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“You have to have confidence that what you are doing deserves a place on the program—either because of its sheer beauty or originality, or because it relates to modern life.”

—Composer-Not-in-Residence Eleanor Aversa, whose piece about mid 20th century female scientist Rosalind Franklin will have its world premiere in this program

SAN FRANCISCO CHORAL ARTISTS
Magen Solomon, Artistic Director

present

Voices of Women

Saturday March 2, 2013, at 8 PM:

St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church, 500 De Haro (at Mariposa), **San Francisco**, CA 94107

Saturday March 9, 2013, at 8 PM:

St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 600 Colorado Ave, **Palo Alto**, CA 94306

Sunday March 10, 2013, at 4 PM:

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 114 Montecito Ave, **Oakland**, CA 94610

TICKETS: \$12-\$25 Advance Purchase; \$15-\$30 At the door.

<http://www.sfca.org/tickets>

(415) 494-8149

San Francisco, February 2, 2013—**San Francisco Choral Artists present *Voices of Women*, A program celebrating music by women and about women**, dreamed up by one of the strongest advocates of new choral music in the Bay Area, Magen Solomon.

“We have in this well-spoken, highly literate, and enthusiastic teacher-performer the kind of driving force that classical music so sorely needs,” states Lynn René Bayley in *Fanfare Magazine* this past October.

With her exceptional talent and seemingly endless energy, Ms. Solomon has moved mountains to bring the music of living composers to Bay Area concert stages in the past two decades. As Artistic Director of San Francisco Choral Artists, she founded the Composer-in-Residence program in 1999, the New Voices Project (a competition for composers under the age of 30) in 2005, and the Composer-Not-in-Residence program in

2010. In the last two seasons alone, SFCA has presented 26 world premieres of new works, 26 works by San Francisco Bay Area composers, and seven works by composers under age the age of 30. (Please read on to learn more about these programs.)

When one gives this much goodness and beauty to the world, it doesn't go unnoticed or unrewarded. In 2012 Solomon and the Choral Artists received the ASCAP/Chorus America Award for Adventurous Programming and were honored with the Roger Nixon Living Music Initiative. The Initiative, created in honor of the eminent composer Roger Nixon (1921-2009) by his five children, has allowed SFCA to nearly double the funding for their existing composer-focused programs, as well as for new recordings.

Voices of Women features old and new masters, from Renaissance composer Maddalena Casulana to the group's first female Composer-Not-in-Residence, Eleanor Aversa. Aversa's piece *Probably Helical* honors Rosalind Franklin, a seriously underestimated scientist from the 1940s and 1950s. The program showcases hidden talent next to famous women Meredith Monk, Fanny Hensel, Chen Yi, Alice Parker, and Pauline Oliveros. And then there are works about women written by male composers: *Hymn to St. Cecilia* by Britten, *Waltz for Debbie* by jazz pianist Bill Evans, and *anima gaia* by Composer-in-Residence Mark Winges.

Read how this kind of programming comes about in Ms. Solomon's blog on the SFCA website: <http://www.sfca.org/where-do-you-find-all-this-stuff/>

Eleanor Aversa talks about female scientist Rosalind Franklin:

"In the 1940s and 1950s, several groups of researchers were trying to deduce the structure of DNA: Franklin and her assistant Raymond Gosling, Maurice Wilkins and his collaborators Herbert Wilson and Alec Stokes, and the team of James Watson and Francis Crick. Without Franklin's knowledge, her co-worker Maurice Wilkins showed her X-ray diffraction pictures to James Watson. Watson and Crick were already close to uncovering the structure of DNA, and Franklin's X-rays provided the final evidence they needed. All three teams simultaneously authored articles on the nature of DNA, all published in the same issue of *Nature* in 1953. Franklin's article was placed third. Watson, Crick, and Wilkins were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1962. Franklin by then had died, at the age of 37, of ovarian cancer. (The Nobel is not awarded posthumously.) I have always admired Franklin's tenacity and genius, and was thrilled that the permissions office at *Nature* granted me the full artistic rights to the text of her paper. I selected a few key passages from the article, at times trimming a few words for "singability" while retaining the original meaning. Musically, I created four voice parts that mirror and cross one another: a kind of double helix in sound. I hope that *Probably Helical* in some way expresses the triumph and reverence of a major scientific discovery."

About being a female composer, she says:

"It has often struck me that women are fairly well represented as poets, novelists, and visual artists, but not as composers or playwrights. I suspect this is because writers and visual artists do not require others to make their work come to life. A painter can decide to go to her studio and create a painting, and after that the work of art exists. But to be a composer or a playwright, you have to *actively enlist* performers to realize your creation.

And you have to compete for these performing resources not just with living artists, but with dead ones! A composer has to essentially say to an ensemble: “Look, I know there is a lot of brilliant music out there, but I want you to perform MINE.” I feel that for a lot of women, this attitude seems pushy, immodest, or even disrespectful. I think this also gets to the question of why write new music at all. You have to have confidence that what you are doing deserves a place on the program- either because of its sheer beauty or originality, or because it relates to modern life. That’s one reason why working on this Rosalind Franklin piece felt so meaningful to me: whatever its purely musical merits, it deals with events from recent history.”

Magen Solomon explains the composer-focused programs to Lynn René Bayley in Fanfare magazine: “We began our Composer-in-Residence program in 1999 and have had one every year since. I choose from among the many wonderful local composers whose works we’ve performed and invite them to fill that position. We’ve had a lot of extraordinary composers work with us and they have written us some fabulous pieces, many of which have gone on to be published, win prizes, and make their way in the world. Four years ago we also started a Composer-Not-in-Residence program in order to be able to work more closely with composers from different parts of the world, different composing traditions, etc. Our first, for example, was Christopher Marshall, from New Zealand, and our second was Stephen Leek, from Australia.”

Noted for being both lyrical and bold, the music of **Composer-Not-in-Residence Eleanor Aversa** has been honored with national awards such as the Northridge Composition Prize (*Hero’s Welcome* for orchestra), First Prize in the San Francisco Choral Artists’ New Voices Competition (*Eyes Open*), and fellowships from the The MacDowell Colony, the I-Park Foundation, and The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Other awards include the Brian M. Israel Prize from the New York Federation of Music Clubs (*Movement for String Quartet*), as well as a grant from The Queens Council on the Arts for her work with choreographer Danuta Petrow-Sek. A major musical influence has been the Russian tradition. After earning a degree in Russian Language and Literature from Princeton, Eleanor lived in the Moscow area from 2002 to 2005 and immersed herself in the local musical life, accompanying harpist Simeon Kulkov at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory and singing in the choir of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral, performing both Latin and Russian Orthodox sacred music. From these involvements, her work absorbed elements of folk melody, quasi-modal harmony, and asymmetrical meter. Eleanor earned a Master’s in Composition from The Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College of the City University of New York, where she studied with Bruce Saylor. In August 2012 Eleanor completed her doctorate in composition from The University of Pennsylvania, where she studied as a Benjamin Franklin Fellow with James Primosch, Jay Reise, and Anna Weesner. She currently teaches advanced theory and composition at Penn and serves on the piano faculty at the Settlement Music School.

For **Composer-in-Residence Mark Winges**, Early beginnings in piano, organ and composition were followed by degrees in the US (Cincinnati, San Francisco) and additional composition study in Stockholm, Sweden. Also lurking in his distant past are flirtations as a performer on oboe, recorder, krummhorn and electric bass. Mark's music has been described as "stylistically adventurous in setting, but strongly beholden to conventional means" (Gramophone). Both vocal (from solo voice to chorus) and instrumental (solo, chamber, orchestral) genres are represented in his catalog. Clarity of expression, a sense of forward motion, formal designs, and a belief that sound and gesture create their own meaning are important elements in all of his works. His music is freely chromatic, sometimes with tonal centers, and includes regular, propulsive rhythms as well as more complex irregular patterns. In addition to his concert music, he has written anthems for church use, and made arrangements of early American shape-note tunes.

Nationally-recognized **San Francisco Choral Artists**, recently awarded the Chorus America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, regularly champion the work of living composers and are known for their eclectic programming. They have premiered or commissioned over 175 choral works, performed at American Choral Directors Association and Chorus America conferences, and released four CDs, including *With Strings Attached*, a critically acclaimed collaboration with the Alexander String Quartet. The ensemble has been called "amongst the foremost unaccompanied singing groups ... on this or any other coast" (artssf.com) and is sought after for guest appearances and collaborations. San Francisco Choral Artists has been described by composer Kirke Mechem as "a Bay Area treasure." The Choral Artists have partnered to bring new music to young people through programs at the UC Berkeley New Music Project, SF Conservatory of Music, St. Mary's College of California, SF School of the Arts, De Anza College, and the San Joaquin Office of Education. Additional musical collaborations have been with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, The Alexander String Quartet, Veretski Pass, The Whole Noyse, Composers Inc., and Sonos Handbell Ensemble.

Magen Solomon, Artistic Director, avidly cultivates engagements with living composers to bridge the gulf between audience, composer, and performer. Under her leadership SFCA has established the Composer-in-Residence Program, Composer-Not-in-Residence Program, Composer's Invitational Program, and the "New Voices Project" Competition. Audiences, composers, performers, and students are fortunate to enjoy the fruits of her unique programming and her commitment to presenting a wide range of excellent new music. An innovative teacher and conductor, Ms. Solomon is Director of Choral Activities at Santa Clara University, and is active across the United States and abroad as clinician, teacher, and guest conductor. She has collaborated on performances of major works with Michael Tilson Thomas, Kent Nagano, Nicolas McGegan, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Helmuth Rilling, among others. Ms. Solomon is also Artistic Director of the Stockton Chorale and Master Chorale, and served as Music Director of the Oakland Symphony Chorus for twelve years. She taught at the University of Southern California from 2004-2010, is editor of the *New Voices in Research* column of ACDA's Choral Journal, and has published a scholarly edition of 16th-century partsongs.