



News & Notes



Spring 2011

Singing Together to Uplift Ourselves and Our Community Vol. 1, No. 1

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New Facebook Business Page!

Thanks to member Elizabeth Clontz, Womansong now has a business Facebook page. A cool aspect of the biz page is that you do not have to log into Facebook to access it, so it is a great way to share Womansong scoop that is posted there with your friends. For a gander [click here](#).

And come join the Facebook fun at:
www.facebook.com/womansongofasheville

Womansong Website Updates

Don't miss the Womansong Website for updates, future newsletters, concert dates, and music downloads!
www.womansong.org

Upcoming "She Sings" Concert!

Local women performers lift their voices, dance in beauty, and beat their drums!

Womansong, Asheville's oldest and largest women's community chorus, shares the stage with a dynamic showcase of local women performers.

- **Saturday, June 11 at 7:30 p.m.**
- **Sunday, June 12 at 3:00 p.m.**
- **At UNCA Lipinsky Hall Auditorium**

Guest artists:

- **Wild Bodema**, a high-energy women's drum troupe will perform a variety of traditional and original rhythms;
- **The Sue Ford Trio** will present Sue's compelling, original songs with backup harmonies by Womansong's own Althea Gonzalez and Susan Taylor.
- **Asheville Contemporary Dance Theatre ensemble** will present "Beauty," a preview of a piece from the full length contemporary ballet "The Birds of War," funded in part by the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation and the Asheville Area Arts Council.
- **Now or Never**, a new ensemble of Womansong members, will make their debut with a humorous Righteous Mothers' piece.



Tickets are \$12 in advance/ \$15 at the door. Child/Student tickets are \$7. Purchase today online at www.womansong.org, or at the door. A \$10 per person group rate is available to groups of 10 or more who buy tickets in advance. For interviews or more information, contact 828-686-9010.



New Start Program co-chairs Kate Lalor (left) and Nita Walker (right) with scholarship recipient Paula Pressley (center)

New Start Scholarships and Grants by Nita Walker, NSP Chair

Womansong's [New Start Program](#) helps women in transition make a new start in their lives by providing grants and scholarships. The NSP fund is intended to "fill in the gap" when other short-term funding options are not available. This one-time grant is available for the amount of need up to \$500 per person.

NSP grants typically provide needed support for a woman on her path toward greater self-sufficiency.

This spring the program added to the annual \$1,000 scholarship to AB Tech

Womansong Archived at Pack Library

Womansong's contribution to the history of Asheville will be preserved in the North Carolina Collection of Pack Library. The Womansong Archive will contain photographs, posters, music, and other items from 1987 to the present that will be part of the history of Asheville in the 20th and 21st centuries. We will add to this archive as Womansong continues into the future. When we celebrate our 25th anniversary in October 2012, we are planning to have an exhibit at Pack Library.

New Voices

by Meredith Norwood



**Fatimah
Rashida
Shabazz**

knows she originates from another planet.

However, for now, she is "a native, madam queen, and mountain bush woman spirit." Luckily for us, her spirit voice shouted at her to open up her voice and sing out loud as a Middle in Womansong.

Fatimah played alto sax as a young woman and, in college, was introduced to African percussions and dance by the Master Baba Oletunejae. She later formed "Whirled Rhythm Nations," a local tribal percussion band. Fatimah is creator, co-producer and owner of WRNU & Taxie Internet TV, an entertainment venue.

She loves singing Womansong's new and old songs, the choir's vision and purpose, and looks forward to co-creating "an off-the-hook, out-of-the-box," group of musicians and vocalists for performances & recording.

Community College, four non-degree program scholarships of \$450 each to both A-B Technical Community College and Haywood Community College. In addition, the New Start Program also set up special funds of \$600 each at these same colleges to help women with immunization expenses required for entering certain certificate or diploma programs.

Director's Corner

By Debbie Nordeen



2010 was a very exciting year for Womansong. Our "She Sings" concert in June featured the debut of [Sing My Sister, Sing](#), a powerful song by Annie Lennox, giving voice to the many women and children suffering with mother to child transmission of AIDS in Africa. Our audience enjoyed guest performances by the Chix with Sticks percussion group, poet Laura Hope-Gill, the Tongue and Groove trio, and Honey Holler, a lively old-time string band. In October, we entertained a full house at the Unity Center with a rousing rendition of Harry Belafonte's "Turn the World Around," complete with a parade of jungle animals. We also

performed at the Peace Conference at Lake Junaluska and at the annual WNCAP (Western N.C. AIDS Project) walk in Asheville.

Along with our regular upbeat and touching concerts, we had the joy and thrill of performing and participating in the Sister Singer Network Festival in Chicago. Joining voices with hundreds of other like-minded and like-hearted women was wonderful. I had the honor of directing mass chorus in our own Lytingale's song, "With Great Love".

However exhilarating these big performances are, the beauty in membership in this loving choral village of women lies in the smallest, and often unseen love exchanges between members. To aid women going through cancer, to sing to a grieving sister, to welcome the birth of a child in song, to hold song circle in the home of one of our members just after her husband passed on, offered us all the opportunity to share in some of life's great challenges and transitions.

I'm grateful for all the experiences and awakenings that happen in, through, and for our village of song. I'm grateful to have the talented support of Althea Gonzalez and Sarah Rubin as co-assistant directors of the chorus. And I'm grateful to music for being the beautiful vehicle for our hearts' expression.

Womansong Herstory, Part 1

By Roberta Newman, founding member

In the fall of 1987, I had just returned to Asheville from Atlanta, where I had been attending graduate school. That same autumn, Linda Metzner had just moved to Asheville from Columbia, SC. Some say there are no coincidences, but...Linda and I happened to be at the same place at the same time one night--at the home of two people who led weekly meditations. Afterwards, Linda announced to the group that she was thinking of starting a women's choral group, and asked if anyone was interested. My hand shot up! That was the beginning of an association with Womansong that has lasted until today, and a friendship with Linda that is still going strong.

In the beginning we met in Linda's home. At that time there were no auditions to become part of the chorus and anyone who wanted to sing was welcomed. Our scores were handwritten by Linda--no specialized computer programs then. Our first "gig," and our only performance in 1987, was to participate in World Healing Day, an all-night event at the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium on New Year's Eve 1987. In 1988 we sang at the Candlelight Vigil to commemorate the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, a Spring Equinox gathering at Stone Soup, a benefit for Helpmate at Malaprops, and at Bele Chere. Each time we appeared somewhere, more women would join our chorus. Soon, we were too numerous to meet in Linda's home, and we began to rehearse at the Unitarian Universalist Church, where we still meet today.

It was in 1988 that Linda Metzner was inspired to create the New Start Fund for Women, saying "It would benefit individual local women, making a strong one-to-one connection among us...Everyone has a right to a new start, wherever they are in their

Elizabeth Clontz is a Soprano who joined Womansong September, 2010. She grew up in a small North Carolina town. She



always loved Asheville and moved here in 2008. Now she happily fills her heart with the creativity, spirituality and nature which abound here. Elizabeth was influenced by a mother who is a wonderful musician and choir director. She started singing in her church choir when she was five. She performed in school choruses and musicals and later sang spiritual songs with "The Inner Voices."

Elizabeth wears many hats in her work at a small publishing company. With a background in psychotherapy and creativity coaching she also companions others on journeys into their inner landscape serving as midwife to their glorious selves. She enjoys "the sounds of music, the vibrancy of community and all the marvelous women" in Womansong.

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lives..." I am probably most proud of helping to create the New Start Fund, among all the things that I've ever been involved in.... It has continued through Womansong's efforts, always creating a larger web of love and caring, especially to those women in our region who can so strongly benefit from it."



Photo info (left): Bele Chere 1988 publicity photo. The writer is fourth from the left. Womansong founder, Linda Metzner is on the far right.

Sister Singers Network Festival



In July 2010, Womansong realized a dream by sending 50 members to Chicago to sing for four days with 25 other choruses from all over the country at the Sister Singers Network Festival. Many memories were made and we carried back with us songs, knowledge and new friends. Here are some memories:

...A feeling of belonging to a group with a similar passion for music and song. A feeling of camaraderie that wasn't there for me before... I feel like a part of the group now and that's wonderful.

...the privilege of listening to so many other choruses was fun and eye-opening.

... when we were up there singing our hearts out [Sing my sisters sing] and Debbie took off down the aisle and who knew if she was going to come back to direct us. It was uplifting to see the audience join in and all of our spirits soaring. Wow what a moment!!!!

... learned lots about my Womansong sisters, learned about what other choruses sing, learned what other directors do, learned about how other choruses are structured/do fundraising, learned that there is no place like our village!

...Singing with the mass chorus is also a great memory--so many women, one strong voice

Contact Us

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