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Dirctor's greeting

Good Evening and Welcome!
"May the love we're sharing spread its wings..."

This lyric was the very first that Aurora's founding director, David York, taught the 40 women who came to the first rehearsal of an "all comers" chorus of women, early in January of 1992. Ten years later, Aurora Chorus is still spreading its wings. The love and intent planted that day grew a chorus that combines a love of singing with a deep yearning for peace, and has indeed thrived. This love continues to guide Aurora as she embarks on her next decade of providing an empowering musical environment for women to spread their wings and to share the serious art of choral singing within the warm glow of community - Aurora's and the FULL CIRCLE we create together with you.

"In Aurora, something ignites us and the flames rise high - in a circle of women, singing, we're sure to survive."

These lyrics are from A Circle of Women Singing, our tenth anniversary commissioned work by Betsy Rose (I invite you to read the entire lyric on p.7). Even as I complete my eighth season as Aurora's music director, I have not ceased to marvel at the passion that invests Aurora Chorus. Yes, we all hunger to feel a part of something bigger than ourselves - choral singing is wonderful nourishment in this regard. I think the women of Aurora also crave the empowering company of women.

Today, women are encouraged to shy away from the "F" word: "feminism." In Aurora, the power and wisdom of women are not only welcome - they are expected and respected. We are a fierce bunch here in Aurora Chorus; we unashamedly cry "peace" and we unabashedly spread our women's wings, all while sharing the glorious gift that is music. We offer our gift to you again this evening.

Thank you for coming, for listening, for being a part of a decade of "women in harmony for peace."

Joan Szymko, Director
Aurora Chorus

Sprinkled throughout tonight's program you will find "Aurora Thoughts" - reflections from current and former Aurora members on what singing in Aurora Chorus means to each of them. The number of years each woman has been a member is noted next to her name.
Happy 10th Birthday, Aurora! Contributors to the "$10 for 10 years" Birthday Campaign

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Thanks to all!
about the director and guest artist

Director

Joan Szymko has over twenty years of experience as a choral conductor, composer, teacher and performer in the Pacific Northwest, directing choruses in Seattle and Portland.

She became the director of the 100+ voices of Aurora Chorus in the fall of 1993. In 1994 she formed Viriditas, a select women’s chamber ensemble which is featured on the compact disc recording of her compositions, "Openings" (1998). She has also composed for the stage, most notably as resident composer with Do Jump! Movement Theater from 1995-2001. She performed her music with the company at home in Portland and on tour, including runs on Broadway, at the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. (2000), and at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles (2001).

In 2001, Joan was awarded an Individual Artist Fellowship by the Oregon Arts Commission for her work as a choral composer. She also received an Individual Artist project grant from the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC) for "A Choral Conspiracy," a program of new works to be presented in the fall of 2002. Szymko was selected as a participant in the ASCAP Foundation’s prestigious 2001 Film Scoring Workshop, held annually in Los Angeles. Most recently, she was honored to have her "Hodie" performed in the renowned St. Olaf College Christmas Festival (Dec. 2001). Her choral music is published by Santa Barbara Music Publishing and Treble Clef Music Press.

Special Guest

Betsy Rose is a singer, songwriter, and performing/recording artist, dedicated to the power of song to heal, empower and inspire people of all ages. For over twenty years she has been a vibrant musical voice for justice and healing, performing nationally and internationally at conferences, festivals, and other gatherings serving a broad variety of spiritual and social change movements.

She has shared stages with Pete Seeger, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Holly Near, Joanna Macy, and many other artists, and has worked closely with Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh. She is on the faculty of the Unitarian Starr King School of Ministry, teaching the power of song in personal and social transformation, and is the lead teacher of the Family Practice program at Spirit Rock Meditation Center in Woodacre, California. She leads retreats and singing circles for women, bringing together the joy of community singing and the depth of spiritual and emotional opening that music allows us.

Her recent recordings include "Motherlight" and "Heart of a Child," songs to nourish the souls of those living with, working with, and loving small children. Her earlier recordings include a collection of songs based on the teachings and poetry of Thich Nhat Hanh.

Betsy lives in Berkeley, California with her partner, David, and 10-year-old son, Matthew.

For the past 8 years I have spent Thursday nights singing with a circle of women. Aurora is my place for soul - nourishment: melodies filled with words that resonate in the core of my being, songs of hope in times of despair, harmonies to ground me through my work week. In this circle I have found deep peace.

Marya Hazilla - 8 yrs
About Aurora Chorus

Since 1992, Aurora Chorus has combined a love of fine choral singing with the desire to create community in an atmosphere of inclusiveness and respect. Aurora demonstrates the power of women assembled and the beauty and power of music to heal, to inspire and to reflect a universal yearning for peace. Aurora Chorus welcomes singers at all skill levels and maintains a membership of over 100 singers. Led by director Joan Szymko (SHIM-koh), Aurora has become a source of strength and inspiration in our community through well-honed, heartfelt performances of music as rich and diverse as the lives of the women who sing.

Recent performances include:
- Portland International Women's Day 26th Anniversary (March '02)
- "Nightsongs & Lullabies" concert (Dec. '01)
- Habitat for Humanity Dedication of Homes (Oct. '01)
- Race for the Cure Survivor's Luncheon (Sept '01)
- "Singing for Our Lives" benefit concert for the Washington and Oregon Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Foundation (May '01)

Membership & Event Information

Want to sing with Aurora or plan ahead to hear our next concert? Register for membership or add your name to our mailing list for up-to-date information about future performances. Sign up in the lobby tonight, visit us at www.AuroraChorus.org, or call 503-AURORA-1 for more information.

Friends and Alumnae of Aurora (FAA)

Friends and Alumnae of Aurora was formed as a way to allow former singers and friends of Aurora to stay in touch with the chorus as supporters, volunteers and participants in special activities. We aim to actively cultivate Aurora — its mission, its community, and its reach. Involvement is geared towards supporting concert production, participating in organized gatherings, and for those who can commit to some rehearsal time, possible opportunities to join with the current membership in singing at special outreach events.

FAA was launched in February, 2001. Since then, those who have sung with Aurora, or who enjoy her performances, have the means to remain connected with this unique and vibrant choral community. We would like to invite you on board. For more information or to join, please leave a message at 503-AURORA-1 (287-6721), or send e-mail to faa@aurorachorus.org.

Full Circle

Celebrating a decade of women singing peace.

Aurora Chorus comes "Full Circle" with a tenth anniversary CD recording of chorus and audience favorites, new favorites and featuring two powerful premieres, works commissioned especially for Aurora's tenth Anniversary: "I Am" by music director Joan Szymko and "A Circle of Women Singing" by our very first guest artist, Betsy Rose. Join us in this very joyous and heartfelt celebration. Order your CD now!

SIGN UP FOR YOURS TONIGHT IN THE LOBBY!
Open Up and Let Her Through

Come Pretty Love
i thank you God

The Summer Day
from "It is Happiness"

I AM

PREMIERE

Woman Am I
"The Network of the Imaginary Mother," Robin Morgan

Welcome to the Circle
SOLOIST: Betsy Rose

Somebody
from "Where I Live"

SOLOIST: Diane Sycle

Sister

Miriam

Against the Wind

Aurora
from "Dreamers"

Yo le Canto Todo el Dia

As a Woman
TRIO: Jeanne Wright, Bonnie Singer, Tina Sandoval

Take Heart
from "Processional Prayers"

How Can I Keep from Singing

Prayer for the Warriors

Well Enough Said About That!

Listening

Wanting Memories

Music in My Mother's House

Shooting Star

Coloring Outside the Lines

A Circle of Women Singing

Betsy Rose
arranged by Joan Szymko
traditional Shaker song

Cecil Steffen

poem by e. e. cummings

Joan Szymko

poem by Mary Oliver

Joan Szymko

poem by Catherine DeVinck

anony

arr. Szymko

Betsy Rose

Diane Benjamin

Cris Williamson
arr. Phyllis Safman

Laura Berkson
arr. Szymko

Maire Brennan and T. Jarvis

instrumental arr. Hackathorn and Cowles

Ysaye M. Barnwell

words, Virginia Woolf

Joan Szymko

words, Anne Warner & Dianna MacLeod

arr. Jean Mohr

Sophia/Heather Seacord
words, trad. Sanskrit mantra & Seacord

arr. Szymko

Bernice Johnson Reagon

Kate Jones
arr. J. David Moore

Ysaye M. Barnwell

Stuart Stotts
arr. J. David Moore

Cris Williamson
arr. The Flirtations

Tom Hunter
additional words, Tom Rawson & Kate Campbell
arr. Kate Campbell

Betsy Rose
choral arr. Szymko
Texts of World Premieres

A CIRCLE OF WOMEN SINGING © BETSY ROSE 2002

In this circle no fear
In this circle deep peace
In this circle great happiness
In this circle safety

Make the circle whole, make the circle wide
Big enough to hold everyone inside
Let the timid speak let the angry cry
Let the weary rise up, rise up sanctified
Let the voice of fear let the voice of peace
Have its place to share and to be released
Let the cry of passion, the wail of grief
Blend together in harmony

In Aurora-rippling light
In Aurora-light up the night
In Aurora-something ignites us
And the flames rise high
In a circle of women singing
We’re sure to survive

How do you suppose the Hebrew people
Walking out of Egypt’s chains
Found the strength to go the length
Till the Red Sea opened up a passageway
And how do you suppose the African people
Survived through slavery
To walk the streets of Birmingham
Singing, singing, singing to be free?

Through the times of trouble, the times of doubt
The road is rocky and the flame burns out
Let the music fill up your dreams and your soul
Make you strong, make you whole

It will set your feet on solid ground
’Til you fall in love with your own sound
With the voice of faith, the voice divine
Ancient song from the dawn of time
In Aurora-rippling light
In Aurora-light up the night
In Aurora-something ignites us
And the flames rise high
In a circle of women singing
We’re sure to survive

In this circle no fear
In this circle deep peace
In this circle great happiness
In this circle safety
In this circle one voice
In this circle release
In this circle great harmony
In this circle deep peace.

THE WOMANLY SONG OF GOD (TEXT FOR “I AM”)
CATHERINE DE VINCK

I am the woman dancing the world
alive:
birds on my wrists
sun feathers in my hair
I leap through hoops of atoms;
under my steps
plants burst into bloom
birches tremble in their silver.
Can you not see the roundness of me:
curve of the earth
maternal arms of the sea
encircling you wetly as you swim?
I am the birthing woman
kneeling by the river
heaving, pushing forth a sacred body
not mud, not stone: flesh and blood.
Round, round the wind
spinning itself wild
drawing great circles of music
across the sky.
Round the gourd full of seeds
round the moon in its ripeness
round the door through which I come
stooping into your house.
I am a God of a thousand names:
why cannot one of them be
Woman Singing?

Translations

YO LE CANTO TODO EL DIA

Ya me voy de corazón,
So I am moving with my heart,
Ya me voy con un tambor,
So I am leaving with a drum,
Yo le canto todo el día
I sing to you all day long
Con cariño y alegría,
with affection and joy,
Ya me voy con un tambor
So I am leaving with a drum
Con cariño y emoción.
with affection and emotion.

PRAYER FOR THE WARRIORS

Sanskrit mantra:
Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya

Om the primordial sound
Namo I honor, I bow to, I worship
Bhagavate Lord, God
Vasudevaya the Protector, the One who
Nurture and supports

Aurora’s 2002-2003 Season

DEC 15, 2002 • DEEP PEACE

The annual holiday concert that really is for everyone!
Join us in celebrating the cycles of life and the yearning for peace.
Parkrose H.S. Auditorium, 4 & 7 pm.

APRIL 12, 2003 • EARTHCHANT

A passionate call for justice for our mother earth and all her
creatures. Celebrate Earth Day early with Aurora Chorus. Venue TBA

JUNE, 2003 • WITH PGMC

Portland Gay Men’s Chorus presents Aurora Chorus as special guests in
their annual June “Pride” concert. These two outstanding community choruses
will perform together for the first time! At the Schnitz! Details TBA.
Program Notes  Joan Symko

"There's a song in my heart, it's been singing all my life. There's a voice in my body that is true. There is so much woman inside of me - gonna open up and let her come into the light gonna open up and let her through."

These words open our concert this evening - simple and true, they describe what is at the core of Aurora Chorus. Singer/songwriter Betsy Rose has been sharing Open Up and Let Her Through in her own song circles for a few years now, but she wrote the verses of tonight's version just for Aurora. While Betsy's song speaks of letting one's inner light shine forth, Come Pretty Love, a traditional Shaker song, was sung and danced to in preparation for receiving the divine presence. The "Mother" in the lyric "oh my pretty Mother's home," refers to Mother Ann Lee, prophetess and founder of the American Shakers, seen as the reincarnation of Christ's spirit.

The next piece in the program, e. e. cummings' I thank You God, answers that question quite emphatically: give thanks. Feeling amazement about and "oneness" with creation, and recognizing divine presence within it is one thing — giving that presence a feminine face is quite another. Poet Catherine Devineck explores and celebrates that image in her poem "The Womanly Song of God," which director Joan Symko set to music especially for tonight's anniversary celebration, calling her composition I AM. "I AM" is also a name for God in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Woman Am I, another empowering image of woman spirit, follows. Aurora opened the concert As A Woman (1999) with this vibrant chant, accompanied by spoken text.

The Shakers danced and sang their prayers, while Mary Oliver, in her poem "The Summer Day," states: "I don't know exactly what a prayer is. I do know how to pay attention... how to feel idle and blessed." The Summer Day is the first of three settings of Ms. Oliver's poetry, in a work for instrumental chamber ensemble and women's chorus entitled It is Happiness, premiered by Aurora Chorus in Life is a Dance (1996). The piece was originally scored for nine-piece orchestra; tonight, The Summer Day will be sung with piano, flute, violin and cello accompaniment. This poem, a beautiful inquiry about nature and our purpose within it, asks finally: "What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

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under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Against the Wind, by Maire Brennan, is a challenge to religious control of government in her country and a plea to women everywhere to stand up for free will and self-determination. One of Aurora’s all-time favorites, Against the Wind was the memorable closing number in Joan Szymko’s first concert with the chorus, Rhythms We Harvest from Our Souls (1994). We are pleased to re-create that moment with original accompanists Sylvia Hackathorn (bazouki) and Monty Cowles (drums).

"May the love we’re sharing spread its wings..." This lyric was the very first that Aurora’s founding director, David York, taught the 40 women who came to the first rehearsal of an “all comers” chorus of women, early in January of 1992. Ten years later, Aurora Chorus is still spreading its wings and “moving with heart,” as sung in the next piece, Yo le Canto Todo el Dia. For men and women, “heart” is what both softens us and gives us strength and courage. The heart, the seat of compassion, is also what beg us to see the senselessness of regarding segments of humanity as separate from or as “other” than ourselves. Virginia Woolf’s words, from her book “Three Guineas,” sets the tone for our next several pieces. She wrote: “...as a woman, I have no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world.” Take Heart shows us the world from the perspective of women who, along with children, are often the most impoverished and have the least political power. Composer Ysaye M. Barnwell (Sweet Honey in the Rock) honors and takes courage from these women, who persevere through senseless and cataclysmic violence. The music of Barnwell is certainly well known to the Aurora community; she has been a special guest performing with the chorus on two occasions: in Ancestor’s Breath (1993) and in Lift Every Voice (1995). Take Heart is new to the chorus and is part of a larger work, Processional Prayers.

The following two songs are from very different traditions; How Can I Keep From Singing and Prayer for the Warriors (ancient Sanskrit and “new age” devotional chanting) are salve to the soul stricken with the pain of humanity’s inhumanity. Both are songs of peace, of healing, and of the hope for a “new creation” which keeps us singing. Chanting and world peace aside, “You still got to get up in the morning,” writes Bernice Johnson Reagon in Well, Enough Said About That! (Heartbeat, 1998). To many, making peace on a personal level is at the heart of everything. Reagon reminds us that the ways in which we conduct ourselves day to day, by simply “showing up,” is ultimately where we all begin.

Showing up, paying attention, and realizing that we are all part of one big song is inherent in the next piece, a song new to Aurora entitled Listening. Listening reminds us of the importance of you, our audience: "...your energy moves us to sound deep and strong; Because you are listening, you’re part of the song!" Wanting Memories, another favorite, from Rhythms and Bramble and the Rose (2000), reminds us to look for beauty in the world and in each other. Ysaye Barnwell wrote it in honor of her grandfather after his passing – it is a testament to those heroes and teachers among us.

Many of you in our audience tonight are our heroes and supporters: family, friends, life partners. You’ve inspired us to love and to be our best. The next two songs are for you: Music in My Mother’s House (We All, Everyone of Us, 1996), and Shooting Star (Bramble and the Rose). Coloring Outside the Lines (Life is a Dance) reminds us that, to be our best, we sometimes have to live life “outside of the box.” Aurora is a safe place in which to do just that. In closing, we come FULL CIRCLE with another of Betsy Rose’s songs, this one commissioned especially for our tenth anniversary. After conversations with director Joan Szymko, and with email input from chorus members, Betsy wrote A Circle of Women Singing, a tribute to “women in harmony for peace.” She writes: “in Aurora something ignites us and the flames rise high in a circle of women singing, we’re sure to survive.” Survive and thrive, as we have these last ten years. Thank you for being a part of our song over the years, this evening, and in the years to come.
Aurora is a blessing that allows me, after five years of singing with this circle of women, to say with conviction that I, too, am a singer.

HEATHER VELDUISEN - 5 YRS

Singing in Aurora has allowed me to express, out loud and in public, my deepest feelings, especially those I was taught to keep to myself.

BARBARA READER - 8 YRS

I've sung in Aurora through six address changes, five jobs, four girlfriends, three choir sections, two years of graduate school and one very best friend.

JENNIFER YOCUM - 7 YRS

I am honored to be singing in this concert because the spirits of the women who preceded me are in the music I am singing!

SARAH STEBBINS - 4 YRS

Community, social commentary, public witness, peace embodied, strong women, beautiful music, all wrapped up in one wonderful Aurora!

MARCIE PEYERWOLD - 1 YR

Singing with Aurora connects me with women of great courage who are role models for me during times of physical and emotional darkness.

ANNE DALL - 8 YRS

We come with who we are — all our baggage — and that’s OK. Together we sing — for ourselves, for family, friends, strangers. Together... we rock!

JUDI RANTON - 4 YRS

Like a perennial bud, Aurora emerges and blooms forth with harmony and love each concert season, and continues to grow more beautiful each time with Joan's exceptional direction.

JO LYNDOOM - 8 YRS

Jeanne Giles Hackney, 52 and Nancy C. Giles - 1994

Dear Aurora,

With great love and appreciation, I congratulate you on your 10th anniversary. It has been a lasting pleasure of my life that you shared many hours of wonderful, uplifting music with me. I've loved being a "soccer mom," but the truth is, I've always wished I could sing in the chorus alongside Jeanne and her singing sisters.

With love, gratitude and infinite affection,

Nancy C. Giles
Aurora Chorus: women in harmony for peace

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Aurora's music and singing sisters have seen me through marriage, three pregnancies, two births and my mother's brain cancer. Aurora brings me joy, sustenance and strength. Aurora helps me breathe, lets me cry and holds me while I reach for the stars. JEANNE GILES HAUSK - 7 YRS

Aurora has a way of attracting such nice people, who are expressive, who know how to laugh at themselves, and who keep on singing. CAROL TINGLE - 4 YRS

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I am very excited to be singing in Aurora's 10th anniversary concert. Though my life has changed dramatically during my time with Aurora, it has been my constant community of women, and a place of comfort, joy, great personal growth and love. Through Aurora I have found my voice and I am deeply grateful.

JENNA SCOTT - 9 yrs

After years of weekly rehearsals, the tears still well up unexpectedly sometimes. The beauty of the music, and of belonging to Aurora, is completely extraordinary...

ROBERTA JORTNER - 5 yrs

Aurora has given me the courage to sing in public for the first time in over 35 years. The music we sing has given me a meaningful way to express my thoughts and feelings. An added bonus is the continuous learning about music that we experience. Thanks Aurora!

BARBARA GRAY - 4 yrs

Aurora concerts three, joy to my soul.
Concert #1: my marriage;
#2: Paris honeymoon;
#3: 1st grandchild.
Onward, I celebrate!

GAYE ANN FLYER CAROTHERS - 2 yrs

I started singing with Aurora at a difficult time in my life. With Aurora I found peace, contentment, beautiful music and a room full of wonderful women!

MAUREEN POINTER - 7 yrs
I've just begun to sing with Aurora this year, yet the feeling of belonging and the collective voice of our song fills me with joy and peace. Thank you, family, and thank you Aurora!

ANNE HEIMLICH – YR

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