

# Aurora Chorus

PRESENTS

## to Sing is to *Fly*

Joan Szymko, Director

<b>Musica vivat aeterna</b>	attributed to Clemens non papa (ca. 1510-1556)
<b>Come Dance and Sing</b>	traditional Shaker Song arranged by Joan Szymko
<b>To Sing is to Fly</b>	Gwyneth Walker (b. 1947) words by Joan Baez

### — It's weird what happens inside —

<b>An die Musik</b>	Franz Schubert (1797- 1828) poem by Franz von Schober
<b>Dirait-On</b>	Morten Lauridsen (b. 1943) poem by Ranier M. Rilke(1875-1926)
<b>The Singing Place</b>	Joan Szymko (b. 1957) poem by Lily A. Long (1860-1927) ensemble*(see credits)

### — Music is the Landscape -

<b>Indian Singing: In Dreams</b>	Ron Jeffers (b. 1943) poem by Gail Tremblay (b.1945)
<b>Todo o meu Ser</b> <b>Duet: Brenda Brischetto, Bonnie Singer</b>	Joan Szymko words by Oripingalik, originally translated by K. Rasmussen; into Portuguese by Ferrand
<b>Knud Rasmussen, a Danish explorer transcribed the words of</b> <b>It Don't Mean a Thing</b> <b>(If It Ain't Got that Swing)</b>	Duke Ellington (1899-1974) words by Irving Mills arr. by Mac Huff

### — When you run so fast —

<b>Julia Jumps</b>	Harmony Grisman
<b>Why Don't You Sing in the Chorus?</b>	Linda Allen, arr. by Joan Szymko
<b>Soloists:</b> Lisa Kron, 4:00pm / Erica Daniels, 7:00pm	
<b>Amazing Grace</b>	Text by John Newton (1725-1807) traditional melody, arr. by Szymko
<b>How Can I Keep from Singing</b>	Rev. Robert W. Lowry (1826-1899) arr. by Gwyneth Walker
<b>Storm is Passing Over</b>	Charles A. Tindley (1851-1933) arr. by Barbara Baker

### — Sing Me to Heaven —

<b>I'll Fly Away</b>	Albert E. Brumley (1905-1977) arr. by Szymko after A. Kraus
----------------------	--

### — Song of Songs —

<b>Listen Closely</b>	Steven Walters, arr. Szymko
<b>Soloists:</b> Cathryn Heron, 4:00pm / Jenna Scott, 7:00pm	

### — We have become part of the singing river -

<b>Call</b>	Joan Szymko poem by Alla Reneé Bozarth
-------------	---

## CREDITS

### Readings:

Kristan Burkert  
Anne Heimlich  
Mary King  
Joan Szymko  
DeEtte Beghtol Waleed  
Wendy Street

### Percussion:

Brian Lavern Davis  
Tim Cooper  
Randy Givens  
Todo o meu Ser  
Marylyn John: Call

### The Singing Place Ensemble:

Terri Grayum  
Jeanette Hankins  
Joni Hartman  
Lisa Kron  
Constance LaGue  
Nancy Otis  
Jan Sauls

# Program Notes

By Joan Szymko

We begin with a rousing Renaissance canon, **Musica vivat aeterna** – *music lives eternally*. Singing is sometimes referred to as the “First Art” as the voice is the first instrument, and one with we all have. In an interview, singer songwriter Susan Osborn had to say about the power of vocal music:

*“What happens when a room full of people sings together is that polarities disappear. Not differences, but polarities; and you experience communion. And once you’ve experienced communion with a group of people you relate to them differently. They’re us.”*

For the Shakers, singing was all about communion. Singing accompanied the climax of Shaker worship: dance. It was their dancing that led the “United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing” to be known as “Shakers.” Inspired by Spirit, dancing was a profound expression of the unity and cooperation they aspired to as “God’s people.” Shakers’ songs and dances were understood as gifts received by individuals from Spirit. Received in 1838, the song **Come Dance and Sing** accompanied a lively “round dance.”

Whether singing in a congregation, in a professional group or being caught up in the sounds of a 100 voice community chorus like Aurora, any singer will tell you that for us earthbound creatures, **To Sing Is to Fly**. Composer Gwyneth Walker says this about her setting of Joan Baez’s poem: *“The musical interpretation, with both the piano accompaniment and the vocal lines endeavors to capture the flowing and triumphant spirit of song in flight.”* In an essay to young composers Walker wrote: *“...the only sort of music that will communicate...must come from your imagination, your mind, your heart.”* Sometimes the human creative imagination seems to draw from no other than — the Divine. Beethoven said of Franz Schubert (1797-1828) *“Truly, in Schubert there is a divine spark.”* One of the greatest composers of all time, Schubert is especially noted for his lieder (literally, “songs”). A hymn to art of music, **An die Musik** (1817) is one of his best loved art songs.

Surely one of the most well loved choral pieces of the last twenty years is Morten Lauridsen’s, **Dirait-on**. The finale of the choral song cycle on Rilke’s “rose poems,” *La Rose Complete*, *Dirait-on* is composed as a *chanson populaire* (folksong) that weaves together two melodies heard earlier in the song cycle. Like Schubert’s *An die Musik*, the direct, beautiful simplicity of *Dirait-on* has the power to transport the singer to another state of mind. It is not surprising then that poet Lily Long describes the state of being “between worlds” — between sleep and subconscious awareness— as: **The Singing Place**. In the “singing place” the poet is carried on rushing waves of sound into glorious union with this realization: “And the song is joy, is life— and the song am !!”

In poet Gail Trembley’s dreams, she too is carried by sounds and rhythms as creation awakens in her a profound understanding of being alive. **In Dreams** opens Oregon composer Ron Jeffer’s powerful multi-movement setting of Trembley’s poetry, “Indian Singing.” Aurora performed this work in its entirety 2003, with Trembley as our special guest. She wrote: *“these poems are based in old traditions rooted in the American continent and... are informed by the experience of indigenous ways of seeing.”*

Our next song, **Todo o Meu Ser**, (All of my being) with Portuguese lyrics and Brazilian flavor actually has its roots with the *Inuit*: indigenous peoples of the North American Arctic. While I was in Brazil last year I set to music a quote by Inuit leader, *Oripingalik*, from the early 20th century: *“How many songs I have I cannot tell you. All my being is a song, and I sing as I draw breath.”*

Jazz is “indigenous” to the USA. Duke Ellington is one of the greatest single contributors to this art form, often referred to as “American classical music.” How many songs did Duke have? He penned more than 3000 songs. His 1931 hit, **It Don’t Mean a Thing (If it Ain’t Got that Swing)** was the first song to use the word “swing” in the title— and introduced swing (well known concept to jazz musicians) as a concept to American popular music before the swing era began. The song was a big hit and is to this day, a jazz standard.

Jazz and rhythm & blues changed everything, of course. The influence is felt today throughout all popular music the world over. There is a link

between the “do-wah’s” of *It Don’t Mean a Thing* and the “ba-domps” in our next song, **Julia Jumps**. Duke Ellington was known to advise: *“You’ve got to find some way of saying it without saying it.”* Contemporary songwriter, Harmony Grisman does just that with her “ba-domp bomb” riff in this delightful gem.

*Julia Jumps* is all about joy and being in the moment. Blogger Erin Blackwell, who we heard from earlier in the program, (spoken word) reflects on singing *An die Musik* with her choir: *“I only wanted to give it my all, to be present to the music moving through me, to not choke off, to forget about “me.”* **Why Don’t You Sing in the Chorus** goes further in lauding the zen of ensemble singing, and shakes off the childhood baggage of “choristers as losers” in this funny, sweet song by Linda Allen.

How many of us sing in the chorus? A recent “Chorus Impact Study” by *Chorus America* found that 32.5 million adults sing regularly in at least one of 270,000 choruses nationwide! One imagines that many of these choruses are church choirs For a lot of folks, their first taste of choral singing is within a Christian congregation. Aurora honors this choral heritage with the next four selections.

As one of the best loved and most recognized hymns, **Amazing Grace** hardly needs an introduction, though its history is worth noting. Hymn text author, John Newton (the self proclaimed “wretch” of the first verse) was an English clergyman and poet. Before being called to ministry, he was a sea captain who plied the slave trade. He begged for God’s mercy to save his ship during a violent storm at sea. He survived and thus began his spiritual conversion. He soon left the sea and slaving, studied theology—becoming a well known preacher and writer of hymns. The origin of the tune is not known - though it is identified in hymnals as “New Britain.” It has been estimated that Amazing Grace is performed about ten million times annually.

**How Can I Keep from Singing** is often erroneously credited as a traditional Quaker hymn. This is most likely because it was taught to folklorist Pete Seeger in the 50’s by a woman who had learned it from her Quaker grandmother. Actually, the hymn text was written in 1868 by American Baptist, Rev. Robert Lowery. (the source of the tune is unknown) Pete Seeger popularized the hymn, omitting or changing much of the Christian -specific wording and including that verse (not in the original) particular to the Quaker source. This is the version sung by activists and folksingers— and the version beautifully arranged by Gwyneth Walker which we sing today.

**The Storm is Passing Over** was written by American Methodist minister Charles Tindley in 1905. Born of slave parents, and self-educated, Tindley was one of the earliest and most influential writers of African American gospel music. His composition *“I’ll Overcome Someday”* is thought by many to be the source material for the civil rights anthem: *“We Shall Overcome.”*

In his own words, Albert E. Brumley, on how he came to write **I’ll Fly Away**: *“I was picking cotton on my father’s farm and was humming the old ballad that went like this: ‘If I had the wings of an angel’ and suddenly it dawned on me that I could use this plot for a gospel-type song.... actually, I was dreaming of flying away from that cotton field when I wrote I’ll Fly Away.”* Well, “fly away” he did! In 1932 this song launched a long successful song writing career. In a Smithsonian Institute study of gospel music, researchers named Albert E. Brumley “the greatest white gospel songwriter before WWII.”

*“The storm is passing over — through many dangers toils and snares above earth’s lamentations —I’ll fly away to a land on God’s celestial shore... “*

... In all of these beautiful, inspired images and metaphors, deliverance is achieved through faith and by the hands of a merciful God. Our next song, **Listen Closely** comes from a Buddhist perspective in which one is not “saved” by a deity, one “wakes up” to one’s own Buddha nature. Songwriter Steven Walter’s tender song is an exploration of a core Buddhist scripture, *The Heart Sutra*.

Alla Renée Bozarth, was the first woman ordained as deacon in the Episcopal diocese of Oregon in 1971. Her ordination to the priesthood

with eleven other women 1974 created a huge stir within the denomination and brought international attention. She wrote the poem **Call** on the eve of this historic ordination. I set this powerful poem in 1997 for Aurora Chorus’ Fifth Anniversary concert. We are now just two years from Aurora’s 20th season!

I believe that these words of Alla’s are relevant now, more than ever. There is still a rumbling of roaring voices in the deep. Women *and* men are waking and rising to the call for conscious engagement in matters of spirit, community, and in the fight to remake our relationship with the Earth.

Truly, how can we keep from singing?

**Call**

There is a new sound  
of roaring voices in the deep  
and light-shattered rushes in the heavens;  
The mountains are coming alive,  
the fire-kindled  
mountains, moving again  
to reshape the earth.  
It is we sleeping women,  
waking up in a darkened world,  
cutting the chains  
from off our bodies with  
our teeth, stretching our lives  
over the slow earth,  
seeing, moving, breathing in the vigor  
that commands us to make all things new.

It has been said that while the women sleep  
the earth shall sleep.  
But listen! We are waking up and rising,  
and soon our sister will know her strength.  
The earth-moving day is here.  
We women wake to move in fire.  
The earth shall be remade.

— Alla René Bozarth

## Translations

**Musica vivat aeterna**

Music lives eternally

**An die Musik**

*Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden, Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt, Hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb’ entzünden, Hast mich in eine beßre Welt entrückt! Oft hat ein Seufzer, deiner Harf’ entflossen, Ein süßer, heiliger Akkord von dir Den Himmel beßrer Zeiten mir erschlossen, Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür!*

— Franz von Schober

**To Music**

Oh gracious Art, in how many grey hours,  
When life’s fierce orbit ensnared me,  
Have you kindled my heart to warm love,  
Transfigured me into a better world!  
How often has a sigh escaping from your harp,  
A sweet, a sacred harmony of yours  
Thrown open the heaven of better times,  
Oh gracious Art, for that I thank you!

**Dirait-on**

- Rainier M Rilke (1875-1926)  
Muhl

So they say  
English translation by Barbara  
and Erica

**Abandon entouré d’abandon, tendresse touchant aux tendresses... C’est ton intérieur qui sans cesse se caresse, dirait-on;**

Abandon surrounding abandon,  
Tenderness touching tenderness...  
Your oneness endlessly  
Caresses itself, so they say;

**se caresse en soi-même, par son propre reflet éclairé. Ainsi tu inventes le thème du Narcisse exaucé.**

self-caressing  
Through its own clear reflection.  
Thus you invent the theme  
of Narcissus fulfilled.

**Todo o Meu Ser**

*Não sei dizer-te quantas canções eu canto,  
Todo o meu ser é uma canção*

*E eu canto enquanto respiro.*

I cannot tell you how many songs I sing,  
My whole being is a song  
And I sing as I draw breath.

mantra from Prajna Paramita Sutra, (*The Heart Sutra*)  
(from **Listen Closely**)

Gate, Gate, Paragate, P arasamgate, *Bodhi Svaha*.

Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond,  
O what an awakening, all-hail!  
(trans. Edward Conze)

**To Sing is To Fly — Joan Baez**

To sing is to love and affirm, to fly and soar,  
to coast into the hearts of people who listen,  
to tell them that life is to live, that love is there,  
hat nothing is a promise, but that beauty exists and must be  
hunted for and found.

**The Singing Place, by Lily A. Long (1862-1927)**

Cold may lie the day,  
And bare of grace;  
At night I slip away  
To the Singing Place.  
A border of mist and doubt  
Before the gate,  
And the Dancing Stars grow still  
As hushed I wait.  
Then faint and far away  
I catch the beat  
In broken rhythm and rhyme  
Of joyous feet,—  
Lifting waves of sound  
That will rise and swell

(If the prying eyes of thought  
Break not the spell),  
Rise and swell and retreat  
And fall and flee,  
As over the edge of sleep  
They beckon me.  
And I wait as the seaweed waits  
For the lifting tide;

To ask would be to awake,—  
To be denied.  
I cloud my eyes in the mist  
That veils the hem,—  
And then with a rush I am past,—  
I am Theirs, and of Them!

And the pulsing chant swells up  
To touch the sky,  
And the song is joy, is life,  
And the song am !!

The thunderous music peals  
Around, o’erhead-

The dead would awake to hear  
If there were dead;  
But the life of the throbbing Sun  
Is in the song,

And we weave the world anew,  
And the Singing Throng  
Fill every corner of space—

Over the edge of sleep  
I bring but a trace  
Of the chants that pulse and sweep  
In the Singing Place.

Then faint and far away  
I catch the beat  
In broken rhythm and rhyme  
Of joyous feet,—