

UBUNTU Niagara, Cabaret Producer

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

Nelson Mandela, November, 2008

UBUNTU Niagara is a group of like-minded people who promote and support the work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) toward the eradication of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

UBUNTU Niagara grew out of the Healing and Meditation Group at the former St. Andrews United Church in Port Dalhousie. Over time, many people shared the sense of Ubuntu through prayer, music and meditation. Three people – Agnes Liles, Gloria Simon Gould and the late Agnes Atwell – wanted to do more in response to an appeal by Stephen Lewis. They invited Laura Thomas, Artistic Director, WomEnchant Chorus, to help in producing a fundraising event for SLF. This collaboration produced a World AIDS Day concert by WomEnchant Chorus in 2006. Since then the event has taken place annually. Each year the amount of money raised has increased, encouraging the producers to continue the work.

During the COVID pandemic, **UBUNTU Niagara** continued fundraising successfully by appealing to our followers to donate dollars directly to the Foundation.

UBUNTU Niagara continues to raise funds for the Stephen Lewis Foundation to support their work with African Partners who are on the front lines of the fight against HIV/AIDS. Through fundraising, we work to include the Niagara community in creating awareness and understanding of the plight of people in Africa whose lives, families, and communities are devastated by the disease. The future may hold circumstances which challenge our commitment, but our efforts to support the tireless, selfless, dedicated work of the Stephen Lewis Foundation will persist.

UBUNTU Niagara is open to all who wish to participate, bringing the spirit of Ubuntu. For more information, please visit our Face Book page.

UBUNTU *Niagara*

proudly presents

"PLEASE GIVE WHAT YOU ARE ABLE"

Stephen Lewis

with Emcee

The Rev. David Pritchard

and performing artists

Hayden Muzyka | Laurel Candler | Mari Shantz

Maja Bannerman | Niagara on the Lake Ukesters

WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers

Friday, November 28, 2025

Trillium United Church

415 Linwell Rd., St. Catharines

Proceeds Donated to:



**Stephen Lewis
Foundation**



UBUNTU *Niagara*

Welcome

UBUNTU Niagara extends a warm welcome to you all. We are proud to present:

"Please Give What You Are Able"

Stephen Lewis

World AIDS Day Fundraiser for the Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF)

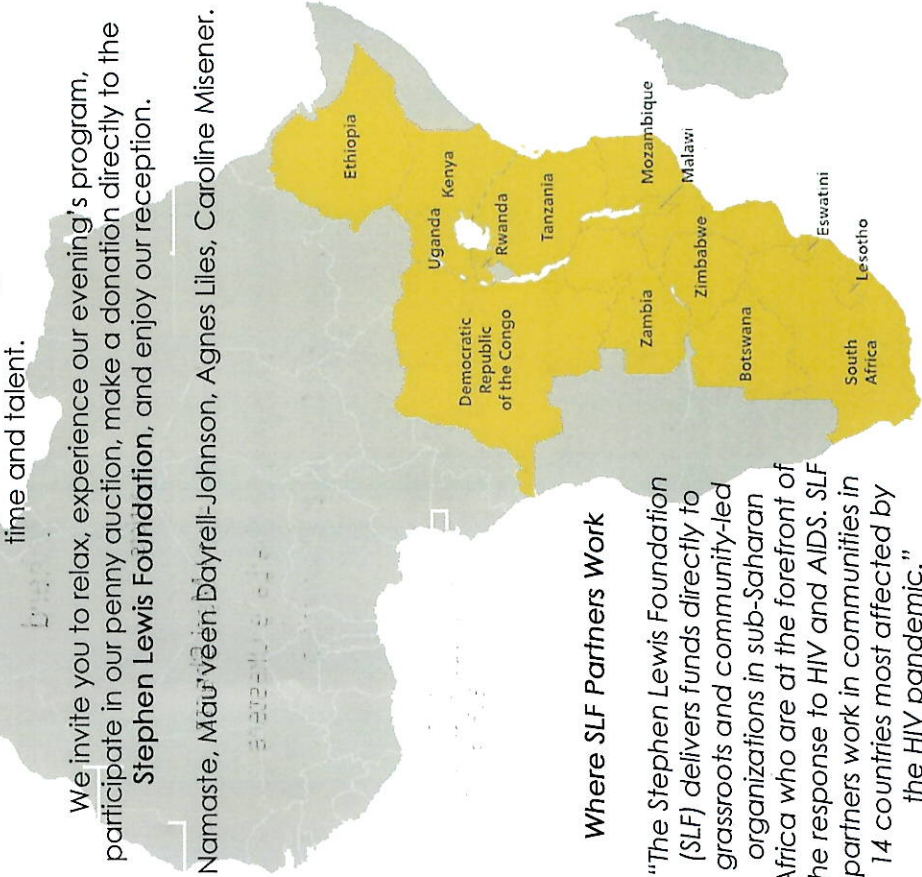
We are grateful to see familiar faces in the audience – friends who have journeyed with us since we began this project. We welcome new faces, and we acknowledge the supporters who quietly send light, prayers and dollars, even if unable to be physically present with us. We welcome Rev. David Pritchard, Emcee, and performing artists: Hayden Muzyka, Laurel Candler, Maja Bannerman, Mari Shantz, Niagara On The Lake Ukesters and WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers, and thank them all for their most generous donation of time and talent.

We invite you to relax, experience our evening's program, participate in our penny auction, make a donation directly to the Stephen Lewis Foundation, and enjoy our reception.

Namaste, Māu'veen Dayrell-Johnson, Agnes Liles, Caroline Misener.

Where SLF Partners Work

"The Stephen Lewis Foundation (SLF) delivers funds directly to grassroots and community-led organizations in sub-Saharan Africa who are at the forefront of the response to HIV and AIDS. SLF partners work in communities in 14 countries most affected by the HIV pandemic."



About the Stephen Lewis Foundation

Reflections on the Federal Budget 2025
Meg French, SLF Executive Director

"I am deeply disappointed in the Government of Canada.

For the past nine months, I've been hearing directly from our partners in Africa about the devastating impacts of cuts to international aid and global health, cuts largely driven by the United States. Just yesterday, the head of one of our partner organizations in Kenya told me that girls in their community no longer have the support they need to continue on to secondary or tertiary education. Without that example, younger girls are losing motivation to stay in school. Home-based HIV testing has stopped. Free drugs for malaria and other common illnesses are no longer available. And the local health centre that once had four nurses now has just one.

At the Stephen Lewis Foundation we have been working relentlessly to support our partners as they reorganize in the wake of these funding cuts and to raise additional funds to fill the growing gaps. Canadians have stepped up. Across the country, people are expressing outrage at the cuts and the harm they're causing to communities across Africa and beyond. They're increasing their donations. They're contacting their Members of Parliament and calling for Canada to maintain its leadership in global health. Just yesterday, we received a new ten-year commitment from a donor who said she simply couldn't stand by as global health funding is dismantled.

Until now, I've held on to the hope that Canada would not follow the U.S.'s example --- that we would show the moral courage to continue, even expand, our support for communities whose health and human rights are under threat. But yesterday's federal #Budget2025 extinguished that hope. Prime Minister Mark Carney's government has announced \$2.7 billion in cuts over the next four years to international assistance, including reductions to global health programming. The justification? That "Canada's contribution has grown disproportionately relative to other similar economies." Is that really our standard --- what others give? If so, we are reducing ourselves to the lowest common denominator. At a time when Canada's leadership is needed most, should we not be the ones setting the bar?

Yes, Canada is facing economic challenges. But overseas development assistance accounts to only 34 cents of every \$100 of our gross national income. Cutting aid to those who need it most, and threatening decades of progress in the fight against AIDS, does not represent a "Canada Strong." It represents a Canada that has lost its moral compass."

Meg French, SLF Executive Director
#Budget2025



Stephen Lewis
Foundation

WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers

Laura Thomas, Artistic Director
Laurel Candler, Accompanist

WomEnchant is a community ensemble of women with diverse musical experience. Our common thread is the desire to learn and perform music that celebrates the lives of all women. Together we promote peace, justice and care of the land, and we are committed to making positive changes in our community and beyond.

In 1993, inspired by the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and with help from established feminist choirs in the U.S. and Canada, Laura Thomas founded *The Unnamed Hamilton Feminist Chorus*, which became *WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers*. In 2007 the WomEnchant Drumming Circle was formed to give women the opportunity to learn about and perform on hand drums. Some of the drummers are choir members, while others belong only to the Drumming Circle. The *WomEnchant Drummers* perform with the choir and independently.

WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers has performed at benefits for women's shelters, International Women's Day celebrations, Take Back the Night rallies, V-Day anti-violence events, World AIDS Day benefits for the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Earth Day celebrations, and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation Winter Solstice fundraising concerts. WomEnchant has performed at notable historic celebrations, including the 160th anniversary of the first Women's Rights Convention in 2008 in Seneca Falls, New York and the 100th anniversary of Harriet Tubman's Memorial at the Salem Chapel in St. Catharines in 2013.

On April 29, 2018, with assistance from community sponsors friends and supporters, *WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers* celebrated 25 years of sisterhood and song with a Gala Concert at Hernder Estate Wines. 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.

cont'd...



WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers (cont'd)

WomEnchant is enjoying extended visibility in the community through our Face Book page where we share photos, event details and items of general interest to the public. As well, we have a YouTube channel:

www.youtube.com/@womenchantchorusdrummers5349 where we post a few of our videos including those made over Zoom during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge for WomEnchant, as it was for other performing groups. We embraced a steep learning curve that taught us about Zooming and recording alone to a background audio track. As well, we participated in a virtual holiday concert for residents of retirement homes. In January 2022, we invited six wonderful and gracious women musicians to visit our Zoom Room. They talked to us about their music, their careers, their lives as performers, and some even performed for us. Vicki Ekstrom, Heather Bishop, Holly Near, Connie Kaldor, Les Arden, and Cathy Miller helped us get through that winter with fascinating conversations and interesting insights. Holly Near told us to "Leave a Trail" – to leave a record of our work in social justice causes and our music. In this way, we can contribute to a body of art that future generations can look to and know that they can write their own songs, tell their own stories and build on the work of those who came before. The time that these strong, creative women spent with us helped to keep us moving forward as a group with a fresh focus as we emerged from the pandemic.

Today, *WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers* continues to perform live in four annual events for the Niagara community. We welcome new members who wish to give voice to the experience of all women and our commitment to making positive changes in our community and beyond.

For more information about *WomEnchant*, please visit our Face Book page or email:

womenchantchorusanddrummers@gmail.com

WomEnchant
CHORUS & DRUMMERS

"PLEASE GIVE WHAT YOU ARE ABLE"

Stephen Lewis

World AIDS Day Fundraiser for the Stephen Lewis Foundation

November 28, 2025

The Rev. David Pritchard, Emcee

Opening Remarks

The Rev. Barb McGill, Trillium United Church Minister

Welcome to Trillium United Church

WomEnchant Chorus

Conductor, Laura Thomas

Accompanist, Laurel Candler

Funga Alafia

LaRocque Bey from Liberian

Fanga dance

Soloist: Beisy Tauro

Drummers: Katherine Cooke, Jerri Penrose,

Peggy Sample, Gloria Ugarte, Sybil Wilson

Lead with Love

Soloist: Laurel Candler

Melanie Demore

We Rise Again

Leon Dubinsky, Arr. L. Adams

Walk Sister, Walk

Nan Thompson

Hayden Muzyka, Soloist

Accompanist, Angela Maccaroni

Black Coffee

The Firm Fram Sauce

The Way You Look Tonight

Mari Shantz, Vocalist

Colleen Smith

Donation Appeal

"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

Desmond Tutu

INTERMISSION

Penny Auction Closes

WomEnchant Drummers

Go-Do Time

Kassa

WomEnchant Drummers
Traditional Malinké (Guinea)

Sybil Wilson, Reader

Impact Story: Growth and Determination

Thabiso Mapalane
MusicWorks, SLF Partner,
Capetown, South Africa

Maja Bannerman, with Accompanist Rusty McCarthy

Present three songs from Maja's new album

Laurel Candler, Vocalist

Niagara On The Lake Ukesters


Emcee

Closing remarks




Refreshments will be served at the performance

The Rev. David Pritchard, Emcee

Dave Pritchard is a retired minister of the United Church of Canada. He is married to Judith, has three children and three grandchildren. He is a member of Trillium United Church. Judith and Dave have been supporters and volunteers for Stephen Lewis Foundation in Niagara-on-the-Lake and St. Catharines for almost twenty years. Dave is pleased to continue supporting UBUNTU Niagara and their important work for the Stephen Lewis Foundation. He also loves listening to WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers and tonight's guest performers.



One-of-a-kind copper jewellery and more
effusivearts.com | 905.341.5362



Laura Thomas, Conductor

Laura Thomas is a Niagara based conductor, arranger, composer, percussionist and teacher. She is a graduate of Mohawk College and McMaster University, where she studied percussion and composition. As well, she holds a master's degree in conducting from New York's prestigious Bard College where she studied with Harold Farberman. Currently, Ms. Thomas is the Music Director of the *Dundas Valley Orchestra*, Artistic Director of *WomEnchant Chorus and Drummers* and Conductor of Hamilton's *Hope and Harmony Choir*. She has held positions as Music Director of *Niagara Youth Orchestra*, Artistic Director of the *Niagara College Jazz Band*, and *Choralis Camerata*, Director of the *Niagara College Jazz Band*, and Director of Cambridge's *Woman to Woman Choir*. She is the Principal Percussionist of the *Niagara Symphony Orchestra*, where she also served as Associate Conductor for thirteen years.

Through her work with community groups, Laura has created the opportunity to combine music with activism. Along with Beth Bartley, Betsy Tauro, Jeff Hale and Neva Tesolin, Laura is a founding member of the *Women in Music Concerts*, and Niagara's eclectic folk/blues band, *BroadBand*. This group hosted International Women's Day fundraising events and promoted young women musicians in Niagara for twenty-five years. In 1993, inspired by the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival and with help from established feminist choirs in the U.S. and Canada, Laura formed *The Unnamed Hamilton Feminist Chorus*, which became the Hamilton / Niagara *WomEnchant Chorus and Drummers*. She has worked collaboratively with several choirs, including: *Woman to Woman Choir*, *Rainbow Chorus Waterloo-Wellington* and *Grimmsby Celebration Choir*, to produce community workshops and concerts. As well, Laura has helped community groups to develop successful fundraising events for women's shelters, Ovarian Cancer Canada, Amnesty International, The Stephen Lewis Foundation, and the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Foundation.

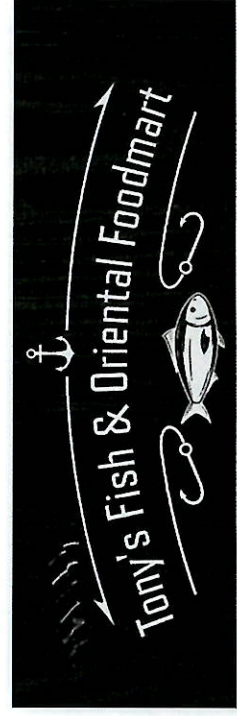
Ms. Thomas' compositions and arrangements can be heard in the music of *Flutes en Route!* featuring Douglas Miller, and the recordings and performances of *BroadBand*, *WomEnchant* and other ensembles. She has written for stage, orchestra, choral and jazz ensembles including a *Concerto for Jazz Trio and Orchestra*, and *A Kinder Concerto* for students and orchestra. 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."*

Laurel Candler, Accompanist and 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 1 2-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.

Hayden Muzyka, Soloist

From a young age Hayden has spent her time making and enjoying music, taking lessons and learning a plethora of musical instruments. Hayden, a grade 12 student is a part of the Blessed Trinity Music program in Grimsby led by Mrs. Angela Maccarroni, who will be accompanying her on piano. Through her past and present involvement in school ensembles such as: *Choir*, *Concert band*, *Drum-line*, *Jazz Choir*, *Music Council*, and *Combo*, as well as her position as vocalist in the *Hamilton Rising Stars Jazz Band*, and involvement with *WomEnchant Chorus* and *St. Martin's Church Choir*, Hayden hopes to become a better artist and performer, further evolving her talents. Tonight, Hayden will be demonstrating her love of music through song, with the pieces *Black Coffee*, *The Firm Fram Sauce*, and *The Way You Look Tonight*.



Tony's Fish & Oriental Foodmart

379 St. Paul St.
St. Catharines, ON
L2R3N1

905-6843700
Open Mon to Sat 11-6
Sunday closed

Adventure for your culinary senses!

Mari Shantz, Vocalist

Having a lifelong enjoyment of music, both as performer and also as audience member, Mari started out playing violin and piano in childhood, and began voice lessons in her teen years. As a child Mari greatly enjoyed playing baroque music on the violin, and, since she was raised in a musical household with a minister for a father, Mari was frequently called upon to play hymns on the piano. Her enjoyment of singing led to undergraduate and graduate degrees in voice performance.

When life felt full with work, studies, and childrearing, she found ways of feeding her need for music by maintaining a small teaching studio (voice and piano), and also in part-time employment with various local parishes. Periodic opportunities to collaborate with musical groups (e.g. soprano soloist for *Haydn's Lord Nelson Mass*, *Mozart's Requiem*, *Blue Bridge Festival*, and *Stephen Leacock Summer Festival*) with the Ardeleana Chamber Music Society), along with concertizing has provided her with an ongoing sense of joy in sharing music with others. In her daily life she is a Spiritual Care Practitioner for Hotel Dieu Shaver, supporting people recovering after injury or illness, and enjoys creating art in her free time.

Maja Bannerman with Accompanist, Rusty McCarthy

Maja Bannerman is a singer, published writer and performing artist. As a founder of feminist music and spoken word in Canada, she brings her passion for life and this planet to her latest album, *WHAT A WORLD!*

Maja has toured across Canada performing original songs and spoken word. Upon moving to Niagara in 1996, she focused on historical figures, both known and imagined. Her performances provided unique access into lives as diverse as Laura Secord, Maria Callas and the McFarland sisters.

In 2008, at the invitation of the Pelham Public Library, Maja created *THIS IS ANNE ~ Older & Wiser* ~ from L.M. Montgomery's Anne book series and performs as Anne Shirley Blythe, in her 60s, looking back on her life. Maja's partner, musician and composer, Rusty McCarthy, created music to accompany the show and they have been touring in Ontario and the eastern provinces since 2020.

Rusty & Maja also curate monthly cabarets at Cafe Mahtay and last year they were nominated for a St. Catharines' Arts Award for Established Artist recognizing their contribution to the community. Tonight, they are delighted to present three songs from Maja's new album.

majabannerman.ca



Niagara on the Lake Ukesters

Established in 2022, the Niagara on the Lake Ukesters provides a forum for musical expression and contributes to the Niagara Regional Community through financial donations, outreach and community service.

The "Ukesters" meet every Sunday at the NOTL Community Centre and play from a sing-along repertoire of over 300 songs from all genres from 1925 to the present.

Through honorariums and monthly dues, the Niagara on the Lake Ukesters have donated over \$40,000 to a variety of non-profit organizations along with donating many hours to assist in fundraising for various Community organizations and events.

For more information check out our Meetup Page
www.meetup.com/niagara-on-the-lake-ukesters or on Facebook
www.facebook.com/notlukesters

In Appreciation

UBUNTU Niagara expresses sincerest thanks to all the volunteers and supporters who offered their gifts of time and talent to make this evening possible.

Emcee: The Rev David Pritchard

Guest Artists:

WomEnchant Chorus & Drummers

Artistic Director: Laura Thomas, Accompanist: Laurel Candler

Hayden Muzyka -- Accompanist: Angela Maccarroni

Laurel Candler

Mari Shantz

Maja Bannerman & Rusty McCarthy

Niagara on the Lake Ukesters

Reader: Sybil Wilson

Trillium United Church Minister: The Rev. Barb McGill

Office Administrator: Kim Lis

Reception Host: Lida Samaradzic

Donation Personnel: Colleen Smith, Liz McGregor

Sound, Audio/Visual Operator: John Senn

Kitchen Help: Jan Sward, Judith Pritchard

Door Help: Jill Goebel, Anne Elliott, Betty Ann Chandler, Lynne Raybould

Photographer: Heather Halfyard

Social Media / Graphic Design: Lena V. Nielsen

Caretaker: Carey Calder

Everyone who donated items to the Penny Auction

Thank you to Trillium United Church for providing the venue and the support essential to this evening's success. Thanks also to those not mentioned who helped to organize and implement this World AIDS Day Fundraiser. Along with strong audience support we are enabled to do what we can toward the eradication of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the African Continent.