

THE JEZIC ENSEMBLE

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Background

Formerly, the Chestnut Ridge Women's Choir

On November 15, 1998, the Chestnut Ridge Women's Choir premiered in a performance emblematic of the tradition it would forge over the years since ... and portending the vision of its eventual successor, The Jezic Ensemble. That concert, with the Unified Jazz Ensemble, featured three earmarks of the new Jezic tradition: collaboration, women's voices, and the energetic, inspired leadership of artistic director Margie T. Farmer.

Farmer created The Chestnut Ridge Women's Choir by recruiting talented women from around the Baltimore metropolitan area and molding them into an intimate and innovative ensemble.

Throughout the intervening years, the choir grew in numbers, repertoire, performance standards, and stature. A long list of collaborating guest artists helped elevate the quality of the work and ensure that it remained richly diverse. Performances took place in concert halls, churches and synagogues, universities, secondary and elementary schools, and countless intimate settings in senior centers, private homes, and even hospitals.

When Diane Peacock Jezic died in 1989, Margie Farmer did not imagine that her Towson University music professor would one day inspire a renewed

"A pianist, teacher, musicologist, mother and feminist, Diane understood that the powerful creativity latent in all people, specifically in women, is too often thwarted by barriers of race, ethnicity, and class, as well as gender. She also understood that questions she raised in the classroom and in her writing about the history of creative women [were] often complex.

"How might we place women composers of the past alongside their better-known male colleagues in the musical mainstream?' 'How can we account for women's (often different) experiences, including social, cultural, economic, and educational conditions, that have contributed to the development of creative work?' 'How do we value and measure women's work?' 'Can we speak of a feminine, aesthetic in music?'

"Now, of course, women can join professional orchestras, and conduct them, and hear them play women's compositions, if too few and too infrequently. Recordings, editions, and commissions of women's music have multiplied; women music teachers have gained academic jobs; a scholarly literature of women's music has sprouted; feminist theories and critical perspectives have begun to change the ways we think about music, gender, sexuality, and creativity. Women composers have become more visible, more accomplished, and more numerous.

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organization with a sharply focused mission dedicated to the celebration of music composed or performed by women.

The Jezic Ensemble

The Jezic Ensemble is committed to excellence in performing diverse and challenging choral literature for women’s voices. The choir serves and enriches the community through performances of artistic splendor, social significance, and cultural wealth. The Jezic Ensemble also provides musical outreach to underserved areas such as schools, community centers, hospitals and retirement homes.

The choir encourages and supports the future development of female vocal ensemble performance by providing a venue for innovation in choral composition for female voices (for example, the ensemble premiered in *A Celtic Journey* with Robin Bullock and Jared Denhard) and a supportive environment for collaboration and experimentation with emerging and established artists (such as the recent *Songs of Hope* concert with David Griffiths). It is Ms. Farmer’s vision that each distinct concert experience will inspire both performers and audiences to come together within the heart of musical expression

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“Yet their survival is not guaranteed. So many of our musical forbearers have disappeared from music history and from memory. The work of the happy few [women of uncommon talent and determination], has survived because of two contributing factors: the availability to them of essential social and economic conditions to sustain creative work; and, their own courage and will in overcoming psychological barriers to creative expression.”

— Elizabeth Wood,
musicologist and writer,
Sarah Lawrence College, NH

The Jezic Ensemble and its guest soloists salute the legacy of Diane Peacock Jezic. The Ensemble celebrates women of uncommon talent and determination and strives to enhance their survival in musical history. Sustaining their creative works, the Ensemble salutes their courage and assertiveness in overcoming barriers to creative expression. Each woman has her own story about music and her own style of expression. The Jezic Ensemble comes together to offer each audience this gift of performance—moments of emotion, expression and harmony—to convey intense feelings of appreciation for so many women artists, who have given all of us an incredible musical heritage.

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