PRESENTED BY THE CONCORD COMMUNITY OF CHOIRS

WINTER, FIRE & SNOW
A SOLSTICE GATHERING

December 21, 1997

AURORA CHORUS • JOAN SZYMKO, DIRECTOR
WOMEN IN HARMONY FOR PEACE
SPECIAL GUESTS: CONCORD CHOIR • DAVID YORK, DIRECTOR
Season Update

January

• Let Freedom Ring - satori
  Jan 17 & Jan 18, 7pm • Unity Church of Portland

March

• So Many Men* - coro uomo & satori
  Men's chorus festival with Portland Gay Men's Chorus
  Mar 13 & 14, 8pm • Westminster Presbyterian Church

April

• Annual Silent Auction - All Choirs
  Apr 3 • time & location tba

• It Is Happiness - Viriditas
  Apr 25, 8:00pm • St. Mary's Academy

May

• With One Voice We Sing - Chrysalis
  May 2, 7:00pm • Bethlehem Lutheran Church

• Muses & Music - Coro Uomo
  May 17, 7:00pm • The Old Church

• Heartbeat - Aurora
  May 31, 2 & 7:00pm • St. Mary's Academy

June

• Brothers Sing On - satori
  June 6, 8pm & June 7, 7pm • Unity Church of Portland

* indicates event not produced by the Concord Community of Choirs

Our Mission

To produce quality choral music as an instrument of peace for our audience and ourselves, through a community of choirs. Our goal is to instill concord and an awareness of one world, in an ever-expanding audience.

A Consortium of Choirs Dedicated to Affirming Peace Through Music.

Concord Choir

Peace through music
David York, Director
Semi-professional chamber ensemble. Members are auditioned every spring.

Aurora Chorus

Women in harmony for peace
Joan Szymko, Director
Multi-level, 140-voice women's chorus. Meets Thursday evenings at Whitaker Middle School. Open enrollment as space is available.

Satori men's chorus

Men singing peace
Ray Elliott, Director
Multi-level men's chorus. Meets Wednesday evenings in downtown Portland. Call to register.

Chrysalis Children's Choirs

Young voices, open minds, joyful hearts
David York, Mary McCarty & Elizabeth Udy, Directors
Chrysalis Concert Choir, directed by David York & Mary McCarty, is an auditioned choir for treble singers, ages 10 to 15, with previous musical experience.

Celebration Singers, directed by Elizabeth Udy, welcomes singers ages 7 to 10, regardless of musical training. Rehearsals are Thursday afternoons at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

A select women's chamber ensemble. Experienced singers with music reading skills, who love to perform, are encouraged to audition.

Viriditas

The greening power of song
Joan Szymko, Director

Coro Uomo

The harmony of man
Steve Peter, Director
An auditioned men's ensemble. Primary repertoire is new and rarely heard men's choral music.

Ashira

A network of community-based choruses who meet monthly. Performances are in the nature of outreach. Groups range in size from 12 to 50.

Call 721-0262 to register or for more information.
CONCORD COMMUNITY OF CHOIRS

DIRECTORS
David York: Artistic Director, Concord Community of Choirs; Director Concord Choir, Chrysalis Concert Choir
Joan Szymko: Aurora, Viriditas Vocal Ensemble
Ray Elliott: satori
Steve Peter: coro uomo
Elizabeth Udy: Chrysalis Celebration Singers
Mary McCarty: Assistant Director, Chrysalis Concert Choir

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CONCORD COMMUNITY 1997-98 CONTRIBUTORS

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JOAN SZYMKO MAKING PLANS FOR CD

Having been asked on countless occasions "Is there a recording available of that?" Joan Szymko has decided that this is the time to seek a wider audience for her compositions by producing a professional quality recording.

it is happiness (premiered by Aurora last year), Openings (music for trapeze – DO JUMP! 1996-97) and Ubi Caritas (premiered by Concord Community of Choirs fall '96) are some of Joan's works that will appear on her first CD. If you enjoy Joan's music and want to be kept informed of the progress of this project, please sign your name at a special table in the lobby.
Directors' Biographies

Joan Szymko has been leading community choruses in the Pacific Northwest for sixteen years. Trained as a music educator and choral conductor, she further honed her leadership and musical skills as artistic director and conductor of The Seattle Women's Ensemble (1981-91) and as music director of University Baptist Church (Seattle, 1987-93). Joan's musicianship, her extensive work with women's voices, her knowledge of "alternative" choral literature (i.e. peace & justice orientated, woman-centered, multi-cultural) made her uniquely qualified to take on the leadership of Aurora Chorus in the fall of 1993.

Joan is also the director of Viriditas Vocal Ensemble, a select women's chamber ensemble which she founded in 1994. Like Aurora, Viriditas is a member chorus of the Concord Community of Choirs. Joan also leads the Portland State Community Chorus.

Joan has always composed and arranged music for choral ensembles she directs, and tonight is premiering a piece she wrote specifically for this concert, "Fire, Burn Bright." Her works for women's voices have been performed by choruses across the country. She has also composed music for the stage, specifically musicals, and music for dance and movement theater. She is a resident composer and a frequent performer with DO JUMP Movement Theater in Portland and is currently performing in "Up in the Air" which runs through January 4th at the Echo Theatre.

Joan will be taking a huge step forward in 1998 as she produces "OPENINGS," a CD recording featuring music she has composed for Viriditas, Aurora and DO JUMP. The recording will include performances by Viriditas as well as musicians and choruses from the Pacific Northwest and beyond. Look for information in the lobby after tonight's show.

Ever since David York was a child soprano, choirs and choral music have been his primary source of musical inspiration. He began conducting his church choir as a teenager, and by the time he had moved to Portland in 1981, his passion for a career in choral music had thoroughly taken root.

At age 23, he became the conductor of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, a position he held for eight years.

In 1986 he enlisted a dozen of his friends to form Concord Choir, a semi-professional chamber choir dedicated to affirming peace through music. From the beginning he has worked to establish a high standard of quality for the ensemble. In addition to performing standard classics and contemporary masterpieces, Concord Choir has served as a vehicle for premiering new works, many of which David has composed himself.

After several years of having auditioned and turned away a plethora of qualified women due to a finite number of openings within Concord Choir, David decided to form a women's chorus modeled on the peace-mindedness he fosters within Concord Choir. In January of 1992, approximately 40 women came together to launch Aurora. Since then, the Concord Community of Choirs has grown to involve over 300 people each week in its eight distinct singing groups.

David graduated Magna Cum Laude from Oklahoma City University with a BMus degree in Voice Performance and Vocal Music Education, and a minor in piano. His masters degree from Portland State University is in conducting. Currently, he is working to receive a PhD in Music Composition and Music Theory from the University of Oregon, a degree he expects to receive in the year 2000. David's long-term goal is to form a music academy for exceptional young musicians with an emphasis in choral music and composition.

Translation

VESI VÄSYY LUMEN ALLE
(Water under snow is weary)

Water under snow is weary,
under ice it stretches sleeping.

Winds are blowing, no rest for them

Thousand-footed flakes are dancing,
and the blizzard boy is whirling.

Winds are blowing, no rest for them.

But it is silent where the grass lies,
withered grass whose stalks are dying,
under snowdrifts, oblivious.

There is time now for slumbering,
there is time for snowing as well.
Program Notes

When writing the libretto to “Dreamers,” (a solstice oratorio composed for Aurora by David York), Judith Barrington said she “didn’t want to perpetuate the idea that dark is bad and that the only redeeming feature about the Winter Solstice is that the dark’s going to be over and we’re going to start having light.”

Solstice, which opened “Dreamers,” sets both a mysterious and celebratory tone as Aurora Chorus and Concord Choir together “welcome this magical night.”

The magical luminous harmonies of the Irish vocal group Anúna (of Riverdance fame) are heard in Winter, Fire & Snow, a setting of a poem by Dublin born poet, MacDara Woods. We continue in a Celtic vein with Red & Green by Maddy Prior, a contemporary English singer and songwriter with strong folk roots. Both text and the “primitive” drive of the music convey the awe and fear felt in the “dark time of the year.” It also is a reminder that many of the winter holiday traditions we follow have pre-Christian roots; the Celts, for one, believed evergreen trees to be sacred and powerful, as they did not die away like other trees in winter.

The beautiful winter images expressed in Vesi Väsy Lumen Alle (Water Under Snow) come from the long, snow-filled winters of Scandinavia. This piece, written for Finland’s Tapiola Choir for youth, was performed in the Planetarium of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry from 1990 to 1995. The cyclic references to the ever turning, ever changing year in Berry’s poem are reflected in Kate’s use of canon among the various sections of the choir. The changing of the seasons is also the focus of Judith Barrington’s poem, Season’s Song, one of the a cappella pieces from “Return of the Light” by David York.

Aurora returns with To Shorten Winter’s Sadness a madrigal from 16th century England. This particular madrigal makes reference to a “masque” where “mummers” in masked disguises are inclined to make the most of the long dark nights with some love making. The “masque” was a descendant of “mumming” a tradition associated with winter festivals.

All winter festivals have their roots in the earth-based cycles of birth, fruition, death and rebirth. In the dead of winter, Solstice holds the promise of new life that comes with the realization that Light Is Returning. In Charlie Murphy's driving refrain, the “Earth Mother is calling her children home.” To the ancient Celts, to many indigenous peoples and to many who today follow the “old ways” the earth is our “Mother.” The cycles of life, death and rebirth are personified by the three faces of the female deity: Virgin (spring-rebirth), Mother (summer-fruition) and Crone (winter-death.) Aurora sings Old Woman in honor of the Crone and the wise woman in each of us.

In Old Woman, the “fragments and colors” of our lives are gathered safely together in one circle. Secret Gardens of Heart is another weaving together – of memories – with the realization that everything indeed changes and stays the same. With each year’s passing we look to see how far we’ve come. “How do you measure a year in the life?” Jonathon Larson asks in Seasons of Love, our closing song. “Measure in Love” is his own reply.

Aurora Chorus and Concord Choir wish you, our friends and family, a holiday season that is a “Season of Love” that lasts well into the New Year!

Program Notes

Where Fire Burn Bright conjures up images of hearth and home, In the Winter places us firmly outdoors in the elements... in nature. Judy Fjell’s song, with its clear, succinct images and potent silences leaves us all listening for the “message in the darkness.”

There is a gentle and moving starkness to Ralph Vaughn Williams’ Infinite Shining Heavens, from his “Songs of Travel.” The poem by Robert Louis Stevenson describes desolation and the comfort felt as an observer of the night sky. Take Back the Night follows, urging us to trust the darkness; when we keep hope and love alive, there is nothing to fear.

A rhapsodic harp solo sets a contemplative mood for Concord Choir’s entrance in Psalm of the Solstice by Malcolm Dalglish. First sung in Latin, then in English, the words speak of “gazing out into the night on the eve of the longest night.” In stark contrast, The Dark Around Us, also from Dalglish’s “Hymnody of Earth,” is a rhythmically vivacious song of rejoicing. The characteristic hammer dulcimer parts used throughout Malcolm’s music adapts beautifully to the harp. The women of Concord Choir are featured in Winter’s Lullaby.

Kate Campbell composed Circles of Return in 1994 for Concord Choir to sing in conjunction with their performance of “Return of the Light,” a winter solstice celebration performed in the Planetarium of the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry from 1990 to 1995. The cyclic references to the ever turning, ever changing year in Berry’s poem are reflected in Kate’s use of canon among the various sections of the choir. The changing of the seasons is also the focus of Judith Barrington’s poem, Season’s Song, one of the a cappella pieces from “Return of the Light” by David York.

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PROGRAM

AURORA CHORUS & CONCORD CHOIR

Solstice
from “Dreamers”
percussionists: Christina Blount, Kate Campbell, Monty Cowles,
Teresa Culp, Judy A. Rose, Joan Szymko

Winter, Fire & Snow
solos: Barbara Cabot (4pm), Leslie Sepetoski (7pm)

Red & Green
dancer: Patricia Cormnan

Vesi Vässy Lumen Alle
(Water Under Snow is Weary)
speaker: Robin Sutherland
piano: Kate Campbell
flute: Mary McCarty

Fire, Burn Bright
Premier

In the Winter

The Infinite Shining Heavens

Take Back the Night

Selections from “Hymnody of the Earth”
1. Psalm of the Solstice 2. The Dark Around Us

Winter’s Lullaby

Circles of Return

Season’s Song
from “Return of the Light”
solo: Lark Ryan

To Shorten Winter’s Sadness

Light Is Returning

Old Woman

Secret Gardens of the Heart

Rock That Sucker
drivers: Carol Hazzard & Margot Faegre

Seasons of Love
solos: Lori Flowers & Denise Andersen

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