

PRESS RELEASE

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**WOMENSING — June Concerts
“Southern Exposure II”**

For its final concert of the 2013-14 season, WomenSing, the adventurous East Bay women’s chorus, takes a diverse choral journey featuring music that meditates on the awe of nature, expresses the human yearning for freedom, and continues the chorus’ exploration of Latin American music. Under the baton of Artistic Director Martín Benvenuto, WomenSing presents “Southern Exposure II” on Sunday, June 1, and Tuesday, June 3 at the Lafayette/Orinda Presbyterian Church in Lafayette.

The graceful lyricism and subtle harmonic shifts of Gabriel Fauré’s *Messe Basse* (short or low mass) opens the program, along with his exceptionally beautiful *Cantique de Jean Racine*, written when Fauré was 19 years old. A set of flower songs evokes the beauty of nature, contrasting a setting of e.e. cummings’ poem *in time of daffodils* by the American composer Kirstina Rasmussen with two songs by Carlos Guastavino, the Argentinean composer dubbed the “Schubert of the Pampas” because of his song-writing skill.

Joan Szymko’s piece, *Only Light Only Love*, uses text from a sermon by Dr. Martin Luther King in a moving meditation on the power of nonviolence in the struggle for freedom: “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.” This challenging piece is set for double chorus.

A special concert highlight will be the world premieres of compositions by Chris Castro and Jordan Nelson, the winners of WomenSing’s 2013 Youth Inspiring Youth competition. The text of these compositions is provided by award-winning children’s poetry from River of Words, a project of the Center for Environmental Literacy at St. Mary’s College in Moraga. For his composition, Chris Castro chose *Poseidon’s Steeds* by Allegra Hyde. Castro’s work mixes complex interplay of choral parts and organ to evoke the swirling and crashing waves as

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Poseidon's steeds arise from the sea. Chris earned his B.M. from the Julliard School and currently is a graduate student at UC Davis in music composition.

Jordan Nelson's composition, *Our Only Sun*, features text from *Ten Ways of Looking at the Sun* by Sophie Anderson. His composition evokes the celestial majesty and our terrestrial experience of the sun—one of many stars. Mr. Nelson is currently pursuing a D.M.A. in Composition at the University of Southern California Thornton School Of Music, where he also earned a Master's degree in Composition. He was awarded his B.A. in music with distinction from Yale. For those who wish to know more about Chris Castro and Jordan Nelson and their music, they will give a pre-concert talk one hour before each concert.

The concert closes on a joyful note with the danceable rhythms of the traditional Colombian folk song, *Maquerule*, and an Argentinean tango!

Tickets are \$30 for premium seats, \$25 for general admission, \$20 for seniors, and \$10 for students/youth 18 and under. Advance tickets are available up to 24 hours prior to each concert at www.womensing.org. Tickets will also be available at the door.

About WomenSing:

Founded in 1965, WomenSing is an active, auditioned chorus of nearly 50 singers, renowned for its vibrant and beautifully blended sound. The repertoire includes both the traditional and the unexpected, featuring great landmarks of the women's chorus repertoire, seldom performed works, new music, commissions from nationally recognized composers, and familiar music from all eras. The innovative Youth Inspiring Youth – Commissioning Emerging Composers project pairs young poets with young composers. The project has led to nine world premieres. WomenSing performances include collaborations with major performing groups such as San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus, Jubililate Orchestra, California Shakespeare Theatre, Dimensions Dance Theater of Oakland, Piedmont East Bay Children's Choirs, and Contra Costa Children's Chorus, as well as the finest Bay Area musicians. WomenSing participated by invitation in the Ninth International Choral Festival in Missoula, Montana in July 2013.