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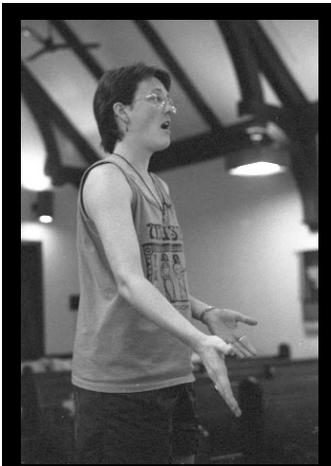
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*Pressroom for more information and/or downloadable images:*

*www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos*

*Program companion website: www.pbs.org/amasong*



THE AMASONG CHORUS:  
SINGING OUT

**INDEPENDENT LENS'S "THE AMASONG  
CHORUS: SINGING OUT"**

**JAY ROSENSTEIN'S INSPIRING FILM CHRONICLES  
THE RISE OF A RURAL LESBIAN/FEMINIST  
CHORUS THAT USES THE BEAUTY OF MUSIC TO  
TRANSFORM AND UNITE THEIR COMMUNITY**

*Film by Jay Rosenstein*

*Premieres Nationally on "Independent Lens,"*

*ITVS's Acclaimed Series on PBS*

*Tuesday, June 15, 2004 at 10 P.M.*

*(check local listings)*

*A co-presentation with WILL-TV / Urbana*

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*"I had to decide what I wanted to do with my life. Am I going to be a professional activist, a civil rights attorney, a labor organizer, or am I going to be a musician? I had to go with the music. What Amasong allowed me to do was to be a lesbian and a musician. I guess I moved from political activism to musical activism."*

—KRISTINA BOERGER, FOUNDER OF AMASONG:  
CHAMPAIGN-URBANA'S PREMIER LESBIAN /  
FEMINIST CHORUS

(San Francisco, CA) — By the early 1990s, lesbian and gay choirs began to spring up in major cities around the U.S. But could one ever exist in central Illinois, an area best known for growing corn, soybeans and conservative Republicans? As Jay Rosenstein's **THE AMASONG CHORUS: SINGING OUT** recounts, the answer was a resounding yes. An inspiring story of commitment, community and triumph, **AMASONG** will air nationally on the PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Don Cheadle, on Tuesday, June 15th at 10 P.M. (check local listings).

Since the age of four, Kristina Boerger had always loved and excelled at music. She came out as a lesbian in college and in the summer of 1985, she had an experience that changed her life: while working at a



Midwestern college, she was fired when she mentioned being a lesbian. As she recalls, "I was removed within an hour. At first I was so humiliated and so depressed and so angry. And as the anger bubbled to the fore, I realized that I just had to make sure that I never went through that again, and that I did anything that I could to prevent anyone else from having to go through it."

She devoted the next six years to activism but by 1991, she was tired, frustrated and burnt out. Studying for her

masters at the University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign, Kristina Boerger decided to challenge the odds and find a way to be out as well as a musician. She decided to form what she advertised as a lesbian/feminist chorus called Amasong.

Posting flyers around town, a roomful of brave women showed up — mainly lesbians but also housewives and students drawn to the idea. As Kristina recalls, the first members were a rag-tag bunch, "raw and diverse material, ranging in age from 12 to 50, and ranging in experience from a lot to none."

But, as the film shows, the chorus grew in number and skill under Kristina's demanding leadership. Women from different backgrounds found a place where they fit in and where their talents were taken to heights they'd never imagined possible. And although the community was hesitant at first, the startling beauty of their music slowly and steadily won acceptance from this traditionally conservative community. As we watch the group transform from a small motley band into a large, polished and nationally recognized award-winning ensemble, **THE AMASONG CHORUS: SINGING OUT** shows how one person's spirit and dedication can help transform individuals and a community through the power of music.



Additional information and/or downloadable photographs from **THE AMASONG CHORUS: SINGING OUT** are available at [www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos](http://www.itvs.org/pressroom/photos).

The program's interactive companion website is [www.pbs.org/amasong](http://www.pbs.org/amasong) and features detailed information about the film, including an interview with the filmmaker, cast and crew bios, as well as links and resources pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a "talkback" section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film and more.

**THE AMASONG CHORUS: SINGING OUT** is a co-production of Jay Rosenstein and WILL-TV, produced in association with ITVS, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

## THE AMASONG CHORUS: SINGING OUT Credits

PRODUCED, DIRECTED, WRITTEN, AND EDITED BY  
INTERVIEW VIDEOGRAPHY BY  
CONCERT AND REHEARSAL VIDEOGRAPHY BY  
ADDITIONAL VIDEOGRAPHY BY

**Jay Rosenstein**  
**Jeremiah Reeves**  
**Jay Rosenstein**  
**Nathan Halder, Cara Restelli & Tarji Wells**

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**JAY ROSENSTEIN** (Director/Producer/Editor) is a documentary producer, director, writer and editor whose work has been seen nationally on PBS, ABC *World News Tonight*, Nickelodeon and the Independent Film Channel, as well as at film festivals around the world. Documentaries he has produced and directed include the short *Erased*, which premiered at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival and won a Director's Citation Award from the Black Maria Film Festival and a Special Jury Award from the Ann Arbor Film Festival, and aired on the Independent Film Channel. His previous documentaries include the highly-influential *In Whose Honor? American Indian Mascots in Sports*, which aired nationally on the PBS series *Point of View (P.O.V.)* and was recognized by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism as one of the most outstanding programs on race in American television in 1997-98. *In Whose Honor?* is currently being used as an educational resource in more than 300 colleges and universities nationwide and in Canada. Jay has been a frequent speaker on the subject of American Indian mascots in sports, and authored a chapter on the subject for the book *Team Spirits* (University of Nebraska Press). *In Whose Honor?* is distributed by New Day Films.

Jay has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media, the Independent Television Service and the Illinois Arts Council. He is currently an assistant professor of journalism at the University of Illinois, Urbana. He lives in Champaign, IL with his wife Gail and daughter Caitlin.

**KRISTINA BOERGER** (founding director, Amasong Chorus), a native of Wisconsin, received her formative musical training from pianist Annie Sherter in Geneva, Illinois. She holds the B.S., M.M. and D.M.A. in choral conducting from the School of Music at the University of Illinois. Her dissertation, *Whose Music Is It, Anyway? Black Vocal Ensemble Traditions and the Feminist Choral Movement: Performance Practice as Politics*, explores racial and gender identity formation through choral performance and examines the effects of racism on White and Black performers' beliefs about authenticity, ownership and theft of oral-tradition materials.

Boerger has directed choirs in the public schools of Kenosha, WI and Bloomington, IL, and served on the faculties of Lake Forest College and the Millikin University School of Music. She has adjudicated, coached and guest-conducted choirs in several regions of the United States and in Mar del Plata, Argentina and Quebec City, Canada. In 1998 and 1999, she was a guest faculty artist at Urban Bush Women's summer arts institute at Florida State University, *A New Dancer For A New Society*. Her choral arrangements are performed by ensembles throughout the United States. Guest conductorships in the current season include the Kalamazoo Bach Society's annual High School Choral Festival and the annual summer workshop of the Syracuse Schola Cantorum.



In 1990, Boerger founded Amasong: Champaign-Urbana's premier lesbian/feminist chorus, a volunteer, community ensemble that she led for nine years. With this group she directed and co-produced two recordings, both of which won the GLAMA (Gay and Lesbian Music Award) for Best Choral Group in the years of their release. In addition, Amasong's recording of "Draum om nedsnødde bruer" earned her and co-composer Michael Cameron the GLAMA for Best Classical Composition. Under her direction, Amasong performed at various regional and national venues, celebrating her final season with a tour of the Czech Republic as guests of Nova Ceska Pisen, a professional mixed chorus based at the University of Western Bohemia.

Having relocated to New York City in 2000, Boerger now conducts Manhattan's Cerddorion Vocal Ensemble, lectures in music history at Barnard College, and tours and records with the Western Wind a cappella sextet and the Pomerium early music ensemble. Freelance engagements have included an appearance with the Vox Vocal Ensemble on Maurizio Pollini's 2001 Carnegie Hall concert series, concert and recording work for singer/songwriter Pan Morigan, and a recording of Medieval music with New York's Ensemble for Early Music. She is currently recording for Bobby McFerrin and collaborating on works for movement and vocal ensemble with the Christopher Caines Dancers. In February of 2004 she was a featured soloist in an evening of premieres at Merkin Hall and could be heard in the incidental music of Bartlett Sher's production of *Pericles* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

## **ABOUT *INDEPENDENT LENS***

*Independent Lens* is a weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history, which prompted Nancy Franklin in *The New Yorker* to write "Watching *Independent Lens* ... is like going into an independent bookstore—you don't always find what you were looking for but you often find something you didn't even know you wanted." Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community outreach campaigns. Further information about the series is available at [www.pbs.org/independent lens](http://www.pbs.org/independent%20lens). *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

## **ABOUT ITVS**

Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 P.M. on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting [www.itvs.org](http://www.itvs.org). ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American People.



## ABOUT PBS

PBS, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, is a private, nonprofit media enterprise owned and operated by the nation's 349 public television stations. Serving nearly 90 million people each week, PBS enriches the lives of all Americans through quality programs and education services on noncommercial television, the Internet and other media. More information about PBS is available at <http://www.pbs.org>, the leading dot-org Web site on the Internet.



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