PRESENTED BY THE CONCORD COMMUNITY OF CHOIRS

SUNDAY MAY 2, 1999 • 7:00 PM
ARLENE SCHNITZER CONCERT HALL

As a Woman
AURORA CHORUS: WOMEN IN HARMONY FOR PEACE

JOAN SZYMKO, director

WITH GUEST ARTISTS
Brenda Phillips,
the Mambo Queens
& Women of Praise

LIFE AND LOVE,
WAR AND PEACE—
FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

A PRE-MOTHER'S DAY
FESTIVAL THAT HONORS
ALL WOMEN!
Welcome to Aurora's spring concert. This evening we will be blessed with songs of women, by women and for women. What a beautiful way to approach Mother's Day. Our senses will be heightened to the value of the women in our lives and to our own womanhood. Not to leave you wonderful guys out in the audience. After all, it is probably a woman that encouraged you to attend this concert. And although you will not experience motherhood, I hope that you've experienced being "mothered." This concert gives us an opportunity to lift up women, honor our mothers and to remember women important in our lives who no longer dwell with us on this earth.

Jamaica Kincaid wrote:

"The shadow of my mother danced around the room to a tune that my shadow sang..."

Surely, the shadows of our mothers past and present are dancing in this auditorium with us today. It's a gift that Aurora provides the song. Happy Mother's Day and Peace to You and Yours!

Denise Andersen
Concord Council President

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**Note From the President**

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Denise Andersen
Concord Council President
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Viriditas Auditions for 1999-2000

Viriditas was founded by Joan Szymko in 1994 to explore the ancient connection between music and community ritual; to nurture a spirit of collaboration with audiences; to create partnerships with other art forms and artists; and to showcase her compositions. Viriditas performs an eclectic array of distinctive choral literature for women's voices in concert and for special events.

Joan Szymko will be holding auditions in late August. Interested women with good tone quality, choral experience and sight reading skills may call 721-0262 to schedule an audition.
Joan Szymko

Joan Szymko is a conductor, composer, arranger, and teacher. Originally from Chicago, she received her formal music training at the University of Illinois, where she studied voice, choral music education and conducting. Joan came into her own as a choral musician in Seattle, directing community and church choirs from 1981-93. Joan joined the Concord Community of Choirs in the fall of 1993 when she became director of Aurora Chorus. She formed Viriditas, a women’s chamber chorus, in 1994. Joan also directs the Portland State Community Chorus.

A gifted composer, Szymko’s numerous choral compositions and vocal arrangements for women’s voices have been performed and recorded by choirs across the country. Her own debut CD, *Openings*, features music she has composed for Concord Community Choruses and for DO JUMP! Extremely Physical Theater. Joan has been a company composer and frequent performer with Do Jump! since 1995 and appears with them later this May at the Newmark Theater. (See ad on back cover).

Brenda Phillips

Brenda Phillips, actor-singer-director, recently returned from New York after performing in the 20th Anniversary Broadway production of *For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, directed by author Ntozake Shange. Her most recent stage performance was her role as Sadie Delany in *Having Our Say* at Portland’s Artist Repertory Theater. She has numerous other NYC and local acting credits including: *Ain’t Misbehavin’, Brown Women Who Fly, Little Shop of Horrors, The Little Foxes, Raisin in the Sun* and *Long Time Since Yesterday*.

Phillips recently directed PassinArt: A Theater Company’s *Portraits in Black* at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center and Oregon Stage Company’s *Flyin’ West* by Pearl Cleage. She has sung with jazz renowns Janis Scroggins and Thara Memory, Akbar DePriest, Ron Steen, The Fallen Angel Choir and the a cappella gospel group The Love Congregation.

Newly appointed as Associate Director of Development at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, Phillips is also the proud grandmother of two, Asante and Asha.

Women of Praise

The Women of Praise include adult and youth ladies from Portland’s North/Northeast community churches. The group originally came into being in the fall of 1994 when Dorothy Davis, the program chairperson for New Hope Missionary Baptist, sought volunteers to sing in a women’s choir which was to provide music for their Annual Women’s Day. Many women responded and the choir was a blessing in that special service. It was mutually agreed that they would come together again – and each year since, the Women of Praise (youth and/or adults) have provided special music at New Hope, as well as other sister churches’ Women’s Day Services. As time and availability allows, the Women of Praise are happy to share their witness with whoever will listen or has a need. For more information regarding WOP, you may contact Dorothy Davis at (360) 695-7605.

The Mambo Queens

The Mambo Queens is a female percussion ensemble founded and directed by Virginia Lopez, a native of Cuba. Their repertoire focuses on folkloric Afro-Cuban music including Arara and Yoruba liturgic music, Rumbas and Bata-Rumba. Based in Portland, the Mambo Queens have done benefit concerts for Campaign for Peace with Cuba, have performed annually at Portland’s International Women’s Day Celebration and for the Gay Pride Parade.
We are children of the New Deal, of the homemakers, artists and administrators. We are aged 15 to 70. We are married with living alone, single moms, lesbians, grandchildren, looking for life partners, happy Cold War - Baby Boomers and Gen Xers - live every moment out loud. Our histories traditions. Some of us meditate. Some of us are atheists. Christians and followers of Wiccan vision of our lives as a creative expression is what we sing of tonight - our collective ancient cognizance of our power as life different, and yet, as women we share an and our present day realities are so verying the gifts of "woman spirit" and of grace.

**Aurora begins with Woman Am I** by claiming the gifts of “woman spirit” and of grace as bestowed by the Source of all. It is that same Source who in the words of Robin Morgan desires us to “walk in the path of (our) highest will.” This path cannot be walked while enslaved. We are therefore required to **Wade in the Watah** - to make a vow to walk on the path toward freedom. Ysaye Barnwell’s driving arrangement of this traditional Negro spiritual reminds us that it is necessary to trust that “God’s gonna trouble the watahs” and that there will be guides like Harriet Tubman to urge us along the way when our courage falters.

Courage, hard work, love and sacrifice – the essential ingredients of so many working women’s lives are the themes of **A Woman**. Sometimes, though – enough is enough. In **The Stove** from Ann Kilkelly’s short story “Revolution” – mother rebels against her family duty, her husband, and indeed threatens “the quality of life in the town” by pounding away at the symbol of her enslavement – the stove. Where the rhythms of a pounding sledge hammer are heard clearly in “Stove,” the rhythms of childbirth are heard in **She Shanty**, a raucous, rollicking ditty that borrows heavily from the sea shanty genre. Some may find the double entendres irreverent, but quite to the contrary, Aurora sings this song remembering that for most of human history, childbirth was attended to, ritualized and held sacred by women. Giving birth is just the beginning of becoming a mother. Gloria Martin, from Venezuela wrote **Cuanto Trabajo** (So Much Work) as a tribute to the beauty and strength of her single mother. She carried the economic burdens and the dreams of her children: “my mother… was my voice and my nourishment.” Aurora dedicates “Cuanto Trabajo” to all the single parents in our audience tonight.

The main difference between single parent families headed by men and by women is that today, women earn only 75¢ for every dollar earned by a man. When Fred Small wrote **Fifty-Nine Cents** back in the late 70’s – that figure was 59¢. But today, millions more women are raising their families under the conditions of a gross pay inequity. We sing the original “59¢” to celebrate the progress that has been made – but also to show that we’ve got a long way to go. The world over, women are the poorest segment of any population – followed closely by children. Holly Near’s **Why Oh Why** poses a very difficult question. How is it that those who fight for the unborn seem too often to be silent on the plight of impoverished mothers and children? If only this divisive subject could be met on all sides with compassion and understanding – then perhaps all could agree to work together to fight for reproductive education as well as for prenatal and post-natal care for the poor.

There is probably no greater life changing experience than having a baby. Both **Lullaby** and Audre Lorde’s poem “Now That I Am Forever With Child” capture the essence of the spiritual connection between mother and child. Women’s wisdom will be needed to ensure the survival of our planet in the next millennium. The yin aspects of yielding and receptivity; the feminine ability to think and feel concurrently; these qualities must be valued and nurtured in our children and honored in both women and men. Pete Seeger no doubt had these qualities in mind when writing **Had I a Golden Thread**. (Sewing and weaving are traditionally women’s work!) He says he would “bind up this sorry world with hand and heart and mind.” Heart and mind… feeling and thinking.

Few sacrifices are greater than to lose a loved one in battle. Judy Small’s **Mothers, Daughter, Wives** is a testament to that sacrifice. Throughout history, women have been the most ardent of protesters against the inhumanity of war. Women have been cited as “too emotional” to understand the need for the violence of war – but indeed – it has been women’s rationality that has seen the insanity of it. Jeanette Rankin, the first elected woman to the United States Congress (and the only representative to vote “no” to entry in both world wars) said “You can no more win a war than an earthquake!” Jane Adams, social activist and winner of the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize wrote: “War is not a natural activity for mankind.” Most do not know that the original “Mother’s Day Proclamation given by Julia Ward Howe in 1870 was a fervent anti-war statement. We will hear it tonight, followed by Adele Panhurst’s words, **I Didn’t Raise My Son to Be a Soldier**.

Also heard will be Joan Szymko’s setting of Virginia Woolf’s words “...as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world.” And so it is that we, with the whole world, watch the terrible turn of events in Kosovo. Aurora first sang **Ja Sam Tvog Svjedok** in 1995 amidst revelations of ethnic cleansing during the war in Bosnia. Again we “witness” the tragedy of ethnic violence between Serbs and Muslims and we offer prayer and hopes for peace. (continued page 9)
As a Woman

AURORA CHORUS WITH SPECIAL GUEST BRENDA PHILLIPS

Woman Am I
anon.
arr. Joan Szymko

"The Network of the Imaginary Mother" (excerpt) by Robin Morgan

Wade In the Watah
SOLO
Lori Flowers

traditional Negro spiritual
arr. Ysaye M. Barnwell

A Woman
SOLO
Sue Jensen

Patricia Johnson
text Connie Brooks

The Stove

Zae Munn
text Ann Kilkelly

She Shanty

Lisa Brodoff & Wendy Crocker
arr. the Righteous Mothers

Cuanto Trabajo
SOLOISTS
Linda Meier & Ellen Goldsmith

Gloria Martin
arr. Sabia and Szymko

59¢

Fred Small, arr. Szymko
additional lyrics Dianna MacLeod

Why Oh Why
SOLOISTS
Liza Whitmarsh, Lori Flowers,
Joanna Dumais-Clark, Judi Ranton

Holly Near
arr. Szymko

Lullaby

traditional, Sweden

"Now That I Am Forever With Child" by Audre Lorde

Had I a Golden Thread

Pete Seeger, arr. Szymko

Mothers, Daughters, Wives
SOLOISTS
Chris Brown, Katie Gordon,
Georgia Pinkel, Gwen Porus, Mary Anne Thygesen

Judy Small

"Mother's Day Proclamation of 1870" by Julia Ward Howe

I Didn't Raise My Son to Be A Soldier

Paige Wheeler, arr. Szymko
text Adela Pankhurst

As a Woman

Joan Szymko
text Virginia Woolf

Ja Sam Tvoj Svjedok
(I am Your Witness)
AURORA & WOMEN OF PRAISE

When Every Woman in the World
Not By Might

arr. Szymko

Linda Hirschorn
text adapted from Zechariah

WOMEN OF PRAISE  DOROTHY DAVIS, DIRECTOR

I'll Give You Rest
More Than Life to Me
Been So Good To Me

SOLOISTS
Janice Flowers & Ethel Tillis

Mambo Queens

Praise to Elegua
Comparsa Songs
Yambu
Iyesa Songs for Ochun

“Phenomenal Woman” by Maya Angelou

Big Legged Woman
Every Woman

SOLO
Ruth Spetter

The Righteous Mothers
Bernice Johnson Reagon

arr. Pam Gerke and Joan Szymko
arr. Szymko

Jenna Scott, Debbie Pinney, Anne Dall

“Finding Her Here” by Jayne Relaford Brown

Prayer for Woman
We Are the Ones

SOLOISTS

Judy Fjell

Bernice Johnson Reagon

Terry Davis & Derrick McDuffy

Ledra McClinton & Spanky Hopkins

Debra Perry

Lamar Campbell

Wes Lewis
AURORA CHORUS: women in harmony for peace

SOPRANO 1
Michele Alderson
Anne Bates
Marjorie Bennett
Claudine Blake
Sarah Churchill*
Anne Dall
Ellen Goldsmith
Christine Hayward
Margaret Imle
Susan Kaeder
Martha Keys*
Karen Lamson
Val Lawrence
Heidi Levy*
Jo Lyndon
Kersti Pettit-Kekel
Debbie Pinney
Janet Rajfalovich
Judi Ranton
Ellen Roberts
Judy Sapon-Borson
Jenna Scott
Cheri Smith
Robin Sutherland
Janet Trinkle
Kiki Ward

SOPRANO 2
Jayne Armstrong
Natasha Beck
Barbara Bonnema
Christine Brown
Patricia Chapman
Patricia Connan

ALTO 1
Angela Crow
Diane Dickey
Dianne Edwards
Marcy Edwards
Kaye Exo
Susan Freidjer
Jeanne Hackney
Laura Hanks
Melinda Jepson*
Kerry LeFever*
Jan Lustig
Marilyn McCabe
Rita McDonagh-Noble
Jessica Nelson
Georgia Pinkel
Gayle Hyde Preston*
Linda Jo Reinhard
Joan Sears*
Oceana Seer
Eileen Spencer
Sherryl Spencer
Kat Stiebrey
MaryAnne Thygesen
Heather Veldhuisen
Jean Wright
Jennifer Yocom

ALTO 2
Teresa Boyle Culp*
Lisa Carlisle-Pope
Karen Christensen
Kate Dreyfus
Ann Dudley
Joanna Dumas-Clark
Leslie Ellis
Margot Fieglere*
Ally Finlayson
Lori Flowers
Judie Franklin
Leslie Gardiner
Jennifer Gates
Haley Gordon
Katie Gordon
Barbara Gray
Carol Hazzard
Jeanne Henry
Ann Huntwork*
Georgie Husted
Susan Hyde
Sue Jensen
Kathy Kelley
Denise Kosover-Wechter
Dorothy Krogh
Karen Mcclare
Jennifer McDonald*
Arla Melum
Sue Merfeld
Phillis Pace
Janet Ploss
Mary Priester
Anne Rutherford
Moya Schloegl
Beth Schwartz
Maddy Sheehan
Ruth Spetter
Cindy Treistad
Carol Walker*
Lisa Whitmarsh

CONCERT PRODUCTION
Marylyn John, chair
Anne Bates
Chris Brown
Diane Dickey
Carol Hazzard
Elizabeth Robb
Cheri Smith
Carol (CJ) Timper

PROGRAM
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Women of Praise gospel choir joins Aurora in our call for peace in When Every Woman and in Linda Hirschorn’s beautiful setting from the Hebrew scripture Not By Might sung in Hebrew, Arabic and English. This text from the book of Zechariah says succinctly that peace is to be had – “not by might, not by power, but with love.” Aurora is very pleased to share the stage with The Women of Praise, who will present songs of praise and thanksgiving – born of love of their Lord.

Praise songs continue with the presentation by the Mambo Queens. Their first song is a praise song to Elegua. Both male and female, Elegua is the Yoruba orisha (deity) that has the ability to speak all languages and is, therefore, the ultimate mediator. Orisha ceremonies begin and end with songs of Praise to Elegua. The Comparsa rhythm has its roots in the Congolese/Bantu traditional music of Africa. Comparsa Songs are played in the streets of Cuba during Carnival’s celebratory parades. Yambu is a rumba rhythm which honors the elders of our community. During colonial times, Yambu was the first rumba to be developed by the West Africans and their descendants living in Cuba. Since the Africans did not have access to skin drums at that time, they transferred their rhythms to boxes from the shipyard. The Mambo Queens close with Iyesa Songs for Ochun. Ochun is the deity of river’s sweet waters, essential for life. She gives us the ability to love and to care for others. Ochun also gives us economic prosperity and wealth. Her color is yellow. In her poem “Phenomenal Woman” Maya Angelou would have us think that she is an incarnation of the goddess Ochun. This poem is very popular with women as it celebrates our natural bodies and alluring grace, as does the song Big Legged Woman. Loving ourselves and acknowledging the love of other women in our lives is not usually upheld in our culture. Competition for men, unattainable body images, unhealthy attitudes about food, ignorance about our health and bodies – these have been more the norm.

Bernice Johnson Reagon’s Every Woman Who Ever Loved a Woman is a call to honor the women in our lives who have nurtured and supported us – and whom we love and nurture. And finally, we honor ourselves, with Prayer for Woman a reminder to keep ourselves in our prayers – and in our daily lives that so often are filled with caring for others.
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