

REFLECTIONS ON 624 N. BROADWAY from Judith Thomas

Roughly 15 years ago, Barbara Kass and I ended up in Saratoga Springs and she alerted me to the Music Director's soon to be vacancy at the Unitarian Church (We were both members of the one in Rockland County). She thought we would be a good fit. I'm not sure exactly what that meant, but I certainly bless her and the team that hired me those years ago. They took on any musical challenge I put forth— singing in languages like Ashanti and Fanti and doing Ghanaian rhythm ensembles. Tackling Hebrew songs with dances and contemporary choral styles- even Aaron Copeland's Lincoln Portrait (which covid cancelled but its just waiting to be completed with Damian as Lincoln).

For me the rehearsals on Thursdays took on new meaning from the musical, human and good humored skills our small but mighty choir exhibited, and this became like honey to the soul on rehearsal Thursdays. I only hope the choir got as much fun and joy out of it as I did. Loving thanks to all those members, especially those who were in the founding group from about 20 years ago and who still participated unfailingly to make a choir part of the UU service. I hope you are encouraged and planning to possibly try out our new Choir Director, Carol Ann Elze who has found enough time to leave her Skidmore teaching to work with us. Special thanks are also due to her and to Michael Harrison who kept this past summer's music going, Michael subbing for about half of the services.

I particularly admire in this original group the willingness to try any style of choir music or complex rhythmic happenings or ethnicities. This BRAVE volunteer group even said "YES" to learning a one-act Advent play by Menotti, "Amahl and The Night Visitors"-- a challenging work even for professionals. A gifted child named Guiletta Gargano age 6 then learned the part from listening to a CD. We quartered the work, learning ¼ in an advent season, and finally put all four parts together in the intended "one act"-- a fine accomplishment for any choir, let alone a volunteer group. For me this was a dream come true and a holiday delight. Alan Bartenhagen made a lovely existing video of it, with Gail grow and Judie frazer singing "Mother" and a host of former congregants who became kings and the country folk, shepherds and shepherdesses. I really cherish the

memory of their performance and lovingly thank all who participated so brilliantly and bravely! If you have been any part of the UU musical scene thus far, please take a bow!

Another high quality of our congregation are those who so willingly shared their special talents on instruments to enrich our worshipful lives:

Thank you Lucy Manning (and for the donation of Martha, your mother's Steinway!!!!) for your brilliant violin work, and Jolene Crowley our magical flutists— you both are stellar performers and have brightened every service in which you've played.

Thanks to the congregation in receiving all our efforts with kindness and appreciation. (And to all the good wishes and encouragement since February which were very helpful)

And finally thanks for the congregation's lusty singing and warm appreciation for everyone's efforts.

Blessings on Carol Ann as she goes forth. I will be doing the Preludes and Offertories and Hymns in the regular services. See you at Lenas!

Warmly,
Judith Thoma