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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-conforming, 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 identity as Soromundi Lesbian Chorus.

## 35<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONCERTS

For the first time in Soromundi's 35 years, Soromundi performed 2 concerts at the Hult Center on Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. Both concerts were well attended. Under the direction of Lisa Hellemn, Act One – Looking Back, told the musical story of the past 35 years. Act Two – Looking Forward, was a musical insight into what might be Soromundi's future.

In addition to the concerts, a history exhibit, "Artists, Activists, and Allies," was available for all concertgoers in the Jacobs Community room within the Hult Center. The exhibit told the story of Soromundi and included costumes, posters, banners, stories of members, and a video of past members and activities.

Each concert began with chorus members arriving on stage while singing "Price Tag," by Jessie J, accompanied by piano and drums. Next up, "Vichten," a traditional Acadian song, with made up words, was a delight and lightened the mood. From there, we went to "City Hall," by Vienna Tang. This song chronicled the many who participated in mass marriages at various City Halls across the country after the legalization of same-sex marriage. This featured



celebration! GOOD times!

a duet and a small group of backup singers. "Adiemus," by Karl Jenkins, proved to be a fan favorite with its small group chanters, percussion group, and strings. "Shenandoah," a traditional folk song from the 1800's, had a calming tone with wonderful harmonies. Everyone woke up to "Where Is the Love?" made popular by the Black-Eyed Peas. This featured two "rap" soloists. "Everything Possible," the concert's title song, written by Fred Small, featured a video of Fred Small congratulating the chorus on its 35 years.

The Reunion Chorus came onstage to perform the last 4 songs in Act One. They were "Ancient Mother," featuring a chant group, instrumentalists, and spiritual poetry; "Quiet," by MILCK & AG; "Choose Something Like a Star," poem by Robert Frost and music by Randall Thompson; a fiery gospel version of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" by Paul Simon featuring 4 soloists.

After intermission, Act Two – Looking Forward, started with "A Beautiful Noise" written by Alicia Keys and 6 other women. Then came "Gold" by Fergus O'Farrell, featuring a dueling guitar accompaniment, followed by another audience favorite, "Highwomen" by Brandi Carlile & Natalie Hemby. "Highwomen," from the album by the same title, featured 5 soloists and guitar. "Without You Without Them," written by boygenius, featured the narration of a Soromundi Chorus survey by Karm Hagedorn. The roof was raised with a blustering rendition of "Everyone Is Gay," a tongue-in-check spoof written by Ian Axel & Chad King and performed

by A Great Big World. The Reunion Chorus joined in for the last four songs that included "Golden Slumbers/Carry that Weight" by John Lennon & Paul McCartney; "Find Your People" by Drew Holcomb & The Neighbors, with a soloist, and "Higher Love," by Will Jennings & Steve Winwood with a featured soloist. The concert closed with "Pink Pony Club," by Kayleigh Roas Amstutz & Daniel Nigro, which left the audience on their feet and dancing! What a way to end the show!

There were many videos shown on the big screen throughout the concert. The videos were a collection of congratulatory messages sent by former US Rep. Peter DeFazio, Mayor Kaarin Knudson, singer-songwriter Holly Near, comedian Kristin Key, Basic Rights Oregon Executive Director Kyndall Mason, former Mayor Kitty Piercy, Dr. Judith Raiskin of Eugene's Lesbian Oral History Project and the *Outliers and Outlaws* documentary, comedian Lee Nacozy, Enid Lefton (long-time radio host of women's music and Wymprov member), Allan Benavides, General Manager of the Eugene Emeralds, Rev. Fred Small, composer of "Everything Possible", and others. These videos reminded us of the tremendous achievement of this chorus.

Each year it seems that Soromundi raises the level of production, and they didn't disappoint in this 35<sup>th</sup> season. In addition to Music Director Lisa Hellemn, the concert featured 3 other directors. Accompaniments ranged from piano, (featuring 4 different pianists), piano and drums (resident drummer Claudia Paige), native drum groups, guitar, dueling guitars, and a string quintet! With the addition of the background videos, the ears and eyes were treated to something very special.

Soromundi has always been known for taking their audiences on a musical journey through a wide range of genres and styles. One audience member commented that the main reason she never misses a Soromundi concert is that they "get to me. I'm laughing one moment, then find myself in tears. I am so moved by their music."



# Spotlight on Volunteers

## Sound Production & The Riser Crew

Our last newsletter featured chorus members who volunteer on the DEIB Committee. We continue this series featuring both the Sound Production team and the Riser Crew.



*Sound Production. Left to Right: Mary & Bert*

The **Sound Production Team** provides sound at dress rehearsals and performances where there is not a suitable sound system provided. This includes caring for the equipment (mixer, mics, mic stands, speakers, speaker stands, cables, power strips, etc.). They arrive at the event early to set up and test the equipment, monitor the sound throughout the event, take down the equipment, and return it to storage. They are a devoted pair, working to make the chorus sound its very best!

### Team Members

**Bert Wong – Bass 1.** It was fall of 2013 when Bert joined the chorus. She works at Lane Community College as an accountant. In addition to heading up the Sound Production team, she volunteers as a member of the Riser Crew. She loves reading and goes on road trips as often as she can get away.

**Mary Robertson – Tenor 1.** Mary has been a chorus member for 21 years and is the Tenor 1 Section Leader. She is retired, generally stays home and hangs out with her mom. Her past jobs/careers include photojournalist, retail manager, reporter, sheepshearer, technical editor, and wilderness guide. She likes to study various things, grow tomatoes, play music at church, look after her community, and support women's sports. Generally, she tries to do whatever makes her dogs happy! Recently she finds herself listening to true crime podcasts and isn't sure why!

The **Riser Crew.** Soromundi owns risers that are needed at venues that don't provide risers or platforms and a trailer to transport from storage to venue and back to storage. Some of the crew arrive at storage a few hours before the performance, get the trailer hooked up and driven to the venue. The remaining members meet at the venue, haul the risers to the stage and set them up before (ready for the chorus) at performance time. Then, of course, they work after the performance to disassemble the risers and take them back to storage. It's a lot of work. Thank you, Riser Crew!!



*The Riser Crew. Left to Right. Back: Ava, Suzi, Liz, & Cathy. Front: Lori, Becky, & Dawn. Not pictured are Hana & Lainey.*

## **Committee Members**

**Becky Hope – Bass 2.** This is Becky's 7<sup>th</sup> year singing with the chorus and her 2<sup>nd</sup> year as Concert Chair on the Board of Directors, and as such, is the chair of the Riser Crew. She is a full-time mom, helping with random tasks for her family and you can often find her at a local craft market selling handmade bags. She's been involved in local theatre for over 40 years as a performer and directs children's theatre productions.

**Ava Bamforth – Bass 2.** Ava has just completed her first season with the chorus! She is a graduate student in Math at U of O. When not at school or singing, she loves hiking, backpacking, reading, and doing math! And yes, she does Math recreationally.

**Cathy Thomas – Bass 2.** Cathy joined the chorus in 2009. She was a board member for 6 years, was a member of both previous tour committees, and a member of the riser crew for the 16 years she's been a Soromundi member! She has worked in Stage Production for all the big concerts with previous and current Concert Chairs. Cathy is a very talented graphic designer and has produced the Hult Center concert programs, as well as other concert programs, and developed various surveys and board evaluations over the years. Cathy works as a Data Analyst. When she's not working or singing with the chorus, you would find her camping, kayaking, going to U of O women athletic events, and working with her dog Zoey as a Therapy Dog team.

**Dawn DeWolf – Bass 2.** Dawn has been in the chorus since the 2006-2007 season. For the past 5 years she has also contributed her time writing grants for the chorus. For 15 years she worked as an administrator at Lane Community College and is now retired. She enjoys camping, kayaking, riding bikes, hiking, reading, and says that being retired allows her to do whatever she wants, whenever she wants!

**Hana Wills – Bass 1.** Hana has been singing with the chorus for three years. For the past 20 years, she has worked as a Data Engineer in higher education. Along with singing in the chorus, she loves camping, sketching, creating computer games and playing the guitar.

**Lainey Rasmussen – Tenor 2.** Lainey first joined the chorus in 2020 (just before COVID) and re-joined this past year, so this is her 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Lainey is a Register Nurse and trained Doula. She loves" kiddos" of all ages, treasures her friends, enjoys spending quality time with them along with hosting a good pool party in her backyard. More recently, she developed a new interest, learning to craft using vintage jewelry. Lainey says she's honored to pair up with Becky on those early morning Riser Runs! Lainey is the driver for the "riser trailer" and appreciated for her trailer driving skills!

**Liz Roberts – Bass 2.**

Liz has been singing with the chorus since 1998. She is a retired Registered Nurse and does some patient care. Most of her clients are people who don't have health care assistance. Liz's favorite things to do when not working or singing are swimming, hiking, pet sitting, bird watching, sailing, watching sports (mostly women's), and hanging out with her grandkids. She really enjoys community service work and is currently the President of the downtown Eugene Lions Club.

**Lori Hilterbrand – Tenor 2.** This is Lori's 3<sup>rd</sup> season with the chorus. She leads a resource sharing & circulation program for academic libraries in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington at the Orbis Cascade Alliance. When not working and singing, she loves thrifting, selling used books online, and playing board and card games.

**Suzi O'Rourke – Alto 2.** Suzi has just completed her first year in the chorus. She will become a Section Leader when the 2025-26 season begins this fall. Suzi is a firmware engineer. For fun she loves to read, play with her dogs, and swim.



*1Lisa presenting awards.*

## The Week Before

Dress rehearsals began on Tuesday, May 13. A dress rehearsal includes a full sound system, set up and monitoring by our Sound Production team. For the regular chorus (excluding reunion chorus members) dress rehearsal was a run through of the full set list including introductions, instrumentalists, soloists, and small group singers.

Thursday, May 15, was our second dress rehearsal for the combined choruses, including the regular chorus and the reunion chorus. When we arrived, the space had been transformed with tables and chairs for a dinner with anniversary balloons and decorations. The evening began early with dinner. Some reunion chorus members were from our local area, and others came from Texas, North Carolina, Michigan, Seattle, and other faraway places. After dinner there was a short awards presentation, honoring those who came the farthest, the youngest, the oldest, a "flounder" award for Soromundi's founder, and other serious and funny awards. Then all got down to the business of the dress rehearsal.

On Friday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, the history exhibit, "Artists, Activists, and Allies," was opened to all chorus members and guests for a special viewing. This was also an opportunity to pre-order the book *Sisters of the World*, the story of Soromundi's past 35 years. The exhibit included artifacts such as costumes, banners, posters, programs and other memorabilia. The highlight of the exhibit was a video of members and events throughout the past 35 years.

On Saturday, May 17, tech rehearsal began at 9:45 a.m. Tech rehearsal is for the Hult Center Staff. It is a run through of the entire concert (with starts and stops of the repertoire and not the full song) so the staff can set sound levels, lighting, stage crew can set up chairs, music stands, and mics for the instrumentalists, videos can be played at correct times, etc. Tech was completed early afternoon and everyone returned home to get ready for the first concert that evening. What a WEEK! Exhausted, Tired and Very EXCITED!



*Dress rehearsal with the reunion Chorus*



*Reunion Chorus performs for Soromundi*

Hult Center Concert Photos



## Support Soromundi and Soromundi Supports You

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

Eugene Pride Festival, Saturday, June 28<sup>th</sup> at 1pm. Lane Events Center at the Fairgrounds

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