

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?!

AURORA CHORUS
Joan Szymko, Director
In concert with special guest
Diane Syrcle

First Congregational Church
1126 SW Park Avenue
Portland, Oregon

Sunday, May 19, 4:00 pm



auroraCHORUS

From the Artistic Director

Greetings, Friends!

Aurora is pleased to welcome an old friend to today's concert stage and to introduce a new one. Diane Syrcle has performed with Aurora Chorus as a soprano soloist and has stepped in on several occasions to sub for me as rehearsal director. Her warmth, humor, and musical talents will all be on display in today's concert, as will her newfound passion for the banjo. Serendipity and synchronicity brought Sister Kathy Sherman and Aurora Chorus together. Kathy will be singing with us on her song, "Love Cannot Be Silenced."

Two American poets share their journeys to "self" as we open our concert. May Sarton's powerful yet tender poem "Now I Become Myself" is set with skill and grace by one of Aurora's favorite composers, Gwyneth Walker. "Finding Her Here" is a paen to self-acceptance. (Both poems appear on the next page.) Our performance then turns toward some potent issues, with doses of levity, love, and some outrage—sometimes all in the same song. Humor does have the ability to help us look at attitudes and issues with a directness that might otherwise be too painful to view head on. Case in point: Despite progress made with regard to women's status and rights, women in America today remain second-class citizens. Songs like "What's Up With That?," "Big Legged Woman," and "Binders Full of Women" allow us to laugh and be indignant at the same time.

Aurora singing about sex—what's up with that? William Blake's "Garden of Love," with notions about the naturalness of sexuality, was a direct attack on the Church of England in the late 18th century. His poem is surprisingly relevant today, as religious institutions hold on to constricting beliefs and traditions while cultural attitudes about sexuality and marriage in the U.S. and in places around the world are shifting with surprising speed. We sing "Simply Love" about a lesbian family, a song I first directed over 30 years ago. There are still many people and institutions that "tear their hair" about homosexuality, but I so hope that the need to sing this song will soon disappear. What better

topic to explore than sex/love? How about food?! Better yet—love and food! My composer colleagues David Childs and Paul Carey offer up some sensuous musical moments to close our first half. And don't be surprised if you find yourself craving Mexican food later tonight.

Our second half opens with another 18th-century writing that still resonates—this time, a letter from Abigail Adams to her husband, John, upon America's declaration of independence from England. I can't help wondering what Abigail's remarks might be on Mitt Romney's "binders full of women." Or what words she might have for her husband if he had voted against the Lilly Ledbetter Act. I do know that they would be words of great wit, wisdom, and tact.

You may be surprised to hear Aurora rapping on "My Water's on Fire," a song about the facts on fracking. The "either/or" debate about fracking has folks who need good-paying jobs so they can put food on the family table pitted against folks who want to ensure that we have safe drinking water on that same table. Fracking is just one of a numbing number of environmental quandaries we find ourselves in. Finding a way past "either/or" thinking is our only hope. For myself, hope is getting hard to grasp, because no matter how "green" my community is, or how conscientious my individual lifestyle may be, the enormity of environmental degradation, of climate change and its consequences, is overwhelming. Sometimes I just jump up and down, shouting "What's up with that!?" Or I ignore it all and get lost in "me"—my garden, my relationships, my career, my iPad—all worthy pursuits (well, maybe not the iPad). And then there are the times when I can no longer numb or ignore my anger and grief—and I sit down and cry.

What *can* we do that makes any difference? We can sing. We can feel and share our grief. We can cry together. We can make community. We can bear witness and remain present, "choosing love over fear" as Holly Near declares in our closing song, "We're Still Here." Thank *you* for being here with Aurora Chorus today!

You know, that we get to sing together in community week after week in rehearsal is reason enough for many of the women in Aurora to give so much of their time and energy to the music. That we get to share it with you is a great honor and gift.

I have inherited a belief in community, the promise that a gathering of the spirit can both create and change culture. In the desert, change is nurtured even in stone by wind, by water, through time.

— Terry Tempest Williams

Thank you all for coming to this gathering of spirit.

Joan Szymko, Artistic Director
Aurora Chorus

NOW I BECOME MYSELF

by May Sarton

Now I become myself. It's taken
Time, many years and places;
I have been dissolved and shaken,
Worn other people's faces,
Run madly, as if Time were there,
Terribly old, crying a warning,
"Hurry, you will be dead before—"
(What? Before you reach the morning?
Or the end of the poem is clear?
Or love safe in the walled city?)
Now to stand still, to be here,
Feel my own weight and density!
The black shadow on the paper
Is my hand; the shadow of a word
As thought shapes the shaper
Falls heavy on the page, is heard.
All fuses now, falls into place
From wish to action, word to silence,
My work, my love, my time, my face
Gathered into one intense
Gesture of growing like a plant.
As slowly as the ripening fruit
Fertile, detached, and always spent,

Falls but does not exhaust the root,
So all the poem is, can give,
Grows in me to become the song,
Made so and rooted by love.
Now there is time and Time is young.
O, in this single hour I live
All of myself and do not move.
I, the pursued, who madly ran,
Stand still, stand still, and stop the sun!

FINDING HER HERE

by Jayne Relaford Brown

I am becoming the woman I've wanted,
grey at the temples,
soft body, delighted,
cracked up by life
with a laugh that's known bitter
but, past it, got better,
knows she's a survivor—
that whatever comes,
she can outlast it.
I am becoming a deep
weathered basket.
I am becoming the woman I've longed for,
the motherly lover
with arms strong and tender,
the growing daughter
who blushes surprises.
I am becoming full moons
and sunrises.
I find her becoming,
this woman I've wanted,
who knows she'll encompass,
who knows she's sufficient,
knows where she's going
and travels with passion.
Who remembers she's precious,
but knows she's not scarce—
who knows she is plenty,
plenty to share.

WHAT'S UP WITH THAT?!

AURORA CHORUS WITH SPECIAL GUEST DIANE SYRCLE

Now I Become Myself	Gwyneth Walker, text: May Sarton
Finding Her Here	Joan Szymko, text: Jayne Relaford Brown
Big Legged Woman	The Righteous Mothers, arr. Pam Gerke and Joan Szymko Solo: Judi Ranton and Wendy Street
What's Up with That?	Helen Lewis Moore Solo: Tina Izen
The Garden of Love	Joan Szymko, text: William Blake Solo: Diane Syrcle
<i>The love that binds us</i>	Zach Wahl, 2011 address to the Iowa State Legislature Reader: Jean Wright
Simply Love	Holly Near, arr. Joan Szymko
Quite Regularly Gay	Joan Szymko, text: Gertrude Stein Solo: Diane Syrcle
I Am Not Yours	David Childs, text: Sara Teasdale
Mashed Potato / Love Poem	Paul Carey, text: Sidney Hoddes
<i>Food Haiku</i>	various, from "Haiku-Sine: 217 Tiny Food Poems by Texans Who Love to Eat & Feed Their Heads" Reader: Gayle Lovejoy and Andrea Burke
My Salsa Garden	Elise Witt, arr. Michael Holmes

INTERMISSION

Remember the Ladies	Carol Barnett, text: Abigail Adams from a letter to her husband, John Adams (1776)
Binders Full of Women	R.B. Sherman, text: Bob Rivers Solo: Diane Syrcle
<i>What we lose can't just be measured in dollars</i>	Lilly Ledbetter Reader: Sharon Rose
Fifty-Nine Cents	Fred Small, additional lyrics by The Labor Theater and Joan Szymko; arr. Joan Szymko

Love Cannot Be Silenced

Kathy Sherman, CSJ; arr. Joan Szymko

I arise in the morning

E.B. White

Reader: **Kristan Burkert**

**Why Am I Painting
the Livingroom**

Pete and Lou Berryman; arr. Jane Ramseyer Miller

My Water's on Fire

David Holmes, Andrew Bean and Niel Bekker; arr. Joan Szymko

Solo: **Amy Jackson** and **Annie Herring**

Saltwater

Julian Lennon, Mark Spiro and Leslie Spiro; arr. Joan Szymko

Solo: **Chelsea Harper**

Ise Oluwa Kole Baje Oh

traditional, Yoruba (Nigeria)

spoken text: Hildegard of Bingen, translated by G. Ühlein

Solo: **Harmony Griffith**

This Land Is Your Land

Woody Guthrie; arr. Robert de Cormier

Solo: **Claudia Nadine** and **Kirsten Hays**

We Clasp Hands

from *Healing* by Wendell Berry

Reader: **Elaine Ball**

We're Still Here

Holly Near and John Bucchino; arr. Joan Szymko

INSTRUMENTALISTS

Banjo: **Diane Syrclé**

Bass: **Josh Feinberg**

Guitar: **Roberta Jortner**

Mandolin: **Marylyn John**

Cajon: **Joan Szymko**

Hand Percussion: **Margaret Blake,**

Alexandra Blatt, Marylyn John,

Lori Kovacevic, Gayle Lovejoy

Guest Artist



Diane Syrclé, soprano and banjo player, is equally comfortable on the operatic stage or at a backyard hootenanny. Ms. Syrclé joined the Oregon Symphony as Executive Vice President for Development in July 2012. Prior to joining the Symphony, Ms. Syrclé was the Executive Director for Oregon Ballet Theater, Executive Director of the Portland Youth Philharmonic, and Director of Education at Portland Opera. She entered the world of arts administration following a career as a professional opera singer. Syrclé holds an MBA in Organizational Development from Marylhurst University, a master's degree in Music in Vocal Performance from the University of North Texas, and a bachelor's degree in Music/Music Education from West Texas A&M University. She is a graduate of *A Seat at the Table*

leadership forum hosted by The Link, LLC, and the first Executive Leadership Cohort supported by The League of American Orchestras. She received a Young Audiences Sunburst Award for Arts Education Advocacy in 2010.