



**COMMON WOMAN CHORUS**

*15-year anniversary retrospective*

Saturday

17 January 1998

8 o'clock

ERUUF

# COMMON WOMAN CHORUS

## *ACT 1*

### **Mountain Song**

words and music by Holly Near and Meg Christian

### **Comin' into My Years**

words and music by Betsy Rose, arr. by J. David Moore

### **Music in My Mother's House**

words and music by Stuart Stotts, arr. by J. David Moore

### **Niška Banja**

Serbian gypsy dance, arr. by Nick Page

### **Beautiful Soul**

words and music by Margie Adam, arr. by Eleanor Sableski

### **Azanian Freedom Song**

words and music by Otis Williams and Bernice Johnson Reagon

### **We Shall Go Forth**

words and music by Margie Adam

*solo by* Chris Merrill



### *Intermission*

Refreshments!  
CWC shirts!  
Triangle Dining Guides!

*15-year anniversary retrospective*

*ACT 2*

**Bread and Roses**

**words and music by John Oppenheim**

**Something about the Women**

**words and music by Holly Near, arr. by Jennifer Stasack**

**Big Legged Woman**

**words and music by Righteous Mothers, arr. by Pamela Gerke**

**Miriam**

**words and music by Laura Berkson, , arr. by Eleanor Sableski**

**Harriet Tubman**

**words and music by Walter Robinson, arr. by John Coates Jr.**

**Perfect Night**

**words and music by Holly Near and Jeff Langley, arr. by J. David Moore**

*This concert is dedicated to the memory of Diane Rood*

## Mountain Song

By Holly Near and Meg Christian

I have dreamed on this mountain  
since first I was my mother's daughter  
and you can't just take my dreams away,  
not with me watchin'.

You may drive a big machine,  
but I was born a great big woman  
and you can't just take my dreams away  
without me fightin'.

This old mountain raised my many daughters.  
Some died young; some still livin'.  
If you come here for to takin' our mountain,  
well, we ain't come here to give it.

I have dreamed on this mountain  
since first I was my mother's daughter,  
and you can't just take my dreams away,  
not with me watchin',  
no, you can't just take my dreams away  
without me fightin',  
no, you can't just take my dreams away.

## Comin' Into My Years

by Betsy Rose

Arranged by J. David Moore

I'm a grey-haired woman and I'm comin' into  
my years.

I'm a weathered woman and I'm comin' into  
my years.

No more holdin' back, no more tryin' to  
please,

I got the will and the power to get off o' my  
knees.

I'm an aging woman and I'm comin' into my  
years.

I'm a streetwise woman and I'm comin' into  
my pride.

I'm a fight-back woman and I'm comin' into  
my pride.

No more shrinkin' with fear when they  
whistle and jeer.

I got a fist that's strong and a mind that's  
clear.

I'm a night-walk woman and I'm comin' into  
my pride.

I'm a loudmouth woman and I'm comin' into  
my voice.

I'm a talk-back woman and I'm comin' into  
my voice.

There's an ocean of words that got caught,  
I'm gonna let loose the waters, gonna learn

how to float  
all because I'm a sing-out woman  
and I'm comin' into my voice, gonna sing,  
'cause...

I'm a fighting woman and I'm comin' into my  
strength.

I'm a make-change woman and I'm comin'  
into my strength.

I can't save the world, I won't train my song,  
but I will fight any battle that'll move us  
along,

'cause I'm a farsighted woman,

I'm a fight-back woman...

we all are sing-out women...

sing-out women, oh....

## Music in My Mother's House

By Stuart Stotts

Arranged by J. David Moore

There were windchimes in the window,  
bells inside the clock,  
an organ in the corner, tunes in the music  
box.

We sang while we were cooking or working in  
the yard,  
we sang although our lives were really hard.

There was music in my mother's house,  
there was music all around....

There was music in my mother's house  
and my heart still feels full with the sound.

She taught us all piano,  
but my sister had the ear --  
she could play the harmony  
to any tune she'd hear.

Now, I don't claim much talent,  
but I always loved to play,  
and I guess I will until my dyin' day.

Those days come back so clearly  
although I'm far away.

She gave me the kind of gift  
I love to give away.

And when my mother died  
and she'd sung her last song,  
we sat in the living room,  
singing all night long,

singing: la la la la la,  
singing the front porch songs,  
singing the old torch songs, la la la la la,  
singing the old hymns to send her home.

There was music in my mother's house,  
there was music all around....

There was music in my mother's house  
and my heart still is full with the sound.

## Niska Banja: • A Serbian Gypsy Dance

---

*Arranged by Nick Page*

Niska Banja toplva voda,  
Zanis lije, ziva zjoda

Emka ravla, emkame ravla,  
Andonisi, name kavla.

Nislike su, fine dame,  
Neseta ju, nikad same.

Jek duj duj duj, ke suj duj,  
Cumi davte caje, andomuj.

Translation:

Let's go to the baths of Nis,  
where we shall kiss, kiss, kiss.

## Beautiful Soul

---

*Words and music by Margie Adam*

*Arranged by Eleanor Sableski*

I wonder where you are, lovable lady.  
I wonder what you're thinking, beautiful  
woman.

It seems like fog is settling in within your  
eyes,  
and the weight of something is pulling your  
shoulders down.

Could it be you ask too much, lovable lady,  
from a world that's out of touch, beautiful  
woman.

So you're hammering at a door that will not  
open,  
and my beautiful soul is weeping.

Better learn the way it goes;  
better share the pain that shows.  
You want to transcend it in order to end it,  
but your loneliness grows.

Do you hate yourself, lovable lady?  
Can I be of help, beautiful woman?  
Your silence is a wall between the two of us,  
and my beautiful soul is weeping.

Beautiful woman... weep no more, my lady.

## Azanian Freedom Song

---

*Words by Otis Williams*

*Music by Bernice Johnson Reagon*

Somewhere there's a child a'cryin',  
cryin' for freedom in South Africa.  
Somewhere there's a mother mournin',  
mournin' for freedom in South Africa.  
Somewhere there's a sister fightin',  
fightin' for freedom in South Africa.

There's a new day comin'...  
I got freedom on my mind, oh,  
gonna take my freedom in the mornin'!

Somewhere there's a child a'cryin',  
crying for freedom, shouting for freedom,  
dying for freedom, fighting for freedom!

## We Shall Go Forth

---

*By Margie Adam*

We shall go forth from this place  
proud of the things we've done,  
sharing the things we've won.  
We shall not fail

We shall go forth from this place  
willing to open wide,  
sharing the light inside.  
We shall not fail.

Bringing together all we know  
for others who are struggling alone;  
bringing together all we are,  
offering those who want to find us  
a way to find us, a way to see.

We shall go forth from this place  
taking with us the pride  
of knowing we can decide.  
We shall not fail.  
We shall go forth.

*Intermission*

## Bread and Roses

---

*Words by John Oppenheim*

As we come marching, marching,  
in the beauty of the day,  
a million darkened kitchens,  
a thousand mill lofts gray,  
are touched with all the radiance  
that a sudden sun discloses,  
for the people hear us singing

"bread and roses, bread and roses."

As we come marching, marching,  
unnumbered women dead  
go crying through our singing  
their ancient song for bread.  
Small art and love and beauty  
their drudging spirits knew.  
Yes, it is bread we fight for,  
but we fight for roses too.

As we come marching,  
marching, we are standing proud and tall,  
for the rising of the women  
means the rising of us all.  
No more the drudge and idler,  
ten that toil where one reposes,  
but a sharing of life's glories...  
bread and roses, bread and roses.

As we come marching, marching,  
we battle too for men,  
for they are women's children  
and their freedom is our gain.  
Our lives shall not be sweated  
from birth until life closes.  
Hearts starve as well as bodies...  
give us bread, but give us roses.

### Something About the Women

-----  
*Words and music by Holly Near*  
*Arranged by Jennifer Stasack*

One woman weaves a message,  
singing the sounds of silence.  
Another wheels her chair to the center of the  
stage:  
Changing minds and attitudes  
with eyes that hear and hands that see,  
these women living, working, independently.

I look to you for courage in my life,  
and I promise it's not just foolish idolatry  
that makes me gaze at you in wonder.

Some drink and call it celebration;  
to some, it's pain and sorrow.  
She says, "Well, maybe just this once would  
be okay."  
But the voice of missions strong,  
surviving, guiding light:  
A circle holds her closely and she throws the  
drink away.

I look to you for courage in my life,  
and I promise it's not just foolish idolatry  
that makes me gaze at you in wonder.

So big and beautiful, she sets my heart on fire

like a raging river in the moonlight of the  
dawn.

She's the mother of my youth...  
she's the daughter of my age:  
This women, now and always,  
survival is her name.

I look to you for courage in my life,  
and I promise it's not just foolish idolatry  
that makes me gaze at you in wonder.

Oh, there's something about the women,  
there's something about the women...  
yes, there's something about the women in my  
life.

### Big Legged Woman

-----  
*By the Righteous Mothers*  
*Arranged by Pamela Gerke*

You walk in the bathroom, you  
step on the scale.  
You read the numbers, you weep and wail.  
But don't cry, darling, you must realize  
that when God made woman,  
she made hips and thighs.

She made a big legged woman...  
a big legged woman is a  
good kind of woman to be.

I'm watchin' the TV. It makes me so mad  
to see all those women dressed like  
boys in drag.  
But out on the street, honey, what do I see?  
There's a whole lotta women  
look a lot like me.

Cuz I'm a big legged woman...  
A big legged woman is a  
good kind of woman to be.

You know we all wanna be  
just as beautiful as we can be.  
But you're beautiful already...  
just take it from me:  
Stand up tall, put a smile on your face,  
and walk those big legs all over the place.

Cuz you're a big legged woman... say it loud!  
Big legged woman... say it proud!

Stand up tall, put a smile on your face,  
and walk those big legs all over the place,  
'cuz you're a big legged women... say it loud!  
A big legged woman... sing it proud!  
A big legged woman is a good,  
such a good kind of woman to be...

Big legs, ahh!

## Miriam

-----

*Words and music by Laura Berkson*

Narrow places we have left behind us,  
never knowing what may lie ahead:  
Moving through a wilderness toward  
freedom,  
feeding souls on hope as much as bread.

Miriam, it's gonna be a long journey.  
Miriam, we're gonna need a song.  
Miriam, it's gonna be a long, long road,  
and we'll keep movin' on. Women reach to  
give birth to new spirit.

The harmony of voices has begun.  
Asking all earth's people now to join them,  
their singing bodies blazing in the  
sun. Freedom is the ownership of choices.  
To choose my future, I must know my past.  
History give reason to our voices,  
giving strength to visions that will last.

And we look back on darkness not to own it,  
but to see the lessons in the night,  
for the fear is ready to reclaim us  
though we're building courage in the night.

Miriam, it's gonna be a long journey.  
Miriam, we're gonna need a song.  
Miriam, it's gonna be a long, long road,  
and we'll keep movin' on!

## Harriet Tubman

-----

*By Walter Robinson  
Arranged by John Coates, Jr.*

One night I dreamed I was in slavery,  
'bout eighteen fifty was the time.  
Sorrow was the only sign;  
nothing around to ease my mind.  
Out of the night appeared a lady  
leading a distant pilgrim band.  
"First mate," she yelled, pointing her hand,  
"make room aboard for this young woman,"  
saying  
"Come on up, I've got a lifeline.  
Come on up to this train of mine."  
She said her name was Harriet Tubman,  
and she drove for the Underground Railroad.

Hundreds of miles we traveled onward,  
gathering slaves from town to town,  
seeking ev'ry lost and found,  
setting those free that once were bound.  
Somehow my heart was growing weaker,  
fell by the wayside's sinking sand.  
Firmly did this lady stand,  
lifted me up and took my hand, saying

"Come on up, I've got a lifeline.  
Come on up to this train of mine."  
She said her name was Harriet Tubman,  
and she drove for the Underground Railroad.

Who are these children dressed in red?  
They must be the ones that Moses led.  
"Come on up, I've got a lifeline,  
come on up to this train of mine  
Come on up to this train of mine."  
She said her name was Harriet Tubman,  
and she drove for the Underground Railroad.

## Perfect Night

-----

*By Holly Near and Jeff Langley  
Arranged by J. David Moore*

The woman is dressed in style tonight.  
She's got a three-piece suit and a tie tonight.  
There's a polished glow on her face in spite  
of her look of amusement.  
And she will dance with her true love,  
take in a bar or two,  
and nothing short of a perfect night will do.

The gal is dressed for work tonight.  
She's got dusty jeans and some boots tonight.  
There's a lover's look on her face in spite  
of her farming intentions.  
And she will plant with her true love,  
take a break in the barn, maybe two,  
and nothing short of a perfect night will do.

The jock is dressed in wool tonight.  
She's got a baseball glove and a cap tonight.  
There's a competitive look in her eye in spite  
of her generous heart.  
And she'll play ball with her true love,  
take in a homerun or two,  
and nothing short of a perfect night will do.

All the rules have been broken.  
They're not talking about the weather.  
A gentleman asks, "Are you ladies alone?"  
They smile and say, "No, we're together."

The lady is dress in silk tonight.  
She's got a glittering gown, a stole tonight.  
There's a sequin on her cheek in spite  
of her sparkling eyes.  
And she will dance with her true love,  
put on a show or two,  
and nothing short of a perfect night,  
nothing short of a perfect night....  
When the gals are out, don't you know that  
it's true:  
Nothing short of a perfect night will do.

*The Common Woman Chorus seeks to sing music that accurately reflects women's experiences and empowers rather than divides or belittles us; to share with and educate the community through our music; to encourage discussion, friendship, and exchange of beliefs with one another; and to network with other women's choruses throughout the country. Our name is taken from a poem by Judy Grahn, which reads, in part: "A common woman is as common as a common loaf of bread, and will rise." The Chorus began in 1983; Eleanor Sableski has been our conductor since the middle of that year. The Chorus has opened for Holly Near, Castlebury & Dupree, and Fred Small, and has performed for such groups as the War Resisters' League, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the National Abortion Rights Action League, and the Festival for the Eno.*

*The Common Woman Chorus is directed by Eleanor Sableski and accompanied this evening by Gail Hafley, Cindy Bizzell, and Eleanor Sableski (piano), Roberta Melton and Lynn Narveson (flute), and Elsbeth van Tongeren (cello). Cindy Bizzell and Carolyn Crumpacker are rehearsal assistants. Sandy Fitzgerald is house manager. Trish Goebel is master of ceremonies. Sound by Roberta Melton.*

*Special Thanks to Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Internationalist Books, White Rabbit Books, Regulator Bookstore, and those tireless Chorus auxiliary members.*

*Program by Angela L. Williams.*