

Lesbian Feminists musically share their visions
Artemis Singers presents "Wildest Dreams" concert
Jan. 23 & 24, 2016, in Skokie, Ill.

Artemis Singers www.artemissingers.org, Chicago's Lesbian Feminist chorus, will present "Wildest Dreams," Saturday, Jan. 23, 2016, and Sunday, Jan. 24, a concert reflecting chorus members' collective dreaming about the environment, social justice, feminism, empowerment, love and passion.

"The lyrics to 'Ella's Song' are as arresting and vital today as they were when civil rights unsung hero Ella Baker spoke them in 1964," said Alyssandra McKaye, concert co-artistic director:

"Until the killing of Black men, Black mothers' sons
Is as important as the killing of White men, White mothers' sons...
We who believe in freedom cannot rest."

Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock, the African-American women's a cappella ensemble, composed "Ella's Song" to honor Baker.

The "Wildest Dreams" program features songs based on this question, "If we were only limited by our imaginations, where would we go?"

Emily Dickinson's subtly erotic poetry is featured in the song, "Wild Nights." Chicago's McKaye said the text is a fascinating contrast to the popular image of the reclusive spinster.

Artemis Singers will perform at 7 p.m. Jan. 23 and at 4 p.m. Jan. 24 at the Ethical Humanist Society, 7574 N. Lincoln Ave., Skokie, Ill. (south of Howard St., west of Skokie Blvd.) The 32-member nonprofit chorus, specializing in music written or arranged by women, is celebrating its 35th season.

Artemis Singers treasurer and long-time chorus member Loraine Edwalds of Chicago said that even though same-sex marriage is now legal, it is still a radical act for a woman to love a woman.

"In the early 1980s, when the lesbian community was underground," said Edwalds, "Artemis Singers had the courage to proclaim we were Chicago's lesbian feminist chorus. We've had 35 concert seasons and that is phenomenal."

Edwalds noted that the chorus is a great way to be in a community of women.

On the "Wildest Dreams" program is the evocative song, "Changing My Major," from the 2015 Tony Award winner for best musical, "Fun Home," based on the graphic novel by Alison Bechdel; "Dream Keeper," with text by Langston Hughes; and "Amazon," by Maxine Feldman.

"These songs speak to strength, freedom and filled and unfulfilled dreams," said McKaye. "Who would have dreamed that this lesbian feminist chorus, which a small group of women created in 1980, would still be going strong today? But here we are 35 years later."

Also on the program is "Gamba Adisa," Joan Szymko's adaptation of text by activist poet Audre Lorde; "Mountain Song," the Holly Near piece about strip mining; and "I Dreamed of Rain," Jan Garrett's environmental and social justice song.

Artemis Singers will present the liberty piece, "Universal Dream," by Jenni Brandon with text by Meta Hellman, Artemis Singers president, and Jane Addams. "Universal Dream" was commissioned for the 2010 Sister Singers Network Festival, hosted by Artemis Singers at Loyola University Chicago. Sister Singers Network www.sistersingers.net is a national cooperative of feminist choruses, ensembles, singers, arrangers and composers dedicated to the women's choral movement.

Skokie's Stephanie Larenas and Chicago's Laurie Lee Moses are the piano accompanists. Tickets for "Wildest Dreams" are a suggested donation of \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door for adults. Tickets for seniors age 65 and older and for children age 12 and younger are a suggested donation of \$10. Visit <http://artemiswildestdreams.brownpapertickets.com/> to purchase tickets online.

Tickets also are available from any Artemis Singers chorus member. Tickets may be purchased by mail with a check payable to Artemis Singers, P.O. Box 578296, Chicago, IL 60657. For concert information, email info@artemissingers.org or call 773-764-4465.

The concert venue, near Oakton Community College, is one-half mile north of the Touhy Avenue I-94 (Edens Expressway) interchange. Parking is available in the lot adjacent to the Ethical Humanist Society or on the street. The building is accessible. The concert will take place in the auditorium.

Artemis membership is open to all women singers. As part of its educational mission as a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization, Artemis Singers provides creative opportunities for women interested in learning aspects of choral production: musical accompaniment, vocal instruction, songwriting and arranging, choral directing, choreography, audio, performance lighting, artistic direction and stage management.

Founded in 1980, Artemis Singers is comprised of women with diverse backgrounds who are dedicated to effecting positive change in cultural attitudes toward women and women artists. Performances highlight historical, political and personal events common to women.

Artemis Singers performed at the March on Springfield (Illinois) for Marriage Equality rally, Oct. 22, 2013, and Illinois' Marriage Equality Bill signing ceremony, Nov. 20, 2013.

Artemis Singers was inducted into the City of Chicago's Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2008.

Audiences have seen Artemis Singers at the Chicago History Museum, Skokie Theatre, the Jay Pritzker Pavilion at Millennium Park (Gay Games), Ethical Humanist Society, Women & Children First bookstore, numerous universities as well as Sister Singers Network festivals throughout the U.S.

Artemis Singers is on Facebook and Twitter.

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