



THE PANDORA CONSORT PRESENTS

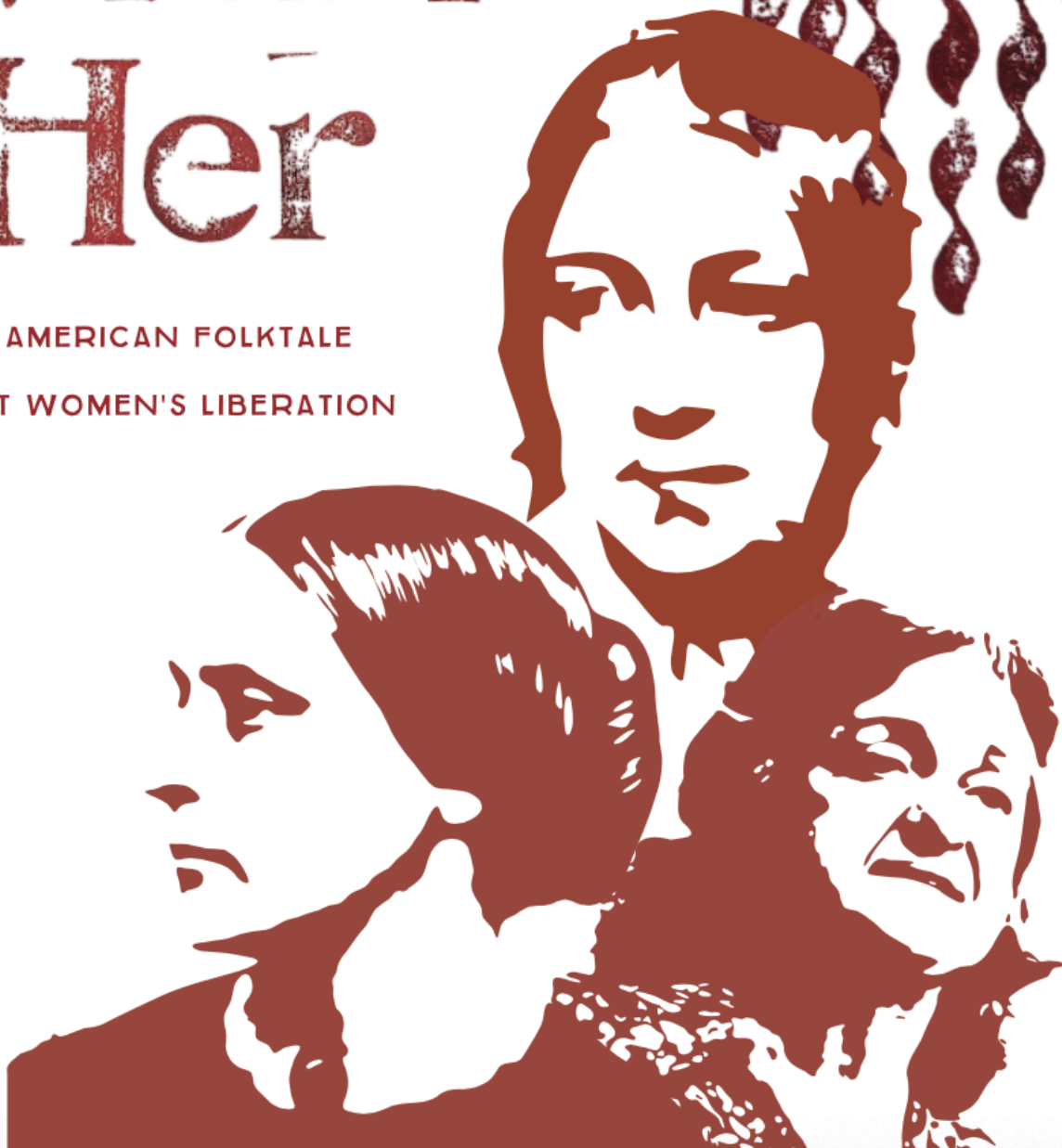
the Fire within Her

AN AMERICAN FOLKTALE
ABOUT WOMEN'S LIBERATION

NOV 7: PVD

NOV 8 : CAMB

NOV 9 : SALEM




The Fire Within Her

An American Folktale About Women's Liberation

**An Original Folk Opera by
Kendra Comstock &
the Pandora Consort**

2025



Within her womb smoulders desire
For justice burns from a sacred fire
The sweetest tune sung in the dark
A great blaze born from a little spark

We burn and change with thyme
A revolution amongst the deathknell chime
We find our sisters in the wind and the rain
Within each heart a flickering flame

Each voice louder with each other
Eases the path for our sisters and brothers
Hear ye! Young lad and lass remember
Fire is easy to spark from the ember



Part 1: Spark

Hard is the Fortune of All Womankind.....American Folk Song
Sweet Prospect.....William Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1833
The Young Convert.....William Walker, *The Christian Harmony*, 1866
I Have a Soul to be Saved or Lost.....Shaker Traditional
Mill Mother's Lament.....Ella Mae Wiggins (?-1929)
There but for Fortune.....Phil Ochs, 1963
Let No Man Steal Your Thyme.....Traditional (*A Handful of Pleasant
Delights*, 1584) performed by Anne Briggs, 1963

Part: Flame

Holy Manna.....William Moore, 1825
Housewife's Lament.....Sara Price (Dates Unknown)
My husband's Got No Courage.....Traditional
Which Side Are You On?..... Traditional, 1931

Part 3: Ember

Leaves in the Woodlands.....Peter Bellamy, *The Transports*, 1977
Housewife's Lament Reprise.....Sara Price (Dates Unknown)
One Hundred Years.....Traditional, 1852

Epilogue

Eyes on the Prize.....1917, adapted by Julia Esterlin, 2011;
arr. for the Pandora Consort by Nathan Halbur

Cast

Anne Hutchinson.....Kendra Comstock
Susan B. Anthony.....Erin Hogan
Betty Friedan.....Gina Marie Falk
Narrator/ Men /Elizabeth Cady StantonAngie Tyler
Mary Dyer.....Hannah O'Brien

Program Notes

by Kendra Comstock, author

Two years ago, when I was researching repertoire for our program *The Witching Hour*, I came across Peter Bellamy's ballad folk opera, *The Transports*. At that moment I knew I wanted to create a folk program for the Pandora Consort and finally picked up the idea one year ago.

Like many of us recently, in the wake of the recent political distortion and dismantling of protections for vulnerable groups, I have been contemplating the lifespan of revolution. The struggle for women's rights and their revocation have been of particular interest to me. This struggle in the United States is older than the country itself. The first recorded appeal for women's suffrage was made by Margaret Brent in Maryland in 1647 (*Liberated Woman's Songbook*). It's a reality that lives under the surface of our daily life.

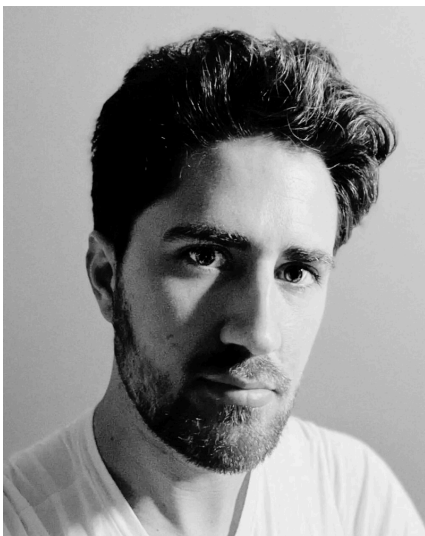
Throughout my life I have encountered many moments of sexist discrimination (the most obvious form of discrimination I could receive as a young, white woman). Yet, I was surprised to learn that it was rarely as overt as the sexism I was prepared for- a comment about my appearance by a male stranger, being passed over for jobs in favor of less qualified male colleagues, an unnecessary touch. I often believed that I misunderstood, or was too sensitive, because that's what I was told by men and women in response to my protests. But at the end of that emotional wash, I reached a moment of clarity. I was not crazy. I was not misinterpreting anything. I am simply existing in a world that is the result of the wishes of those in power. As much progress has been made, there is still a long way to go.

However, while coming to terms with our current social and political climate, I have found solace in a feeling of gratitude to those who sacrificed and innovated so that we could reach our current place of progress. The process of researching and compiling *The Fire Within Her* has immersed me in stories and songs of resistance which is its own sort of comfort amidst the happenings in our society. There are plenty of references to other female activists and composers woven through the story and most of the dialogue was constructed from actual quotes by the central figures.

This production is our own form of protest, hopefully bringing us all closer together, and perhaps inspiring some hope in the process. A few months into the writing process I came across a quote by Alice Paul, which has remained at the forefront of my mind since: "I always feel the movement is a sort of mosaic. Each of us puts in one little stone, and then you get a great mosaic at the end."

About the Music

Our goal with this production was to highlight the often overlooked early music and stories of North America. The songs for this production are drawn from many disparate sources of vocal repertoire throughout the history of North America. Often when dealing with early music the date of origin is difficult to pin down and these songs are no exception. The date listed next to our selections is used as a reference point for when the piece was first recorded or added to a collection, but it's very likely that these tunes and texts date much earlier. The music takes on a folk quality, generally with one voice narrating a story of struggle, not unlike the troubadours of Europe. Selections like "The Young Convert" and "I Have a Soul to be Saved or Lost" draw from early American religious tradition. A similar genre of interest to us that we drew from is the North American tradition of shape-note singing ("Sweet Prospect," "Holy Manna," etc.) The brash vocal tone of this repertoire is the sister to the Medieval peasant songs, yet the interwoven vocal lines and shifting tempos generate something uniquely North American. Yet the cornerstone of our sources surely comes from "The Liberated Woman's Songbook," printed in 1971, from which we've adapted protest songs. Lyrics were changed for "Hard is the Fortune of All Womankind" (Wagoner's Lad), "Which Side Are You On?" and "Housewife's Lament" to fit the narrative of the production. We also decided to broaden the scope of our musical lens to include contemporary artists with songs of hope and rebellion, such as Anne Briggs and Joan Baez. The inspiration for this style of production comes from Peter Bellamy's folk opera, *The Transports*, from which we have chosen one song to perform as an homage to Bellamy's work, "The Leaves in the Woodlands." Our final song, "Eyes on the Prize" is an adapted reimagining of the original spiritual found in the Justice Choir Songbook and performed by Mavis Staples, by Julia Easterlin, and arranged for our ensemble by Nathan Halbur. All other songs were arranged and transcribed by Music Director, Angie Tyler.



Baritone **Nathan Halbur** is a singer and composer based in Boston. His compositions and arrangements have been performed by choral and jazz vocal ensembles throughout the United States, and his song "Sigh no more" (set to lyrics by Shakespeare) was recently featured at the Sparks & Wiry Cries GRAND songSLAM in Chicago. He recently produced an album of completely improvised a cappella music for Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, titled *Composition Sped Up*. He is also in an experimental pop band called DREAMGLOW, which reimagines music from the classical canon in an electronic lo-fi aesthetic. nathanhalbur.com

The Women of The Fire Within Her



Anne Hutchinson (1591-1643) was a Puritan spiritual leader whose outspoken religious beliefs challenged the male-dominated clergy and helped spark the Antinomian Controversy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Mary Dyer (1611–1660) was a Quaker martyr who defied Puritan authorities in Massachusetts by repeatedly returning to preach despite banishment. Her public execution for religious defiance made her a lasting symbol of freedom of conscience in early America.



Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) was a reformer and suffragist who co-founded the National Woman Suffrage Association and dedicated her life to securing women's right to vote. Her tireless campaigning made her one of the most influential figures in the fight for American women's equality.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) was a pioneering leader of the women's rights movement and the primary author of the 1848 Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments. Her writings and activism laid the philosophical groundwork for women's suffrage and gender equality in the United States.



Betty Friedan (1921–2006) was a feminist writer and activist whose book *The Feminine Mystique* ignited the second wave of feminism in the United States. She co-founded the National Organization for Women, advocating for workplace equality, reproductive rights, and social reform.



The Pandora Consort



The Pandora Consort is an early music ensemble dedicated to reimagining classical music performance by integrating multimedia, interactive elements, and exploring historically under-represented repertoire. Together, the ensemble has developed three original concert programs, *Vox Feminae*, featuring stories of famous female heroines through female Baroque composers; *The Witching Hour*, a semi-staged program exploring women and witchcraft through repertoire spanning from Medieval to modern day; and *Hildegard Reanimated: Vision in Vision*, a program of repertoire by Hildegard von Bingen accompanied by animated projections of her most famous divine visions.

The Pandora Consort has performed on the New York State Baroque and Pegasus Early Music Young Artist Series, SoHIP Boston Summer Concert Series, the Saint James World & Early Music Series (PA), King's Chapel Concert Series (MA), Salon Avec Moi (NYC) and the BEMF Fringe Series. In the Summer of 2024, the Pandora Consort was the ensemble-in-residence at the Portland Bach Experience, performing works of Hildegard and Bach throughout Southern Maine. The ensemble is also committed to educating the public on lesser-known early music repertoire and bringing early music to unconventional performance spaces, performing everywhere from basements, to bookstores, to homes and outdoor venues. Some highlights of the upcoming 2025-2026 season include the Pandora Consort performing *Hildegard Reanimated: Vision in Vision* with Vermont Public Classical Radio and premiering their new program, *The Fire Within Her*, an original folk opera about women's liberation in the United States.



The Pandora Consort Ensemble



Praised for her “clear melodic core” and a “sound that rejoices in the beauty of natural vowels” (Boston Music Intelligencer), soprano **Kendra Comstock** is a Boston-based performer and teacher. Recent engagements include performances with Vermont Chamber Artists, Pegasus Early Music & NYS Baroque, the Cambridge Chamber Ensemble, the Boston Camerata, SoHIP Boston, the Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, and the Lilith Vocal Ensemble. Kendra holds a MM in Historical Performance at the Longy School of Music of Bard College, where she studied with Pamela Dellal.

kendracomstocksoprano.com



With a bright, shimmering tone, **Angie Tyler** is passionate about telling compelling stories and challenging the status quo. A sought-after soloist and ensemble singer, Angie performs with Pandora Consort, and joins The Aurora Ensemble, Newton Baroque. The Boston Camerata, Seven Times Salt, Lilith Vocal Ensemble and Tutti Music Collective. Angie holds a Master of Music in Historical Performance from Longy School of Music of Bard College where she studied with Pamela Dellal. In addition to music, Angie is passionate about disability rights and queer liberation.

angietyler.com



A “soaring soprano soloist” (Boston Classical Review), **Gina Marie Falk** specializes in the performance of early and contemporary chamber music. In addition to touring programs with the Pandora Consort, some Gina Marie’s recent credits include joining Emmanuel Music in their weekly Cantata Series and yearly concerts, collaborating with pianist Clémentine Dubost on 19th-21st century French art song, and appearing as a soloist at the Portland Bach Experience. Gina Marie values her work with emerging composers, premiering their music in both chamber and solo settings. She and electric guitarist John Secunde fuse indie aesthetics with classical repertoire as their duo, Saint Boneface.

ginamariefalk.com

Guest Artists



Erin Hogan is a musical shapeshifter whose soulful soprano voice moves with ease between early and sacred music, folk traditions, and cross-genre collaborations. She is a sought-after collaborator, performing with Forsyth, Tiny Glass Tavern, Dreamglow, Trinity Church Choir, The Adam Hendey Band, and joining Adam in the duo Sister June. As a solo artist and interpreter of traditional song, Erin recently opened for Sam Amidon at Arts at the Armory in Somerville, MA, and also appeared with the Ike Sturm Ensemble, the Silkroad Global Musicians Workshop, and Ryan Keberle's All Ears Ensemble at Birdland Jazz Club.

erinsheahogan.com



Hannah O'Brien is a classical and Irish fiddle player based in the Boston area. A graduate of the University of Michigan School of Music and the New England Conservatory, Hannah regularly plays with local ensembles including the Boston Lyric Opera and Cape Cod Chamber Orchestra as well as playing summer seasons with the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra and Des Moines Metro Opera. In addition to classical performance, Hannah is an Irish fiddler, composer and arranger, and is part of an acoustic string duo with musical partner Grant Flick. The duo has released two records and are the recipients of many grants including the Binkow Chamber Music Grant, Excel Enterprise Fund and the Club Passim Iguana Fund. She can be seen playing Irish music around Boston and was most recently featured as a composer for ITMA's Saothar Series. Her most recent composition project for violinist Ayano Ninomiya explores the Bach "Double" partita movements, adding 6 newly composed Doubles to the E major partita.



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