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COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DENVER

THE SPIRITUALS PROJECT
in collaboration with FLOBOTS presents

Would You Harbor Me?
Voices from the Broken Path

featuring
The Spirituals Project Choir
Bennie Williams, Artistic Director
John Hubert, Choir Director
Terry Jackson, Accompanist

with Guest Artistic Director
Stephen Brackett
Brer Rabbit of FLOBOTS

Event Sponsor: GILMORE Construction
A Higher Standard

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2010 7:30 PM
JUNE SWANER GATES CONCERT HALL
Our sincere thanks to composer
Ysaye Maria Barnwell
for permission to use the title of her song,
“Would You Harbor Me?”
The colorful stoles draped over the hearts of members of The Spirituals Project Choir are known as kente cloth. The icon of African cultural heritage around the world, Asante kente is identified by its dazzling, multi-colored patterns of bright colors, geometric shapes and bold designs. Kente is made by the Asante and Ewe peoples of Western Africa and is the best known of all African textiles. Kente comes from the word kenten, which means “basket.” The Asante also refer to kente as awentono or “woven cloth.”

Historically, kente was the cloth of kings. The king (asantehene) controlled the production and use of kente, among his household, officials and political allies. Over time, the use of kente became more widespread. Unlike the royal family, however, an individual who owns kente today most likely owns one cloth that is worn on multiple occasions. Kente is comparable to an evening gown or tuxedo in Western cultures. Kente proudly worn or used at ceremonial occasions always brings honor and prestige to the proceedings.

In The Spirituals Project Choir, we have adopted the kente cloth designs as a symbolic reflection of our organization’s values. New choir members participate in a powerful ceremony before their first public performance, during which they are awarded their personal kente cloths. From that point forward, they are forever recognized as valued members of our unique community. The wearing of the kente cloth by every single member of our community symbolizes our common belief in the power of unity through diversity.

Our theme this year, “Would You Harbor Me?: Voices from the Broken Path.” is drawn from the title of a song composed by Sweet Honey in the Rock artist Ysaye Barnwell, which raises the challenging question, “Would You Harbor Me?” particularly if “harboring me” would put your own safety or reputation at risk. In this vein, the search for a safe harbor or home in the face of injustice is a multi-layered human experience. It is an experience that spans centuries of American history, from the time of chattel slavery, when African women and men in bondage fought for their right to freedom, to the current struggles of immigrant families, seeking to find a way to live, love and work amidst a tangle of hostile barriers. Tonight we seek to illuminate the universally human dimensions of such experiences, from the emotional and spiritual extremes of despair and, paradoxically, hope.

As always, we are indebted to all of our sponsors. Please find them all listed in the program. Through the quality of our work, we aim consistently to honor their generous contributions. Additionally, we are deeply grateful to Helen Thorpe, author of Just Like Us: The True Story of Mexican Girls Coming of Age in America and the honorary hostess of tonight’s program. (Ms. Thorpe is also First Lady-Elect of Colorado!). Beyond serving as hostess tonight, Ms. Thorpe gave her valuable time to participate in interviews, excerpts of which you will view tonight.

A most enthusiastic “thank you” goes out to our staff, our Board of Directors and the numerous volunteers who continue to make it possible for us to do what we do. We also thank Spirituals Project Program Committee Chair Yvette Keesee, and Jami Duffy, from Flobots.org, who skillfully organized the planning for our special Friday evening youth preview program. The Denver Mayor’s Office for Education and Children also awarded a generous grant to support additional preliminary programming for some of the children attending the Friday night program.

Finally, we can’t say enough to thank the women and men from all walks of life who comprise the Spirituals Project Choir, rehearsing diligently week after week and serving as dynamic ambassadors in spreading the word about the continuing significance of the spirituals in the twenty-first century.

We invite you to visit our website (www.SpiritualsProject.org) to learn more about the programs and initiatives of The Spirituals Project, and we hope to see you at future events.
Would You Harbor Me?

Voices from the Broken Path

Bennie L. Williams
Artistic Director

John Hubert
Choir Director

Terry Jackson
Accompanist

Stephanie Brackett
Guest Artistic Director

Panama Soweto, Bobby LeFebre, Adrian Molina, Isis, Matt Zambrano, Jessica Lopez
Guest Poets

Drum Invocation

Poetic Response
City Called Heaven

I'm Building Me a Home

arr. by Sankofa
Claudia McCoy and Anne Comstock, soloists

Poetic Response
Would You Harbor Me?

arr. by Sankofa

Poetic Response
I'm Determined to Walk With Jesus

arr. Raymond Wise

Poetic Response
Walk Together, Children

arr. Moses Hogan

Poetic Response
Sweet Home

Luann Dodge and Duane Smith, soloists
Adrian Molina, spoken word

Sweet Home

arr. Wendell Whalum

Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child

arr. Rosephanye Powell

Dide ta Deo

arr. Uzee Brown, Jr.

Translation: "That we are back home, Good Father, we give thee thanks. We journeyed safely, we arrived safely; we praise thee, Jesus Christ."

Intermission

The Spirituals Project
Arthur Jones Balm in Gilead Society

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Luann Dodge*
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Barbara Grogan
William & Joan Houghton*
Gary Jackson*

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Elizabeth Bennett
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Friday, November 19, 2010

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Ambassadors of Hope
Youth on Record

Goin' Home
Antonín Dvořák
words and adaptation by William Arms Fisher
Arthur C. Jones, soloist

The Negro Speaks of Rivers
Margaret Bonds
Poetic Response
arr. Stacey V. Gibbs
arr. Horace Clarence Boyer
James Cleveland
arr. The Spirituals Project Choir

I Want Jesus to Walk With Me
Poetic Response
We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder
Poetic Response
I Don't Feel No Ways Tired
James Cleveland

Arthur C. Jones, soloist

- END -
Would You Harbor Me?
Program Guide

The message in our program tonight comes through the interplay of singing, personal testimony, and spoken word art. In this tri-part artistic mix, we seek to illuminate the now centuries-old story of women and men seeking to find refuge in a place called “home,” even as they suffer experiences of brutality, humiliation and de-personalization. “Home,” of course, is multi-layered. It’s a physical place. It’s a symbolic place. It’s a place of comfort and solace that often resides in the center of the human spirit. And the story – seeking home – joins through time the experiences of such seemingly disparate communities as African Americans in slavery, immigrants across the globe seeking refuge from poverty and oppression, and all those in all places and all times who struggle to find a way out of victimization, oppression and injustice.

The spirituals, in essence, are the songs passed down to us from women and men in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries who were wrenched away from their homes in Africa and forced into bondage in North America. In the first half of tonight’s program, the choir performs contemporary choral arrangements of old spirituals that express, again and again, a desperate yearning for a welcoming home in the midst of a spiritually barren landscape. “I heard of a City called Heaven,” the first song exclaims, for example, and “I’ve started to make it my home.” Another song expresses the joy accompanying the decision to be in charge of the матери home building task: “I’m building me a home!” And yet another elaborates on what it would be like to move in: “Sweet home!” At the same time, the singers are grounded in the enormity of the emotional task: “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child!”

In the middle of all of this is a contemporary song, “Would You Harbor Me?,” from which the title of tonight’s program is drawn. It was written by Vyaumarielle Barnett, singer and songwriter for the famed women’s a cappella singing group Sweet Honey in the Rock. Barnwell’s song offers a challenge to all of us who might be tempted to remain in the protective harbor of our own homes while there are others among us who are left unprotected. The challenge is to say, and to me, and to us! “Would you harbor me? . . . Would I harbor you?” Listen carefully . . . Who would you harbor? Who would I harbor? And who not?

The women and men we interviewed for tonight’s program expressed many different ideas about what home means to them. We’ve captured some of their comments in video clips. Listen to their words, and also think about what you would say. What does home mean to you? The first half of the program ends with the choir singing a Nigerian Christian folk song, “Dide ta Deo,” which is a celebratory song about returning home after a long journey. Its connection to tonight’s theme is so strong that we couldn’t resist including it. The words, in translation, are: “That we are back home, good Father, we give Thee thanks. We journeyed safely, we arrived safely; we praise Thee, Jesus Christ.”

Ultimately, the ability to find hope in the midst of despair is aided by the forging of empowering communities. Coming together in community creates an insurmountable force for collective healing and social justice. In parallel to songs about community, our spoken word artists offer collective, rather than individual poems.

In the middle of this section of the program the choir performs an original song by the African American composer Margaret Bonds, written to the text of the famous Langston Hughes poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers.” The song, and Hughes’ poem, speak not only to the strength of a contemporary communal voice, but to the added power that stems from a relationship with the community of the ancestors. As he encounters the ancestors of his African heritage, Hughes exclaims that he has “known rivers, ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.”

We conclude by raising the question of how it is possible for oppressed people to sing, triumphantly, “I don’t feel no ways tired!” This is a question we hope you will grapple with for yourself as you leave the hall tonight.
HONORING OUR PAST, HEALING OUR PRESENT, TRANSFORMING OUR FUTURE
WITH POWER, PASSION AND PURPOSE

Mission
To preserve and revitalize the music and teachings of the sacred songs called “spirituals,” created and first sung by enslaved Africans in America in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Guiding Vision
The Spirituals Project is a broad-based initiative to explore the many, varied dimensions of African American spirituals as art form, tradition and tool; and to invite all people to experience the joy and power of this dynamic music and gift from African Americans to the world.

Spirituals uplift in times of crisis, heal, comfort, inspire and instill hopes and dreams, thereby transforming individuals, communities, and whole societies. Our goal is to ensure that the spirituals will be passed on for many generations to come.

Dr. Arthur C. Jones - Founder and Chair
Dr. Arthur C. Jones brings his unique combination of experience as a scholar, clinical/community psychologist, and singer to The Spirituals Project, as well as a deep love for the spirituals and the lessons they teach. He earned his doctorate, in Clinical Psychology, from the University of Iowa in 1974 and in 1987, at age 41, he returned to singing – his childhood love – and studied voice for 14 years with Anne Van Etten in Aurora, Colorado. He is currently Clinical Professor of Culture and Psychology at The Women’s College of the University of Denver. He is also the faculty director of the university’s Social Justice Living and Learning Community. Each year he teaches courses on African American music culture, including a course on the Spirituals and a course focused on the multi-layered cultural interconnections between all African American music genres. His book *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals* earned a First Time Author of a Book Award from the Catholic Press Association of America and he co-edited, with his brother Ferdinand Jones, *The Triumph of the Soul: Cultural and Psychological Aspects of African-American Music*. Since 1991 he has presented lecture, concert and workshop programs on spirituals in university, church and community settings throughout the United States. Assisted by a dedicated group of community volunteers, Dr. Jones founded The Spirituals Project in 1998.

Amani Ali - Executive Director
Since his arrival a little over a year ago, Amani Ali has been moving The Spirituals Project at warp speed. He created The Spirituals Project’s new signature event, “The Red Gala,” which has quickly become a favorite in the fundraising community. Working with The Spirituals Project Board of Directors, he has re-branded the front office and created the Educational Institute - with a focus on young people - relocating it to the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver. In embracing a vision for the future, he is formulating The Spirituals Project’s new National Center for Performance and Research, to be located in the historic Mary Reed Hall on the DU campus, which will target specific groups for collaborative projects. Amani attended Howard University, studied law and is currently winding up his graduate studies for a MBA degree in strategic management at Regis University. He is married to popular multi-media journalist and CBS4 commentator Gloria Neal.

Panama Soweto is a veteran Hip-Hopper, philosopher, college lecturer, and all-around human bridge. He is nationally renowned for his eclectic music collaborations and his work as a poet, storyteller, and youth advocate. Prolific and empowering, Molina carries mainstream appeal as a rapper while focusing his artistry on ideas and themes that defy the typical. From venue stages to cultural festivals to the university ballroom, the Denver resident hits the road regularly to share his work with audiences as diverse as his sound and his rhymes.

Bobby LeFebre is a Denver-born spoken word artist, actor, and activist. After earning a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology and Sociology from Metropolitan State College of Denver in 2005, he became a Social Caseworker specializing in working with youth ages 12-18 that are on probation in the city of Denver. LeFebre’s talent is not limited to just poetry. He is an actor with Denver’s only Latino theatre, El Centro Su Teatro, and has performed in countless productions as an actor for the last ten years. Combining his passion for education and performance, LeFebre is founder of Cafe Cultura, Denver’s largest monthly open mic and artistic expression event serving Denver’s Latino community. The event was voted “Best Open Mic” in 2007, and has showcased both local and national talent.

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The Guest Artistic Director
Stephen Brackett
Stephen Brackett (*Brer Rabbit of Flobots*) is a co-founder and lead emcee for the internationally acclaimed hip-hop group *Flobots*. He is also a co-founding board member of *Flobots.org*, the non-profit arm of Flobots. With a special focus on young people, Flobots.org works to create positive social change, using music and poetry as a tool for empowerment, community building, leadership development and action. Brackett has long believed that the arts are a vital component of any movement. His work is a reflection of this belief, from his emceeing duties in Flobots, to his poetry performances across the city, and his new role as Chair of the Art 2 Action after school program committee at Flobots.org. Brackett first worked with the Spirituals Project Choir in a collaborative performance piece during the finale of TedXDU, held at the University of Denver in the spring of 2010. This is Brackett’s first role as artistic director for the Spirituals Project.

The Poets
Panama Soweto has been a part of the Denver Hip Hop scene since the mid-90’s. Graffiti and emce’n’ve been his artistic focus since his youth. With a small recording workspace he creates a classic Hip Hop sound that has earned him a decent reputation as a producer. His beats are a mix of Jazz and classic boom hip Hop, and have allowed him to spit rhymes and feature his style from Las Vegas to Minneapolis. He has also been involved in slam poetry since 2004. He earned a spot on the 2005 Denver Slam Team and recently was a member of the Denver Slam team that won the National Poetry Slam in Austin, Texas. He loves words, and follows them everywhere they go, from comics, to the daily news.

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Isis presents herself and poetry honestly so that all can see the beauty and the scars that have made her a woman. She has been performing poetry professionally for 5 years, and has become synonymous with excellence. Isis poetry explores universal themes of empowerment, reclamation, love, abuse and the mistakes we all make. She has a tenderness at the center of her work, which comes thru in her performance. Isis’ work has been described as, “a meritage of Saul Williams’ passion and Maya Angelou’s eloquence with an incendiary tongue.” The grace and power she exudes from any stage are unparalleled. Each word interlocks to weave a tapestry of teaching, living, healing, and loving.

Matt Zambrano is a native poet, actor and playwright who is overjoyed to be part of this Spirituals Project event. He was part of the 2007 Mercury Cafe Slam Team, and was a semi-finalist at the National Poetry Slam. Matt works with area youth in writing and performing poetry, and is currently in his 2nd year of grad school at the National Theatre Conservatory.

Jessica Lopez was born in Paramount, California, now resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is pursuing her MFA at the University of New Mexico. She is the co-host of a writer’s workshop at her local community center and is an active slam poet in the National and local scene. She is a former member of 2006 and 2007 City of Albuquerque Slam Team and the 2008 National Champion UNM Lobo Slam Team.

Flobots

www.flobots.org

Founded in March of 2008 by the Denver band, Flobots, Flobots.org works to create positive social change by harnessing the power of music and the people who love it. Their innovative school and community-based programs combine music and arts outreach with social activism and leadership development. They provide hands-on training, education and therapeutic experiences to critical populations of youth, and equip young music lovers with the tools they need to foster positive community involvement. At the Flobots.org Community Space, kids and musicians, artists and community members come together to share, create and learn in a safe, inspiring environment. We invite you to join us!

Jami Duffy currently works as the Executive Director of Development and Resources at Flobots.org, a Denver-based social justice nonprofit that empowers youth through music, art and community organizing training. This fall, Duffy was awarded the Arthur C. Jones Community Award: The Spirituals Project “Sojourner for Excellence in Service to Humanity. Prior to joining Flobots.org, Duffy worked as the Social Justice and International Living and Learning Community Coordinator at the University of Denver.

Lockrpartners is a collaboration between Emily Swank and Mary Grace Legg. Together they write, direct, shoot and edit videos commissioned by organizations and individuals seeking a creative and contemporary way to promote and share their goals. The overarching feel and style of their filmmaking can be attributed to their fine arts backgrounds and shared love for documentary film/video. Lockrpartners is honored to have worked with many focused and energetic people, and always strives to translate their client's characteristics in an artistic, honest, and intriguing manner.

Benjie L. Williams
Artistic Director

John Hubert
Choir Director

Terry Jackson
Accompanist

Baritone
David Burrows *
Harold Fields *
Charles Fortney *
Bruce Marsden *
George Nelson
John M. Riley
Charles Stevenson *
Geoffrey Wodell *

Bass
Doug Blane *
Russell Cotten
John W. Daniels
Bob Davis *
Tom Gilmore
Raymond Jones *
Derrick Montgomery *
Ken Parks *
Alan Pettis *
Paul Staten *
Tom von Reckers *

* member Sankofa
‡ member SPC Ensemble
◊ Leave of Absence

Maggie Wright *
Patricia Wright

Carol Albright
Georganne Bley *
Daphna Brown *
Christine Chao *
Anne Comstock *
Marcia Dellaacroce
Faith Goins *
Helen Gray
Sue Herring
Aimee Justice-Lundt
Emma Livingston
Linda Maich
Clairice McCoy *
Maureen McDonald
Ardis Miller *
Maxine Oliver
Phyllis Rader
Heather Revanna *
Claudia Roberts *
Ruth Ann Rogers
Kassi Ross *
Allison Smith

Lynne Smith
Jo Ann Soker
Gwendolyn Sowell
Julie Todd *
Sidra Smith Wabaltere *
Ruthie Williams

Don Allen
David Anthony *
Raymond Anthony *
Edward Bate
Ted Cofelt *
Randy Friesen *
Roger Fuchter *
Sarah Harman *
Lorin Hunt *
Mark Ingram
Arthur Jones
Randall Livingston *
Richard Pettis *
John Piper *
Dan Raybon *
Diane Smith
James Williams