Life is a Dance

Aurora Chorus
women in harmony for peace
Joan Szymko, Director
April 20, 1996
Ariene Schnitzer Concert Hall
The women in Aurora step on stage tonight from lives that are full—full with friends, family, work and all the many ways each of us cares for her small patch of the planet. Sometimes our lives feel more like a race than a dance—there is so much to do and so little time to do it!

Music, the kind we make here tonight, helps us find meaning and discern a pattern out of what can otherwise feel like noisy chaos. The words of the songs we sing voice our message of hope and connection. We sing that message for ourselves, as well. It is not always easy to come together in community—each bringing our individual torch and our unique burden. One of our purposes in Aurora, as in Concord as a whole, is to experience that coming together bears fruit that multiplies a hundredfold.

The opportunity to perform Joan Szymko's setting of three poems by Mary Oliver has fueled Aurora's creative fire this spring (and stepped up our music practice time)!. We are deeply moved to present a work of such beauty written expressly for Aurora. The work of an author and a director of such talent and passion calls forth the passionate, creative woman in all of us.

So enjoy the work of all of the creative, talented women you experience tonight! We sing to you from lives like your own, full of delight as well as hardship, trouble as well as grace. We come to you in health, and with some of our community ill and healing. We come to you in light, with all of us carrying some darkness. We come to you full-voiced and glad of heart, and occasionally wishing we could spend the evening in a closet with a bowl of ice cream. And through it all, we listen for the music, and move with the rhythm—and won't you join us in the dance?
Our Place in the Natural World by Jeanne Hackney

The visual nature of poet Mary Oliver's prose is such that images appear to the reader like magic, or like daydreams brought to life. Oliver's ability to turn words into visions sometimes has a profound effect on her readers.

The members of Aurora chorus have become intimately familiar with three of Mary Oliver's poems: "A Summer Day," "Sunrise" and "Wild Geese" which Aurora Director Joan Szymko set to music, the piece entitled "it is happiness." Since the poems' introduction in rehearsal, Aurora members have been immersed in their imagery, enhanced by Szymko's melodies and accompanying score. Many women have found that Oliver's words resonate within their bodies and minds. Choir member Anne Mansfield's reaction: "Her words so beautifully represent the other kingdom: plants and trees, not just animals -- the connection we're losing as people to the natural world. She's (Oliver) speaking for the larger earth community." A line from "Wild Geese" illustrates that connection exquisite-ly: "You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves." The message is heart: "What is the name of the deep breath I would take over and over for all of us?"

At that moment, I feel connected to the whole of humanity; afraid and celebratory at the same time of our humanness.

In her review of Mary Oliver's volume "Blue Pastures," poet Judith Barrington wrote of Oliver's words, "They place a kind of spiritual harmony within reach of the reader, who catches a glimpse of how she herself could see the world a little clearer -- how she could find more reverence and joy in her daily life." Well said. Oliver's opening of our eyes to the natural world can only be a good and wonderful thing, as we ourselves will always be a part of that world.

Yeaye Barnwell Here in October 1996

Aurora's next performance will be as part of a larger ensemble in an Oct. 20 concert that will be directed by the celebrated artist Yeaye Barnwell. Multi-talented, Dr. Barnwell is a composer and singer with "Sweet Honey in the Rock," the internationally acclaimed a cappella quintet, a teacher and doctor of speech pathology. She will be assembling and directing a group of adult singers auditioned from the various Concord Community of Choirs, as well as from communities around Portland. The style of the auditions and teaching will be aural, as is Dr. Barnwell's tradition, with the emphasis on flexibility of style rather than music reading ability. The concert program will feature solo sets from Aurora Chorus and satori, group pieces with those two choirs and with the Barnwell-assembled festival chorus. Venue and time are still to be determined. For more details, call the Concord office at 721-0262.

Enrollment Opens

Aurora is a 140-voice women's chorus welcoming all levels of singers to an atmosphere of growth and cooperation. On April 28, we will accept new members for a limited number of openings. The next enrollment date will be in November. Join us in song!

FOR INFORMATION CALL 721-0262

1995-96 Contributors

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Ticket sales account for only a portion of the substantial costs for producing a program. We gratefully acknowledge all who have donated goods and services that enable our programs to be realized. Please add your support with a tax-deductible financial contribution to:

Concord Community of Choirs
P.O. Box 2636
Portland, OR 97208-2636

1996-97 ANNIVERSARY SEASON!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CONCORD COMMUNITY OF CHOIRS AND OUR 1996-97 SEASON, SIGN THE MAILING LIST IN THE LOBBY.

We do not sell or trade our mailing list
It is happiness

I wish to dedicate tonight's premiere performance of my new work, \textit{It is happiness}, to the women of Aurora for accepting this music with such joy and determination. Blessings to all.

*Note from the composer*: Joan wishes to dedicate an unforgettable performance of her new work, \textit{It is happiness}, to the women of Aurora for accepting this music with such joy and determination. Blessings to all.

\textbf{Directors' Bio}

Joan Szymko, conductor and composer, has been leading community choruses from the visceral impact of her words. But after searching for months for the perfect text, I kept returning to Mary Oliver's poems for their great power, beauty and grace; for their ability to move me to tears. Her words and images make me feel at home in the world. I am disconnected from so much of today's cultural hype: cyberspace, fast and furious video images on TV, fast food, cellular phones. Technology is finding better and faster ways to disembodied human communication. So it is luck, and I think it is fate, that Joan has been producing in Portland, Seattle and San Francisco. Joan is planning to bring the women of Aurora to Portland in the not too distant future.

\textbf{Director's Bio}

onductress and composer Joan Szymko has been leading community choruses across the country. Also included among her compositions are sacred anthems, music for modern dance and two full-length musicals. The musical \textit{Cradle and All} has been produced in Seattle and San Francisco. Joan is planning to bring the women of Aurora to Portland in the not too distant future.

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Our opening song Why Don't You Sing in the Chorus strikes a deep chord with many Aurora women. Sometimes life seems to be a series of doors; some are open, some shut, some need just a little coaxing. But whoever you are, no matter how talented, there is always opportunity for friendship and harmony within a community of song. The Shakers (a religious sect that peaked in the 1850s) valued community above all else. They shared all property in common and preached celibacy, love, peace and justice. They were especially known for their fervent worship practices (hence the name “Shaker”). Aurora sings an energetic Shaker round, Come Dance and Sing, encouraging all to “sing with life and power.” English madrigalist John Wilbye’s Seek Sweet Content is a 16th century version of “don’t worry, be happy.” His advice for a good life is quite simple: “Seek sweet content, without her there’s no pleasure; the mind content, knows blessings without measure.” Simple pleasures are best, and if you don’t agree, you will by the end of Good Friends Are the Best. Cincinnati songwriter Therese Edell has the best of friends; stricken with MS, she has been confined to a wheelchair for several years and has battled her disease with the love and support of friends from all over the country.

Marla Beth Elliot of the Seattle-based vocal group, the Righteous Mothers, wrote Common Woman, having been inspired by this much quoted line of poetry by Judy Grahn: “I am a common woman, as common as bread, and will rise.” This anthem to a woman’s strength and determination celebrates her resourcefulness and pride. Striving to make ends meet is surely a common experience among all women from all over the world. Another common, though tragic experience among women is mourning the loss of husbands, fathers and sons during times of war. The words of Vrličko Kolo, sung in Serbo-Croatian proclaim: “We said we would be here, be it night or day. We are sisters, come as one to mourn.” This song is traditionally sung as an introduction to a silent kolo, or dance. This ancient song and dance from an island off the Dalmatian coast (in the former Yugoslavia), was performed to commemorate a battle for freedom. The old-tradition dance (originally a couples dance) is danced in silence to the rhythm of the dancers’ feet. Now rarely performed, it is quite lengthy, complex and energetic. The Aurora dancers will perform a new-tradition dance which has been choreographed for women, using the opening and closing steps from the original dance. Jean Ritchie, known by many as a keeper of Appalachian folk music traditions is also a fine songwriter. Her Flowers of Joy is plaintively optimistic, looking to a time when “we can walk together, and will not then, as now, be... afraid to claim all people, everywhere, our brothers and sisters.”

“To be of the Earth is to know...the joy of bursting and bearing fruit...the love of being food...the scattering of your seeds...the mystery of death and the miracle of life” (John Sos). Songwriter Si Kahn tells the story of someone who lived close to the earth and understood this cycle of death and rebirth in Gone Gonna Rise. In the face of life’s hardships and even death, the “miracle of life” has the power to comfort and inspire, as in the African-American Church Song, The Sun Will Never Go Down. The DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, created by modern-day mystic Samuel Lewis, are a compendium of group dances set to sacred phrases from the many spiritual and religious traditions of the world. They were created and are danced to promote peace in one’s self and within the world community. Unbroken Flows the Rhythm is one of these dances. The title phrase comes from a poem by Ruth St. Denis, one of Lewis’ teachers and one of the founders of modern dance. It also includes two phrases from the Sufi zikr, the practice of remembrance.

(see translations page 6)

De Colores (In Colors) celebrates that undeniable feeling of pleasure and at-one-ness with creation that comes from embracing the day with all its sights and sounds. This traditional Mexican folk song became the anthem of the United Farm Workers during their historic struggle for migrant workers’ rights. Without the courage and chutzpah of folks like Caesar Chavez and Rosa Parks, labor movements and civil rights struggles couldn’t get off the ground. Ms. Parks, whose simple act of insisting on the right to sit sparked the civil rights movement, is one of the characters in Coloring Outside the Lines. Songwriter Tom Hunter wrote this song having been inspired by his own daughter. The message translates to adults as well: Let your own unique spirit shine.

Robin Lane, founder and choreographer of DO JUMP Movement Theatre, is one who’s unique spirit has been shining brightly in Portland for over 20 years. Her Laughing and Crying, a compressed soundtrack of human life, is performed on three human instruments. While Laughing and Crying visits the elements of human emotion, Turn the World Around urges us to go back to the sources of our being: fire, water, earth, and spirit — to seek replenishment for life’s journey; to turn the world around.

It is happiness (see article on page 2 with complete texts of Mary Oliver’s poems)

Mystics from Meister Eckert to St. Francis of Assisi, Hildegard of Bingen to Rumi, have shared the experience of feeling the Divine Presence in all things. Mystery from the “Missa Gaia” identifies this experience with the utmost simplicity and beauty: “O Mystery, you are alive; I feel you all around. You are the fire in my heart; you are the holy sound. You are all of life — it is to you that I sing. Grant that I may feel you always in everything.” Life Is a Dance brings us to the end of tonight’s program. Songwriter Theresa Chandler assures us that we’ve got what we need; we know the steps, we’ve got the rhythm — all we need is to dance our way through the open door.

Good luck!
PROGRAM

Why Don't You Sing In the Chorus
soloists: Nancy McFarlane, Kathy Smith, Cindy Trelstad
Linda Allen
arranged by Kate Campbell

Come Dance & Sing
Shaker Round

Seek Sweet Content
John Wilbye (1547-1628)

Good Friends Are the Best
bass: Dax Smith; Aurora top ensemble
Therese Edell
choreography by Sue Ceswick

Common Woman
soloist: Judy Sapon-Borson
Marla Beth Elliot & The Righteous Mothers
arranged by Szymko

Vriliko Kolo
Kolo dance ensemble
traditional song from Lika, Dalmatia

Flowers of Joy
solo: Jay Marwood; violin: Denise Ayres
Aurora ensemble singers
Jean Ritchie
arranged by Szymko

Gone, Gonna Rise Again
soloist: Catherine Rolling-Freedman
violin: Denise Ayres
Si Kahn
arranged by Szymko

The Sun Will Never Go Down
African-American Church Song
arranged by Bernice Johnson Reagon

Unbroken Flows the Rhythm
sufi dance ensemble
music & movements, Adivisura Carol Griffin
words, Ruth St. Denis and traditional
traditional song from Mexico

De Colores
(In Colors)
Tom Hunter/additional words by
Tom Rauson & Kate Campbell
arranged by Kate Campbell

Coloring Outside of the Lines
soloists: Christine Brown, Carol Timper,
Olivia Clark, Kelly Childress
choreographed by Robin Lane

Laughing and Crying, the Music of Life
DO JUMP Movement Theatre:
Carolyn Holtzman, Robin Lane, Robin Woolman
bass: Dax Smith
Harry Belafonte & Robert Freedman
arranged by Szymko

Turn the World Around

INTERMISSION

Premiere Performance
It is happiness
A Summer Day
Sunrise
Wild Geese
(please hold your applause until the end)
Joan Szymko
poetry by Mary Oliver

Mystery
Jeremy Geffen
arranged by Scott, Szymko

Life Is a Dance
Theresa Chandler
arranged by Szymko
Aurora Chorus: women in harmony for peace

SOPRANO 1
Angelica Adams*
Michele Alderson
Debra Arrivée
Jean Askalon
Marilyn Ayers
Lynn Buechler
Barbara Cabot
Anne Dall
Marj Halford*
Christine Hayward
Margaret Imile*
Jo Lyndon*
Nancy McFarlane
Eileen Melander
Kirsten Meyer*
Heather Michel
Gina O’Feral
Debbie Pinney
Helen Richardson
Ellen Roberts
Judy Sapon-Borson
Jenna Scott
Lesley Sepetoski
Cheri Smith
Cathy Steen
Lisa Stone
Robin Sutherland
Janet Trinkle
Marsha Weidof

SOPRANO 2
Lori Arnett
Natasha Beck
Priscilla Bernard
Barbara Bonnema
Christine Brown
Patricia Chapman
Diane Dickey
Marci Edwards

Kaye Exo
Susan Friedler
Jeanne Hackney
Laura Hankis
Kyra Hazilla
Tiwla Johnson
Judith Komishane
Kerry Lefever
Jan Lustig*
Anne Mansfield
Sandy McQueen
Ellen Morrison
Mary Ellen Morrison
Georgia Pinkel
Gayle Preston
Catherine Rolling-Freedman
Joan Sears
Megan Smith
Eileen Spencer*
Cheryl Summerton
Jeanne Vernon
Twyra Wallace
Lorraine Wrazen
Carol Wright

ALTO 1
Anne Bates
Judie Brodkey
Karen Chase
Kathy Childress
Lois Dikes
Maria Doheary
Ann Dudley
Joanna Dunmais-Clark
Kathleen Fisher
Karla Fitzwater
Lori Flowers
Jodie Franklin
Peggy Friedl-Yee
Leslie Gardiner
Cathy Garrett*
Jennifer Gates
Carol Hazzard
Merrill Hendin
Jeanne Henry
Ann Huntwork
Susan Hyde
Kathy Kelley
Denise Kossover-Wechter
Eileen La Chance
Lisa Larsen-Wheeler
Joan Logan
Karen Milton
Helen Nissani*
Theresa Orange
Janet Ploss
Anne Rutherford
Kate Schuyler
Judie Franklin
Fran Weick*
Marci Williams
Carleen Wroblusky
Joni Young
Adelle Zimmerman

ALTO 2
Jacqueline Abel
Joan Andrews
Patricia Ayerza
Randi Besser-Rapopo
Olivia Clark
Karen Erde

Pam Evans
Maria Hazilla
Lee Johannes
Marylyn John
Colleen Keys
Susan Knight-Allen
Jay Marmaduke
Linda Meier
Linda Milone
Carole Most
Carolyn Boshari
Melanie Plaut
Wendy Rankin
Barbara Reader
Elizabeth Robb
Mari Roberts-Pillon
Allyn Shepley
Kathy Smith
Carol (CJ) Timper
Maureen Tolonen
Carol Walker
Twyla Wallace
Lorraine Wrazen
Carol Wright
Adelle Zimmerman

ENSEMBLE SINGERS
Barbara Cabot
Kathy Childress
Anne Dall
Diane Dickey
Karen Erde
Susan Friedler
Jeanne Hackney
Christine Hayward
Jeanne Henry
Marylyn John
Tiwla Johnson

Kathy Kelley
Colleen Keys
Denise Kossover-Wechter
Kerry Lefever
Jay Marmaduke
Linda Meier
Colleen Keys
Susan Knight-Allen
Jay Marmaduke
Linda Meier
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Allyn Shepley
Kathy Smith
Carol (CJ) Timper
Maureen Tolonen
Carol Walker
Twyla Wallace
Lorraine Wrazen
Carol Wright
Adelle Zimmerman

TAP DANCERS
Lorraine Wrazen
Casas
Cindy Dickey
Barbara Cabot
Marylyn John

Judy Ayers
Toni Shemarya
Kathleen Fisher
Marylyn John

SUFI DANCERS
Kate Schuyler, lead
Patricia Ayerza
Barbara Bonnema
Judy Brodkey
Judi Franklin
Kerry Hazilla
Marylyn John
Linda Meier
Megan Smith
Judi Solomon
Cathy Steen
Lisa Stone
Cheryl Summerlin
Cindy Dreifstät
Martha Wagner
Twyra Wallace

ALL-CONCORD MARCHING BAND
Ray Elliot, tenor saxophone
Deanna Fitzpatrick, trombone
Ron Geitgey, tuba
Laura Hanks, clarinet
Tiwla Johnson, flute
Mary McCurry, piccolo

AUDIENCE
Judy Ayers
Toni Shemarya

KEYS TO THE ARTS
Angelica Adams*
Michele Alderson
Debra Arrivée
Jean Askalon
Marilyn Ayers
Lynn Buechler
Barbara Cabot
Anne Dall
Marj Halford*
Christine Hayward
Margaret Imile*
Jo Lyndon*
Nancy McFarlane
Eileen Melander
Kirsten Meyer*
Heather Michel
Gina O’Feral
Debbie Pinney
Helen Richardson
Ellen Roberts
Judy Sapon-Borson
Jenna Scott
Lesley Sepetoski
Cheri Smith
Cathy Steen
Lisa Stone
Robin Sutherland
Janet Trinkle
Marsha Weidof

LORRAINE WRAZEN

CREDITS
**Translations**

**VRLIČKO KOLO**
We said we would sing here
Be it night or mid-day.
We are sisters, come as one to mourn.
Dalmations, you were brave soldiers;
Bravely you fought in Lika.

**UNBROKEN FLOWS THE RHYTHM**
(complete text)
Unbroken flows the rhythm for me to dance upon
Ishq Allah Mabud Lilah
(God is Love, Lover and Beloved)
Allah hu Allah, Allah hu
(Only One Being exists)
Love flows on

**DE COLORES**
In colors the field dress up in the spring
In colors the little birds come from far off
In colors we see the rainbow glistening
And that's why those big many colored loves are what I like
The rooster sings with his cockadoodle doo
the hen with her cluck, cluck, cluck
the baby chicks with their peep, peep, peep
And that's why those big many colored loves are what I like

**Profile: Robin Lane**
Movement is Robin Lane's middle name. She has been choreographing complex pieces that incorporate dance, theatre and gymnastics since she was 14! The inception of DO JUMP Movement Theatre in 1977 gave Robin a permanent cast with which to showcase her creations. Happily for the arts community, Robin is generous with her time and energy outside of the show schedule and classes she holds; she's also busy choreographing and creating works for many theatre and dance groups throughout the West Coast. Robin has collaborated with Concord Community of Choirs artistic director David York on numerous occasions, most recently on the Aurora solstice production *Dreamers*, written with poet Judith Barrington. Aurora looks forward to sharing the stage with Robin and the DO JUMP cast performing the piece “Laughing and Crying, the Music of Life.” Robin's physical exuberance is most appropriate with the concert's theme of celebrating life through movement and song.

**Gone Gonna Rise by Catherine Rolling-Freedman, soloist**
When I first read the words of “Gone, Gonna Rise,” I saw that it was about my grandaddy Addison Dunlap Ellison. He was a farmer with a degree in AG from the University of West Virginia in 1908: a parent with Emma Catherine Kyle to seven children; a Sunday School superintendent for 50 years in a one-room church. A healthy man, he lived 94 years in the hills of West Virginia farming the same land settled by family pioneers more than 200 years before.

The Ellisons of Hans Creek harnessed the stream’s power to grind flour; they milled lumber, gardened with horses, wove coverlets, raised cattle, turkeys and chickens; sold enough grain, milk and eggs to put their children through college. They sang, danced and played the fiddle between hard chores. They rode horses on Ellison’s ridge many miles to school. Many of them are buried in the cemetery between the ridge and the farm.

My ancestry is rich with the sights, sounds and smells of the daily rhythms of a farming way of life. But “Gone, Gonna Rise” is about all the grandfathers. We each had one and hopefully got to know him. And we will pass on the strengths learned and inherited from our very diverse and beautiful ancestors. In each case “the storms of life have cut ’em down, but the new wood springs from the roots underground. Gone, gonna rise.”

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• Soul Sister Circle
  Begins mid-May, Wednesday evenings, 6 weeks
  Shamanic journey group for women exploring healing,
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• Sophomore Soul Circle
  Tuesday afternoons
  Journey and support group for sophomore high school women.

• Authentic Voice
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