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# UBUNTU Niagara

Supporting our African Sisters, Brothers, and Children

# BARAKA NA WEWE

(Swahili - Blessings to You)

An Evening Cabaret  
Celebrating 20 years of Stephen Lewis

featuring  
**WOMENCHANT**  
Chorus & Drummers

Laura Thomas, Artistic Director  
and Special Artists:

Johanna Agnew | Betsy Tauro | Tannis Beamer  
Laurel Candler

Friday, December 1, 2023

Trillium United Church  
415 Linwell Rd., St. Catharines L2M 2P3

World AIDS Day Fundraiser Event



Stephen Lewis  
Foundation | 20  
Years

Proceeds donated to the Stephen Lewis Foundation



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## Welcome

**UBUNTU Niagara** welcomes you all to our evening cabaret. We thank you for helping us to raise funds in support of the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) and the work of eradicating HIV/AIDS in Africa.

We are delighted to offer you Baraka Na Wewe (Swahili – Blessings to you).

We welcome our performing artists: WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers, Johanna Agnew, Betsy Tauro, Tannis Beamer and Laurel Candler. These veteran performers have contributed in many ways to raise thousands of dollars for SLF for over a decade.

We are grateful to Trillium United Church for graciously hosting our fundraising event this year.

And now, you are invited to check out the Silent Auction, relax and enjoy our musical offering, all for a most worthy cause.

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## About the Stephen Lewis Foundation

The Stephen Lewis Foundation works with community-based organizations who are turning the tide of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2003, the SLF has partnered with 325 community-based organizations on more than 1,800 initiatives in the 15 countries that have been hardest hit by the AIDS pandemic.

Most of these organizations were born of the resolve of small groups of individuals who, after witnessing the devastation of HIV and AIDS in their own lives, began to work determinedly to save their communities. Over the years, the organizations have grown and evolved to become trusted and important local institutions, and leaders in the fight against HIV and AIDS.



Stephen Lewis  
Foundation | 20  
YEARS

## Unleashing the Power of the People

### Supporting Community-Based Leadership to End HIV & AIDS

From our inception in 2003, the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) has been asserting that if only a critical mass of community-based organizations (CBOs) could receive adequate funding, they would turn the tide of HIV & AIDS in Africa.  
~ Stephen Lewis Foundation

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# BARAKA NA WEWE

## An Evening Cabaret World AIDS Day Fundraiser Event December 1, 2023

WomEnchant Chorus

**Welcome**

**Come Sing a Song with Me**

**Freedom is Coming**

**If We Stand as One**

**Count on Me**

John Krumm

Carolyn McDade

South African Freedom Song

Jim Papoulis

Philip Lawrence, Ari Levine, Bruno Mars

arr. Andy Beck

Joanna Agnew, vocalist

**Come to the Cabaret** (from Cabaret)

**All That Jazz** (from Chicago)

music: John Kander, lyrics: Fred Ebb

music: John Kander, lyrics: Fred Ebb

Tannis Bearer, pianist

**From My Heart to Yours**

**A Skip in My Step**

Tannis Bearer

Tannis Bearer

Laurel Candler, vocalist

**With Every Breath I Take** (from City of Angels)

music: Cy Coleman, lyrics: David Zippel

WomEnchant Drummers

**Moribayassa**

**Tango**

**Hot Pursuit**

**Groovy Band**

Traditional Dance – Malinke

Based on Argentinian Tango Rhythms

WomEnchant Drummers

WomEnchant Drummers

Betsy Tauro, vocalist

**Without You** (from Rent)

Jonathan Larson

WomEnchant Chorus

**We Are Circling**

**Hope Is**

**Baraka Ne Wewe**

**Something Told the Wild Geese**

**My Winter Wish**

**Walk Sister Walk**

arr. Margaret Sample

music: Jeff Hale, text: Emily Dickenson

Victor C. Johnson

music: Greg Gilpin, text: Rachel Field

music: Greg Gilpin, text: Charlotte Lee

Nan Thompson

Please join us afterwards for an array of delectable nibbles and our greeters will lead you to the Silent Auction area. Proceeds will be donated to the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

## History of UBUNTU Niagara

In Africa there is a concept known as Ubuntu, the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others." - Nelson Mandela

The journey to becoming UBUNTU Niagara began in 2003 at the former St. Andrew's United Church, Port Dalhousie. On this journey over several years many people shared the sense of Ubuntu through prayers, music and meditations. Three people - Agnes Liles, Gloria Simon Gould and the late Agnes Atwell - wanted to do more to respond to an appeal by Stephen Lewis for help toward the eradication of HIV/AIDS in Africa. But how?

We took our idea to Laura Thomas, Artistic Director, WomEnchant Chorus. Our first fundraiser event to assist the efforts of the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) to provide anti-viral drugs occurred in 2008 through a concert by WomEnchant Chorus. The choir has engaged in several varied events annually to raise funds. Each year the amount of money increased and this has encouraged us to continue the work.

In 2015 as the horizons of WomEnchant Chorus broadened, UBUNTU Niagara came into being. We retained with gratitude the help of several members of the choir. Contributions of Caroline Misener, Elizabeth Agnew and Mau'veen Dayrell-Johnson as co-producers are invaluable.

Although the Covid pandemic halted fundraising activities for three years, SLF advised that several donors responded to UBUNTU's letter of appeal to send dollars directly to the foundation during those years. THANK YOU.

The future may hold other circumstances beyond our control which challenge our commitment, but UBUNTU Niagara's efforts to support the tireless, selfless, dedicated work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation will persist.

Membership in UBUNTU Niagara is open to all who wish to participate, bringing the spirit of Ubuntu.

ubuntuniagara@yahoo.com

Namaste, Elizabeth Agnew

Mau'veen Dayrell-Johnson

Agnes Liles

Caroline Misener

# UBUNTU Niagara



## Laura Thomas, conductor

Laura Thomas is a conductor, arranger, composer, percussionist and teacher. She is the Artistic Director of the Hamilton/Niagara area WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers, Music Director of the Dundas Valley Orchestra, and Conductor of Hamilton's Hope & Harmony choir. Her past positions include Music Director of the Niagara Youth Orchestra, Artistic Director of the Niagara-based chamber choir, Choralis Camera and Director of the Niagara College Jazz Band. She is the Principal Percussionist of the Niagara Symphony Orchestra where she also served as Associate Conductor for thirteen years.

Ms. Thomas holds a masters degree in conducting from New York's prestigious Bard College, where she studied with Harold Farberman. She is also a graduate of Hamilton's Mohawk College and McMaster University, where she studied percussion and composition. Along with acclaimed flutist Douglas Miller, she developed the Flutes en Route! programs of orchestral, ensemble and educational concerts. Her guest conducting appearances include Symphony on the Bay (Burlington), the Huronia Symphony, Etobicoke Philharmonic, the North York Concert Orchestra, and the Bard Chamber Orchestra.

Ms. Thomas has performed with many ensembles throughout Southern Ontario and Western New York, including the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Hamilton Philharmonic, the Te Deum Baroque Orchestra, and the Aradia Ensemble. She is a member of Niagara's popular eclectic folk/blues band BroadBand and performs regularly with her Vintage Jazz ensembles.

Her compositions and arrangements can be heard in the orchestra and ensemble repertoire of Flutes en Route! featuring Douglas Miller and in the performances and recordings of BroadBand. In 2012 she composed and recorded the soundtrack for the play "Bullying Hurts" by Monica Dufault and produced by Mainstream Services in St. Catharines and, in March 2013, her Concerto for Jazz Trio and Orchestra was premiered by John Sherwood and the Niagara Youth Orchestra. She composed A Kinder Concerto for students and orchestra which was premiered by the Dundas Valley Orchestra and students from St. Augustine School in Dundas in November 2019. Her recording credits include the Aradia Ensemble CD for Naxos Records, "Ballet Music for the Sun King", the Niagara College Jazz Band's "On the Move", Rich Blend's self-titled CD, sisterLune's "Wonder", and BroadBand's "LIVE at the Black Sea Hall" and "BroadBand".

## Johanna Agnew, soloist

Johanna Agnew is a St. Catharines native who has been singing her way through life.

She began her studies as a young girl with Terri Pothier who taught her both vocal and piano and was involved in high school productions at the St. Catharines Collegiate. She took the classical music route at Wilfred Laurier University and then began her teaching career with the District School Board of Niagara. Before children, she performed in the Garden City Productions of Cabaret, playing Sally Boles, as Hope in Anything Goes, and Polly in Crazy For You. She has been a member of the Niagara Chorus, and presently sings with the Silver Spire United Church choir.

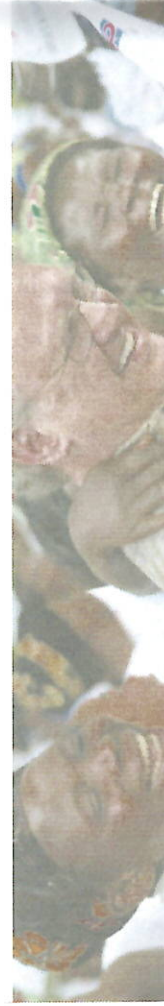
She enjoys teaching her Grade 7/8 class, and music classes at Parnell Public School. She also is a mom to Ayden and Owen, spending many hours at soccer fields and, along with Alastair, chauffeuring their sons to their various activities.

## Betsy Tauro, soloist

Betsy Tauro is a Niagara musician, actor and director who has taught Music, Art and Drama for over forty years. She played Mother Superior in last spring's production of Garden City Production's Sister Act, is a member of sisterLune and BroadBand, and performed with Niagara Express Big Band, as well as

## Tannis Beamer, pianist

Tannis Beamer began studying piano at a young age and her love of the instrument led her to pursue music at the post-secondary level at the University of Guelph and as a career. She joined WomEnchant Chorus and Drummers in 2011 and from 2012 to 2017 she was the piano accompanist for WomEnchant Chorus. Tannis has been teaching piano in the Niagara Region for over fifteen years and has also been exploring the use of sound and music as a therapeutic tool to help relieve stress and promote the body's own natural healing ability. She offers energy healing sessions and deep emotional release work both online and in person. You can check out some of her original compositions and improvisations



## Laurel Candler, accompanist, soloist

Laurel is a Niagara native who has been active in the arts community for many years. After graduation from the theatre arts program at University of Waterloo (a long time ago), she returned to her home community of St. Catharines. Laurel sang for 20 years with the Niagara Vocal Ensemble, a 12-voice treble choir and has performed in dozens of community productions throughout Niagara, including playing in the pit of Garden City Productions' *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* and *The Addams Family*. Favourite credits include Mama Rose in Garden City Productions' *Gypsy* and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at the Firehall Theatre in Niagara Falls. Laurel retired from 30 years of teaching with the District School Board of Niagara and is happy to be part of the WomEnchant family.

## Janice Arnoldi, emcee

Janice Arnoldi is passionate about reducing the stigma surrounding mental health. For the past twenty years Janice has spoken openly about living with manic depression (bipolar disorder) in an effort to foster understanding of mental health and addiction. She is the host of the radio show and podcast *Lifeunscripted - Stories of Mental Health and Addiction*, which airs weekly on 610CKTB. Janice is on the Board of Directors of Quest Community Health Centre and the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce. She has helped raise money for mental health causes, including the Women and Wellness event which has raised \$350,000 for Canadian Mental Health Association Niagara. Janice has worked with Ontario AIDS Network and most recently OUTniagara.

## WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers

In 1992, inspired by the music heard at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, a group of women in Hamilton decided to form a feminist choir which would sing about peace, justice, caring for the earth, equality for all and an end to violence; a group that would champion music by women composers and songwriters; an ensemble that could perform to help raise money and awareness for important local causes; and a community of women who wanted to improve conditions for disadvantaged people at home and around the world. Following months of research and with help from the leaders of other women's choirs, Laura Thomas called the first rehearsal of Unnamed Hamilton Feminist Chorus in February, 1993. A few years and many choir discussions later, we became The WomEnchant Chorus. *(continued...)*

## WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers

*(continued)*

Over the years the choir has performed in support of organizations whose goals and missions aligned with ours and in our own self-produced concerts. On April 29, 2018 WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers proudly celebrated 25 years of sisterhood and song with a Gala Concert at Hernder Estate Wines, with assistance from community sponsors, friends and supporters. A few weeks later we were honoured to receive the Town of Grimsby Civic Recognition Award in celebration of our 25th Anniversary promoting positive change to the Town of Grimsby and surrounding communities. This recognition is an indication that the world still needs our work after 25 years.

WomEnchant remained active during the Covid-19 pandemic producing videos for our YouTube channel and other projects. "Physical Distancing" was our first pandemic video. Later we did a video to contribute to the Dundas Valley Orchestra's Virtual Holiday Concert for Retirement and Long-Term Care Facilities and a video of "That Day" for a virtual IWD event. You can still watch these videos along with our inclusive version of "O Canada", which we produced in 2018 to support Bill C-210. We kept busy with these projects and Zoom get-togethers with generous women musicians like Holly Near, Heather Bishop, Connie Kaldor, Vicki Ekstrom, Les Arden and Cathy Miller. These artists spent time on Zoom with us, talked to us about their careers, sang some of their songs and generously helped us keep moving forward as a group through very challenging times.

Today WomEnchant is back to rehearsing and performing live. As a choir and drumming group of women from a wide variety of backgrounds and musical experience, we honour our common thread - the desire to sing and play music that celebrates our lives, calls for peace and justice, and demonstrates the power of sisterhood and song. We welcome all women who want to learn to play and sing music that gives voice to our experiences and our commitment to making positive changes in the world.

WomEnchant has participated in many events centred around women's equality, anti-violence, peace, social justice and care of the Earth that include:

- Benefits for women's shelters
- Take Back the Night rallies
- V-Day anti-violence events
- Niagara Leadership Summit for Women
- International Women's Day celebrations
- World AIDS Day concerts in support of the Stephen Lewis Foundation
- Earth Day celebrations and events supporting environmental concerns

To accommodate women from both the Hamilton and Niagara areas, WomEnchant now rehearses in Grimsby on Monday nights from September to May. For information about performances and membership please email: [womenchantchorusanddrummers@gmail.com](mailto:womenchantchorusanddrummers@gmail.com).

## WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers

### Soprano

Agnès Liles \* Jackie Barrett \* Kathy Dallaire Marsha Hildebrand \*  
 Caroline Misener \* Jing Xu Linda Meerveld Rose Delottinville  
 Elizabeth Agnew Karen Widmer \* Liz Watson Sheila Massey \*

### Mezzo

Ellie Bloomfield Karen Cough Mollie Holloway \* Shay Love  
 Heather Scott Lu Lenz Peggy Sample \* Sue Wells \*  
 Janet Davey Marianne Saade Sandy Lambie Suzanne McClennan \*  
 Jerri Penrose \* Mary Davies Sharon Martinello Tricia McNaughton \*  
 Jill Van Biesbrouck

### ALTO 1

Annelien van Velzen Daphne Davis Katherine Cooke \* Lena V. Nielsen \*  
 Catherine Tompkins \* Judie Herbert

### ALTO 2

Abbey Cole Lorraine Burr \* Louise Farrar Marg Hipkin  
 Laura Baird \*

### Additional Drummers

Gloria Ugarte \* Sybil Wilson \*

### \* Drummers

## WomEnchant

### CHORUS & DRUMMERS

## Do You Love to Sing?

Do you care about social justice, peace and caring for our planet?

Would you like to hang out with a bunch of fun women choristers?

Maybe WomEnchant is the choir for you!

We rehearse on Monday evenings from September to June at Trinity United Church in Grimsby. No audition or experience is necessary.

For more information, contact us by email at:  
[womenchantchorusanddrummers@gmail.com](mailto:womenchantchorusanddrummers@gmail.com)

## In Appreciation

UBUNTU Niagara extends their sincerest thanks to all the volunteers and supporters who offered their gifts of time and talent to make this evening possible. A heartfelt thank you to the performing artists and emcee who generously donated their time and talents.

### WomEnchant Chorus and Drummers

**Artistic Director:** Laura Thomas

**Accompanist:** Laurel Candler

**Guest Artists:** Betsy Tauro, Johanna Agnew,

Laurel Candler, Tannis Bearner

**Trillium United Church Minister:** The Rev. Barb McGill

**Emcee:** Janice Arnoldi

**Town Crier:** Jack McPherson

**Reception Hosts:** Rosemary Addison, Deste Kuhn

**Silent Auction:** Maureen Norrie

**Donation Personnel:** Colleen Smith, Dorothy Franklin

**Sound:** John Senn

**Ticket Sales:** Tricia McNaughton

**Greeters:** Barbara James, Cheryl Dillon, Judith and David Pritchard, Leona and Wally Knash

**Communications:** Jerri Penrose

**Photographer:** JW Vraets Photography

**Social Media/Graphic Design:** Lena V. Nielsen

**Proof Reader:** Marg Hipkin

**Care-taker:** Carey Calder

**Crew:** Ernest Widmer, Heather Scott,

Karen Widmer, Kathy Dallaire

and Richard Hall

The generous donations by our volunteers for our silent auction.

A special Thank you to Trillium United Church for providing the perfect venue and the support essential to the success of this evening as well as to those, not mentioned, who helped to organize and implement this fund-raising concert. Your help, along with the audience support, enables all of us to do what we can to eradicate the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the African Continent.

