



Musical Notes



A Publication of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii
Office of Buddhist Education
Music Committee

Two Talented Ladies of Kamuela Hongwanji Mission by Ethel Miyashiro

Waimea, Hawaii Island, has always been a special place, with roots for the famed Parker Ranch. It is believed that at one time, thousands of Hawaiians lived in the area. But with the arrival of Europeans, changed and cattle were introduced. In 1809, a young John Parker jumped ship to Hawaii Island. Six years later, he married Kipikani, the daughter of a high-ranking Hawaiian chief. Their descendants founded the Parker Ranch, the largest ranch in the area.



**Corinne Higa (left) and Hanae Okumura (right)
of Kamuela Hongwanji Mission**

Kamuela can be found on the outskirts of this historical locale and it is here that we can find their talented and devoted organists: Corinne Higa and Hanae Okumura. Both are local born women, whose life's adventures have taken them far and wide but have returned to settle here and have contributed to their temple and community for the past 24 years.

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Corinne Higa was born and raised in Honokaa. She comes by her talent naturally, her father was very musical and it was said that he could play the piano by ear and loved to dance. Early on in her parents' marriage, her father told her mother that if they ever had a daughter, he would want her to take piano lessons so that she could learn to read music. So it was destined that Corinne would learn to play the piano. While in second grade, Corinne began her lifelong relationship with the piano and started lessons, which she admits, she did not always enjoy. But when her mother threatened to sell the piano, her deep love for the piano won out over the drudgery of practicing. She continued to take lessons, catching the bus to Hilo for lessons on Saturdays, even after the passing of her father.

When choosing a career, Corinne did not want to major in music nor become a performer, or to teach music. But she combined her talents with her love of children and got her degree in education. Her first teaching assignment was at Makapala School in Kohala where she met and married her husband. Her teaching assignments have led her to Kohala, Honokaa, Waimea and finally back to Honokaa where she retired. She and her husband have traveled extensively, visiting faraway places such as Japan, Okinawa, Europe, South America and Canada.

(continued on page 3)

IS TONE PRODUCTION QUANTIFIABLE?

Music Editorial

by Francis
Okano

“The parallels to the keyboard are the likelihood that the mental and kinesthetic processes we undergo before and after – not only during – key strike affects not only the impact but also the resulting timbre independently of volume.”



My long fascination with piano tone production – specifically singing tone -- was rekindled recently by an article, “Tone Production: Doing the Right Things for the Right Reasons,” by piano teacher Chad Twedt in a recent issue of *Clavier Companion* (July/August 2016). As an amateur pianist, I sought insight.

The article stresses that beautiful tone on the piano can be explained by factors as pitch, rhythm, volume, duration, overtones, and soft pedal – and nothing more, least of all such techniques as “pushing” or “pulling” the keys as one depresses them. Because of the way the piano key works, “the only pianist-controlled factor that is transferred to the string is *hammer velocity*.” The author implies there is not much you can do to alter a note’s timbre, keeping volume (loud or soft) constant, and to think you can do so results largely from illusion (synesthesia, or eye-impressions from watching concert pianists and their bodily motions). He cites experimental research in support. And he objects to dogmatic pedagogy by some (including a few teachers he had had to endure) that certain prescribed performing methods (such as stroking the keys, striking from above, arm weight, etc.) can affect tonal quality (timbre) when all one is doing is playing louder or softer.

While I sympathize with the author about dogmatic pedagogues, I wonder if one should be careful not to throw the baby out with the bath water. Rightly or wrongly, I happen to believe there is yet much to understand about how – with mind, muscle, and movement – we humans can do wonders with physical objects. Take sports. Have you ever wondered how the split-second contact of golf club or tennis racket with ball determines the ball’s resulting spin, speed, and trajectory? Or how a baseball pitcher’s release influences how the ball moves, long after it has left the pitcher’s hand, often baffling the batter? Is a karate punch that splits a plank in two an instance of “mind over matter”? What of aikido’s *ki* that surpasses brute strength? Above all, what do we make of hypnosis, or self-hypnosis, that suggests the enormity of neural powers? The parallels to the keyboard are the likelihood that the mental and kinesthetic processes we undergo *before* and *after* – not only *during* – key strike affects not only the impact but also the resulting timbre independently of volume. Mechanistically speaking, I dare venture an infinite gradation of hammer velocities – at varying rates of acceleration or deceleration – that may vary timbre at the same instantaneous velocity upon strike, if such could be measured.

This may sound outlandish to some, and I grant much of what we consider beautiful tone results from *context* (what the author calls “tonal wash”). If, however, a mother in shock can lift a car single-handedly to rescue her child, or if a pianist can make the long, thick bass note strings on a concert grand sound metallic, as if threatening to snap, I think there is still a mysterious lot we don’t understand about how our neuromuscular mechanism can achieve a range of piano tones, perhaps real, perhaps illusory. I imagine similar tonal possibilities with all musical instruments, including the human voice, and such possibilities, when placed in service of the Buddha-Dharma, cannot help but bring light and warmth to the temple.

While there are many other places that they would love to visit, the “A” word “a-g-e” has crept into their lives and now they surround themselves with their two daughters and their families and friends.

Corinne continued in her father’s dance footsteps with line dancing, hula, and exercising by doing Tai Chi and Chi Kung, and running in 5 and 10k’s until the “A” factor set in. Today she keeps active and fit with hula lessons, working out at the gym and walking. She continues to share the Dharma by sharing her knowledge and love of music by playing the organ at temple services.

Hanae Okumura was born in Pahala, Hawaii, to an issei father and nisei mother. Her parents met in Japan where her father was an ordained minister. Upon arriving in Hawaii, to serve in Pahala, her parents also assumed the job of teaching Japanese language school. Unfortunate circumstances during World War II, forced the family to be split apart and her father was sent to an internment camp in Arkansas. He was later sent to Texas, where at the age of five, Hanae, her mother, two older sisters and two younger brothers joined him. Hanae’s recollection of the camp is that it was a “fair” place to live with a hospital and medical staff, dentists, schools and teachers. Their home was a duplex, shared with another family, the worst part of which was sharing the single bathroom. She has since learned that it was one of the largest internment camps established during the war, and remembers there being a German community within the camp.

It was while interned that Hanae began her love of music and was first introduced to the piano. The camp hosted evenings of musical entertainment and the sounds of the piano sparked her fascination. Being a curious and determined child, Hanae would sneak into the hall when it was empty, and plunk on the piano. And so began her interest with her first musical instrument. At the end of the war, Hanae’s father was given the option of returning to Japan or Hawaii. So, the family, including a new baby sister and another on the way, returned to Kealahou, on the Big Island. She attended Konawaena Elementary, Middle and High Schools. It was while she was in the fifth grade that she began taking formal piano lessons. When her father was transferred to Kona Hongwanji, even though she was just a teenager, she became the temple organist. After graduating from high school, Hanae went to college on the mainland where she majored in music and eventually met her husband. The young couple lived in the San Jose area for about 30 years and raised their family of four children. During that time, Hanae attended San Jose Betsuin but her talents remained untouched due to the large number of other organists. In 1992, her husband was offered a ten-year contract job in Hawaii, and Hanae returned “home” to the Waimea area. It wasn’t long before she was “discovered” once again and she became an active member of the Kamuela Hongwanji. Upon completion of her husband’s contract, they made the decision to remain here in Hawaii and now host family visits, which include nine grandchildren.

In addition to her devotion to Kamuela Hongwanji, Hanae continues to pursue her interests in music by attending a kanikapila class which performs at the Waikoloa and Fairmont hotels twice a month, playing the ukulele and singing Hawaiian “Hapa Haole” songs.

Hanae and Corinne have alternated their organist duties for the past 24 years and as Hanae says, “Our wonderful Shin Buddhism guides us to opt for the middle path, and accept challenging CHANGE— which is constant.” She is thankful that she can absorb messages from Sensei, and gratefulness is in her daily vocabulary.

It is the members of Kamuela Hongwanji Mission, and all of us that are truly grateful for these beautiful women who have offered their talents unselfishly all these years. If you are ever in the area, please stop in and join Rev. Shingo Furusawa and their warm and gracious congregation. It is especially beautiful in February, when the cherry blossoms are in bloom.

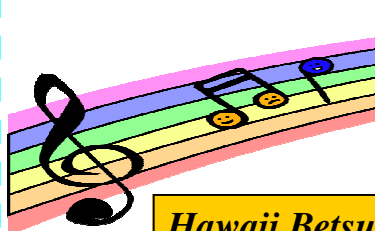
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Honolulu District

JIKOEN CHOIR by Lily Horio

Jikoen's choir leader is on sick leave at present. Choir member, Janet Sasaki, has been keeping the group abreast of news. Jikoen Hongwanji is very appreciative of junior organists, Chase and Kylie Urasaki and Jazmin Horio, who perform their duties diligently.



HONPA HONGWANJI HAWAII BETSUIN CHOIR by Wendie Yumori

Hawaii Betsuin Choir Featured in "Sacred Sites of Hawaii" DVD

The singing of the Hawaii Betsuin Choir is featured in a segment of a 2-DVD set entitled "Sacred Sites of Hawaii" produced by Dr. Achilles Gacis, Professor of Religion at Kapiolani CC. Dr. Gacis noted that his ten-year mission, completed in 2016, was to provide an overview of "Religion in Paradise: Oahu".

Honpa Hongwanji Choir Perform at HBC Buddha Day Service

Jikoen Hongwanji and Moiliili Hongwanji singers joined Hawaii Betsuin Choir members to participate as the Honpa Hongwanji Choir in the Hawaii Buddhist Council Buddha Day service on April 10 at Higashi Hongwanji Betsuin. The combined choir presented two uplifting gathas, *Cosmos Flower* and *Thank You!*

**Jikoen, Moiliili, and Hawaii
Betsuin Choirs unite as
Honpa Hongwanji Choir.**



Hawaii Betsuin Dharma School "Ohana" at Eshin-ni/Kakushin-ni Day Service

Hawaii Betsuin's Dharma School is very fortunate! Teacher and organist, Debbie Kubota, has been composing delightful gathas for everyone to sing during Dharma School services. Debbie has completed six gathas so far, the scores of which have been sent to district representatives of the HHMH State Music Committee for distribution. The gathas are wonderful additions to the HHMH gatha repertoire. The text of one gatha, *Peace is a Seed*, was written by Pacific Buddhist Academy student, Megan Sakata, ninth grade winner of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Peace Poetry Contest in the spring of 2014. This piece and another of Debbie's compositions, *Living Gratefully*, were performed by Dharma School families and teachers, under the direction of D.S. Superintendent, Laura Nakasone, during the Eshin-ni/Kakushin-ni Day service at Hawaii Betsuin on April 24.



Under the direction of Laura Nakasone, D.S. Superintendent, Dharma school families and teachers perform two of Debbie Kubota's new gathas.

CONGRATS, MARI!!!

Hawaii Betsuin Choir Director, Mari Murakami, composed a lovely gatha, *Buddha's Teaching Everywhere*, in completion of requirements for her B.A. in General Music at UH. The Hawaii Betsuin Choir sang this gatha at Hawaii Betsuin's Mother's Day service on May 8. Choir members held a joyous graduation party for Mari on May 26. Congratulations, Mari!



Choir members join in the celebration for Mari!

Over 100 Honolulu United BWA members sang B. J. Soriano's stirring *Buddhist Women's Pledge* at the HUBWA Joint Education/General Membership Meeting opening service at Hawaii Betsuin on October 15. Many thanks to B. J. for composing this significant piece and for providing practice CDs. Hawaii Betsuin's Dharma School and Betsuin Choir have also learned B. J.'s very appealing gatha, *Live Amida's Love*.

The Hawaii Betsuin Choir performed at the Hawaii Association of International Buddhists' Dharmachakra Festival at Honolulu Myohoji Mission on October 22; the theme was "Unity in Diversity". The choir sang *May Peace Prevail* for the service prelude. For the entertainment program, the choir presented *Watashi to Kotori to Suzu* and its English rendition, *The Bird, the Bell and I*; they also sang *Make a Rainbow* in three-part harmony. Myohoji Mission's Rev. Takamasa Yamamura, who is an operatic tenor, sang *Sen no Kaze ni Natte* beautifully.

Hawaii Betsuin Choir Sings at Nu'uanu Thanksgiving Interfaith Service

The 55th Nu'uanu Thanksgiving Interfaith service was held at Sokka Gakkai International on November 22 and Hawaii Betsuin Choir's contribution to the "Live the Spirit of Aloha" theme was to sing an inspiring piece, *I Dream a World*, that had been introduced to Choralfest 2016 participants by Festival Choir Director, Nola Nahulu.





Choralfest 2016 Dazzles

by Francis Okano



Festival choir in focused rehearsal with music director, Nola Nahulu.

The sixth choralfest of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii, held at Hawaii Betsuin on September 24 and 25, 2016, once again dazzled the sangha with the warm harmony of singers, accompanist, and conductor performing as one. Arguably the most technically precise presentation by a festival choir from among past choralfests, the audience reception was anything if not enthusiastic.

Singers numbering just under 100 assembled at the Social Hall at 1:00 pm on Saturday for four hours of intense rehearsal under the watchful and encouraging eye of music director and Hongwanji Living Treasure, Nola Nahulu. In that time the singers became a working festival choir as they learned to sing together and to polish their execution of five challenging choral gathas: **Where, Oh, Where?** (Hotokesama wa); **Entrusting Heart** (Marui kororo); **Touched by Kindness** (Shiawase ni deattara); **How Happy I Am!** (Go-on ureshiya); and **Buddha's Great Light**. Among the emphases of Maestro Nahulu were voice production, musical phrasing, and the importance of conveying the meaning in the poetry of each verse.

After the afternoon workout, the singers enjoyed a sumptuous dinner, thanks to the gracious hospitality of the Hawaii Betsuin BWA, with help from Jikoen, Moiliili, and Kailua BWAs. Bishop Matsumoto and Rimban Hagio warmly welcomed all the singers, who included two participants all the

way from Ekoji Temple in Virginia. To top off the evening, everyone sat back to enjoy violinist Rev. Shinji Kawagoe, of Paipkou Hongwanji, perform a concerto movement by Antonio Vivaldi and **Air on G-String** by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Singers arrived early Sunday morning for breakfast at the Social Hall and to warm up at the Hondo. Busloads of participants made their way to Hawaii Betsuin from points west and north of Honolulu and from Ala Moana Hotel. At the appointed hour of the Music Service the festival choir, supplemented by Hawaii Youth Opera Choir volunteers, opened the singing with **I Dream A World**, a chorus on a poem by Langston Hughes. The choir then offered its program of five prepared choral gathas consisting of four Midou Ensoukai gathas in English translation and the homegrown **Buddha's Great Light**. The singing concluded with the all-embracing congregational **Gratefulness II** (Ondokusan II). An appreciative audience gave the festival choir a warm ovation. A new wrinkle this year was the addition in the Music Service hand-outs of "Program Notes," a description of each gatha designed to help listeners better understand and appreciate each work.

A video of the festival choir's performance has been posted on the websites of both the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii and Hawaii Betsuin (plus YouTube). The Music Committee extends warm mahalo to Hawaii Kyodan for support and to Hawaii Betsuin for gracious hosting.



Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus singers round out dazzling performance at Choralfest 2016.



Participants in deep concentration during Saturday's practice with Nola and Francis.



Violinist, Rev. Shinji Kawagoe, thrills audience with his performance of two numbers on Saturday evening.



Dynamic Duo:
Nola Nahulu,
Choir Conductor &
Francis Okano,
Piano Accompanist



Presenting...Choralfest 2016!

Music Committee

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Kauai District

Music at West Kauai Hongwanji Mission - Hanapepe Temple by Shirley Kakuda of WKH

Our ukulele group formed a number of years ago with only temple members meeting on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm for one hour with Ms. Diane Kent as the instructor. Today we have grown to a group of 25 people with a lot of non-Buddhists joining us. Presently our instructor is Mr. Roy Tamashiro. We practice singing and strumming for fun. Serious practice happens when we perform at the annual Shinnen enkai and when asked to entertain at the Hanamatsuri Service or other temple functions.

The WKH temple's ukulele players are getting ready to accompany the congregation in singing some of BJ Soriano's new gathas, as well as others. Every fifth Sunday of the month is Music Sunday, so we practice singing with the CD or organ. Eventually, we hope to accompany everyone with our ukuleles and make the services more interesting and enjoyable.



The ukulele brings about happy times and new friendships at WKH Mission!

Oahu District

"Mililani Hongwanji Jammers"...Just Wanna Have Fun! by Rene Mansho

The Mililani Hongwanji Jam Session started in November due to the interest of members who just wanted to get together, play the ukulele and guitar, and sing. The sessions are very informal, lots of fun, and are open to all members and friends, and not limited to just the guitar and ukulele. Other instruments are welcomed as well! This is a great way for anyone who loves to play the ukulele or guitar, or who wants to improve their ukulele or guitar skills, and exercise their vocal chords at the same time to do so! Participants bring their own song sheets with chords to share with everyone who comes. The Jam Sessions are on the second Fridays of the month, from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m., at Mililani Hongwanji. The group is now called the **Mililani Hongwanji Jammers!** The Mililani Hongwanji Jammers had lots of fun playing Christmas songs at our Winter Party on December 11.

Just come with your instruments, meet some fun

folks, enjoy the fellowship and music and sing with joy in your hearts! !

For more information, contact Rene Mansho at 291-6151 or email at renemansho@hawaii.rr.com.

