SWEET RADIANT MYSTERY

Sunday, December 10, 2017
4pm & 7pm

First Congregational Church
Portland, Oregon
Greetings from the Board

Thank you for joining us for the first concert of Aurora’s 26th season. As the cold settles in and I recall last year’s ice storms and the events that have transpired since, I feel a sense of urgency to be back with you. Let us collectively breathe in a moment of tranquility amidst the cacophony of unrelenting and deeply distressing trending hashtags.

This evening we sing Jim Scott's words of hope and connection: . . .might I know the faith that winters in the heart to be reborn in Spring. To hear and to feel the pulse of life enters my soul as a song to sing, Of the oneness of everything. I hope that you might take with you from tonight a renewed belief in our common humanity, a faith that together we will pass through storms to sunnier days, and a sense that women's voices are as strong and vivacious as ever. We also look forward to exciting collaboration later this season. At our fifth annual International Women's Day, we are welcoming to the stage Ara Lee and Beth Wood, two contemporary artists who recently went viral on YouTube with a piece entitled "Nasty Woman." This May we will share the stage with four ensembles featuring both women's and men's voices ranging from ages 13 to 88.

You have already supported Aurora by being present with us today. Thank you. Twenty-six years is an impressive feat for any organization, especially an arts organization; Aurora celebrates 26 years of women-run and women-driven music. If you have an additional $26 or $2.60 to share with Aurora, know that your financial contributions are invaluable in supporting the continuation of our longstanding musical community.

With immense gratitude,

Jaclyn Leeds, Board Chair

Aurora Board
Jaclyn Leeds, President Lisa Fithian-Barrett
Kristan Burkert, Treasurer Lori Kovacevic
Lynn Greenwood, Secretary Judi Ranton
Joan Szymko, ex officio

Raffle!!  Raffle!!  Free raffle!!
Our sections have lovingly created wonderful baskets filled with all the things we love. Just fill out the form found inside your program or on the tables in the reception hall and drop it at the basket table. Drawings will be held on Monday, December 11th. Winners will be notified by email and arrangements will be made for basket delivery. Enter now!
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 and abroad.

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 renowned. 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. Szymko’s *Shadow and Light, an Alzheimer’s Journey*, a major new work for chorus and orchestra, was commissioned by Eugene Vocal Arts and given a successful premiere in April 2016.

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.

About Aurora Chorus

Aurora Chorus was founded in 1992 on the belief that music is a powerful instrument of peace—locally, globally, and within the hearts of all who sing and all who listen. We honor the strength, beauty and diversity of women’s lives through the fine art of choral singing. As a community of women empowered by song, our mission is to be a clear, compassionate voice in an increasingly conflicted world.

Comprised of singers from the Portland/Vancouver metro area, the chorus presents three full-length concerts each season and performs at community outreach events throughout the year. Aurora Chorus offers novice and experienced singers alike the opportunity to grow in a nurturing, inclusive atmosphere where healthy vocal production, solid choral technique and a diverse and compelling repertoire amplify support Aurora’s mission.
From the Artistic Director

I have always struggled a bit with what to call this December event, often turning to terms like “season celebration” or “winter concert.” I think I am now finally comfortable with calling it a “holiday” concert, despite the fact that we rarely sing a Christmas or Hannukah song on our December program. The word “holiday” means “holy day” (Old English: haligdaeg (halig/holy + daeg/day). Aurora Chorus endeavors to celebrate the “holi-days” of December with universal expressions of wonderment, awe and with yearnings to be made whole (to be holy). And so it’s our hope that these songs may put some of the “holy” back into your holiday season.

I can’t explain the goings or the comings. You enter suddenly, and I am nowhere again inside the majesty. —Rumi (C.Barks)

Today we sing of the Sweet Radiant Mystery— “of all that is and was and ever shall be” as we explore many of the questions and proclivities that connect us as members of the human family. We begin with songs of praise for the “Mystery” itself, with odes from the Psalms and from Sufi mystics. We will hear from poets and philosophers like Rilke and Goethe who tell us to love the questions but not to expect any answers.

Singer/songwriters are modern day philosophers, and so we share the wisdom of Joni Mitchell, and Laura Nyro and sing “Thanks to Life” by Violetta Para. Another song of joyful gratitude, “Tala’ al-Badru Alayna”, a well-known traditional Arabic song, is the centerpiece of “Vivre, Aimer, Partager” (Live, Love, Share) from Quebec; its premiere performance, videoed as a welcome to Syrian refugees to Canada, became viral on YouTube in 2016. The French lyric translates: To live is to love. To love is to understand. With love we understand. To understand is to share. To share is to give. To give is to love. And to love is…? “Love is love is love is love” We are happy to invite you to sing along with us on this beautiful canon composed by Abbie Betinis. It's from “Justice Choir,” a songbook of new and re-purposed protest songs and a template for a national movement of community singing for change.

The dead have a pact with the living. In the Indian epic, the “Mahabharata,” a revered teacher answers the question: What is the most wondrous thing in the world? He replies: “The most wondrous thing in the world is that all around us people can be dying, and we don’t realize it can happen to us.” As we are presently in deep dark winter—what better time to ponder the great mystery, death. With the help of Laura Nyro and poets Mary Oliver and Birago Diop we make a friendly overture to death as a part of life.

Still we seek to find a truth that we might understand, and reduce to terms defined, vast and immeasurable time and space all so overwhelmingly designed. — Jim Scott

In closing we acknowledge the truly awesome connection to all that is. And with that, we recognize with poet Joy Harjo, that “we must take the utmost most care and kindness in all things...we pray that it will be done in beauty.”

Thank you for making Aurora Chorus a part of your holiday season! On behalf of Aurora Chorus, I wish you shalom— peace, yes—but also its Hebrew root: shalem, wholeness—holiness.

Joan Szymko, Artistic Director Aurora Chorus
Sing With 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.

Join us for cookies and conversation after the show downstairs in the reception area.

Concert Credits
Patti Harelkin - Production Coordinator
Robin Lane - Stage Manager
Sara Steege - Assistant Stage Manager
Ron Hartmann - Front of House

Sound & Lights - Showdrape Inc. Cassie, Yalchin & staff
Sound Recording - Branic Howard
Tickets - Dixie and Mark Larsen
Concert Graphic Design – Joan Szymko
Concert Program – Erin Wilson

Special Thanks
PSU Music Dept., Cara and staff at First Congregational Church, First Unitarian Universalist Church, Kathleen Hollingsworth, Wendy Street, Still Meadow Retreat Center, Judy Rose, Jill Sanders, and all of our amazing volunteers. Thanks Starbucks on SW 10th & Taylor for ongoing support.

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.”
Sweet Radiant Mystery
Joan Szymko, Director
Kira Whiting, Accompanist

Sweet Radiant Mystery
Catherine Dalton

Laudate Dominum
Carolyn Pirtle
Psalm 150

Isn’t That Something?
David L. Brunner
Daniel Ladinsky, from Rumi

The Freshness
Joan Szymko
Rumi, trans. Coleman Barks
reader: Patti Harelkin

Reading
All Life is Being Lived
R. M. Rilke
reader: Elaine Ball

Gracias a la Vida
Violeta Para
soloists: Kirsten Hays 4pm
arr. Willi Zwozdesky
Lori Kovacevic 7pm

Reading
Now I See
J.W. von Goethe
reader: Susan Rinker

Both Sides Now
Joni Mitchell

Reading
Look What Happens
reader: Barbara Gray
Hafiz (Ladinsky)

Love is Love is Love is Love
Abbie Betinis
piano accomp: Pachelbel’s Canon
Latin verse from Liber Usualis

Latin verse from Liber Usualis
Reading
reader: Nanette Niski

Vivre, Aimer, Partager
(Live, Love, Share)

Reading
reader: Debby Pollack

Who Knows Where Time Goes?

And When I Die

Reading
reader: Debbie Paynter

Breaths

Eagle Rounding Out the Morning

Reading
reader: Michele Stemler

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

The Oneness of Everything

I Have Learned So Much
Hafiz (Ladinsky)

Laura Hawley, incorporating the traditional Middle Eastern song, *Tala’ al-badru ‘alayna*
Louis-Ferdinand Céline (French)

Love the Question
R.M. Rilke

Sandy Denny
arr. Audrey Snyder

Laura Nyro
arr. Joan Szymko

When Death Comes
Mary Oliver

Ysaye M. Barnwell
Birago Diop

Joan Szymko / Joy Harjo
flute improv., Judy Rose

Anon. Tune, Mozart / arr. Szymko
Trad. French, Jane Taylor & Meish Goldish

Ten Million Stars
Nancy Wood

Jim Scott
arr. Szymko
Selected Lyrics & Translations

Laudate Dominum
*(translation from the Latin)*
Praise the Lord in his sacred places:
Praise him in the firmament of his power.
Praise him for his mighty acts,
according to the enormity of his greatness.
Praise him with the sound of the trumpet.
Praise him with the psaltery and the harp.
Praise him with the drum and the dance:
Praise him with strings and pipes.
Praise him with high sounding cymbals:
Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Gracias a la Vida
*(translation from the Spanish by William Morín)*
Thanks to life, which has given me so much
It has given me two eyes, and when I open them
I clearly distinguish black from white.
And in the high sky, its starry depths,
And from the crowds, the one that I love.

Thanks to life, which has given me so much
It has given me sound and the alphabet.
And with it the words to think and speak.
Mother, friend, brother, and the light that
brightens.
The path of the soul of my loved one.

Thanks to life, which has given me so much
It has kept my tired feet walking.
With them I walked through cities and puddles,
Beaches and deserts, mountains and plains.
And your house, your street and your
courtyard.

Thanks to life, which has given me so much
It has given me laughter and it has given me tears.
Thus I distinguish between joy and pain,
They are all elements of my song
and of your song, which is all one and the same.
Thanks to life, which has given me so much

Love is Love is Love is Love
*Ubi caritas et amor translates:*
Where there is charity and love...

Vivre, Aimer, Partager
*(Arabic translation by Eric Banks)*
‘Allamdulilah
Praise be to God.

Chantons chantas ‘Allamdulilah
’Sing, sing, praise be to God!*

*Tala albadru ‘Alayna*
The white moon rose above us
*min thaniyyati lwada’*
Coming out of the valley of Wada.

*wajaba Ishkru ‘Alayna*
And we should show every gratitude
*mada ‘a lillahi da’*
For the one who has called us to Allah.

‘Allamdulilah!
Praise be to God!

Vivre c’est aimer.
To live is to love.

Aimer, c’est comprendre
To love is to understand.

Comprendre, c’est partager.
To understand is to share.

Partager, c’est donner.
Sharing is giving.

Donner, c’est aimer.
To give is to love.

Aimer, aimer c’est vivre.
To love, to love is to live.
Eagle Rounding Out the Morning
To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can’t see, can’t hear;
Can’t know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren’t always sound but other
Circles of motion.
Like eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky
In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.
We see you, see ourselves and know
That we must take the utmost care
And kindness in all things.
Breathe in, knowing we are made of
All this, and breathe, knowing
We were born, and die soon within a
True circle of motion,
Like eagle rounding out the morning
Inside us.
We pray that it will be done
In beauty.
In beauty.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star
(translation from the French)
Vous dirai-je maman
Oh! Shall I tell you, Mommy
Ce qui cause mon tourment?
What is tormenting me?
Papa veut que je raisonne
Daddy wants me to reason
Comme une grande personne
Like a grown-up person,
Moi je dis que les bonbons
Me, I say that sweets
Valent mieux que la raison.
Are worth more than reasoning.

The Oneness of Everything
Far beyond the grasp of hands, or light to
meet the eye,
Past the reaches of the mind
There find the key to nature’s harmony
In an architecture so entwined.
Like the birds, whose patterns grace the sky
And carry all who join in love, expanding,
The message of peace will rise in flight
Taking the weight of the world upon its wings,
In the oneness of everything.

Peace is in the dance of trees
Who stir before the first breath of wind is
yet perceived
Trust in the song, becoming one with the
dance,
and all mysteries can be believed.
Like the sorrow of the clouds whose tears fall,
Caring on the soil, undemanding
Lessons of love are given that we might rejoice
in the music they bring
Of the oneness of everything.

From chords that sound of molecules spinning
billions to a cell,
the call resounds afar.
To the sun who warms the dancing earth
and whose song holds it close on the journey
of a star.
Songs of lives long past who touch our own
are written in the earth ever giving.
And now to maintain the harmony gives to us
all lives worth living for the oneness of
everything.

Still we seek to find a truth that we might
understand
and reduce to terms defined,
Vast and immeasurable time and space
all so overwhelmingly designed.
Oh passing years, just might I know the faith
that winters in the heart to be reborn in
Spring.
To hear and to feel the pulse of life
enters my soul as a song to sing,
Of the oneness of everything.
The Singers

Soprano 1
Susan Abe
Michele Alderson
Kristan Burkert
Ellen Drumheller
Kirsten Hays
Christine
Hayward
Frances Hicks
Wendy Howard
Caren Jensen
Lori Kovacevic
Lydia Pickard
Judi Ranton
Susan Rinker
Bethany Soule
Stacy Watts
Eun Jung Yi

Soprano 2
Rachel Baldwin
Elaine Ball
Cheyenne
Chapman
Patricia Cornman-Wilcox
Clara Dair
Judith Don
Betsy Dowell
Roberta Jortner
Static Kaeder
Elizabeth Larsen
Jaclyn Leeds
Zsuzsa Nemeth
Nanette Niski
Debbie Paynter
Gwen Purus
Jenna Smith
Mary Anne
Thygesen
Krista Weikel
Delaplane
Wendy Leigh White

Alto 1
Anne Auxier
Shannon Buono
Teresa Boyle
Rachel Bramble
Barbara
Cervantes-Gautschi
Cindy Christensen
Claire Dennerlein
Beth Ferrarini
Barbara Gray
Patti Harelkin
Marylyn John
Kristin Judge
Dixie Larsen
Donna Lieberman
Patricia McKinney
Wendy Miller
Mary Ellen
Morrison
Rachel Plotinsky
Jackie Rose
Sharyl Swope
Carol Walker

Alto 2
Margaret Brown
Colleen Cornman-Wilcox
Margot Faegre
Lisa Fithian-Barrett
Terri Lewis
Virginia Malone
Linda Milone
Claudia Nadine
Janet Neuman
LouAnn Peartree
Debby Pollack
Jill Sanders
Michele Stemler

+ Harmonizers
++ Harmonizer Chair
** Music Leaders
* Section Managers
A Aurora Coordinating Team

Instrumentalists

Handbell ensemble: Teresa Boyle, Margaret Brown, Kristin Judge, Lori Kovacevic, Judi Ranton, Jill Sanders

Percussion ensemble: Teresa Boyle, Marylyn John, Roberta Jortner

Native flute and doumbek: Judy Rose

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Sherri Vacarella
Carol Walker
Brent Walth
Susan Watson
Stacy Watts
Krista Weikel-Delaplane
Connie Weiss
Ann C Werner
Eun Jung Yi
Deborah Zita
SAVE THE DATES!
Upcoming Aurora Concerts

MARCH 4
Sisters, You Keep Me Fighting
Join Aurora for our 5th International
Women’s Day Celebration!
Special Guest Artists Beth Wood and Ara
Lee join us in songs of resistance and
persistence. The combination of these
two artists’ voices creates an alchemy of
power, musicality and tenderness that
cannot be denied.

MAY 20
love is love is love is love
Aurora’s season finale features collaborations
with special guests:
Bridging Voices
Portland Lesbian Choir
Cascade (of PGMC)
BVS Women’s Choir (from Brooklyn, NY)

Singers participating in our International Women’s Day
concert are invited to bring a daughter, niece, godchild or
young friend to sing with us in this inspirational concert.
For more info, please contact admin@aurorachorus.org

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