

The current early childhood building, or North Building as it was once called, was originally built as a Waldorf high school. The building has served many purposes over the years, but for the last twelve years it has been home to our kindergarten, nursery and parent-toddler classes. Over the past two summers, a wonderful renovation took place, making the building truly functional for our young children. We now have five beautiful classrooms, each with its own kitchen and child-sized bathroom decorated with decorative tile work evocative of its name: Robin's Nest, Rose Room, Sun Room, Star Room, and Rainbow Room. Many parents, teachers, and community members were involved in this project and we wish to thank everyone who helped in creating this welcoming and nurturing new space.

Thirty-six years after that first kindergarten got started under Betty's loving guidance, we have a thriving, bustling early childhood program housed in a space that is a model for Waldorf early childhood programs everywhere. We wish to honor our founding kindergarten teacher and benefactor by dedicating this building to Betty Szold Krainis. Just as her warmth and love touched the lives of so many little children – some of whom now bring their own children to our school – we hope that this building will continue to serve as a haven for generations to come.

Mary Thienes Schunemann

October 7, 1960 - August 30, 2007

Many of you have been touched by the work of Mary Thienes Schunemann of Naturally You Can Sing Productions. She passed away quietly at home in East Troy, Wisconsin on August 30 after an intense, valiant journey with gastric cancer.

After years of being asked to record the songs she taught in several trainings, Mary took the time to create seven children's songbooks to help parents and teachers learn how to sing for and with children. Her music was not only liltingly beautiful but it was full of enthusiasm and joy. A former Waldorf kindergarten and music teacher, Mary finished her final CD one week before she died. This CD, a collection of healing songs, is called I Still Have Joy and is scheduled to be released on her birthday, October 7.

As many of you know, Mary was a dear friend and mother to my two youngest goddaughters. The girls and their daddy are beautifully surrounded by the Prairie Hill Waldorf School community and their local community. While fond memories and those habits of life (the time of day when Mary and I would often talk on the phone, or the urge to call and tell her a joke or sing a song with her) can bring tears, those who were close to Mary in life have a warm awareness of her newfound freedom and the largesse of her spirit. The greatest gift we can give to Mary is to continue singing and playing our instruments. She was, and is, a music ambassador.

Here are excerpts from Mary's eulogy by one of her longtime friends, Reverend Carol Kelly of the Christian Community. It was a privilege to serve with Carol at Mary's funeral on September 2, 2007.

– Submitted with love and respect by Cynthia Aldinger

When a tone sounds through a human voice, from where does it come? Something invisible and inaudible comes into the earthly sphere. It touches down for a moment and it leaves again. It lives.

When a song comes through a human voice we receive not only the gift of the song but we also receive something of what lives in the soul/spiritual nature of the person who sings it. There is a gesture, a signature of the human being behind the voice and it enters our deepest soul.

Mary was a wellspring of song, a fountain overflowing with such gifts. She gave her music with ceaseless generosity to all who wished for it and she even gave to some who were not yet aware that that was exactly what they "needed."

When we think of Mary we think of her outpouring radiant joy, sunlight, color, beauty, humor, outrageousness. She was always trying to make the world more beautiful. Her gesture was spontaneity, movement, flexibility. She was in love with "aliveness," seeking on earth what was a true reflection of the spirit. She took delight in all that sparkled, but also in deep velvet; she had depth of soul, and appreciated inner and outer beauty equally.

When she was a junior in high school she played the role of Maria in *The Sound of Music*. She was the "star," and perhaps the seeds were sown for her future musical career right then and there. But how DO you solve a problem like Maria?

Her quest began. She needed to go out into

the world and find herself, her mission in life. She was a bit of a gypsy, a seeker of truth, a wanderer. She traveled throughout her twenties between California, Europe, and the Middle East and back to Minnesota. She wasn't sure what to do with her life, but she was gathering experiences for the future. At twenty-six years old she returned to college and received a bachelor's degree in general studies. Then she began a massage training in California, and it was there that she met Anthroposophy – an encounter that would change the rest of her life.

In 1988 she attended Early Childhood Teacher Training at Rudolf Steiner College in Sacramento, where she discovered music and singing again! She had been lost until she found music again. She taught kindergarten at the Prairie Hill Waldorf School, the Urban Waldorf School in Milwaukee, and also in Louisville, Kentucky. Then she went for further voice training in Germany and Finland, developing a distinct, silvery tone that one would come to identify as Mary's unique and magical sound. Afterwards, she returned to Wisconsin to teach music, and reconnected with a man who was to become the love of her life, Sven Schunemann. Meanwhile, two "star children" were looking down from heaven and longing to come to these two lovely parents. There was a magnificent wedding celebrated in "queenly" style, in a manor house on Saint Bride's Bay in Wales. Baby Aurora was carried down the aisle by her godmother, Cynthia Aldinger. Another golden girl, Allegra, would appear on the scene nine months later.

Mary was a founding faculty member and longtime music teacher of the LifeWays trainings and also taught in other trainings. Dozens of people have credited Mary with the reason they now sing – some even joining choirs!

Mary gave presents and presence in abundance. She was often wrapping a wonderful scarf around one's neck or putting a bracelet on the wrist. She would find treasures and give them away. Then there was the gift of music, which will live on in all who had the privilege of working with her. For when a person teaches you a song, you have it for life. You can teach it to others, passing on the joy and the life of it in endless profusion without ever losing it. You can sing it outwardly or hear it inwardly. It is a living thing, which touches down to earth when we sing it and then returns. We can be sure that Mary will be

listening and rejoicing whenever we are singing from now on.

In one of her recent gift-giving moments, a friend received the following poem, which seems poignantly appropriate at this time:

*I fill this cup to one made up of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle nature the seeming paragon.
To whom the better elements and kindly stars have
given
A form so fair, that, like the air, 'tis less of earth than
heaven.*

*Her every tone is music's own, like those of morning
birds,
And something more than melody dwells ever in her
words.
The coinage of her heart are they, and from her lips
each flows,
As one may see the burthened bee; forth issue from the
rose.*

Our beloved rose, may our highest thoughts and love rise up to meet you. – Rev. Carol Kelly

ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER CONFERENCE, AUGUST 2 – 6, 2008

WECAN will host a world gathering of Waldorf early childhood educators on the campus of the Pine Hill and High Mowing Schools in Wilton, New Hampshire from August 2 – 6. The conference theme is Care and Education of the Child from Birth to Seven and keynote speakers will include Dr. Michaela Gloeckler from Dornach, Dr. Johanna Steegmans from Seattle/Alaska, and Dr. Renate Long-Breipohl from Australia. The conference is co-sponsored by the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education, and we expect Waldorf early childhood educators from as many as forty countries to attend.

Further details will be available in January; travel support is needed. Can your school community support someone coming from Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, South America or Africa? For further information contact the WECAN Office at info@waldorfearlychildhood.org or 845-352-1690.