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## Our Mission

Soromundi comes together in song to create a visible expression of Lesbian pride. We strive for musical excellence and embrace our commonalities and differences. Through the power of music and inclusion we effect positive change in our community.

## Our Membership Statement

Chorus membership is open to anyone over the age of 18, who identifies as a woman. We welcome members of all orientations, races, ethnicities, abilities, economic statuses, and religions. We embrace a broad definition for self-identified women, which includes lesbian, straight, bisexual, cisgender, individuals with non-binary gender expressions, and gender expansive individuals who find home within women's spaces. This can include gender non-confirming, a-gender, two-spirit, butch, femme, and many other identities. We intend this membership definition to be as inclusive as possible while honoring and reaffirming our history and identify as Soromundi Lesbian Chorus of Eugene.

## Winter Retreat 2026

This year's Soromundi Winter Retreat on Saturday, February 28th was a special one - because it is the first year the chorus is rehearsing for a full-scale musical theater production! *Soromundi The Musical* rehearsals officially kicked off, and the excited energy permeated the day.

Once everyone was awake, Assistant Director Lynn led the group in a series of vocal warm-ups. Afterwards, Director Lisa remarked that even though the early hour was difficult for some, "Life is good and life is full if you have somewhere to be at 8:00 a.m. on a Saturday."

The morning focused on learning the music for the show's largest ensemble numbers. The musical features 17 original compositions, and while the chorus has been rehearsing for more than two months, the extended preparation period allowed for a more in-depth focus on the production's more intricate pieces. During the morning session, time was allocated to assigning brief individual lines and short solo segments interspersed throughout the script.



it's All about the **MUSICAL!**

The production truly has room for everyone in the chorus, including the option of the “Black Box Chorus,” a group of singers who will be positioned at the back of the stage to give extra power to the ensemble voices.

After lunch, the group started on something new to many - blocking! Every musical number has a specific stage setup, and the Mundis kicked it into high gear as they listened to Co-Director for the musical, Becky Hope, talk through the specific timing and plans for the five largest numbers of the show. There were lots of literal ups and downs as folks found their marks and went through the scenes. By the end of the afternoon, the chairs for the typical choir section setup had been transformed into everything from a community workshop to a tour bus!

The retreat gave chorus members important time to connect, which is rare during regular rehearsals. While this is Soromundi’s first musical, Saturday’s activities suggest it will be a fun and exciting show.

Jayde Hansen



**Soromundi  
the Musical!**

*A celebration of 35 years of the Soromundi chorus. How six friends singing in a living room evolved into a 100-member chorus and a proud cornerstone of the larger Eugene queer society — we're singing our story!*

**FLORENCE**  
**Sunday, May 3 at 2:00PM**  
Florence Events Center

**EUGENE**  
**Saturday, May 16 at 7:30PM**  
Hult Center for the Performing Arts

Tickets \$25

Hurry, only a few seats left!

**SOROMUNDI**  
*Lesbian Chorus of Eugene*

# Interview with Lisa Hellemn

## Composer and Co-Writer of *Soromundi the Musical*

I'm joined by Music Director Lisa Hellemn, who composed the music and co-wrote the script for *Soromundi the Musical*. Lisa has agreed to talk about the musical and will share how the musical was created and its progress.

**Dawn:** "Lisa, we'd like to know what inspired you to write a musical."

**Lisa:** "Our 30th anniversary was interrupted by COVID (the tour, the concert, and our plan to record a CD), so in preparing for the 35th, we decided to launch a history project, interviewing returning members of the reunion choir and early members of the choir. It was uncanny that so many people pointed to the same critical events that shaped the choir... And that gave me the idea. Then, when I developed my storyboard, it paralleled many of the same themes that ended up in the history exhibit, which were transformed into a memoir. I felt I was on the right track."

**Dawn:** "Can you tell us a little about the production?"

**Lisa:** "Well, there are over 100 people in the choir, and everyone will have a role to play, so this is the largest theater production I've ever been a part of. It was fun to try to write it in a way that anyone who wanted to participate could have some special part, but this is making it incredibly hard to stage. We also want the audience to really enjoy the story, so we need to block the scenes creatively to allow for different representations of past groups... this allows us to bring on different groups of people throughout the production. And then there are other ways to move the timeline along, but I don't want to give away too much!"

**Dawn:** "You mention 'we'. Since it's such a large production (100+ people), what's the division of labor? Who's doing what?"

**Lisa:** "So many people are involved in making this come to life... I hope I can answer that. To start with, I'm co-directing with Becky Major-Hope, who has a lot of experience in acting and directing locally. We also have an assistant director, Ann Huber, who also has experience. I needed help developing the script, so I asked Ann Roberts (a published author who co-wrote the choir's memoir) to co-write the script. She was invaluable... as well as some local actor and directors who have provided feedback."

"Then there's the production team... we have people who've stepped up to lead crews for costuming, props, and sets. We held auditions in January, so there's a cast of lead characters who the audience relies on to follow the story. Then, all the chorus... not just in singing, but in little spoken parts, here and there."

**Dawn:** "How do you even start to write a song?"

**Lisa:** "Well, that's the weird part: It just depends. Sometimes I'll think of a melody; other times, I will play with a chord progression that's interesting and then build the melody. And for some of this, it has been the words that drive it. If I have a particular goal or part of the story that needs to be told, that will often be the start... maybe a phrase or sentence that leads me to other things. That happens quite a bit, especially in the 1st act, where you get to see the messy process of how the choir came to be. The whole song "Get on the Bus" was inspired by that phrase and rhythmic motive."

“Sorry to go on too long, but to sum it all up... I think a third of my process is passion or inspiration, but a third is setting the parameters for a song or scene... like the style, what part of the story is being told, etc. Then the final third... at least, is the hardest part... the choral arrangements, setting keys for the lead characters, developing the lyrics to tell the story, setting the form, composing the accompaniment, and all that good stuff.”

**Dawn:** “What has been the biggest challenge or obstacle for you in this project?”

**Lisa:** “Hmm, I can think of three... but not sure of the order. My inexperience is right up there. I'm learning so much and developing new skills as fast as I can. The second is related... I arrange all the time, but I've only written a couple songs for the group, and I've never written a script. I hate to admit it, but I find it weird when I go to see a musical, and the story moves along...and then everything stops for a song. You know, the story is put on pause. I find that really irritating, especially if the song isn't that interesting to me. So, I started with the music... and every song needs to represent a real event that is happening in real time. But that means the script is subservient, connecting all those events. That made it hard, and we tried a couple of angles, using a narrator or other device. However, I had envisioned images and audio clips moving us through time... but that wasn't providing the info, so we finally landed on spoken word and projections to move the story. I hope it works!”

**Dawn:** “Just to follow up, you mentioned 3 obstacles?”

**Lisa:** “Oh, sorry... that's easy. The last one is simply the laws of physics... we need to solve endless logistical issues, like how to move lots of people in seconds without noise or how to fit the group into limited space (in the theater wings). The team is constantly trying to solve these.”

**Dawn:** “What has been the best thing about working on this project?”

**Lisa:** “Great question... and thank you for asking. I get so focused on the immediate needs, I don't always get to reflect on this. It's the people... it's our community.”

“I love the core of the group: I've known many of them for a long time, but I love getting to know the newbies who are getting involved and bring such great, dynamic energy to the project. For example, there's a new member, Am, who has been working with me behind the scenes on the spoken-word dialogues and videos - amazing person. Or the spoken word actors, who we affectionately call “The SPOKES”... or the cast members, who are putting in so much time and effort to learn their parts. Or people who are afraid of being on stage, so they're working on a crew or singing in the background. This group has created a community that has inspired me for 35 years and they just continue to do it. They are the reason I'm still her. Love these people.”

**Dawn:** “It sounds like a great group... but is there anything that's more personal, or specific to you?”

**Lisa:** “Maybe one thing, but I don't know how to describe it. (pause) I write stuff on a crappy music program that doesn't even allow me to play things back, so when we start rehearsing a new song that I've only ever heard in my head... and the layers start to form... and the choir starts to sound confident... and they begin to bring out the lines and expression, then it starts to sound like what's in my head. That's one of the coolest things I've EVER experienced.”



Lisa at her piano.



*Lisa at the Hult Center*



*Lisa & Amy Picard who is playing Lisa in the musical*

## **HULT CENTER TICKETS: LIMITED AVAILABILITY**

The Hult Center performance only has 14 tickets available for the May 16<sup>th</sup> performance of *Soromundi the Musical* as of April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Our Suggestion:** Take a lovely Sunday afternoon drive to Florence on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Travel along a river, take in the big fir trees, and you might even spot some wild Dogwood trees and wild rhododendrons in bloom.

Go to the Florence Event Center where there is a lovely theatre. See *Soromundi the Musical* at 2:00 pm and have plenty of time to drive back before dark.

# Spring Retreat

On Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, the choir met for their Spring Retreat and ran through the musical. The directors walked everyone through the scenes in order, completing Act One before the lunch break and Act Two after.

Members who were cast in roles got to speak their lines in front of the whole choir for the first time, and the group was excited to hear them. 'The Spokes' were a favorite; their rap style narrations were full of enthusiasm.

Many people mentioned they enjoyed the inclusion of additional instruments such as the drums and the cello, with the latter performing a solo that introduces a song in the second act. People also got to see the choreography for any scenes that were new to them. "Song Selection" was perhaps the most elaborate and exciting.

Members unexpectedly previewed the slideshows and videos planned for scene changes, which offer extra context and historical details to the audience. Choir members reacted warmly to nostalgic photos of their peers.



Everyone took notes for each of their scenes, to remember details such as when to come in, where to put props, how to react to the action, whether they mime silently or get loud, and which way to exit. The directors were clear that with so many people, each one had to be responsible for remembering their directions.

When scenes needed repeating, anyone not in the scene waited patiently and gave their friends encouragement afterwards. When Act Two ended, the directors shared their final notes, and the day ended a little after 4:00pm.

It was a long and tiring day, but everyone kept uplifting each other and saying how helpful it was to see the whole musical at once. Lisa was happy to have everything coming together so well, and many people commented on how moving it is to be part of something big, personal, and important.

*Michelle Michael*



*Co-directors: Lisa Hellemn & Becky Hope*

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Soromundi sponsor!**



**Where Soromundi pooches go to play!**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Soromundi the Musical* - Two performances:

Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2 pm at the Florence Events Center, Florence

Saturday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm at the Hult Center for the Performing Arts

Emeralds Pride Night - June 9 at PK Park.

Eugene Pride - June 27 at Lane Events Center.

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Soromundi Lesbian Chorus of Eugene  
P.O. Box 40934 Eugene, Oregon 97404