

Soromundi Q&A courtesy of Karm Hagedorn:

Karm Hagedorn started the choir in September 1989 with Sheryl Bernheine, her partner, and four others in their living room. Lisa Hellemn is the current director.

*Q: When did Lisa join and what was her role?*

A: Lisa approached me after our performance at the Sept 1990 Eugene Celebration and asked if we would consider having an accompanist. She came to the next rehearsal and has been there ever since. In addition to accompanying most songs, she provided much musical instruction to the choir, and support to me as director. She assumed the director role when I left in Mar '93. I returned as co-director in Sept '98.

*Q: How many singers have been a part of Soromundi and generally how many at a time?*

A: I wish we had kept better track of the membership. Even the early programs don't include everyone because of the risks of performing for some women. And in the early years, the programs listed only first names so it would be harder to track us down! I'm guessing that at least 1000 women have been members over the 31 years. In the last several seasons membership has been a consistent 85-95 women. One year the September rehearsal roster was at 125 but it dropped pretty quickly through the fall; we speculated that many of those people were girl-friend shopping. :)

*Q: Has Soromundi toured outside of Oregon? Where?*

A: We toured to Portland, Tacoma, and Seattle in April '13. Gay and Lesbian Youth groups were involved beforehand and participated in the concerts. There was a Northern CA tour planned for spring '20, and then canceled due to the pandemic. I believe it will be resurrected for spring '22. Three prior tours and run-outs in different years included Ashland and Klamath Falls, Bend, and Florence and Newport. Local women joined us in each town for a day-long workshop and sang several songs with us in the evening concerts.

*Q: How would you describe the musical choices?*

A: The music has certainly evolved over the years and has always been selected by the group. In the beginning, we sang songs that I could arrange and easily (!) teach in the oral tradition. As Lisa's role evolved, she transcribed what I was teaching so I could add more harmonies and remember from week to week what we had learned. As the group grew vocally we were able to sing from sheet music which enabled Lisa and me to arrange music specifically for our choral range and strengths. We sang foreign language songs and more complicated arrangements of the music the choir selected each year. We did Karl Jenkins' nine-movement *Adiemus* with complete orchestral accompaniment by the UO's Orchestra Next (maybe 2015?) In the last several years the song selection has moved toward a lot of pop music with instrumental accompaniment (keyboard/piano, guitar, bass, drums).