

Notes on 3 Rivers Chorale production of *Missa Gaia* by Paul Winter and friends

by Kate Campbell

John Muir, the Scottish-American naturalist and environmental philosopher, said that "between every two pine trees, there is a door leading to a new way of life". I would add, "between every two pine trees, there is a window leading to a new way of looking at nature and our place in it".

This is what a young Paul Winter and his consort of musicians and composers did in 1981. At the invitation of James Morton, Dean of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, these innovative creators brought their music together with nature and some of her strongest singers (humpback whale, Alaskan tundra wolf, the common loon, and baby harp seals as well as various songbirds). The result was "Missa Gaia" -- a Mass in celebration of Mother Earth.

The ancient Greek name for Mother Earth, Gaia, gave rise to the "Gaia principle", which, according to scientists James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, proposes that "the entire range of living matter on Earth, from whales to viruses, and from oaks to algae, could be regarded as constituting a single living entity, capable of manipulating the Earth's atmosphere to suit its overall needs and endowed with faculties and power far beyond its constituent parts".

Paul Winter writes: "If the 'Gaia hypothesis' is about synergy, then the process of our creation of *Missa Gaia/Earth Mass* is truly a manifestation of Gaia. For what developed was an interweaving of creative ideas from all the members of the Consort; and our process was self-balancing, by virtue of the common instincts of taste we share in our little musical tribe. While no one of us knew all the threads with which we would weave the *Earth Mass*, together we found we *did* know."

Much of the original recording of *Missa Gaia* was improvised by the musicians who created it. The entire *Missa Gaia* is a blend of gospel, jazz, classical, African and Latin folk genres and rhythms. The representation that 3 Rivers Chorale offers uses both the written score and the musical instincts of all the players involved. In addition to the choir and soloists, four members of the Oregon Little Big Band will take part, including Tim Wallace on soprano sax and flute, Michelle LeComte on guitar, John Trujillo on bass and Tom Freeman on percussion, along with pianist Heidi Shepard, Abigail Wilensky on violin and Teresa Northcross on cello.

We are honored to partner with our co-sponsors, the Illinois River Valley Arts Council and Siskiyou Field Institute. The joining of the arts and science is a natural one, in my mind. As I have heard it said, science is actually just an organized form of wonder. It's all related.

3 Rivers Chorale has also received a generous grant from Josephine County Cultural Coalition, whose parent organization is the Oregon Cultural Trust. We are grateful for the support of our community and look forward to creating our musical performances in cooperation and collusion with our audiences!

The Cave Junction concert will be held at 3 pm on January 21 at Immanuel United Methodist Church at 200 W. Watkins St. Admittance is by donation.

On Sunday, January 22, at 3 pm, a Grants Pass concert will be performed at Bethany Presbyterian Church at 741 NW 4th St. Tickets are available at Oregon Books at 7th and D.

A personal note from the director, Kate Campbell:

If the earth in 1980 was in tentative health due to burgeoning humanity's various pollutants since the industrial age, it is now, in 2017, in perilous danger of terminal illness. Sometimes the music we sing feels more like a funeral mass than a celebration. The earth's atmosphere has now been drastically altered since 1981, when *Missa Gaia* was first conceived. Species have gone extinct at an unprecedented rate. How many whales and wolves get to vote in our elections? Who will speak for them, for the sacred waters, and for all of Creation? This music lets Mother Earth and her singers speak for themselves.