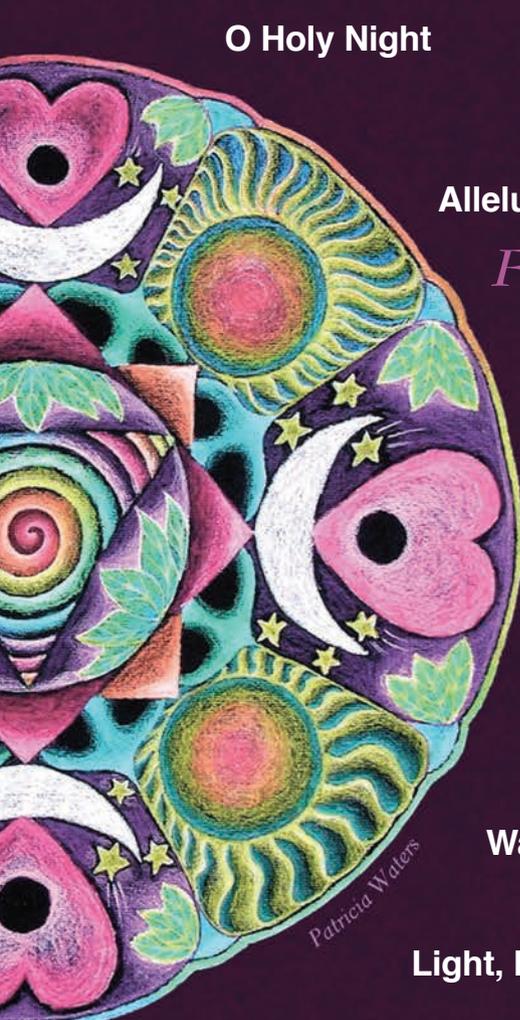
Seasons of Love
from **RENT**

Jonathan Larson, arr.
Emerson

Instrumentalists

Mary Ellen Grace, clarinet, saxophone and recorder
Chris Perry, percussion
Julie Earnest, recorder
Jill Poris, accordion

Joan Szymko, guitar
Terri Grayum, bass
Marylyn John, mandolin



Program Notes

We open Aurora's 20th Anniversary season in joyous fashion with the bright and sunny opening movement of Vivaldi's **Gloria**. (RV589). It was most likely composed in 1715 for the choir and orchestra of the Ospedale della Pietà, an orphanage for girls where Vivaldi served as priest and music teacher for many years. His most famous choral work, it is a twelve movement setting of the Gloria from the traditional Latin Mass. The text for the next piece, **O Lux Beatissima** (*Oh Light most blessed*) has origins from 10th and 12th century Christian hymns that invoke the powers of divine spirit to enlighten minds and strengthen hearts. We can certainly use all the light we can get in this, *the dark time of the year*, characterized in our next song with the driving Celtic rhythms of **Red & Green**. Aurora has performed this work by Maddy Prior several times, but tonight we hear a new arrangement featuring Aurora's brilliant accompanist, Signe Lusk.

Prior describes the dark time as being a "time of dread and fear." Yet author Marianne Williamson insists: *It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us* — we are afraid to let our own light shine! For generations and generations, women have been instructed to hide their light under a bushel. Our next set of songs celebrates the brilliance of the divine feminine and the light of the divine IN the feminine. **Aurora**, penned by Portland poet Judith Barrington and set to music by Aurora's founding director David York, explores that light as promise— as "dawn." The finale of *Dreamers*, the York/Barrington collaboration presented by the Concord Community of Choirs in 1994, "Aurora" is a tribute to Aurora Chorus *as a dream not ended, a dream begun* and, as the *bridge between dreams and deeds*. We are so pleased that David is with us today to conduct the chorus to which he gave the name, "Aurora" —*new dawn*. The following two selections are centuries old praise songs to the Virgin Mary had become the face of divine Mother in the many cultures whose earth-based spiritualities had been supplanted by Christianity. The hauntingly

beautiful **Shen khar venakhi** dates back at least 1000 years and is of Georgian origin. It is still sung today at weddings, in honor of the bride. It is believed that Georgia has one of the earliest polyphonic traditions in the world, and this country's rich and vibrant traditional music is still sung today. In the *Quechua* language of Peru, **Hanacpachap Cussicuinin**, is a processional hymn from the "New World" most likely written by an indigenous composer. It was published in 1631 by Franciscan scholar Juan Pérez Bocanegra and is the the first example of polyphony printed in the Americas.

Journeying even further back in time, we next sing two ancient Sanskrit chants in contemporary settings. The first, Gamaya is associated with Hinduism. The chant text is from the oldest of the Upanishads, the Sanskrit sacred books which embody the mystical and esoteric doctrines of ancient Hindu philosophy and was probably written between 400 and 200 BC. The underlying wisdom of the Upanishads is that the soul is a fragment of the divine, and that humans should work toward this realization rather than running after material gain and pleasure. The Gate, Gate text appears at the end of the Prajñāparamita Heart Sutra, which is regarded as the essence of Buddhist teaching. Gate means gone - gone from suffering to freedom from suffering. Brian Tate's setting opens with a nod to traditional chant style, but then leaps off the page with the buoyancy and excitement of enlightenment— svaha! Halleluia!

Since my youth, I think that I have never lost the intuition that community life could be a sign that God is love, and love alone. — Brother Robert, founder of Taizé Community, an ecumenical of Taizé Community, an ecumenical monastic order in France and one of the world's most important Christian pilgrimage sites. The order has a strong devotion to peace and justice through prayer and meditation— and song. Taizé inspired music & meditation services have spread to communities around the world, including here in Portland. The music of Taizé emphasizes simple phrases,

usually lines from Psalms or other pieces of Scripture, repeated and sometimes also sung in canon. Dans Nos Obscurités is just one of many songs written by composer Jaques Berthier for Taizé services: Within our darkest night, you kindle the fire that never dies away. Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ as that fire— as Light of the World. Ysaye Barnwell turns one of Jesus’ primary teachings, do unto others as you would have them do unto you, on its head in her song, Prayer as we begin to zero in on our primary theme: Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hatred cannot drive out hatred: only love can do that. Joan Szymko’s Only Light, Only Love is a setting of this powerful quote from a sermon by Dr. Martin Luther King.

Man continues to be persuaded by the idea that war can be an effective instrument of peace. In its time, WWI was thought of as the “war to end all wars.” During WWI, trench warfare was prevalent in Belgium and France; combatants constructed elaborate trench and dugout systems opposing each other along a front protected from assault by barbed wire. The area between opposing trench lines was known as “no man’s land,” as it was fully exposed to artillery fire from both sides. John McCutcheon’s **Christmas in the Trenches** tells the story of the WWI Christmas truce, which was actually a series of widespread unofficial ceasefires along the Western Front throughout the week leading up to the Christmas of 1914. These foot soldiers chose their humanity during one of the most violent conflicts of modern history. We next sing Holly Near’s version of **O Holy Night** to honor this wondrous night as well as all people whorise up and cry for peace. When Randall Thompson composed Alleluia in 1940 the Second World War had just broken out. He was deeply troubled by what was happening in Europe and felt that writing the “festive” piece that was expected of him would be inappropriate. His resultant Alleluia is a quiet, introspective, and profoundly powerful work which has become his most popular choral opus.

Look! How good and pleasant it is when people dwell together as one. This opening verse from Psalm 133, **Hine Ma Tov** has several traditional settings as sung for Jewish Shabbat. The version we sing, although set in a minor key, is a joyful musical expression of yearning for unity and peace. The quasi-reggae feel of the first half of the arrangement was inspired by a version sung by the Vienna Jewish Choir. The characters in Dar Williams’ **The Christians and the Pagans** tells the story of how good and pleasant it can be when relatives find “faith and common ground” at the Christmas dinner table when Amber and her life partner Jane, practicing Wiccans, share the holidays with her uncle’s Christian family.

Clarissa Pinkola Estés writes to a young activist: One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. It is twenty years running now, and Aurora Chorus continues to stand up on those risers and show her soul, wearing her heart on her sleeve as she sings of the audacity of peace. Artistic Director Joan Szymko composed Light, Beauty, Peace for this special anniversary season. And with it, Aurora declares to family, friends and to our community that singing together turns on the light in the soul, inspiring beauty in our own lives and breathing peace into the world. All during the Fall season, the women of Aurora have spent much effort and time in rehearsals, in studying and in memorizing this program. Just as our finale Seasons of Love encourages us, this journey— and our time together and with you— is measured in love. Thank you for listening.