Light Is Returning

Joan Szymko, Director
In concert with special guest
KIM STAFFORD

First Congregational Church
1126 SW Park Avenue
Portland, Oregon

December 21, 2014
Greetings from the Aurora Chorus Board of Directors

Thank you for joining us today! We are delighted that many of you have made Aurora’s December concert one of your winter holiday traditions. We are proud to offer something a little different from the usual holiday fare, yet attuned to the season. Gathering with family and friends, finding signs of hope, and celebrating life and love are elements that bridge religious and cultural differences. We are glad to bring these to winter’s dark days.

We hope you’ll celebrate another holiday with us soon and invite you to put International Women’s Day on your 2015 calendar now. Join us again on March 8 for Dare To Be Powerful. Plan to bring a friend, too! Aurora is proud to celebrate women’s voices together in a powerful way. Thank you for celebrating with us.

Kristan Burkert, Board President

Aurora Board of Directors

Kristan Burkert, President
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Rebecca Pepper, Secretary
Marilyn Lindberg, ACT liaison
Joan Szymko, Ex-officio
Michelle Alderson, Scribe
Krista Thomas
Carol Walker
Jaclyn Leeds
Wendy Thompson
Rachel Wagner
Matt Salazar

Aurora Staff

Joan Szymko, Artistic Director
Signe Lusk, Accompanist
Bunny Marechal, Interim Administrative Manager
Kathy Hryciw, Bookkeeper

Aurora Chorus

Since 1992, Aurora Chorus has honored the strength and beauty of women’s lives through the fine art of choral singing. Aurora was founded on the belief that music can be a powerful instrument of peace locally, globally, and in the hearts of all who listen and all who sing. In an atmosphere of personal growth and cooperation, Aurora is proud to provide both novice and experienced singers with an unparalleled opportunity to expand and transform a love of singing into an understanding and appreciation of healthy vocal production, choral technique, musical expression and literacy. Led by Director Joan Szymko, Aurora Chorus consists of around 100 singers from the Portland/Vancouver area, presents two full-length concerts each year, and performs at community outreach events throughout the year. Aurora has produced three full-length CD recordings: Full Circle, Solstice, and Baby, It’s Cold Outside. All are for sale in the lobby and through the chorus website. Please visit us online at www.Aurorachorus.org, your source for future events and for information about joining the chorus.

Get a Tax Credit—Donate to Aurora

Donors who contribute to Oregon cultural nonprofits, including ours, then make a matching donation to the Trust, can receive a 100% state tax credit on the Cultural Trust donation, up to $500 per individual, $1,000 per household and $2,500 per Class-C Corporation.

The more donations Oregonians make this year, the more music our state will be able to fund next fall. Thank you for your support!

Oregon Cultural Trust
www.culturaltrust.org

Raise Your Voice in Song

Last March, Aurora presented its first International Women’s Day concert before a nearly sold-out crowd in a feisty, fun performance that brought the audience to its feet. Now we’re looking for singers to help us do it again.

Our next International Women’s Day program, Dare to Be Powerful, will again feature pieces that celebrate and empower women. We invite singers to join us for this short, 8-week rehearsal term and perform in our concert on Sunday, March 8. Rehearsals take place on Thursday evenings beginning January 15. A two-part Choral Basics workshop will be offered at the beginning of the term to help you get up to speed or brush up on your choral skills. You can also choose to stay for the entire spring term, singing in both Dare to Be Powerful and Let the River Run. Interested? To find out more, write to info@aurorachorus.org.

Artistic Director

Joan Szymko has conducted community choruses in the Pacific Northwest for over thirty years. When Joan came to Portland in 1993 to take on the leadership of Aurora Chorus, she brought extensive experience with women’s voices, composing and arranging skills, and a wide knowledge of peace and justice repertoire. In subsequent years Joan founded and directed Viriditas Vocal Ensemble, a select women’s choir. With Viriditas she collaborated with Do Jump! Movement Theater. As a resident composer with Do Jump! (1995-2012), she had the opportunity to perform her music with the company at their home theater in Portland and on tour from Broadway to Los Angeles. Joan recently joined the choral faculty at the Portland State University School of Music as director of the Vox Femina women’s choir.

In the last decade, music Joan composed for Aurora Chorus and Viriditas has gained recognition in the larger choral community for providing “opportunities for women’s choruses to stretch beyond the ordinary and the expected to the refreshing and powerful” (The Choral Journal). A renowned and frequently commissioned composer with over 100 choral titles in print publication, her music is sung by a variety of distinguished ensembles across North America and abroad. The American Choral Directors Association recognized Joan’s lasting contribution to the choral arts by selecting her as the recipient of the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission in 2010. She is currently working on a major work for chorus and orchestra, Remembrances, funded by the Oregon Community Foundation’s Creative Heights Initiative, to be premiered by the Eugene Vocal Arts Ensemble in the spring of 2016.

Save the Dates

Sunday, March 8, 2015
You won’t want to miss our next concert, Dare to Be Powerful. Portland singer-songwriter Kelly Bosworth joins us as our special guest for our second annual International Women’s Day performance, followed by a reception featuring organizations that focus on women’s issues.

Sunday, May 17, 2015
In our May concert, Let the River Run, we will be welcoming Seattle women’s chorus Con Brio for a joint performance.

Visit us online at AuroraChorus.org for more details.

Kathy Hryciw

Aurora Staff

For more information, visit www.Aurorachorus.org
Signe Lusk is staff pianist at the First Unitarian Church in Portland, and Eugene opera companies. Currently, she works for Seattle Symphony and the United States Department of State. Lusk has 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, Sir Anthony Caruso, Nico Castel, and John Del Carlo, and she was pianist for the Oregon Coast Orchestra. She has taught writing workshops in Italy, Scotland, and Bhutan, as well as a host of colleges and community centers in America.

Kim Stafford is the founding director of the Northwest Writing Institute at Lewis & Clark College, where he has taught writing since 1979, and is the author of a dozen books of poetry and prose, including The Muses Among Us: Eloquent Listening and Prose, The Poets of the Northwest Coast, and Art & Ecology, and the Fishtrap Writers Gathering. He has taught regularly at the Sitka Center for Environmental Learning, the Northwest Writing Institute at Lewis & Clark College, and has taught writing workshops in Italy, Scotland, and Bhutan, as well as a host of colleges and community centers in America. Stafford's poem is a testament to the healing power of poetry and song, although he told me that songs and poems come to him in quite different ways and have different effects:

Poems come to me every day. Now and then a song comes. It feels different, seems to be singing already. I remember walking late at night, in the rain, and hearing a song, in the voice of a homeless person, ringing in my mind. Rhyme is part of it. But the text for a song feels like it's in a different language, our deepest, most native language. As a diva said once, we start life by singing—the child's long wail is an aria. Some people stop singing as they grow, but fortunately others do not.

But a successful poem, Stafford added, is "a song in disguise. It may ring true even when spoken." Still, he feels that a poem's words set to music "[raise] the power of words exponentially."

On the website of Lewis and Clark College's Northwest Writing Institute, which Stafford directs, he states, "If communication is the fundamental alternative to violence and injustice, what is the work of each voice among us?" This is a question that each of us must answer for ourselves, a question that may take us a lifetime to answer. But in Stafford's poem, he states:

"For the moment, the dream is the same dream.
Violence and injustice, what is the work of each voice among us?"

Kim Stafford on the Power of Words, Sung and Spoken

By Jeanne Kinsley

A spoken poem, a charm, a spell, a song can fill a room, fill a heart, crowd a mind with hope . . . we are stirred . . . we are moved. For the duration, we may dream the same dream.

This is what writer, teacher, filmmaker, and musician Kim Stafford told me during an interview about his extraordinary poem, "Friend: Download This Free Proclamation for Local Use." During this concert you can look forward to hearing a musical setting of the poem, "Be It Therefore Resolved," written by Artistic Director Joan Szymko.

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"For the moment, the dream is the same dream.
Violence and injustice, what is the work of each voice among us?"
As we begin our concert, we inhabit the darkness of the season and explore its power and mystery. According to Sri Ramakrishna, a famed 19th-century Indian mystic, darkness is the ultimate Mother—Kali:

My Mother is the principle of consciousness. . . .

The night sky between the stars is perfectly black. The waters of the ocean depths are the same; the infinite is always mysteriously dark. This inebriating darkness is my beloved Kali.

In our opening chant, From the Reaches of Darkness, poet (and former Aurora singer) Elly Worden reflects on the solstice and on Mother Kali's transformative powers as overseer of darkness (death) and rebirth. In the Hindu religion, Kali is a manifestation of the supreme Mother Goddess, Durga, who is honored in our next piece, the prayer chant Jai Bhavani, as divine Mother Earth. Some believe Kali/Durga to be one of the many Black Madonnas that exist in various locations throughout the world. Aurora's celebration of the Divine Feminine then culminates with David MacIntyre's meditative, ecstatic Ave Maria.

The image of mother and child is at the center of Christmas religious observance. Another familiar image is that of Joseph leading Mary and baby Jesus on a donkey in the desert night, refugees fleeing Bethlehem and the murderous wrath of King Herod. Two thousand years later, there are many constructions of any kind. But that's where the light gets in, and that's where the resurrection is and that's where the return, that's where the repentance is. It is with the confrontation, with the brokenness of things.

Anthem's message of hope is clear and unsentimental and believable. Do what you can: "Ring the bells that still can ring." The winter solstice is a kind of resurrection, a new beginning, even though it is the darkest hour. In our concert title song, Light Is Returning, we keep the "light of hope alive" for ourselves, for our loved ones, and for the planet. With the return of the light and the lengthening of days, our concert program gives way to the sun. Wendeyaho, popularized by Rita Coolidge as Cherokee Morning Song, has traditionally been sung by women as part of morning prayers, while facing the rising sun and welcoming the new day. The song is actually not in the Cherokee language, but is sung in a little-known Native American language, Tihanaama. According to one of the remaining fluent speakers, the phrase wendeyaho means "Our hearts (spirits) are strong."

Turn the World Around begins, "We come from the fire." Harry Belafonte was inspired to write this song upon hearing a story, told by a village storyteller deep in the interior of the West African nation of Guinea, about how fire (the sun), the water, the earth, and Spirit together turn the world around. We are here for but a short time, and if we take the time to understand and care for each other, we together can "turn the world around." Imagine it were so—the earth and the heavens would surely sing for joy! ¡El Cielo Canta Alegría! (Heaven Is Singing for Joy) brings us fully out of the dark and into the shining light that is there for each of us, and in each of us. The sun is always shining somewhere in December—if not in our beloved hometown, then somewhere in the Aloha state. Aurora takes you there with Honolulua Chorus.

No matter where you go or what holiday you celebrate this week, we send you off with the wise, practical, and enlightened Seven Principles of the African American/Pan-African holiday of Kwanzaa, celebrated from December 26 to January 1. The name Kwanzaa comes from a Swahili phrase meaning "fruits of the harvest." The message of Kwanzaa speaks to the best of what it means to be African and human in the fullest sense. May we all enjoy the fruits of our understanding as we seek to "know who we are" and to truly "see each other clearly." Wishing you all light and beauty in the new year.

— Joan Szymko
From the Reaches of Darkness
Joan Szymko / poem by Elly Worden

Winter
John Krumm

Jai Bhavani
Sanskrit prayer on Raga Sindhu Bhairavi /arr. Ethan Sperry
guest conductor: Ethan Sperry

Ave Maria
David MacIntyre

Coventry Carol
trad. English carol / text by Robert Croo / arr. Joan Szymko

There Shall Be Christmas Day
Joan Szymko / poem by Joyce Kilmer

Shir Lashalom
Yair Rozenblum / lyric by Yaakov Rohtblit / arr. J. David Moore
duet: Jaclyn Leeds and Gayle Lovejoy (4:00)
Terri Grayum and Harmony Griffith (7:30)

Be It Therefore Resolved
Joan Szymko / poem by Kim Stafford

SPECIAL GUEST ARTIST
KIM STAFFORD

Anthem
Leonard Cohen / arr. Joan Szymko
solo: Jaime Merrill (4:00)
Lori Kovacevic (7:30)

Chanukah/Solstice Round
Linda Hirschhorn / arr. Joan Szymko

Light Is Returning
Charlie Murphy / arr. Joan Szymko

Wendeyaho
trad. Tihanama (Native American) / native flute: Judy Rose

Turn the World Around
Harry Belafonte and Robert Freedman / arr. Joan Szymko
Pablo Sosa / arr. Roger Bergs

¡El Cielo Canta Alegria!

Honolulu Chorus
G. F. Handel / lyrics by Barb Glenn and Susan Nivert

Seven Principles
Bernice Johnson Reagon

Instrumentalists
Violin: Heather Mastel-Lipson
Cello: Hannah Hillebrand
Flute: Julie Earnest

Native American flute: Judy Rose
Percussion: Dianna Hnatiw
Aurora percussion ensemble: Betsy Claasen, Marylyn John, Roberta Jortner, Gayle Lovejoy
joined by Dianna Hnatiw and Judy Rose

Text & Translations

Jai Bhavani
Long live Durga,
all-encompassing Goddess
bad events destroy everything
please be merciful
(Interpretive translation: Long live Mother Earth. Please send happiness and be merciful to all.)

¡El Cielo Canta Alegria!
Heaven is singing for joy, Halleluia!
For in your life and mine
is shining the glory of God. Halleluia!
Heaven is singing for joy, Halleluia!
For in your life and mine
unite in the love of God. Halleluia!
Heaven is singing for joy, Halleluia!
For your life and mine
will always bear witness to God. Halleluia!

Shir Lashalom
Let the sun rise and give the morning light,
the purest prayer will not bring us back.
He whose candle was snuffed out and was buried in the dust,
a bitter cry won't wake him, won't bring him back.
Nobody will return from the dead dark pit.
Here, neither the joy of victory nor songs of praise will help.
Refrain:
So sing only for peace,
Do not whisper a prayer,
it's better to sing a song for peace with a giant shout!

Text & Translations

Let the sun penetrate through the flowers,
don't look backward, leave those who have departed.
Lift your eyes with hope, not through the rifle sights
sing a song for love and not for wars.

Don't say the day will come, bring the day,
because it is not a dream.
And within all the city's squares, cheer for peace.
And sing, sing a song for peace, don't whisper a prayer,
it's better to sing a song for peace with a giant shout!
Singer Roster

**Soprano 1**
Michele Alderson
Margaret Blake
Kristan Burket
Paulla Dacklin
Karen Fryefield
Terri Grayum*
Christine Hayward+
Frances Hicks
Wendy Howard
Joan Johnson
Lori Kovacevic*
Zoe Lehr
Megan McGladrey
Meredith Peake
Lydia Pickard
Judith Ranton**
Francine Talla
Sarah Villanueva
Eun Jung Yi

**Soprano 2**
Elaine Ball
Patricia Cornman-Wilcox**
Julie Earnest
Ruth Friedel
Lynn Greenwood
Robert Jortner
Static Kaeder
Elizabeth Larsen**
Jaclyn Leeds
Jaime Merril
Suzsua Nennth
Linda Nichenko
Amanda Perl*
Regina Sackrider
Mary Anne Thygensen
Rachel Wagner
Krista Weikel-Delaplane

**Alto 1**
Micki Barney
Barbara Cervantes-Gautschi
Beth Ferrari
Barbara Gray
Patti Harelkin
Joni Hartmann
Marylyn John
Kristin Judge
Dixie Larsen
Mary Lindberg
Gayle Lovejoy**
Michelle Lum*
Bunny Marechal
Gai Mather
Claudia Michel
Wendy Miller
Mary Ellen Morrison
Jackie Rose++
Judy Soule
Sharyl Swope
Carol Walker++

**Alto 2**
Chris Bond
Debbie Cardiff
Annette Carter
Betsy Claassen
Colleen Cornman-Wilcox**
Jan Corwin
Lisa Fithian-Barrett
Harmony Griffith
Marya Hazila*
Terri Lewis
Linda Milone
Claudia Nadine+
Michele Stemler
* Section Manager
** Music Section Leader
+ Harmonizer
++ Harmonizer Chair

Aurora Coordinating Team
Marilyn Lindberg, Chorus Coordinator and Chair
Terri Grayum, Attendance Manager
Chris Hayward, Scholarship Liaison
Bunny Marechal, Website
Patti Harelkin and Michele Stemler, Volunteer Coordinators
Gayle Lovejoy, At Large and E-lists
Megan McGladrey, Membership Coordinator
Linda Nichenko, Music Librarian
Jackie Rose, Harmonizer Chair
Micki Barney, Chorus Treasurer
Margaret Blake, Retreat Coordinator
Lisa Fithian-Barrett, Production Coordinator
Kristin Judge, Scribe

Eileen Spencer Scholarship Committee
Kathleen Middleton, Joan Sears, Kaye Exo

Chorus Volunteers
Website and Social Media: Bunny Marechal, Dianne Foster
Rehearsal Support: Michele Alderson, Patti Harelkin, Amanda Perl, Lisa Fithian-Barrett, Michelle Lum, Micki Barney, Mary Ellen Morrison, Patricia Cornman-Wilcox, Stacy Watts, Linda Milone, Zoe Lehr
Ad coordinators: Sacha Gilbert, Rachel Wagner
Flowers: Wendy Street

Concert Staff and Volunteers
Front of House: TK
Stage Manager: Jon Ploecard
Program: Dianne Foster with Rebecca Pepper, Jeanne Kinsley, and Lisa Fithian-Barrett

Thank you to all of the ushers, ticket sellers, and additional concert volunteers whose names did not get into the program. We appreciate your support.

Community Outreach
Home Free Liaison: Chris Hayward
Sunday Parkways: Micki Barney, Julie Earnest, Marilyn Lindberg, Mary Ellen Morrison, Carol Walker
Vancouver Peace & Justice Fair: Barbara Gray, Patti Harelkin, Cathy Ferris

Fundraising
Fundraising Leads: Dorothy LaDouceur, Lynn Greenwood
Night in Japan Dinner Party: Joni Hartmann, Frances Hicks, Ann Wilson, Starla Hellman, Amanda Perl, Steve Wilson
Great Dames Dinner and Musical Review: Dorothy LaDouceur, Pat Carleton, Martha Hall, Bob Hall, Andrea Lathrop, Ryan LaDouceur, Michael LaDouceur, Micki Barney, Barb Cabot, Bob Thomas, Krista Thomas, Michelle Bahr, Lisa Kron, Tina Izen
Chinook Book Sales: Judi Ranton
Heart Pin Sales: Michele Stemler

Special Thanks
Ethan Sperry, Judy Rose, Portland State University Music Department, First Unitarian Church, Marylhurst University

Eileen Spencer Scholarship Fund
The Eileen Spencer Scholarship Fund was established in honor of Eileen Spencer, a devoted chorus member for nearly 15 years. The fund carries on Eileen’s desire to support Aurora and all the women who find empowerment through creativity and song. The Fund assists chorus members with membership fees when financial challenges arise. Eileen would be pleased that women are still able to sing thanks to the generosity of our donors.

We invite you to support Aurora singers by making a contribution to Aurora Chorus earmarked for the “Eileen Spencer Scholarship Fund.”
Vox Academy continues to support singers of the Aurora Chorus through group classes and private lessons. We are a Portland non-profit dedicated to vocal freedom for everyone.

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Aurora, Satori, PGMC, Threshold Choir, Portland Lesbian Choir and PDX VOX (google them!)

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