

RAISING OUR VOICES: A BREAST CANCER BENEFIT

8 PM | 13 November 2004 | Meymandi Hall | BTI Center for the Performing Arts | Raleigh, NC

HONORARY EVENT CHAIR Kay Yow, NCSU Head Women's Basketball Coach

NARRATOR Angela Hampton, ABC-11 Eyewitness News Anchor & Health Reporter

CHORUS DIRECTOR Cindy Bizzell

CHORUS PIANIST Gail Hafley

PERCUSSION Jude Casseday, Carolyn Crumpacker, and Kim Turk

STRINGS Belinda Swanson, Violin I; Joan Beck, Violin II; Suzanne Rousso, Viola; Virginia Hudson, Cello; and Robbie Link, Bass (from Seraphim Chamber Players)

ACT ONE

Seasons of Love by Jonathan Larson, arranged by Roger Emerson. From the Broadway musical RENT. (solos by Kristen Stinnett and Lisa Shupp)

Fields of Gold by G. M. Sumner, arranged by Roger Emerson (solo by Erin O'Hara)

Remember Who You Are by Lynn DeFino and Roxanna Ward (solo by Chris Merrill)

You Are the New Day by John David, arranged by Philip Lawson

Strong and Beautiful Women by Dean X. Johnson (with Abbie Modjeska on piano)

ACT TWO

Courage to Be Who We Are by Ruth Huber (solo by Barrett Mardre)

WHERE I LIVE: A BREAST CANCER ORATORIO

Somebody music and lyrics by Diane Benjamin (solo by Erin O'Hara)

That Was The Fruit of My Orchard music by Diane Benjamin, lyrics by Patricia Goedicke. From *The Tongues We Speak: New and Selected Poems* (Milkweed Editions: 1989). (solo by Holly Ferguson)

In the Hospital music by Diane Benjamin, lyrics by Patricia Goedicke. From *The Tongues We Speak: New and Selected Poems* (Milkweed Editions: 1989). (solo by Shelly Duhn)

Help Me music by Diane Benjamin, lyrics by Katherine Traynham. From "Can You Come Here Where I Am?" (E. M. Press: 1995).

Peace music by Diane Benjamin, lyrics by Carol Barth. From untitled poem in *Wounded Healers*, R. Remen, ed. (Wounded Healers Press: 1994). (solo by Michelle Reader)

My Body music by Diane Benjamin, lyrics by Grace Ross Lewis. From *1001 Chemicals in Everyday Products* (John Wiley and Sons: 1999). (narrated by Chris Merrill, Rebecca Longley, Julia Storm, and Jolene Robinson)

Teach Me How music by Diane Benjamin, lyrics by Viviken Flynn. From untitled poem in *Wounded Healers*, edited by R. Remen (Wounded Healers Press: 1994). (solo by Carolyn Crumpacker)

"WHERE I LIVE" COMPOSER DIANE BENJAMIN IS IN ATTENDANCE & IS AVAILABLE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS AFTER THE CONCERT

Diane Benjamin's WHERE I LIVE: A BREAST CANCER ORATORIO



Somebody

lyrics by Diane Benjamin

Waiting for the phone to ring, waiting for the news.
Just this morning I was in my garden singing,
feeling sunshine on my face.
The whole world bloomed around me—
life so sweet and shining ...

Somebody's mother, somebody's sister,
somebody's lover, somebody's very best friend,
somebody's daughter, somebody's neighbor,
somebody's wife—
somebody could be me.

Slowly my tears start falling.
Gently I draw you near.
Hold me, please just hold me;
let me hear your strong heart beating.

Somebody's mother, somebody's sister,
somebody's lover, somebody's very best friend,
somebody's daughter, somebody's neighbor,
somebody's wife—
somebody could be me.

Everything is different now.
I am entering an unknown world.
So many women gone before me;
Too many women follow behind.

Somebody's mother, somebody's sister,
somebody's lover, somebody's very best friend,
somebody's daughter somebody's neighbor
somebody's wife—
somebody could be me.
Somebody's mother, somebody's sister,
somebody's lover, somebody's very best friend,
somebody's daughter, somebody's neighbor,
somebody's wife—
somebody could be me.



Narration 1

by Jenny Lewis, from Art. Rage.Us:
Art and Writing by Women with Breast Cancer
(Chronicle Books, 1998)

As he talks his hands jump in and out
Of his pockets, square hands,
Brave with the exact science
Of mending faulty instruments.
(And the pain of his knife is like violin strings
breaking.)

His white coat gives him immunity against our
germs, and griefs—
Our women's longings for love, babies
And healthy breast tissue.

All we want is the right answer.
Pecking after facts, ignorant as hens,
Eyes small with hope, only half digesting
What he says. All that technical data
so patiently explained, falls before us
In a somber harvest to be winnowed blindly
For the magic words "non fatal."

But instead he tells me I am the one in twelve.
He cannot say how long I have to live
Until the results of further tests come.

To the eleven others life is more benign.
They touch his hand, weeping with gratitude.
Then he turns his head away to avoid my eyes
Which plead "save me."

And people come with unwanted gifts
Of comfort and pity.



That Was The Fruit of My Orchard

lyrics by Patricia Goedike

No moon. No night either.
White as the inside of an onion.
Bed after hospital bed stretches endlessly
to the sky.
In the shadowless country of loss
wafers of silence whirl;
knives like hummingbirds flicker.

Silently they insert the needles.
The scalpel cuts across.
The entire melon gapes open
and they scoop it out with a spoon
Silently they throw it ... Where?

I who was not there
tell you that was no nightmare.

Now even though the scar lies hidden
under the grass, sodium pentathol
still blooms coldly.
Everything smells of ether.
And everything keeps murmuring.

Loss in an endless column.
Cry without sound.
Mute bird that has flown too high.

That was the fruit of my orchard they plucked.
That was the field of my body they trampled.
That was the fruit of my orchard they plucked.
That was the field of my body they trampled.
That was the fruit of my orchard they plucked.
That was the field of my body they trampled.

I who was not there tell you
That was no nightmare.

Narration 2

by Barbara Rosenblum and Sandra Butler, in
Cancer in Two Voices (Spinsters Ink, 1991).

When you have cancer the body no longer contains
the old truths about the world. Instead you must
learn a new language, a new vocabulary, and, over
time, as symptoms converge and conflate, you
learn the deeper structure of its grammar. The
patient's task is to learn the new language, hoping
that the body will remain stable enough. You can no
longer rely on the previous systems of interpreting
the body you have used before. When you have
cancer, the ground is pulled out from under you.
Existence is problematic and anxious. You must look
for new, stable ground.

When you have cancer, you have a new body
each day, a body that may or may not have a
relationship to the body you had the day before ...

Sometimes I can hardly use human language
to tell how I feel. When I am frightened or feel
alone and can't sleep, I need to take sleeping
pills because I lie there thinking about dying.
I explain to Sandy, "If I were a dog, I'd be shaking
and trembling." Animals don't use words; their
bodies speak for them. While I'm not mute, I am
often frustrated by the way the limits of language
circumscribe my ability to communicate events in
my body. But I am not an animal. I am a human
being, an articulate one at that, who is challenged
to find words to apply to sensations I've never had
before, challenged to find meaning and stability
despite a changing body. I'm caught in a relentless
metamorphosis. You cannot imagine how stable
and firm and fixed your body looks to me. You
cannot imagine that I can actually feel my molecules
moving around, wondering what miraculous shape
they will prefer next time:



Help Me

lyrics by Katherine Traynham

Come here where I am. Come here where I am.
Come here where I am.

Do the little thing. Do the little thing.

Don't tell me who died.
Do tell me who's living despite the odds.

Come here where I am.

Don't tell me to quit reading about it.
Help me laugh! Help me laugh!
Don't tell me how great I'm doing.
Forgive me everything.

Come here where I am. Come here where I am.
Come here where I am.

Do the little thing; do the little thing.

Narration 3

by Katherine Trayham from *Can You Come Here Where I Am?* (E.M. Press, 1995)

Don't try to talk me out of what I feel. Don't try to move me along toward where you think I ought to be. Sometimes I'm despairing. Come in here with me. Sometimes I'm optimistic. Come hope with me. Maybe I'm denying the truth. Tell a bald faced lie with me. Sometimes I'm wallowing. Get in here with me and get dirty too. . . .

Forgive me everything. I have no idea what I'm doing. I can't remember my own birthday, much less yours. Sometimes, I'll want to talk your head off and the next time you call, I'll cut you off. I don't mean to. I'll correct you, contradict you, irritate you, ignore you, forget to thank you, and make you uncomfortable. Please, please forgive me. I hope to be myself again one day. This is not my finest hour. And whatever you do, whether it helps or hurts, I'll forgive you. Just don't leave me alone in this.



In The Hospital

lyrics by Patricia Goedicke

When they came at me with sharp knives
I put perfume under my nose.
When they knocked me out on the operating table
I dreamed I was flying.
When they asked me embarrassing questions
I remembered the clouds in the sky.
When they were about to drown me
I floated on their inquisitive glances.
I drifted like a leaf becalmed in a pool.

When they laid harsh hands upon me
I thought of fireworks I had seen with you.
When they told me I was sick and might die
I left them and went away with you to where I live.

When they took off my right breast
I gave it to them.



Narration 4

by Terry Tempest Williams, from *Refuge* (Vintage Books, 1991)

Cancer. The word has infinite power. It kills us with its names first, because we have allowed it to become synonymous with death.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines cancer as "anything that frets, corrodes, corrupts, or consumes slowly and secretly."

A person who is told she has cancer faces a hideous recognition that something monstrous is happening within her own body.

Cancer becomes a disease of shame, one that encourages secrets and lies, to protect as well as to conceal.

And then suddenly, within the rooms of secrecy, patient, doctor and family find themselves engaged

in war. Once again, medical language is loaded, this time with military metaphors; the fight, the battles, enemy infiltration, and defense strategies. I wonder if this kind of aggression waged against our own bodies is counterproductive to healing? Can we be at war with ourselves and still find peace?

My Body

lyrics by Grace Ross Lewis and Diane Benjamin

My body is the earth . . .

Benzene. Still found in old cosmetics, perfumes, nail polish remover, lacquers, paint, spot remover, varnish, stain and sealants. A confirmed human carcinogen. Induces myeloid leukemia, Hodgkins disease, and lymphomas by breathing.

My body is the water . . .

Ethyl acrylate. Applications include uses as a flavoring agent and for packaging materials. Confirmed carcinogen. A substance that migrates to food from packaging materials.

My body is the fire . . .

Talc. A product used in baby, bath, foot, and face powders. A possible carcinogen. A study of women who used talcum powder on sanitary napkins indicated an increased risk of ovarian cancer.

My body is the air . . .

Chlorofluorocarbons. Used as coolant for refrigerators and air conditioners. Also used in aerosol propellants and solvents. Ozone layer depletion caused by CFCs has resulted in an increase in skin cancers.

My body is the earth . . .

Acrylamide. Applications include adhesives, textiles, and permanent press fabrics as a coating and conditioner, also in soil conditioners. Suspected human carcinogen. Toxic by skin absorption.

My body is the water . . .

Methylene chloride. Used in decaffeinated coffee, fruits, vegetables, adhesives, glues, cleaners, waxes, oven cleaners, paint strippers and removers, shoe polish, varnishes, stains and sealants. A confirmed carcinogen.

My body is the fire . . .

Methoxsalen. Used in skin products for suntain lotions, gels, mousses, creams and ointments. A confirmed carcinogen.

My body is the air . . .

Perchloroethylene. A dry-cleaning solvent, rug and upholstery cleaner, spot remover. The cleaning agent in 85 percent of US dry-cleaning stores. They emitted 92,000 tons of perc into the air this year. A probable carcinogen.



My body is this poison
My body is this ignorance
My body is this fear
My body is inscribed

My body is the earth

Acenaphthene . . .

My body is the water

Calcium Chloride . . .

My body is the fire

Allyl Isothiocyanate . . .

My body is the air .

Diethylene Ether

My body is this healing

My body is this power

My body is this knowing

My body is inscribed!

My body is the earth

My body is the water

My body is the fire

My body is the air

My body is the earth

My body is the water

My body is the fire

My body is the air

My body is inscribed. My body is inscribed.



Narration 5

by Sandra Steingraber, from *Living Downstream* (Vintage Books, 1997)

I was born in 1959 and so share a birth date with atrazine, which was first registered for market that year. In the same year, DDT—dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane—reached its peak usage in the US. The 1950s were also banner years for the manufacture of OCBs—polychlorinated buphenyls—the oily fluids in electrical transformers, pesticides, carbonless papers, and small electronic parts. DDT was outlawed the year I turned 13 and PCBs a few years later. Both have been linked with cancer.

I am compelled to learn what I can about the chemicals that presided over the industrial and agricultural transformations into which I was born. Certainly, all of these substances have an ongoing biological presence in my life . . .

I had bladder cancer as a young adult. If I tell people this fact, they usually shake their heads. If I go on to mention that cancer runs in my family, they usually nod. "She is from one of those cancer families," I can almost hear them thinking. Sometimes, I just leave it at that. But, if I am up for blank stares, I add that I am adopted and go on to describe a study of cancer among adoptees that found correlations within their adoptive families but not within their biological ones. . . . At this point, most people become very quiet.

These silences remind me how unfamiliar many of us are with the notion that families share environments as well as chromosomes or with the concept that our genes work in communion with substances streaming in from the larger, ecological world. What runs in families does not necessarily run in blood. And our genes are less an inherited set of teacups enclosed in a cellular china cabinet than they

are plates used in a busy diner. Cracks, chips and scrapes accumulate. Accidents happen.

Peace

lyrics by Carol Barth

In the stillness of my breast
there is a silver sea of peace.

It holds me floating,
it holds me floating,
It holds me floating
when I let go.

In the stillness of my breast
there is a silver sea of peace.

Narration 6

lyrics by Audre Lorde, from *The Cancer Journals* (Aunt Lute Press, 1979)

Sometimes fear stalks me like another malignancy,
sapping energy and power and attention from my
work. A cold becomes sinister; a cough, lung cancer;

a bruise, leukemia. Those fears are most powerful
when they cannot be given voice, and close upon
their heels comes the fury that I cannot shake them.
I am learning to live beyond fear by living through it
and, in the process, learning to turn fury at my own
limitations into some more creative energy.
I realize that if I wait until I am no longer afraid to
act, write, speak, be, I'll be sending messages on
a Ouija board, cryptic complaints from the other
side. When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength
in the service of my vision, then it becomes less
important whether or not I am unafraid.

As women, we were raised to fear. If I cannot
banish fear completely, I can learn to count with it
less. For then fear becomes not a tyrant against
which I waste my energy fighting, but a companion,
not particularly desirable, yet one whose knowledge
can be useful . . .

Living a self-conscious life, under the pressure
of time, I work with the consciousness of death at my
shoulder, not constantly, but often enough to leave
a mark on all of my life's decisions and actions. And
it does matter whether this death comes next week
or thirty years from now; this consciousness gives
my life another breadth.

It helps shape the words I speak, the ways I love,
my politic of action, the strength of my vision and
purpose, the depth of my appreciation of living.

Teach Me How

lyrics by Viviken Flynn

Teach me how to honor this day,
how to walk among the billowing sheets of
sunlight—

Arm in arm
with the brilliant angel of death.
How to find my home
with a fire in the hearth.

In the green, green fields of this life,
in the green, green fields . . .

Teach me how to honor this day,
how to walk among the billowing sheets of
sunlight—

Arm in arm
with the brilliant angel of death.
How to find my home
with a fire in the hearth.

In the green, green fields of this life.

In the green, green fields of this life. . . .

THE WOMEN OF THE COMMON WOMAN CHORUS

DIRECTOR

Cindy Bizzell

ACCOMPANIST

Gail Hafley

SOPRANO ONE

Heather Barnes-Monbureau | Linda Carmichael | Holly Ferguson | Caroline Herbert | Judy Hoell | Anne Kilpatrick | Barrett Mardre | Erin O'Hara
Janine Reed | Jolene Robinson

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Delma Armstrong | Shelly Duhn | Kathy Keyser | Catherine Lidov | Joan McAllister | Pat McKenzie | Sandi Metz Betty Prioux | Michelle Reader | Kim Sage

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Diane Arnold | Melinda Campbell | Kim Douglass | Ruth Heruska | Jules Ingram | Rebecca Longley
Chris Merrill | Abbie Modjeska | Deborah Reilly | Lisa Shupp | Kristen Stinnett | Julia Storm | Michele Van Note | Jodi Walton

ALTO TWO

Bonnie Burroughs | Jude Casseday | Carolyn Crumpacker | Ann Garrou | Jamie Lamkin | Bernise Lynch
Marty McClelland | Sharon Nash | Jean Olson | Pam Parkinson | Kim Turk | Angela Williams | Elizabeth Williams

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