

COMMON WOMAN CHORUS IDENTITY CAFE 5.10.2008

8 PM • ENO RIVER UU FELLOWSHIP • DURHAM



*so tell me,
who are you?*

IDENTITY.

Milan Kundera wrote the novel. John Cusack starred in the film. Web 2.0 sites encourage us to describe ours in succinct acronyms.

Tonight, the Chorus celebrates our differences and commonalities as interpreted through the universal language of music.



CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Cindy Bizzell

GUEST DIRECTORS

Erin O'Hara

Kristen Stinnett

ACCOMPANIST

Gail Hafley

PERCUSSION

Jude Casseday

HOUSE MANAGER

Joan Pierce

SINGERS

Sopranos (1) Caroline

Herbert • Holly Ferguson

Amy Johndro • Anne

Kilpatrick • Erin O'Hara

(2) Heather Barnes

Ruth Kravitz • Joan

McAllister • Betty

Prioux • Michelle Reader

Kim Sage • Kristen

Stinnett • Jenny Womack.

Altos (1) Melinda

Campbell • Caroline Kearns

Jane Mac Neela • Nancy

Maeder • Lisa Shupp

Julia Storm • Laura

Wrightson (2) Lea

Cordova • Robin Neville

Mary Plyler • Annette

Vinding • Angela Williams

Elizabeth Williams

ACT ONE

FANGA A song of welcome from Liberia. *Performed by Drumrr Grrls: Jude Casseday, Sarah Karakitsos, Sallie Wintz and Jenny Womack.*

WE ARE Words and music by Ysaye M. Barnwell.

TO BREED OR NOT TO BREED Words by Karen Miltner (with apologies to Shakespeare). Music by David Maddux. *Narrated by Ruth Kravitz.*

EXACTLY Words and music by Amy Steinberg. *Performed by Sarah Karakitsos with Nancy Maeder on guitar.*

AND SO IT GOES Words and music by Billy Joel. Arranged by Kirby Shaw. *Performed by Holly Ferguson, Nancy Maeder, Robin Neville, Erin O'Hara, Michelle Reader, Kristen Stinnett, Julia Storm and Angela Williams.*

DANCING QUEEN Words and music by Benny Andersson, Stig Andersson, and Björn Ulvaeus. Arranged by Deke Sharon. *Performed by Cindy Bizzell, Melinda Campbell, Robin Neville, Erin O'Hara, Mary Plyler, Betty Prioux, Lisa Shupp and Kristen Stinnett.*

I'M NOT YOUR UNMARRIED DAUGHTER by Jenny Womack.

ON THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE Words by Alan Jay Lerner. Music by Frederick Loewe. Arranged by Cindy Bizzell. *From My Fair Lady. Performed by Julia Storm with the chorus.*

BIG DOGS, MUSIC, AND WILD WILD WOMEN Words and music by Ruth Huber.

MY SEXUALITY IS PART AND
PARCEL OF WHO I AM AND MY
POETRY COMES FROM THE
INTERSECTION OF ME AND
MY WORLDS. JESSIE HELMS'S
OBJECTION TO MY WORK IS
NOT ABOUT OBSCENITY OR
EVEN ABOUT SEX. IT IS ABOUT
REVOLUTION AND CHANGE.
HELMS KNOWS THAT MY
WRITING IS AIMED AT HIS
DESTRUCTION, AND THE
DESTRUCTION OF EVERY
SINGLE THING HE STANDS FOR.

—AUDRE LORDE

ACT TWO

GRAVITY BLUES Words and music by Lisa Koch and Peggy Platt. Arranged by Tom Gentry.

WHY DON'T YOU SING IN THE CHORUS Words and music by Linda Allen. *Performed by Joan McAllister with Amy Johndro, Sarah Karakitsos, Jane Mac Neela, Robin Neville, Kristen Stinnett, and Betty Prioux on guitar.*

PERHAPS THEY ARE NOT STARS Music by Steven Sametz.

In 2003, my friend Rita Cortez approached me to write a commission for her middle school chorus. The school community had just suffered the sudden death of one of its students, Mukul Gupta, age 12. Rita's response was that "we shouldn't plant a tree or put up a plaque; we should commission a song." The students had written letters in response to Mukul's death. I suggested we use something from the letters. One of the students had included the Inuit proverb, "Perhaps they are not stars" in a letter to Mukul's parents. Both Rita and I thought this text would be a wonderful tribute to an outstanding student. *Perhaps They Are Not Stars* was premiered by the Lower Macungie Middle School Chorus in May of 2003 under the direction of Rita Cortez. Over 200 singers performed from memory with Makul's parents in attendance.—Steven Sametz.

FOR GOOD Words and music by Stephen Schwartz. From *Wicked*. *Performed by Robin Neville and Lisa Shupp.*

WHO AM I? by Jude Casseday.

COMIN' INTO MY YEARS Words and music by Betsy Rose. Arranged by J. David Moore.

WOMAN AM I Words and music by Joan Szymko.

25 YEARS
25 SONGS

CDs presold in the lobby during intermission. Order yours now for just \$15!

Now Celebrating 25 Years!!!

1983

Durham, North Carolina

Two women, at the same time but unknown to one another, place ads in the local feminist newsletter.

They are, based on their experiences in other cities, reaching out to find women interested in forming a chorus.



They answer one another's ads, make plans to meet and bring interested friends.

Twelve women arrive on the steps of the Y and the Common Women Chorus is born.

Today the sounds of the Chorus

Still affirm women's lives.

Come celebrate our 25th year with us this fall

2008

... AND STILL GOING STRONG!

PRIDE BAND CONCERT SATURDAY • 5.17.08

Share an evening of musical excitement and variety with the NC Pride Band on Saturday, May 17, at 7 PM at the Eno River UU Fellowship. The band will be joined by the cool jazz sounds of the Metrognomes from Hotlanta, and Triumph, the unique saxophone quartet just back from their tour of the Ukraine. This concert is FREE. Doors open at 6:45 PM.

This performance is hosted by the Pride Committee of NC. Please see www.ncpride.org.

LYRICS

ACT ONE

FANGA Performed using traditional Liberian words. English translation: Welcome, well-being; may it be so.

WE ARE (Words by Ysaye M. Barnwell). For each child that's born a morning star rises and sings to the universe who we are. We are our grandmothers' prayers and we are our grandfathers' dreamings. We are the breath of our ancestors. We are the spirit of God. We are mothers of courage and fathers of time. We are daughters of dust and the sons of great visions. We're sisters of mercy and brothers of love. We are lovers of life and the builders of nations. We're seekers of truth and keepers of faith. We are makers of peace and the wisdom of ages. We are our grandmothers' prayers and we are our grandfathers' dreamings. We are the breath of our ancestors. We are the spirit of God. We are one.

TO BREED OR NOT TO BREED (Words by Karen Miltner, with apologies to Shakespeare). To breed or not to breed; that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler for a dyke to buffer the swings and building blocks of outrageous offspring or to take baby in arms against a sea of calm and, by procreating, upset it. Know that you'll sleep no more; and by no sleep, to say no end to the back ache and the thousand natural shocks that pregnant flesh is heirless to. 'Tis an insemination devoutly to be wished! To breed, to birth; to birth, perchance to lactate. Ay, there's the grub! For in that leak of birth, what meals may come when we have shuffled off this fetal coil!

EXACTLY (Words by Amy Steinberg). I am exactly where I need to be. I need to be exactly where I am. I am a blessing manifest and I can undress the moment. Naked time unwinds beneath my mind and from within. I find the kind of beauty only I can find. I am exactly where I need to be. I need to be exactly where I am. I am surrendering so willingly to be the perfect me inside this now. And truly how else could it be? Destiny, she blesses me. Destiny, she blesses me. And when I try to fight or run, I only wind up back at square one. And when I think I know what's best for me, Fate, she takes me back to exactly where I need to be. I am exactly where I need to be. I need to be exactly where I am. I am divinely timed and shining brightly. Yes, I believe that there's a purpose just for me. Yes, I believe that we are light and we shine infinitely. I am exactly where I need to be. I need to be exactly where I am. I am not aimlessly existing. See, I am in perfect harmony with universal energy, and I am truly free when I accept my own divinity. Look at me. Look at me closely. Tell me exactly what you see. If you are paying attention, you will now begin ascension of the mind. Why? Because if you look at me just right you will see a kiss, for it took a kiss to make this breath exist. The intersection of my mother's and father's lips to touch, twist, perfect what came next to produce me. Yes, look at me and you will see the breeze—the breeze it took to shake the leaves to make my mother's hair move, my father dare touch it and say "Please may I have a kiss?" Yes the breeze made me exist and, if you want to get even deeper into this right now, you will look at me and see a big ol' cloud. That's right, the cloud it took to form the storm to make the breeze to shake the leaves to inspire the liplock. Yes, a raindrop will pop up out of these words. You heard me right. If you look at me close enough you will see a dark stormy night. And what is night? Well night ain't night without its polar opposite, the sunlight. So if you watch the way my hands

sway, you'll see the light of day and every day is a testament to the sediment of the earth's core, it's ever-spinning enormous force. So if you look at me just right, you will see a spark of the source. But the most fascinating thing about this, and it's true, is that if you look at me just right, you see you. It's only what you believe and how you perceive the space between you and me that creates reality, so when I sing you can feel it, when I cry you can heal it, when I speak words you can be the words I speak by singing with me: peace love free, peace love free, peace love free.... And when I try to fight or run, I only wind up back at square one. And when I think I know what's best for me, Fate she takes me back to exactly where I need to be. And when I am alone and full of fear, I just remember the rising sun always appears. And everyday miracles that I see, well, you take me back to exactly where I need to be. I am exactly where I need to be. I need to be exactly where I am. I am a blessing manifest.

AND SO IT GOES (Words by Billy Joel). In every heart there is a room, a sanctuary safe and strong to heal the wounds from lovers past until a new one comes along. I spoke to you in cautious tones; you answered me with no pretense. And still I feel I said too much—my silence is my self defense. And everytime I've held a rose, it seems I only felt the thorns. And so it goes, and so it goes and so will you soon, I suppose. But if my silence made you leave, then that would be my worst mistake. So I will share this room with you, and you can have this heart to break. And this is why my eyes are closed. It's just as well for all I've seen. And so it goes, and so it goes and you're the only one who knows. So I would choose to be with you. That's if the choice were mine to make. But you can make decisions too and you can have this heart to break. And so it goes, and so it goes and you're the only one who knows.

DANCING QUEEN (Words by Benny Andersson, Stig Andersson, and Björn Ulvaeus). You can dance, you can jive—having the time of your life. See that girl, watch that scene, diggin' the dancing queen. Friday night and the lights are low. Looking out for the place to go where they play the right music. Getting in the swing, you come to look for a king. (The dancing king!) Anybody can be that guy. The night is young and the music's high. With a bit of rock music everything is fine; you're in the mood for a dance. And if you get the chance, you are the dancing queen— young and sweet, only seventeen. Dancing queen, feel the beat from your tamourine, oh yeah. You can dance, you can jive—having the time of your life. See that girl, watch that scene, diggin' the dancing queen. You're a teaser. You turn 'em on, Leave 'em burnin' and then you're gone. Looking out for another—anyone will do—you're in the mood for a dance. And if you get the chance, you are the dancing queen—young and sweet, only seventeen. Dancing queen, feel the beat from your tamourine, oh yeah. You can dance, you can jive—having the time of your life. See that girl, watch that scene, diggin' the dancing queen.

ON THE STREET WHERE YOU LIVE (Words by Alan Jay Lerner). I have often walked down this street before, but the pavement always stayed beneath my feet before. All at once am I several stories high, knowing I'm on the street where you live. Are there lilac trees in the heart of town? Can you hear a lark in any other part of town? Does enchantment pour out of every pore? No, it's just on the street where you live. And, oh, the towering feeling, just to know somehow you are near! The overpowering feeling that any second you may suddenly appear. People stop and stare. They don't bother me, for there's nowhere else on earth that I would rather be. Let the time go by. I won't care if I can be here on the street where you live.

BIG DOGS, MUSIC, AND WILD WILD WOMEN (Words by Ruth Huber). Big dogs, music and wild wild women are making my life complete. They make me happy. They make me glad. Wild wild women, they give me all that I need to flourish. I got a dog he's so big, so big. He makes me really happy nearly all the time. Big dogs, music and wild wild women are making my life complete. And when I wake up morning for a run—mile or two with my dog, go home and play my piano, give my lover a call. I'm telling you that big dogs, music and wild wild women are making my life complete. They make me happy. They make me glad. Wild wild women, they give me all that I need 'cause singing music with the women, it's so fine. It makes me really happy nearly all the time. Big dogs, music and wild wild women are making my life complete. And when I wake up in the morning and go down to the spa with my dog, write a song in the shower, then give my lover a call. I'm telling you that big dogs, music and wild wild women are making my life complete. They make me happy. They make me glad. Wild wild women, they give me all that I need to flourish. I know a woman, she's so fine. She makes me really happy all the time. Big dogs, music and wild wild women are making my life complete. So if you wake up in the morning, you're not feeling so fine with your dog. My opinion? Here's a little advice of mine: get you some big dogs, music and wild wild women and they'll make your life complete. They'll make you happy. They make me glad. Wild wild women, they give me all that I need to flourish 'cause a song will make you happy, a dog will make you smile, but a woman will make you feel just like a natural child. Big dogs, music and wild wild women are making my life complete (with my dog).

ACT TWO

GRAVITY BLUES (Words by Lisa Koch and Peggy Platt). When I was a young girl, I learned that the world was round and when something goes up, eventually it must come down. This nasty gravity is gonna pull me in the ground. I tell you when I start a'waving, my arm starts to waving back, and my flesh in the middle is piled up like a pancake stack. If I had me some money, I'd pay to cut me some slack. Oh Lord my skin has fallen and it can't get up. My skin has fallen and it can't get up. My knees are sagging and my hips are spreading the news. Things are looking down. I got those gravity blues. Can't you see? I said sag, bag, stretch, hang, flap. When I was younger, well my headlights helped me to cruise. Now they're pointing down to the ground illuminating my shoes. Not too bright. My skin has fallen and it can't get up. My skin has fallen and it can't get up. My knees are sagging and my hips are spreading the news. Things are looking down. I got those gravity blues. Lord my eyes are bagging, chins are sagging, hips are spreading, I'm a'heading down, down to the ground....

WHY DON'T YOU SING IN THE CHORUS? (Words by Linda Allen). When I was eight in Chapel Hill Elementary, in the school Christmas pageant I longed to be Mary, but Susan was picked. Susan was pretty. All the boys loved Susan. (I hated Susan.) Then the teacher said "Never mind, dear, there's a place just for you. Never fear. Why don't you sing in the chorus? There's still lots of room in the chorus. You may not be a star but sing where you are. You'll find lots of friends in the chorus!" Then I was twelve in North Junior High School, in the class talent show I thought it would be cool to be chosen to solo, but I felt like a fool when that awful Mrs. Johnson—I hated Mrs. Johnson—sneered at me, laughed at my song, and she said "In the chorus is where you belong. Why don't you sing in the chorus? There's still lots of room in the chorus. You may not be a star but sing where you are. You'll find lots of friends in the chorus!" Then I was eighteen and in the university, and I thought that an actress was what I could be, so I tried out for musicals. It was so clear to me that I surely had talent—didn't they know talent?. Then, at auditions, I'd wish I was dead when the music director smiled and said "Why don't you sing in the chorus? There's still lots of

room in the chorus. You may not be a star but sing where you are. You'll find lots of friends in the chorus!" Well it's been many years since Chapel Hill Elementary, and all of the wishes of what I could be. I was awkward and shy, and I wasn't so pretty, but I learned how to sing with the chorus around me. And the friendship and sweet harmony taught me to be what I wanted to be. Why don't you sing in the chorus? There's still lots of room in the chorus. You may not be a star but sing where you are. You'll find lots of friends in the chorus. You'll find lots of friends in the chorus.

PERHAPS THEY ARE NOT STARS (Inuit proverb). Perhaps they are not stars but, rather, openings to Heaven where the love of our lost ones pours through and shines down on us to let us know that they are happy. They are not stars, but love.

FOR GOOD (Words by Stephen Schwartz). *I'm limited. Just look at me. I'm limited. And look at you. You can do all I couldn't do. Glinda, now it's up to you. For both of us, now it's up to you.* I've heard it said that people come into our lives for a reason, bringing something we must learn. And we are led to those who help us most to grow. (If we let them.) And we help them in return and we are led to those who help us most to grow—if we let them—and we help them in return. Now I don't know if I believe that that is true, but I know I'm who I am today because I knew you. Like a comet pulled from orbit as it passes the sun, like a stream that meets a boulder halfway through the wood, who can say if I've been changed for the better? But, because I knew you, I have been changed for good. *It will may be that we will never meet again in this lifetime, so let me say before we part: so much of me is what I have learned from you. You'll be with me like a handprint on my heart now whatever way our stories may end. I know you have rewritten mine by being my friend. Like a ship blown from its mooring by a wind off the sea, like a seed dropped by a skybird in a distant wood who can say if I've been changed for the better? But, because I knew you, I have been changed for good. Because I knew you, I have been changed for good. And, just to clear the air, I ask forgiveness for what you blame me for.* Well I guess there is blame to share, and none of it seems to matter anymore. Like a comet pulled from orbit as it passes the sun, like a stream that meets a boulder halfway through the wood, like a ship blown off its mooring by a wind off the sea, like a seed dropped by a skybird in the wood, who's to say if I've been changed for the better? Because I knew you, I have been changed for good.

COMIN' INTO MY YEARS (Words by Betsy Rose). I'm a gray-haired woman and I'm coming into my years. I'm a weathered woman and I'm coming into my years. No more holding back, no more trying to please. I got the will and the power to get off of my knees. I'm an aging woman and I'm coming into my years. I'm a streetwise woman and I'm coming into my pride. I'm a fight-back woman and I'm coming into my pride. No more shrinking 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 coming into my pride. I'm a loud-mouthed woman and I'm coming into my voice. I'm a talk-back woman and I'm coming into my voice. There's an ocean of words that got caught in my throat. I'm gonna let loose the waters, gonna learn how to float—all because I'm a sing-out woman and I'm coming into my voice. I'm a fighting woman and I'm coming into my strength. I'm a make-change woman and I'm coming 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 far-sighted woman, I'm a make-change woman. We all are sing out women, oh!

WOMAN AM I (Words by Joan Szymko). Woman am I. Spirit am I. I am the infinite within my soul. I have no beginning and I have no end. All this I am. Blessed am I. Spirit am I. I am the infinite within my soul. I have no beginning and I have no end. All this I am.

ABOUT THE CHORUS

The Common Woman Chorus is a woman-positive choral community committed to musical excellence and social change. We celebrate all life styles and gender identities.

OUR MISSION is to

- sing empowering music that highlights the diversity and strength of women's lives and experiences
- share with and educate the community through music
- develop and refine individual and group musical skills through regular rehearsal and performance
- encourage and support discussion, friendship, leadership, and the open exchange of beliefs with each other through regular check-ins, social gatherings, discussions and rehearsals
- network with other likeminded choruses and support such networks, societies, and organizations.

Performing membership is open to any woman who enjoys choral singing, can match pitch, and can commit to the chorus's regular rehearsal schedule. Performing members rehearse weekly and learn the music to the satisfaction of the creative director before performing with the group. Nonperforming members participate in committee and board work that augments, supports and enhances chorus activities.

Performing members' musical skills range from professional musician to untrained shower diva. Auditions are not required for most chorus activities. Instead, our creative director teaches the basic concepts of music and musical performance during rehearsals. She also confirms that performing members know their music to performance standards. We encourage you to join our community.

The Common Woman Chorus is a non-profit organization (Federal EIN 58-1711608, ITS Code 501(c)(3), NC State Certification 5585586-1) that encourages donations. Your support allows us to cover operational and administrative expenses that include, but are not limited to, rental of rehearsal space, the purchase of music, and performance expenses such as set design, lighting, and sound equipment. Please contact us to make a donation or to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

COMMON WOMAN CHORUS • PO BOX 51731 • DURHAM NC 27717
INFOCWC@YAHOO.COM • COMMONWOMANCHORUS.NET



ABOUT THE COVER: Fashion designer Vivienne Westwood introduced a punk aesthetic to our generation and, today, numerous people express their identity through the lens of her androgynous vision. The graphic used on the cover is taken from a banner that San Francisco's de Young Museum posted in the city to advertise Westwood's retrospective tour. PROGRAM by Angela Williams.