Aurora Chorus
PRESERVES

Calling on the Spirits

Joan Szymko, Director
Special Guest: Jami Sieber

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2009

Matinee 4:00 p.m.
Evening Performance 7:00 p.m.
St. Mary’s Academy Theater

www.aurorachorus.org
Welcome!

We think we have a terrific concert for you.

First, thank you for coming to our concert. Without you, we sing alone. We are grateful for your company and your support.

The Board has many plans, but first and foremost is to continue to offer our audience and supporters concert experiences which we are proud of. In this concert, we are pleased to be premiering some of Joan’s work as well as offering you a chance to hear our wonderful guest artist, Jami Sieber.

We are planning our 4th annual auction in April (exact date TBA). You will hear more about that in coming months. Please plan to come and to offer items for auction. Come for good food and beverages, great shopping and an Aurora presentation.

We will also be presenting Lunafest, an evening of films by, for and about women. This will be our second Lunafest presentation. We are pleased to take part in the women’s arts community in this way.

We continue to work with the VOA’s Home Free program and hope you will stop by their table to learn why we are proud to do so.

Aurora’s financial support comes from ticket sales, our members’ fees and contributions. We appreciate the support of our music and values which you demonstrate by attending our concerts. If you would like to further support Aurora, please use the envelope in your program.

Again, thank you for joining us as we call on the spirits.

Wishing you Light in the dark nights of the year, the joy of good fellowship, and all the best in the new year.

From the Aurora Board

Artistic Director’s Greeting

Good Evening!

Are you one of the seven in ten adults who believe in angels?*

Whether Christian or Jew, Muslim or Buddhist, atheist, or “none of the above” — who hasn’t called out to the unknown for help, reassurance, wisdom, guidance...who hasn’t asked for a “sign?” I think we all seek or recognize guiding spirits that “help us keep our feet upon the path.” Most likely they don’t appear with wings and halos, but perhaps in the kindness of a stranger or in the lingering wisdom of ancestors, or from respected elders gone before us. Some people find guidance in the forces of nature or in animal spirit guides; some, in studying and exploring the miracles of creation. And then there are those who believe that, if we listen very closely, the wisdom we seek can be found within.

No matter how they come to us, our guiding spirits are all messengers. They tell us not to be afraid, and bring tidings of comfort, joy and hope — gracing us with their wisdom. The music we sing this evening comes from many sources and traditions, but each piece is a calling on or a conversation with those guiding spirits that would bring us closer to the great Mystery. I am very pleased for Aurora to present special guest Jami Sieber. I think you will find that Jami’s music deepens the conversation.

Thank you for making Aurora Chorus a part of your holiday. May Love and Joy come to you and yours this season and in the year ahead!

Joan Szymko, Director
Aurora Chorus

* 2005 Harris Poll
A singing member of Aurora for 13 years, Eileen Spencer died on October 16, 2008 at age 64. She was passionate about the chorus and, in spite of a ten-year struggle with cancer, gave generously of her time and talents. She was an independent, adventurous woman who was energized by singing.

In honor of Eileen’s passion that Aurora continue to flourish, we have established the Eileen Spencer Memorial Fund. It is supporting scholarships so that more women can sing together about peace and justice. We invite you to join this effort through a contribution to Aurora Chorus—earmarked for the Eileen Spencer Fund.

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Aurora thanks these volunteers and those who volunteered too late for their names to appear in print, for the contribution of their hands, hearts and minds. Our continuing success depends upon your willingness to help.

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Lan Fendors
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Signe Lusk
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Thank You
From everyone at
Aurora Chorus
Aurora Chorus

SINCE 1992, Aurora Chorus has honored the strength and beauty of women’s lives through the fine art of choral singing. In Aurora, the beauty and power of music to heal, to inspire, and to reflect a universal yearning for peace blend together in an atmosphere of inclusiveness and respect.

Led by director Joan Szymko, Aurora Chorus consists of over 100 women from the Portland area. Through finely-crafted performances of music, Aurora has become a source of strength and inspiration for our community.

Aurora presents two concerts each season and also appears at community events. Two full length CDs of the chorus’ music Full Circle and Solstice! are for sale in the lobby and through the chorus’ website, www.aurorachorus.org, where you can also read about future events and find out how to join the chorus.

The Board

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Special Guest: Jami Sieber

Electric cellist and vocalist Jami Sieber reaches inside the soul with compositions that are contemporary, timeless, lush, and powerfully evocative. Her music transforms from the deepest stillness to moving melodies and rhythms that light the soul on fire. Her life-long commitment to the environment, social justice, and the healing arts is at the heart of her music, reflecting a deep dedication to the arts as a medium of exploration and awareness of the interconnectedness of all beings. This sometimes ethereal, sometimes hard-edged, musician has earned rave reviews throughout Europe, Asia, and North America, having been an invited guest artist in China, Korea, Russia, the Balkans, Italy, France, and Thailand.

Sieber’s musical path moved from classical to folk to rock/pop where, within her popular band “Rumors of the Big Wave,” she garnered the coveted Northwest Area Music Association (NAMA) Award for Best Rock Instrumentalist. Since launching her solo career Sieber has entered into dynamic collaborations with an extraordinary spectrum of dancers, actors, poets, visual artists, improvisers, vocalists, and instrumentalists that span the globe. Employing looping devices and electronics to create sounds never before associated with the cello, Sieber transforms her solo instrument into an orchestra of sound that opens the heart, defies the mind, and, at times, sets the body dancing.

“...these musical paintings hang, framed in her own passion and dreams. If you’ve ever taken a journey of the soul, be it to another place or your own backyard, this music will play back every scene.”

[Victory Music]

Sieber has released five independently produced recordings that are for sale tonight or through her website: www.jamisieber.com

AURORA CHORUS | CALLING ON THE SPIRITS
Artistic Director

Joan Szymko has led choruses in the Pacific Northwest for nearly thirty years. Originally from Chicago, she studied choral music education at the University of Illinois (Urbana) and composition and ethnomusicology at the University of Washington. She moved to Portland from Seattle in 1993 to take on leadership of Aurora Chorus. She brought with her extensive experience in conducting women’s voices, composing and arranging skills, and a wide knowledge of peace and justice repertoire. Sixteen years later, she continues to inspire and motivate women of widely varying musical abilities to come into their own voices and to aspire to choral excellence.

Szymko began composing in the early 1980’s to fill a need for mature, substantive, contemporary pieces for adult treble ensemble. A nationally recognized choral composer, her music is widely performed. She has made a significant contribution to the body of literature for women’s voices:

“Joan Szymko...has continued to provide opportunities for women’s choruses to stretch beyond the ordinary and the expected to the refreshing and powerful.”

[The Choral Journal]

Accompanist

Signe Lusk studied piano accompanying at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and then continued her studies in Stuttgart, Germany. Upon returning to the United States, she worked for the Oregon Symphony as the Assistant Publicity Director. Lusk has worked as staff pianist for the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. She was given the Outstanding Music Director Award for her work on “Candide”. She made her Carnegie Hall debut in 1998. She accompanied soprano Debra Wilke in the National Association of Teachers of Singing Artists Award Competition, where she was awarded first place. Lusk has performed in concerts with Metropolitan opera stars Jerome Hines, Nico Castel and John Del Carlo, and she was pianist for National Trumpet Association winner Andre Dubelson. In addition, Lusk has worked for Seattle, Portland and Eugene opera companies. Currently, Lusk is staff pianist at the First Unitarian Church, where she conducts their Nova Choir. She is also staff accompanist for the Pacific International Children’s Choir Festival and the Astoria Music Festival.

Translations

A jí kí ire ni Èsù (Yorùbá)
A jí kí ire ni Èsù,
We wake and happily greet Exu
Èsù kà bí kà bí
Exu tells the story of birth
Ô wa èsè l’abowolé s’ ori àgbéko ilecum
He stands at the threshold of the door
Inon inon mo júbà e e mo júbà
Exu of the fire, my respects.
I leave and offer you my respect

¡El Cielo Canta Alegria!
¡El cielo canta alegría! ¡Aleluya!
Heaven is singing for joy, Hallelujah!

porque en tu vida y la mia brilla la gloria de Dios
For in your life and in mine is shining the glory of God.

porque a tu vida y la mia las une el amor de Dios
For your life and mine unite in the love of God.

porque tu vida y la mia proclamarán al Señor
For your life and mine will always bear witness to God.

Iavnana (Transliteration of Georgian)
Iavnana, batonebo vardo batonebo
Oh violet, nana, of lords, oh roses, lords
Datkbit, datkbit da shoshindit, vardo batonebo
Amuse yourselves, calm yourselves oh roses, oh lords

Iavnana, batonebo vardo batonebo
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Datkbit, datkbit da shoshindit, vardo batonebo
Amuse yourselves, calm yourselves oh roses, oh lords
In many non-western indigenous cultures, the spirit realm is not so far away as, say, “heaven.” Spirits may be present in the elements of nature, or willing to be witnesses, or even participants in human rituals. Our first three pieces are invitations to spirits associated with the Ifa religions of the Yoruba, the native Lakota of North America and the Mbuti from the rainforests of New Guinea.

Practitioners of Candomblé (a religion of African origin, practiced mainly in Brazil) venerate a pantheon of Orixas—manifestations and emissaries of Oludumare, the Supreme Being (God). The Orixá Exu (Portuguese spelling) is the messenger between humans and the Orixás and between the Orixás and Oludumare. He is the Orixa of choices and his domain is the “crossroads.” He is the entrance and the exit and so is always appeased and called first before any other Orixa as he opens the door between humans and the Orixas and between the Orixas and Oludumare.

Orixa Exu (Portuguese spelling) is the messenger between practitioners and Oludumare. He is the entrance and the exit and so is always appeased and called first before any other Orixa as he opens the door between the worlds and opens our roads in life. So we begin our concert by calling on Exu. A jí kí ire ni Èsù was composed earlier this year while I was a Fellow at the Instituto Sacatar in Bahia Brazil. Sung in Yoruba, the language of Candomble, it is a mixture of original music and traditional rhythms.

The Lakota are the westernmost of the three Sioux groups, occupying lands in both North and South Dakota. In Sioux Prayer, we sing to the spirits of the four directions of the Medicine Wheel. The Medicine Wheel holds great spiritual significance for the Lakota. The shape of the wheel represents the never-ending circle of life and death, the Beginning and End, which represents unity in the Great Spirit. When Ysaye Barnwell first taught Aurora Mbuti Chant, she introduced it as a song the rainforest pygmies sing to invite the “spirits” into their midst. In concerts, she invites audience members to join in this song “so that we can create the kind of environment that says we honor and respect the air we breathe, the land, the people around us because we understand that our environment and all those in it are God.”

In The Earth is Singing My Name the poet is called by name by the “earth spirit” who is firm and loving, as a mother. In the early 60’s in Findhorn, Scotland, Dorothy MacLean was called to the presence of the forces of nature and developed ongoing relationships with spirit entities she called devas (from the Sanskrit root, div – “to shine”) She received instructions from the devas that allowed Findhorn community to grow an extraordinary garden in this very harsh climate. She documented her communications which we read from tonight.

The stary heavens have always sparked the human imagination as the place where gods, spirits and angels reside. The heavens are singing in our next two songs. In The Song of the Stars the Algonquin people imagine that the stars are singing, making a road “for the spirits to pass over.” The energetic, ¡El Cielo Canta Alegría! (Heaven is Singing for Joy) is a worship song from Argentina that tells us the heavens are rejoicing because of God moving in our lives. Back on earth, poet Carolyn Forché writes of spirits “entering the stomach of the stones” in Song Coming Toward Us. If we listen to the still quiet place within each of us, we may hear a voice telling us, as in this spacious poem, to “listen to yourself.”

Our concert title song, Calling on the Spirits, suggests that past and present and future are not separate, but a continuum. Those helpers, ancestors, future generation, and wise ones—all are welcome spirit guides to keep us on the path of human growth and survival. I first heard songwriter Charlie Murphy sing this song with our special guest artist, Jami Sieber. Charlie and Jami collaborated for many years, and Aurora Chorus is pleased to introduce Jami’s heart centered, healing music to our audience.

Angels appear not infrequently in the sacred scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. “Angel” comes from the late Greek, angelos, “messenger.” Typically, these celestial beings act as intermediaries between heaven and earth. They often begin delivery of their messages with the words “Do not be afraid.” Angel In Eternal Flight is a picture of the conventional image of angels: shining beings with halos and flowing hair. Even more, this song depicts our understanding of angels as benevolent beings “gracing us, guiding us, healing us.” Apparently not all spirits are benevolent, however. To the Georgian people, the Batonebi were spirits who brought illness to people, especially young children. Our next song, Iavnana, is one of a genre of traditional lullabies sung to appease and ward off the batonebi spirits, or “lords” in the hope that they’ll go away. Illness and death are inescapable. Poet Sri Chinmoy wrote, “In the last dark hour of the night, angels come to love us and awaken us.” Songwriter Jane Siberry’s popular Calling All Angels is a plea for comfort and understanding in times of loss.

Music has brought comfort throughout the ages. While in a Japanese prison camp in Sumatra during WWII Norah Chambers and Dorothy Dryburgh, relying only on their musical memory, worked together to create vocal arrangements of classical music. They presented their first “vocal orchestra” with thirty singers in 1943. One inmate later wrote: “... [the first chords] reached us listeners packed together in the compound. Some of us wept. We had not expected such beauty among the cockroaches, the rats, the bedbugs, the lice and the smell of latrines. The concert renewed our sense of human dignity. It gave us courage to go on.” Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring is one of those “songs of survival.”

“The courage to go on... “ Our last three songs inspire that courage. No One is Alone appears toward the end of Steven Sondheim's musical, Into the Woods. The play intertwines the plots of several Brothers Grimm fairy tales. Birago Diop’s poem, Breath is an invitation to understand the “breaths” that invigorate “things”: fire, water, wind, grass, bushes, huts, a woman’s breasts, and forests. “All beings everywhere overflow the place where they are, surpass their specific location, have more to them than their body.” (N.B. Djangrag). The Voice by Brendan Graham was winner of the 1996 Eurovision competition. This Celtic inspired song sings of the spirit that infuses our natural world - the wind, the rain, the seasons, the past and future and dwelling in all of us.

— Joan Szymko
Aurora Chorus presents

Calling on the Spirits

Joan Szymko, Director
Special Guest: Jami Sieber

A ji ki ire ni Èṣù
Joan Szymko
trad. Candomblé ritual song texts (Brazil)

Sioux Prayer
Joan Szymko
lyrics: trad. Lakota

Mbuti Chant
trad., New Guinea
as sung by Ysaye Barnwell

“Findhorn Devas”
Dorothy MacLean

The Earth is Singing My Name
Marjan Helms
poem by Dar N’var

Song of the Stars
from Songs of the Lights
Imant Raminsh
text: Algonquin Indian, trans. N Barnes

¡El Cielo Canta Alegria!
Pablo Sosa, arranged by Roger Bergs

Song Coming Toward Us
Joan Szymko
poem by Carolyn Forché

Calling on the Spirits
Charlie Murphy
arr. J. Szymko

Special Guest
JAMI SIEBER
AURORA CHORUS

“To be an angel”  
“Angel in Eternal Flight”  
“Iavnana”  
“In the Last Dark Hour”  
“Calling All Angels”  
“Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring”  
“Chorale Prelude, Cantata No. 147”  
“No One is Alone”  
“from Into the Woods”  
“Breaths”  
“Storming Heaven”  
“The Voice”  

Soloists: Terri Grayum, 4pm; Constance LaGue, 7pm

CREDITS

Instrumentalists: Percussion:  
Brian Lavern Davis  
Randall Givens  
Mehmet Vurkac  
Clarinet:  
Meg Grace  
Readers:  
Jackie Rose, Wendy Street, Andrea Weiner, Jean Wright

Small Ensemble for Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring:  
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Cyd Cannizzaro  
Kristan Burkert  
Linda Meadows  
Marilyn Lindberg  
Marya Hazilla  
Meg Grace  
Nancy Otis  
Pat Blanco  
Static Kaeder  
Terri Grayum

Credits:

Francois Couperin  
Valerie Webdell  
lyrics: Chris Boyer & V. Webdell  
trad. Batonebo lullaby from Georgia  
Sri Chinmoy  
Jane Siberry (Issa)  
arr. Eric Lane Barnes  
J.S. Bach  
arr. Margaret Dryburgh & Norah Chambers  
Stephen Sondheim  
Ysaye M. Barnwell  
lyrics tr. from poem in French by Birago Diop  
Laurie Shentalevenn  
Brendan Graham  
arr. Roger Emerson  
Terri Grayum, 4pm; Constance LaGue, 7pm
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Deedle Basham, Joie's mom

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To help but maybe not to sing?
Aurora Chorus is always looking for volunteers to join our community of strength and inspiration, and to support our vision of “Powerful Women Singing Peace.” We have a place for you here!

To learn about sponsorship opportunities?
Aurora Chorus is looking to expand our reach into the community, and is seeking sponsors who support our vision. Would you like to contribute to the financial health of Aurora?

Aurora Chorus will be one of 21 women's choirs performing at the Sister Singers Festival this July in Chicago, Illinois.

Aurora singers will bring music from our spring concert to share at the four-day festival of workshops, concerts, mass chorus rehearsals, and networking. The Festival is called "Our Kind of Sound" and is hosted by the Artemis Singers on the Loyola University campus. We are looking forward to sharing the Aurora spirit, learning from other choruses, and getting to know each other in a new way as we travel together to Chicago. The logistics of sending a big delegation will be a challenge, so your support of your favorite Auroran is welcome! Chicago has much to offer the non-singer as well, so some will be adding a family vacation to the trip.

Join us as a singer this spring and come along!

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Joan Mullen Woods
Joan Sears
Joan Szymko
Jocelyn Biro
Jon Hartmann
Joy Nahigian
Joyce Follingstad
Juanete Lynn
Judith Ranton
Julian Joseph
Erin Kenning
Julie at Flora
Julie Earnest
Karen Benjamin
Karl Lee
Karol Rykert
Kate Grogan
Kathryn Brawner
Kathryn Work
Kay Pollack
Kaye Eyo
KB Frames
Keith & Kathie Henley
Keith MacDonald
Kelly Marie Fitzpatrick
Kristan Burket
Kristofer Lofgren
Krystee Sidwell
Kwan-Yin Healing Arts Center
Lambley Benefit Auctions
Lanai Mackey
Landscape East & West
Lani Jo Leigh
Laura Day
Laura Merrell
Lauren Eisenberg
Leslie & Alan Comnes
Lila Braker
Linda Cornell
Linda Makohon
Linde Meier
Linde Milone
Linde Westling
Lisa Fithian-Barrett
Lisa Harper
Lorelynn Mirage Cardo
Lori Thomas
Lorraine Heller
Lyn M. Palmer
March Wellness: OHSU
Maren Souders
Margaret Blake
Margaret Spencer
Marie Battistel
Marlyn Lindberg
Marlyn R. Dunn
Mark Almblad
Mark Spencer Hotel
Marsha K. Ehlers
Mary Edmeades
Mary Ellen Morrison
Mary Huang
Mary Hull-Caballero
Mary King
Mary Lee Braymen-Cleary
Mary Saunders
MaryAnne Wakefield
Meg Grace
Melody Kegley
Michael Hoffman
Michelle and Jim Alderson
Mickie McClure
Mike Fetty
Miracle Theater Group
Miss Fit Adventure
Mitch Lambley
Moira McCurry
Muir Ferdue
Music Together
Nancy Ashley
Nancy Hamer
Nanette Niski
Natural Skin Revival
New Renaissance Books
New Seasons
Nike
Nikki Becker
Nova Luna Arts
Old Wives’ Tales Restaurant
Olivia Clark
Orales Stiles
Paloma Clothing
Pat Blanco
Pat Taylor
Patricia Cornman
Patricia McManus
Patricia Smith
Patti Pomerantz
Paula Franck
Peace Planet Proclamation
Peg Von Dreede
Peggy McComb
Penny Juve
Perry Auger
Portland Baroque Orchestra
Portland Gay Men’s Choir
Portland Hoopz
Portland Revels
Priscilla Carlson
Pup-a-razzi
Purdy’s Auto Detail
Rachel Brooks
Rebecca Pepper
Red Leaf Natural Health Clinic
Rene Pino
Renee & Drew Lippay
Rental Sales Gallery
River City Sailing
Robert Jortner
Roger Londberg
Ryan Jaggar
Saed Bannoura
Sandi Schmitt
Sandy Shore
Sarah Aserude
Sarah Baden
Sarah Palin
Sasha Swenk
Seton Orschein
Sherrie Van Hine
Signe Lusk
Simone Sunderland
Stacy Watts
Stash Tea
Stephanie Kaplan
Steve Stanick
Sue C. Robel
Susan Abe
Susan Jensen
Susan Kaeder
Susan Saccomanno
Susan Stambaugh
Susan Walker
Taiost Tai Chi Society
Tara Isaacs
Tasha Harmon
Tazo Tea
Ted Isaacs Salon
Terri Grayum
Terrill Grubbs
The Meadow
Timber Press
Tip Top Cleaners
Tish Stoebner
Viki Shilos
Virginia Benware
Wendy Howard
Wendy Miller
Wendy Rankin
Wendy Street
White Dragon Therapies
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