Women Working

A Series on Equity at Grailville

By Nicky Westrick

We were made for these times… We are needed… Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. -Clarissa Pinkola Estes

On Saturday, May 31 Women of Grailville, Loveland Zen, and The Grail hosted our first program in the Women Working series here at Grailville promoting equity, support, and visibility for women in all walks of life – music, science, at home, politics, in the garden – empowering women to transform the world. We celebrate both the ordinary and extraordinary women in our community. Some working silently unnoticed, some breaking boundaries, others knocking on locked doors.

Earlier this year I was inspired by the outreach of a young women, Liz Young, who was one of our guest artists at the event. She is a classical double bassist studying at Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. She is the founder of EmpowHer, a student-led organization at Eastman. Liz takes a feminine, positive approach to making connections with students and faculty across the university. She is with the Boston Youth Orchestra this summer for a concert tour in Mexico. We had two other featured female artists with us, April Elise Clemons and Alexis Marsh, along with the Grail Village Choir led by Nina Naberhaus. The program was filled with female-composed music from the “first” American female composer Amy Beach, gospel music of CeCe Winans, Lynne Malley, founder and director of the Ann Arbor Grail Singers, and the award-winning

composer, songwriter, and music producer Alexis Marsh.

Liz opened the program with a double bass solo accompanied by Jan Weinkam's interpretive dance to the poetry of Clarissa Pinkola Estes. This was a beautiful beginning to the series expressing courage, disappointment, outrage, perseverance, and hope. April followed with her inspiring gospel vocals. She has been singing since she was a child and describes her work in music as a ministry, a gift that can change lives. April embodies spirituality in song.

I then had the opportunity to perform Amy Beach's Romance Op. 23 for double bass and piano with my son, Luke Black. The first song each of us hears is our mother's voice. For millennia, women have been nurturing with lullaby, encouragement, play and (mostly) gentle direction. Often these songs are written on our hearts. Few things bring me the joy I feel when making music with him. Like Liz, Luke is a classical double bassist and recent graduate of the Eastman School of Music in James VanDemark's studio. The three of us performed the contemporary piece, Divertimento by Judith Bailey.

Alexis Marsh, a film composer and songwriter, completed the program. She has scored 17 feature films and 6 seasons of television. Her songs have been in over 40 productions: shorts, features, network, and cable television. Originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Alexis currently lives in Cincinnati with her family. She performed an excerpt from a flute concerto she is composing for London Symphonia's 2025/2026 season, and the song Midwest from her new album which poignantly expressed the pain of miscarriage through music.

Our Grail Village Choir book-ended the music of our guest artists throughout the concert with short pieces from the Grail's Feast Day Melodies. Many thanks to Meg Bruck, Jane Carter, Joy France, Becky Hill, Jan Weinkam, and Nina Naberhaus for their gift of song. Thank you also to Joanne Drilling and Bonnie Hendricks for their lovely introductions,

Robin Green for marketing, Loveland Zen for funding, and the Grail and Women of Grailville for their support. We concluded the program with a panel discussion with the artists. This was an intimate way to hear the unique struggles, financial challenges, inspiration, and joy of these female artists. I think we all left the Oratory changed by their music and stories.

We are busy now planning our next event, Women in Science, which is scheduled for Saturday, August 23. The program will feature scientific talks on topics such as diversity in consumer products research, water quality, AI in medical imaging, and spirituality in the workplace. The program will also include fun chemistry demos and a glass art exhibit by Doni Hatz, retired scientific glassblower and Loveland local. Please reach out to me if you are interested in getting involved, nickywestrick@gmail.com.

Women Working Series – Mark your calendar!

May 31	Women Working in Music
August 23	Women Working in Science
November 22	Women Working at Home
February 21	Women Working in Spirituality