A CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING PUBLICATION
INAUGURAL EDITION #001 -- RevBilly.com

FRAN BENITEZ

DOWN UNDER IN AUSTRALIA

Graham Garlington

Drawings by Gregory Corbino~Tenor & Associate Music Director
NEW ORLEANS

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STOP THE RIFT

KIDS OFF THE EARTH
On March 2, 2019—at the Victor Harbor Beach FIGHT FOR THE BIGHT Paddle-Out we sang “The Gratitude Song” for Bunna Lawrie. He is a Mirning elder, Whale Dreamer, and acclaimed musician. Along with several other passionate and Earth-loving groups, we were all there to protest the proposed drilling in the Great Australian Bight.

In Lawrie’s own words: “We are the Whale Dreaming tribe of the Nullarbor and Great Australian Bight, the home of this planet’s greatest whale nursery and sanctuary. For over 60,000 years we have been custodians of this land and sea. In the 1950’s the Australian government declared the Mirning people extinct and relocated another tribe onto our land. The government formed a corporation, made agreements with mining companies and have been using native title to take our freedom to protect our sacred homeland. The mining company this time is Equinor (Statoil) who is proposing very risky oil drilling in the pristine Great Australian Bight.”

He taught us the Mirning word ‘mirinja’: the vibration/life spirit that imbues all things.

He picked up a handful of sand. "This is ‘mirinja’.

He pointed to the ocean. "This is ‘mirinja’, the songs, the dream time."

It reminded me of what the Lakota elder at Oceti Sakowin—the 7 Council Fires of the Great Sioux Nation, home of the Water Protectors at Standing Rock Reservation—had said:

"Every living thing is our relative. The grass and the trees are our brothers. The wind and the water are our sisters."

Superloop 500 action:
The Earth - Our Home - Blue and Green
Stop Burning Gasoline!
There’s A Fire Down Under, The Flames Are High
If We Keep Burning Petrol, We’re All Gonna Die!
(we spontaneously reprised that one at that night’s show...)

Fight For The Bight Paddle-Out @ Victor Harbor:
Oil Spills, Oil Kills --
Ain’t No Way in Hell We Gonna Let You Drill!
We Are The Current, We Are The Sea
Won’t Stop Rising Til We Are Free!

Extinction Rebellion NYC
David Buckle Ceremony
Just Like A Mother Loves Her Child
We Love The Earth Because She’s Wild!
As we ascended the escalators wearing our bright orange papier-mâché Golden Toad heads, what we were doing seemed as necessary as it was outlandish. A choir of extinct toads landing in the lobby of Chase Bank in Midtown Manhattan—what?! But, that is exactly what the world needs more of; what the Earth is asking of us.

We sang our songs and handed out information describing WHY this Golden Toad Chorus had landed in Chase Bank. The investments in mountaintop removal, coal, pipelines—things a majority of New Yorkers would say, "Of course, I’m not FOR this!"—but their money told a different tale.

We descended the escalator back to the street with the mere mortals. It was beginning to rain. So we descended yet another set of stairs and gathered on the downtown F train platform. Billy collected Golden Toad heads in a bag. Our director, Savitri, had designed and handmade each one with help from the choir so it was essential that these be organized and returned in an orderly fashion. A train slowly pulled in to the station. There was some activity above us and we could just make out heavily-pleated blue pants walking through the subway gates. I was heading uptown but decided to wait with Billy to make sure all heads were accounted for.

I was thinking about how this all must look and I couldn’t help but laugh. I was holding a large sack of papier-mâché Golden Toad heads while Reverend Billy (dressed in his Televangelist-meets-Elvis drag) tried to remember how many heads we had arrived with. In those days Billy wore all white from head-to-toe except for his clergy vestments. And I was holding a large, black cloth sack. Again, I was laughing at myself and now wondering what life choices had led me to this exact moment (and whatever they were, I’m so glad that I made them.).

Down the stairs come those blue pleated pants—and there seem to be so MANY pairs of pleated pants coming towards us. "Were you just up in Chase Bank?" one cop asks Billy. Unable to lie, Billy nods. Another cop says to me, "Were you with him?" I’m holding a huge black sack...and I’m sure people on the platform must be thinking, "Did you really almost get away with a huge sack of stolen money from a BANK ROBBERY?" In my mind I’m trying to explain "THESE ARE GOLDEN TOAD HEADS!" but I can’t stop smiling and laughing to myself. I just nod and follow Billy up the stairs.

As we are handcuffed and put into a police car, a higher-ranking white-shirted police officer comes up to me and snarls in my face, "Why are you smiling? Do you think this is funny? We’ll give you something to smile about?"

But...I’m smiling because this is as hilarious as it is NECESSARY.

A week after arrival and on the one day that Dragonfly ventured solo to the beach (and got a sunburn!), the “Black Nod” proved to be an international phenomenon, as she greeted and befriended the grandson of the world’s most famous and respected prisoner of our lifetimes:

Australia required us to submit a narrative of our arrests along with our visa applications. Here is what our music director submitted for his one and only arrest:

NEHEMIAH LUCKETT
Music Director

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Australia denied the visa application for our friend Theo [bass]. So we brought him with us everywhere we went.

#LoveNoBorder
THE CHURCH OF STOP SHOPPING

Looking back across our 17 years, the light and funny name starts to time the answer is becoming clear. Our devils have been sweatshops, commercial Christmas, pesticides, racist police, gentrification, pipelines... Our dark angel was always the "Mono-culture." And who we pray and sing to is the Earth. We look at the 500 tornadoes (so far) of 2019 and we hear in the screaming wind 500 arguments against the poisons of industrial agriculture in the Midwest, against the monoculture of Trumpland. The storms are messages from the Earth. Yes—simply regarding this living being as intelligent, in fact, fabulous—that's it.

And so we're taking that word "church" back from the hate-and-fear Times Square. There can be a lot of radical love in a church that replaces the God of Judgment with the Goddess of Justice. We find that the passionate harmonies of the choir seem to slow down the police as our activist dramas unfold in corporate lobbies, in the Monsanto labs, in the backyards of prisons. On a good day, we a singing species of the Earth, letting her work her mysterious ways through us.

The Church of Stop Shopping will try to deliver the message with humor and music, because that is what opens people's hearts. Amen? And so will this zine, flowing like a stream from our actions and songs. Earthalujah!

~ REVEREND BILLY TALEN

Q: What will we do when a long-time community member migrates?
A:

Travis and his love/life partner, Lilly, have embarked upon a life together in Tennessee. We are simultaneously crestfallen over his departure and overjoyed for their new beginning. May the Force be with you both. May you be blessed with abundant solar power and organic vegetables and bicycle lanes and music and laughter.

Support our work!

POB 1556
NY NY 10013

Join us!

Bill Talen
Savitri D.

is a radical performance
OF STOP
Directed by
Nehemiah Luckett
Ndaba Mandela and Colin Kaepernick

The Church of Stop Shopping makes a difference every day. Support our work today! Click here to give your donation.

state of misogyny

"Bird Wing" collage by TRAVIS TENOH - Tenor Emeritus

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...the colorful housing...the hospitality of the manager at Sonic

I’ll never forget that encounter, nor the grace, patience, and

And the final amazing thing was that a fellow member from a

wisdom of Rebecca and Bryan--the husband and wife who

blessed many of us in the choir who stayed in their welcoming

home...or the people that fed us at the meetings and shows...the

bikers in support of the people in that prison we rallied at...the

Trump” march through the French Quarter...the fireworks show on

the water (I had never been that close to a fireworks display

before, lol)... the phenomenal shrimp at Cafe Pontalba...seeing the

location where Solomon Northup was sold and later wrote his

Slave

Burger who let us stage our Bayer-Monsanto march there and

even took a pic with us...and the overall energy and culture of a

that has been through hell and came out on the other side and is

band I play with in Chicago happened to be in town--and he sat in

experience.

ERIC JOHNSON--drummer

Purple Rain

As a Creole (whose paternal grandmother was born and raised in

So N’awlins represents a dichotomy of progression/regression like

But my most awesome experience was when I visited Euclid

He told me he was a DJ and Prince collector like myself, and put

in succession as they would have on the soundtrack, but they ALL

original Purple Rain soundtrack. So at that point, I had to approach

the owner.

the songs together based on a rare concert Prince did that became

known as the

on the actual soundtrack came from that show in Minneapolis. But

the longer versions of all the other songs we’ve come to love on the

soundtrack are part of that concert as well. So I was blown away and

(luckily, I realized I have this concert on mp3 from another avid Prince

collector in Chicago, lol). But he did give Dragonfly--a fellow choir

member--a copy of the

Davis and George Clinton. But that whole experience to me summed

datastically. It’s the kind of thing that makes me want to say “I

be restored.

with those I love.

I think I’m in love again.

For as I fall in love I rise in love.

I am intrigued and also desperate.

The capacity for remembrance must simply

of song and story I realized there are moments

from the deep stores within, perhaps it is not

of curiosity, awe-appreciating?

Awakening this morning afternoon energy

The family my cousin’s My Chosen cousins

I am intrigued and also desperate.

family never forgotten and always known,

and harmonies, glances and brushes of shoulders,

I will recall lying on the well-trodden off-white carpet

and muscles retain, record, reflect,

appreciation, awe, recognition, appreciation,

and bass and choir along and through my spine.

To stop to be with body as it imprints notes, melodies

swing open.

more than mere words and images woven together

forward into our bodies into this now.

elbows against beer-battered bellies.

I don’t know what other words could describe this:

banging my skin, the scent of the air inside the church,

the sensation of white patent leather shoes

into the air carve awakening awareness of the

life and love that courses through these bodies

New words new chemical compounds names spoken

these cells remember the rhythm, the song, cavernous

ridiculous and illogical moments that seems to fear this

THESE are moments I want to recall forever. Moments

want to share it with my grandchildren nieces nephews

...
I have some complex thoughts/feelings story of it: I had one morning to myself to wander through New Orleans. I strolled from where I made my way. New Orleans struck me as that rare kind of city that has a deeply felt sense of place. Homes and cars adorned with color and flowers, art and artfulness seeping from every corner. The people of the city always with attention to detail. It was a slow Sunday morning and I took my time, stopping in at a shop called Cajun myself and a birthday gift for Lena (a hairpin with a glorious feather arrangement). In the midst of this reverie, this joy at even this small glimpse of the spirit that animates NOLA, I came across a series of plaques that detailed the uglier side of this place: the historic role of New Orleans in the slave trade. I encountered a young black father with his two small children, struggling to take a selfie with his kids in front of one of the plaques. I immediately felt all kinds of strange so. Then I offered to take a photo for him. His hands were full with his kids and he was struggling on his own. He gratefully accepted white guy tourist helping out a black man a ton of bricks, a feeling of deep grief heightened by this contrast between the triviality of the tourist photo and the enormity of the sin of chattel slavery. I handed his phone back to him, he thanked me, and we parted casually and amicably in the way that strangers do. I left the moment feeling haunted, holding onto this deep sense of contradiction where a place can be both wonderful and terrible in the same moment.

Orleans itself. I am too much a stranger to the place to make that kind of declaration, but that's the impression that I carried home to Brooklyn, contradictions, its own terror and beauty and...
our recycling goes into the general garbage. We NOLA activist hosts recycled County (NY) dump/recycling, metal cans, maybe glass and where your recycling is going. Check with your municipality to see rest goes into the general garbage.

\[\text{Singer of the Month:}\]

\[\text{felt so close to people in that horrible situation.} \]
\[\text{The second line "Tourists Against Trump" on Royal and Bourbon Streets--and of course the great fellowship and meals between us and all our new friends were such a joy. I hope we can have many more tours with the whole choir. The joint action with NOLA to ANGOLA at the prison was a hope the images we created help to spur massive civil action. Wonderfully joyful to be there with the Stop Shopping Family.} \]

\[\text{Dragonfly in an uproar.} \]
\[\text{an impressively large or varied person or thing.} \]

\[\text{Jana Napoli} \]
\[\text{Sherri Miller} \]
\[\text{Cherri Foytlin} \]
\[\text{Southern Rep 'debate',} \]
\[\text{Nola To Angola} \]
\[\text{Valerie Massimi} \]
\[\text{Solitary Gardens} \]

\[\text{My experience performing in NOLA as the choir's interpreter for the deaf circle. I felt the stars tumbling down from the heavens every minute of every day, especially when we performed at the Southern Rep Theater. The presence of off-guard as I was preparing to sign for what I had anticipated to be an all-hearing audience. I was so deeply} \]
\[\text{Sylver and Fran, who were able to sign and participate with the Deaf group that attended the performance. Our Creative Director Savitri D. dazzled me by offering Sign Language to the Deaf community. And when a staff member told me there was someone who wanted to see me, I couldn't imagine who that might be. I couldn't quite recognize the person from what I had anticipated to be an all-hearing audience. I was so deeply} \]
\[\text{When the veil lifted, I had the pleasure of recognizing Hansen, a native of New York City in the late 80's and early 90's after finishing school in Rochester, New decades. Natural connection, an organic response and a sense of enlightenment from being in their presence. Whenever I am invited} \]
\[\text{accomplishments they bring to the world. I feel I am being graced. American Sign Language captures the essence of such a profound experience in communication. It encampasses the heart, soul and expression of a person with such} \]

\[\text{Stop the Bayou Bridge Pipeline} \]

\[\text{A QUICK TRIP} \]

\[\text{We also understand New Orleans as a place where we can enjoy moments from the modern world here, where we can enjoy moments from the modern world here, the} \]
\[\text{the uniqueness of its vernacular architecture, the strong localism of the city's food and music cultures. Beset by seemingly insuperable tragedies of both the "slow-motion" and suddenly catastrophic varieties. The trip with the choir was our first time to perform in New Orleans and our personal journey took us to areas that are} \]
\[\text{Edmonton to New Orleans.} \]

\[\text{THE SIGN} \]

\[\text{L'eau est la vie Camp} \]
\[\text{Congress of Day Laborers / Congress de Jornaleros} \]

\[\text{Photos by John Carlin / Charlene Ruscadella / Savitri D} \]

\[\text{New Orleans is thus a paradox in the way we can think about all places simultaneously "distinct" and "typical." National and international forces shaping the city. Activists, educators, and visionaries to take care of them and to discipline the disorder of capitalist urbanization. Women, queers, people of color, and a distinctly itself.} \]

\[\text{Simultaneous subjection and emancipatory possibility, but each in their own distinct, resilient, painful ways.} \]

\[\text{Exorcism of the Bayer-Monsanto factory in Luling, Louisiana...} \]