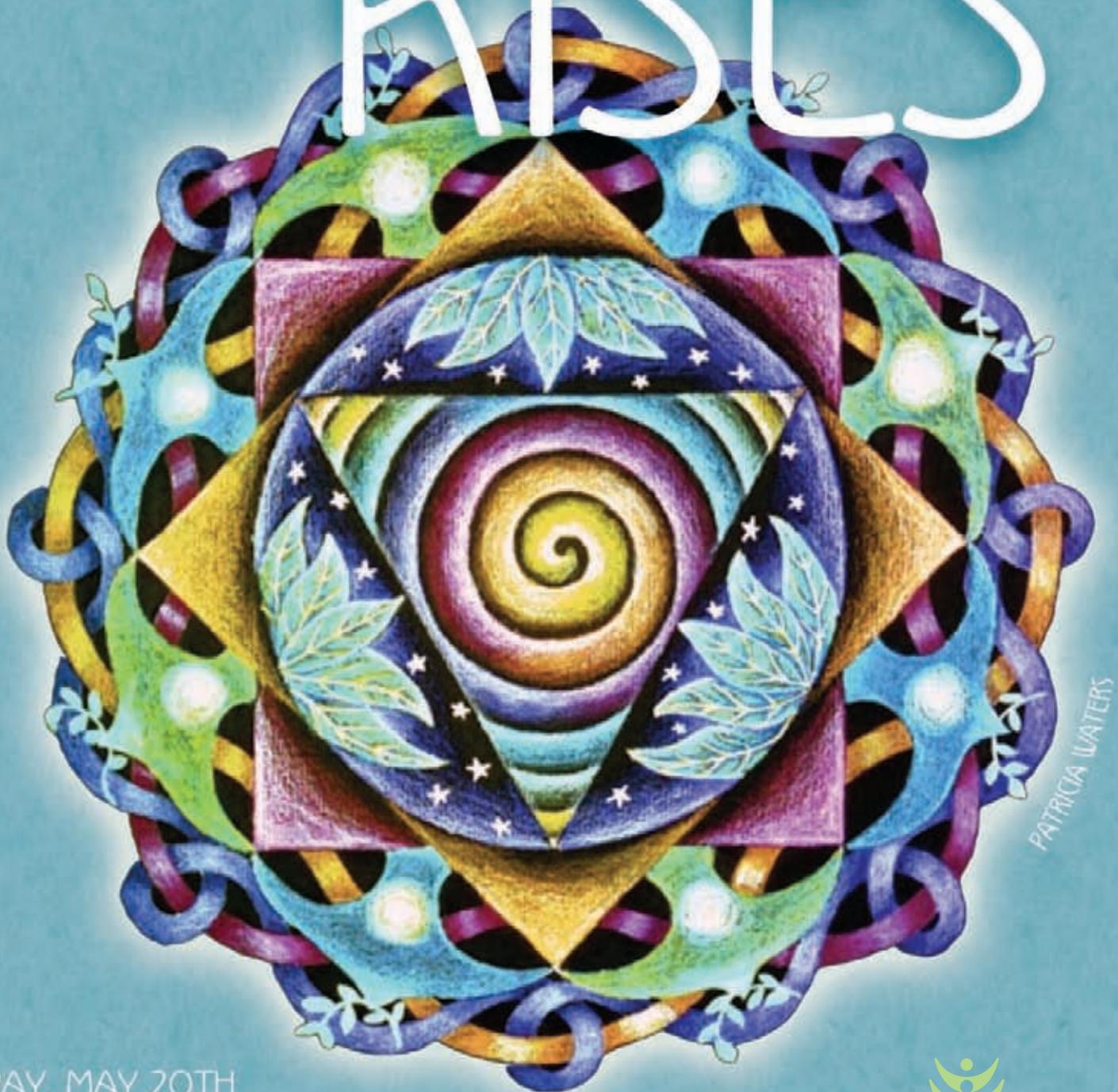


20TH ANNIVERSARY

AURORA CHORUS

JOAN SZYMKO, DIRECTOR

# SHE RISES



PATRICIA WATERS

SUNDAY, MAY 20TH  
4:00 PM & 7:30 PM  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
PORTLAND, OREGON



**aurora**CHORUS

## PROGRAM NOTES

As you listen to Aurora's opening song, ***She Speaks***, imagine that \*She\* is Source—Wisdom, Higher Self, Mystery. \*She\* speaks from the wildness in nature and, at times, in the wilderness of our own hearts. In the next song, composer David Brunner uses the words, ***Radiant Sister of the Day*** as a joyful refrain calling us to come away to the wild, to nature—to the place “Where earth and ocean meet /And all things seem only one / in the universal sun.” Inspired by our own Sun—the physics of light and the power of the human voice, ***She Rises*** is a jubilant celebration of energy and a “reminder of the light that resides without and within all of us.” (read more about the composer and the piece *She Rises* below). Beginning with “sun sounds,” lyrics lauding the Celtic sun goddess Brigid are sung on a driving Celtic-style melody. Brigid is the goddess of the hearth fire, the forge, illumination, and of poetry. Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore was first and foremost a poet. The texts for ***A Burst of Song*** are primarily from his most famous volume: *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (1912). This setting illuminates the poet's heartfelt beliefs about the divine grace and power of song. Originally scored for men's chorus, Aurora premieres the SSAA setting of this 3 movement work.

A foundational value of Aurora Chorus is: women matter; that women's voices are powerful and must be heard if there is ever to be justice and peace in this world; there is no peace without justice. Our next set of music is about the audacity and boldness of women speaking out loud—speaking the truth. Julia Ward Howe (who penned our National Anthem) is bluntly anti-war in ***Arise! (Mother's Day 1879)***. Holly Near is ***Fired Up*** and imagines how ***1000 Grandmothers*** could change everything. In Connie Kaldor's ***Mother's Prayer***, we sing of feeling “tied to every mother” who fears for the health and safety of her children. In the bouyant, ***Thulele mama ya***, inspired by African rhythms and the Zulu phrase, “cry mama —

don't cry mama” we have a clear reminder that mothers don't really have time for tears.

Much of Aurora Chorus' appeal for singers is our open recognition of the life force that connects us all, in claiming that divine spirit for ourselves as women, and in celebrating it in all things and all people. Singing is enlivening! The very act of breathing in consciously and exhaling on sound in a creative way with others enables one to feel that which we all yearn for: connection. We open our second half with ***Mbuti Chant***, originally a call to the great spirit of the Ituri Rainforest of Central Africa. Indigenous peoples are often seen as being closer to nature — to the forces of creation. In her poem, *In Dreams*, Native American poet (and Aurora's guest artist in 2003) Gail Tremblay writes: “creation wakes the wit; I am alive.” ***We Wake the Day*** is from Oregon composer Ron Jeffers' brilliant settings of Tremblay's poetry, *Indian Singing*. “Woman Singing” is the name mystical poet Catherine DeVinck gives the narrator of her poem, *The Womanly Song of God* which I set for Aurora's 10th Anniversary. The driving, predominant 5/8 rhythm of ***I AM*** dances, leaps and pushes with the text; images of circling, roundness and wildness give way to grounded birth.

Women have always turned to each other in times of birth and celebration, death and hardship. In ***Mae Francis***, Bernice Reagon asks: “Who do I turn to when my legs get shaky... woman hold my hand.” Of course, many turn to prayer in times of need; Psalm 23 endures as a prayer of faith and trust in divine grace. By simply changing pronouns from “he” to “she” Bobby McFerrin's ***The 23rd Psalm*** challenges notions of attaching gender to an all-providing godhead.

There are times in life when prayer may seem useless; a cancer diagnosis could be such a time. ***Where I Live*** (A Breast Cancer Oratorio) was presented by Aurora Chorus in 2001 in *Singing for Our Lives*, a fund raiser for the



local Susan B Komen foundation. We present two movements from this memorable work: **Somebody** and **Peace**. Members of our Aurora community have been touched by cancer. Our scholarship fund is named after Eileen Spencer, who fought a recurring cancer over much of the decade she sang with the chorus.

We often do not pause enough to give thanks for life itself. Violeta Parra, a founder of the *Nuevo Cancion* (new song) movement in Chile, does that brilliantly with her **Gracias a la Vida (Thanks to Life)**, penned before she died in 1967. Still popular today, it has become one of the most covered songs in Latin America. A good life is filled with good friends; **Good Friends Are the Best**, (written by another songwriter who left this life too soon: Therese Edell) was first presented (complete with tap dancing!) at the first concert I directed for Aurora Chorus, *Rhythms We Harvest from Our Souls*. Aurora Chorus continues to sow the seeds of connection and of woman's power to affect change in the world. With you our audience, friends, life partners, co-workers and children, we harvest so very much! Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate Aurora Chorus' past and present and we look to the future in our final song, **We Rise Again**.

## SHE RISES - A WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

Aurora Chorus is pleased and honored to present the first performance of composer Catherine Dalton's *She Rises*. Catherine explains: "*She Rises* was written in part by a desire to explore the physics of light and the mystery of illumination through the power of the human voice. I began by imagining the sounds of electrons falling from higher to lower levels, emitting light in the process. For a few weeks, I walked around making 'sun sounds' and asking other people what they thought

the sun 'sounded' like. I was surprised, at one point, to hear a Celtic-style melody find its way into the composition. This melody inspired the lyrics for *She Rises* which speak of the Celtic sun goddess Brigid and of Saint Brigid of Kildare, the Irish saint of, among other things, poetry, the hearth, the forge and illumination. "

Ms. Dalton's compositions are inspired by classical, jazz, folk, world music and chant. She is the winner of the McPhail Center for Music's Composition Scholarship and has been selected to participate in Nautilus Music Theater's nationally recognized Composer-Librettist Studio. Her music has been performed across North America and in Europe. She lives in Minnesota.

### **She Rises** **Catherine Dalton**

She rises up from the heather  
Her flame in hand, she crosses the sky  
When she's tired she lays down her head  
In the sweet heather she makes her bed

All night we tend to her flame,  
her sacred light, eternal and bright  
When she wakes she'll open her eyes  
Then up from the heather she'll again rise

She flames the poet's pen,  
fires the forge and hearth,  
lights the fire within

# SHE RISES

## AURORA CHORUS 20TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

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

### MY SONG WILL BE LIKE A PAIR OF WINGS TO YOUR DREAMS

**She Speaks**

**Radiant Sister of the Day**

**She Rises** *World Premiere*

**A Burst of Song** *Premiere treble version*

1. A Shower of Mercy
2. A Kiss of Blessing
3. Thee and Me

Susan Osborn, arr. Joan Szymko

David L Brunner, text: Percy Bysshe Shelley

Catherine Dalton

Joan Szymko, text: Rabindranath Tagore

### I FEEL TIED TO EVERY MOTHER THAT I SEE

***The Day The Mountains Move***

reader: Marlena Maestas

Poem by Yosano Akiko

**Arise!** (Mothers' Day 1870)

The Righteous Mothers

text: Julia Ward Howe

**1000 Grandmothers**

**Fired Up**

**Mother's Prayer**

*Soloist: Constance LaGue 4 pm*

*Harmony Griffith 7:30 pm*

Holly Near, arr. J.David Moore

Holly Near, arr. J.David Moore

Connie Kaldor, arr. Willi Zwozdesky

**Thulele mama ya**

(Don't worry, mama)

*Soloist: Cathryn Heron*

Lisa Young

## INTERMISSION

### CREATION WAKES THE WIT; I AM ALIVE

**Mbuti Chant**

***In Dreams***

reader: Nanette Niski

**We Wake the Day**

from *Indian Singing*

**I Am**

Trad., Ituri Rainforest (Congo region of Africa)

Poem by Gail Tremblay

Ron Jeffers, text: Gail Tremblay

Joan Szymko, text: Catherine DeVinck

## WOMAN, HOLD MY HAND

### **Mae Francis**

*Soloists: Stephanie Colantino  
Jenna Scott*

### **The 23rd Psalm**

#### **Where I Live**

*(please hold your applause)*

#### **#1 Somebody**

*Soloist: Chelsea Harper 4pm  
Terri Grayum 7:30pm*

#### **Excerpt from *Refuge***

reader: Jayme Armstrong

#### **#5 Peace**

### ***Spirit to Spirit***

reader: Elaine Ball

Bernice Johnson Reagon

Bobby McFerrin

Diane Benjamin

by Terry Tempest Williams

Diane Benjamin, text: Carol Barth

Irene Young

## THANKS BE TO LIFE THAT HAS GIVEN ME SO MUCH!

### **Gracias a la Vida**

*Soloist: Kirsten Hays 4pm  
Alaina Robertson 7:30pm*

### **Good Friends Are the Best**

#### **We Rise Again**

*Soloist: Judi Ranton 4pm  
Joni Hartmann 7:30pm*

Violeta Parra, arr. Willi Zwozdesky

Therese Edell

Leon Dubinsky, arr. Lydia Adams

## INSTRUMENTALISTS

Violin: Denise Ayres  
Cello: Valdine Mishkin  
Bass: Ryc Williamson  
Flute: Mary McCarty  
Percussion: Joan Szymko,  
Roberta Jortner, Marylyn  
John, Betsy Claassen, Gayle  
Lovejoy, Judi Ranton

