Sure On This Shining Night

Joan Szymko, Director

First Congregational Church
1126 SW Park Avenue
Portland, Oregon

December 17 and 18, 2016
"Five hundred twenty-five thousand six hundred minutes …. How do you measure, measure a year?” Tonight as we begin our 25th Anniversary season, this lyric from the musical RENT got me thinking: how do you measure twenty-five seasons in the life of Aurora Chorus? How’s this for starters?

Over one thousand women have sung in fifty-five full-length concerts. Over forty thousand concert tickets sold. Over four hundred choral works performed from memory, in eighteen different languages. Thirty-eight premieres of original choral works. Fifty+ original arrangements. And that’s just the numbers. How do you measure love?

Since its founding, Aurora Chorus has always been more than just a place to sing. It has been a “place where you belong,” a multi-generational community of women who work hard on their music and look out for each other in hard times. A place where so many came for the singing, but stayed for the community. Aurora has also been a home for you, our audience. As always, you will hear a holiday concert of diverse repertoire with words that allow the heart to soar, to grieve, to celebrate and, yes—to hope for a more compassionate world.

We begin the season by looking back over many favorites that have made our winter concerts such an enduring and beloved holiday tradition for so many. Today’s concert program is grouped by universal holiday themes that Aurora has long embraced during this most wonderful time of the year. The opening set, Sure on this Shining Night, explores the night sky and includes beautiful repertoire new to Aurora. In the Winter features founding director David York’s fabulous “Solstice,” a song from Dreamers, the choral theater extravaganza Aurora premiered in 1994. Finding Faith and Common Ground honors Aurora’s commitment to maintaining an inclusive atmosphere in our holiday concerts. In “Here,” a singer favorite among the many compositions that Aurora has premiered over the years, poet Wendell Berry invites us to consider that “in the ancient faith, what we need is here.” Aurora also sings and invokes peace with the popular Israeli song “Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu.” In closing, Seasons of Love brings us Bach, John Lennon and a little Broadway as we ultimately measure the life of Aurora Chorus in expressions of love.

We love singing for you and hope that you will join us throughout our 25th Anniversary season.

Wishing you all a holiday season of love and of light!

Joan Szymko
Greetings from the Board

Thank you for joining us this weekend to begin our celebration of Aurora Chorus’ 25th anniversary. David York founded Aurora Chorus on the belief that women’s voices matter— that the words women sing and the intentions in their hearts could make the world a more peaceful, compassionate place. In 1994 David collaborated with Portland poet Judith Barrington on an epic choral/theater presentation by Aurora Chorus, Dreamers. The poetry he set then still speaks to the essence of Aurora: “ A hint of pink seeps through the night sky/ This time is an end and beginning too/ Dawn holds the night in its dark embrace/ Dawn holds the day in its egg shell blue . . . .”

As Joan’s words express, true to the goddess Aurora who heralded the dawn and bridged the gap between night and day, Aurora Chorus has been a place for the heart to soar and to grieve, to celebrate what is here and to hope for the future. Author Marianne Williamson iterated what resonates perhaps too profoundly in today’s world, “It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us”; yet still, each morning, Aurora awakens, renewed and vibrant, to set a blanket of lights across the wakening sky, her tears forming the fresh morning dew.

This weekend brings a new dawn, and while tonight much of our music reminisces of years past, spring brings the premiere of two new pieces written for our chorus. In the coming years, Aurora has the opportunity to reach even more people around the Pacific Northwest. A home that cultivates space for women to shine their light brightly, or even hope that such a space exists, is still out of reach for far too many. I ask you to consider what you can do to make possible that the brilliance of Aurora be visible and accessible to everyone.

We have accomplished a lot together during our first 25 years. We have empowered hundreds of women to realize their full potential and invited thousands of people just like you to share in that splendor. But what matters most now is what we, collectively, do next: “Aurora the bridge where the stars meet the sun/ A dream not ended a dream begun.”

Thank you for your luminosity at our performances and your continued financial generosity in making Aurora Chorus a place where all belong, now and for decades to come.

Jaclyn Leeds
Board Chair

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Aurora Board:

Jaclyn Leeds, president
Lynn Greenwood, secretary
Candice Laxton

Judi Ranton, treasurer
Colleen Cornman-Wilcox, chorus coordinator
Kristan Burkert

Joan Szymko, ex officio

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Aurora-made truffles are back! We have lovingly prepared beautiful and delicious truffles in 9 flavors under the guidance of Collin and Susan Kaeder, supported by the generosity of Marilyn DeVault and her professional kitchen space at Piece of Cake Bakery in Sellwood.

Get your holiday treats in the lobby before they sell out.

$12/box of 6
OUR DIRECTOR

Joan Szymko has conducted choruses in the Pacific Northwest for over thirty years. She left Seattle for Portland in 1993 to take on the leadership of Aurora Chorus. She soon founded Viriditas, a select women’s ensemble, (1994–2002) and enjoyed a fruitful collaboration with Do Jump! Movement Theater (1994–2012) as a performer, music director and resident composer. She recently served on the choral music faculty at Portland State University as director of Vox Femina (2013–15). As a visiting artist, Joan Szymko workshops her music with choirs in a variety of educational settings across the country. This past year she was honored to guest conduct at regional choral festivals that featured her compositions for women’s voices both in the Netherlands and at the University of Illinois.

Composing for choir is a natural outgrowth of Joan Szymko’s creativity as a conductor. Joan’s dedication to craft and artistry and her insistence on quality texts are evident in both her choral directing and her choral writing. Her catalog of over 100 published choral works is performed by ensembles across North America and abroad. Since 2003, her music has been performed at every National Conference of the American Choral Directors Association. In 2010 the ACDA recognized Szymko’s lasting impact on the choral arts in America by selecting her as the recipient of the prestigious Raymond W. Brock Memorial Commission. Most recently she was commissioned by Eugene Vocal Arts to compose a large scale work that focuses on those faced with the tragedy of Alzheimer’s dementia. “Shadow and Light” for mezzo-soprano, tenor, soprano, SATB chorus and full chamber orchestra premiered in April 2016 to great critical acclaim.

OUR ACCOMPANIST

Currently based in Portland, Oregon, collaborative pianist Kira Whiting graduated from Manhattan School of Music in May 2014, with a Master’s in Classical Accompanying with a Vocal Emphasis. Ms. Whiting has participated in master classes with Thomas Quasthoff, Martin Katz, Thomas Hampson, Craig Rutenberg, and Roger Vignoles. She has performed several art song recitals in Scandinavia, including a program of American art songs with Norwegian soprano Margrethe Fredheim for a balcony concert at the Oslo Opera House. Ms. Whiting was a semi-finalist in collaboration with Dashon Burton, Bass-Baritone, at the Wigmore Hall International Art Song Competition 2015 in London, UK.
“I am sending you light to heal you, to hold you… I am sending you light, to hold you in love.” How those words resound in the heart of Aurora! Once a month after Thursday rehearsal, the women of Aurora join hands as sisters and “send light” after sharing joys and concerns and requests for light and healing for ourselves and for those our larger circle. And then we sing! We are thrilled that Melanie DeMore, the woman who wrote the much loved song that has bound Aurora women together for over two decades, will be joining us as the headliner of our 4th Annual International Women’s Day Concert. Be prepared to join in the singing, as Melanie will present a set of music heavy with audience participation! When Aurora Chorus takes the stage, we will be joined by Melanie and by old friends Judy Rose on keyboards and Sylvia Hackathorn on bouzouki.

Born in the Bronx, raised in Anchorage, Melanie’s folks moved all five kids to San Antonio where she finished school, got out of Texas, was the only Black folk singer in Taos, N.M, then decided to get back into the mix, took all her stuff and moved to Oakland where she’s been for the last 21 years. She has traveled the world and every town Melanie traveled became her teacher and an opportunity to hone her craft as a songwriter, troubadour, and an emissary of tolerance, kindness, and harmony through the sound of her golden voice. Melanie DeMore is a founding member of the Grammy-nominated vocal ensemble Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir and, as she will readily share, “is constantly amazed” by her life. But nothing is closer to her heart than bringing people together wherever she is to experience the healing power of music. Whether she’s performing solo, leading stick pounding workshops, doing residencies with choirs all over the country or teaching Sound Awareness to sixth graders, baby boomers, or senior citizens, one thing is certain: her mission is to make sure you unlock the key to experiencing yourself in all your Glory and return home with the very same excitement and passion for living that she herself has. When she comes your way, her energy will charge the very air you breathe like a meteor shower, so get ready to rise up!

DON’T MISS THIS FABULOUS SINGING OPPORTUNITY WITH MELANIE DEMORE!

March 4, 10 to noon: FULL BODY FORWARD! Workshop This course is for all those who have longed to raise their voices with power, determination and energy. Participants learn songs from various vocal and communal traditions and how to sing from and with their whole selves. Through a series of vocal, verbal and physical warm-up techniques, participants will learn how to fire up their inner and outer voices. This course is ideal for all skill levels and will help revitalize and inspire you to sing from the inside out. Whether yours is a choir that specializes in traditional choral singing or Gospel and everything in between, Full Body Forward! will take you to the next level. Watch the Aurora website for details: www.aurorachorus.org
Sure On This Shining Night

Joan Szymko, Director
Kira Whiting, Accompanist

The Voice
Brendan Graham / arr. Roger Emerson

Sure on this Shining Night
Samuel Barber Op.13, No. 3 / text: James Agee

Stars (excerpt)
Mary Oliver

reader: Margot Faegre

The Dawn Is Not Distant
Christine Donkin / text: Genesis 15:5

and H. W. Longfellow, Tales of a Wayside Inn

soloist: Libby Clow

Perhaps They Are Not Stars
Steven Sametz / text: Inuit Legend

In the Winter

Solstice
David York / text: Judith Barrington / ed. Szymko

Secret Gardens of the Heart
Judy Collins / arr. Szymko

Walking Home from Oak-Head
Mary Oliver

reader: Nanette Niski

In the Winter
Judy Fjell / arr. Fjell, Szymko

Finding Faith and Common Ground

We Are a Circle
Rick Hamouris / arr. Szymko

The Christians and the Pagans
Dar Williams / arr. Szymko

soloists: Saturday–Patti Harelkin
Sunday–Lori Kovacevic

Goddess Chant
Charlie Murphy

Ave Maria
David MacIntyre

Stille Nacht
Franz Xaver Gruber / text: Josef Mohr/
arr. Szymko

Here
Joan Szymko / text: Wendell Berry

Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu
Mosh Ben Ari / arr. Szymko
Seasons of Love

Choral Prelude, Cantata No. 147  J.S. Bach / arr. Margaret Dryburgh and Norah Chambers

The Esquimos Have No Word for War  Mary Oliver
reader: Michele Stemler

Imagine  John Lennon / arr. Mac Huff

Seasns of Love  Jonathan Larson / arr. Roger Emerson

Guest Artists
Lucie Zalesakova  violin
Brian Banegas  percussion

Instrumentalists
percussion ensemble  Marylyn John, Roberta Jortner, Gayle Lovejoy
flute  Julie Earnest
guitar  Roberta Jortner
mandolin  Marylyn John
cello  Stephanie Singer
ukulele  Robin Lane

Vocal Ensembles
Ave Maria  Kristan Burkert, Margaret Blake,
Lori Deering-Mohr, Static Kaeder,
Nancy Otis, Lydia Pickard

Here  Kristan Burkert, Liz Larsen,
Gayle Lovejoy, Michele Stemler

Bach prelude  Kristan Burkert, Claire Dennerlein,
Lori Deering-Mohr, Mara Farrier, Patti Harelkin,
Marya Hazilla, Elizabeth Larsen, Jaclyn Leeds,
Gail K. Murphy, Nancy Otis, Jackie Rose,
Sharyl Swope

TRANSLATIONS
The Dawn Is Not Distant (Latin text)
Suspice caelum et numera stellas / Look at the heavens and count the stars.

Od Yavo Shalom Aleinu (Hebrew)
Od yavo shalom aleinu / Peace will yet come upon us
Salaam (Arabic) / Peace
Aleinu v’al kol ha’o-lam / On us and on everyone
The Eileen Spencer Scholarship Fund

The Eileen Spencer Scholarship Fund was established in memory of Eileen Spencer, a devoted chorus member for nearly 15 years. The fund assists chorus members with participation fees when financial challenges arise. We invite you to support Aurora singers by making a contribution to Aurora Chorus earmarked “Spencer Fund.”
Join Us!

Aurora Chorus welcomes women of all ages at all skill levels who seek artistic expression in an empowering singing environment. Directed by renowned choral composer Joan Szymko, Aurora provides women with an outstanding opportunity to grow vocally, but also — and just as importantly— to sing words that allow the heart to soar, to grieve, to celebrate and to communicate to our audience our hopes for a more compassionate world.

NEW SINGERS WELCOME FOR SPRING 2017!
First rehearsal: January 12

Aurora prepares two events this spring: an International Women’s Day celebration and a 25th Anniversary Gala concert that will feature two world premieres! Explore the Sing With Us page on our website. Inquiries happily accepted at join@aurorachorus.org.

SPECIAL PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITY FOR AURORA ALUMNAE!

Plans are being made for a 4-rehearsal session for any Aurora alumnae interested in performing a short set at Aurora Dances Down, our 25th Anniversary party on April 22nd. Joan Szymko will direct. Scores, rehearsal recordings and party admission are all included in $100 registration fee. To register visit www.aurorachorus.org.

KEEP UP WITH US!

Join our newsletter list to receive The Aurora Voice.
Sign up at www.aurorachorus.org.
Sing! Celebrate! Save the Dates!

AURORA CHORUS 25th ANNIVERSARY SEASON
A Place Where You Belong

2016–2017 CONCERT SERIES

Holiday Performance at The Grotto – December 22 at 6 pm

FULL BODY FORWARD! Workshop with Melanie DeMore – March 4

We Remain Faithful
International Women’s Day Concert featuring vocal activist Melanie DeMore
March 5, 4pm
“Melanie DeMore’s singing is thrilling. This is not a voice that comes along every
day. This is WOMAN POWER WRAPPED IN VELVET.” — Ronnie Gilbert

A Place Where You Belong
Two performances: May 20, 7:30pm & May 21, 4pm
Our 25th Anniversary concert season soars to a close with two world premieres!
Renowned composers Carol Barnett and Joan Szymko have created works that
honor and celebrate the circle of love and life that is our Aurora Chorus community.

Aurora Dances Down! – April 22nd 6pm to 9pm – Aurora Chorus celebrates her
Silver Anniversary in style with a BIG PARTY at the Mittleman Jewish Community
Center. Come to dance, visit with friends, eat delicious hors d’oeuvres, and join
in a sing-along. Check out our spring online auction for great experiences—
vacation homes, yoga packages, and much more. To top it all off, hear an intimate
performance by one of Aurora’s great friends and favorite guest artists, the
incomparable Claudia Schmidt.

Unless otherwise noted, all performances take place at
First Congregational Church, 1126 SW Park Ave, Portland, OR
Thank you to all those who have supported us over the past year.

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Carol Walker
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Margaret Blake
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Beth Ferrarini
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Jane Terzis
Carl Addy & Robin Thomas
Margaret Wade
Rachel Wagner
Eun Jung Yi
Kathy Young

Gifts in memory of Debbie Pinney, Georgia Pinkel, and Sara Baker and in honor of Kay Exo

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Sign up for the Community Rewards program by linking your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to Aurora Chorus. You can search for Aurora Chorus by name or by our nonprofit number 88060 online at www.fredmeyer.com/communityrewards. Then, every time you shop and use your Rewards Card, you are helping Aurora Chorus earn a donation! Thank you!

Our thanks to Starbucks for the coffee we are offering at our after concert reception.

Select Aurora Chorus as your chosen organization for Amazon donations at smile.amazon.com.
Bridgeport
United Church of Christ

Creating the Beloved Community by fostering relationships, nurturing peace, and celebrating our Christian faith—and we are home church to several members and alumnae of Aurora Chorus! Worship with us Sundays at 10:30 am.

621 NE 76th Avenue, Portland—503.258.0992
www.bridgeportucc.org

10% of online sales during December will be donated to Aurora Chorus!
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