

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Giving Voice To Our Song

If you love to sing, you have a special invitation - from 120 women!



"Her hairflip is gone and her voice more seasoned, but LULU's back," roared the New York Times in announcing the release of her latest album entitled INDEPENDENCE.

LULU's storied career began in 1964 when, as a fifteen year old Scottish spitfire, she rose to the top of the U.K. pop charts with her cover of the Isley Brothers' "Shout." A few years later, America discovered LULU with her emotional rendering of "To Sir With Love." The title track from the film of the same name, in which she starred alongside Sidney Poitier, reached #1 on the pop charts and earned her a gold record. It was re-

cently reprised, to enormous response, by Natalie Merchant and Michael Stipe at the Clinton Inaugural celebrations.

For nearly twenty years thereafter, LULU dominated the pop world. In 1982, she was nominated for a Grammy Award for "Who's Fooling Who?", from the same album that featured her Top 20 hit "I Could Never Miss You (More Than I Do)." Remarkably, 1982 was the last year that LULU released art album, Apart from

a remake of "Shout" in 1986, which again hit the U.K. Top 10, her instantly recognizable vocals were to go unheard for over ten years. Until now, that is, with the release of INDEPENDENCE.

"It certainly wasn't by design," she says. "My American record company at the time closed down and somehow I just got diverted from my recording career."

Flash forward to 1992, and LULU is back on course, recording in Miami with her former brother-in-law Barry Gibb and with R & B producer Nick Martinelli whose credits include Loose Ends, Regina Belle and Phyllis Hyman. She started writing for the first time, with a variety of collaborators, and recorded one of her own tunes "I'm Walking Away." On "I'm Back For More," she teamed up with (Music Shoals old hand) Bobby Womack, whose songs were being recorded by the Rolling Stones when she was just starting out, LULU also joined up with young UK soul producer Ian Green, responsible for Monie Love hits, as well as contemporary production whizkids, Errol Henry and former Floy Joy member Mike Ward.

INDEPENDENCE leads off with the bold and sassy title track, co-written by Winston Sela, who penned Maxi Priest's #1 "Close To You," and former Motown artist Leon Ware.

Aurora, a women's chorus which celebrates harmony in diversity, seeks singers to join with Aurora and special guests Ysaye Barnwell and Boka Marimba to present "The Ancestors' Breath: A Celebration Of African And African-American Song" next October.

Aurora is a unique group, providing the Portland area with an unusual new opportunity. Aurora's membership is very diverse. Women of all ages, cultures and backgrounds have come together to express both their diversity and their unity in the joy of singing. Singers come from Salem to Vancouver. There are members who have never sung in a choir before, and members who are professionally trained musicians. This is an opportunity to learn, to meet new friends, to perform, and to contribute to the community.

Although Aurora is only 18 months old, it has grown from 35 to 120 voices and has already presented three major performances and several guest appearances. Aurora's high quality has recently been recognized by a coveted grant from the Metropolitan Arts Commission, which only rarely recognizes amateur groups. David York, well-known in Portland as a talented vocal performer, composer and director, leads and teaches Aurora in a joyful, sensitive and inspiring manner.

The members of Aurora perform a wide variety of music and are especially interested in giving exposure to new composers, women composers and ethnic composers. The chorus is committed to singing out a message of



love, peace and respect for All peoples of our community.

Aurora looks forward with excitement to sharing the stage with Ysaye Barnwell and Boka Marimba in October. For over a decade Ysaye Barnwell has performed all over the world with the acclaimed Sweet Honey In The Rock. In her 1991 Portland Performance with the Concord Choir, she charmed both the audience and the choir with her unique talent for conveying not only the music, but the spirit and history of African-American spirituals. Ten members of the well-known Portland band, Boka Marimba, will perform traditional and modern pieces based on the music of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. Aurora singers are already enjoying learning the haunting harmonies and moving rhythms of these African songs.

Join Them! Rehearsals are on Thursdays at Whittaker Middle School, 5700 NE 39th, Room C-215 at 6:30 p.m. The last registration dates for The Ancestors' Breath concert are May 13 and May 20th! Call 760-3722 for more information.

Men Don't Be Left Out! There is a men's chorus being formed! David York will be directing Satori, an entry level men's chorus modeled after Aurora, dedicated to affirming peace through music. Call 760-3722 for more information and to register.

Satori will make its debut performance in The Ancestor's Breath.

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August Wilson's The Piano Lesson Concludes Portland REP's 12th Season



Portland Repertory Theater concludes the season with the Pulitzer Prize-winning drama The Piano Lesson by August Wilson. This Broadway play set in the 30's, is one in the series of plays chronicling the African-American experience in this century. Directed by Debra L. Wicks, The Piano Lesson runs May 8 through June 13. Tickets are \$23 & 26.

At the heart of the play stands an upright piano in Berniece Charles's Pittsburgh home, an heirloom for which members of her family were once traded as slaves. Carved with the images of her ancestors, it holds the meaning of her past and the memory of her father dying while taking it back from the old masters's family. Berniece's brother, Boy Willie, wants to sell the piano to buy the same

Mississippi land that his family worked on as slaves, while Berniece refuses to sell her family's legacy.

This dilemma is the real "piano lesson," reminding us that African-Americans are often deprived both of the symbols of their past and of opportunity in the present.

The cast includes Benny Cannon as Doaker, Baron Kelly as Boy Willie, Eugene Huges as Lymon, Quigley Provost-Landrum as Berniece, Aryanna Hunter and Evelyn Reid alternating as Maretha, Robert Chew as Avery, Neal Tate as Wine Boy, and Wanda Walden as Grace.

To get tickets before The Piano Lesson is completely sold out call the Portland Repertory Theater's box office at 224-4491, or visit any Ticketmaster location.

JAMES CANNON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
OREGON BALLET THEATRE

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- Gene Shalit, NBC-TV

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