

MUSICAL NOTES



July 2018 Issue

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

NEW ORGAN FOR HILO BETSUIN

by Karen Maedo

Hawaii's newest and most technically advanced church organ was dedicated in a concert that took place at Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin on Sunday, June 10, 2018.

Performing on the new organ was Rick Mazurowski, organist and choir director at Hilo's Church of the Holy Apostles and featured organist at the Palace Theatre. Mr. Mazurowski presented a program including his own compositions, favorites of Johann Sebastian Bach, traditional gathas from Praises of the Buddha, and transcriptions of well-known concert pieces arranged for organ. Also on the program was violinist and member of Hilo Betsuin, Megan Pascual, who was accompanied by Mazurowski.

Mazurowski has served churches in Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Hilo, and has performed on the organs in St. Patrick's and St Paul's Cathedrals in New York City. He is a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, where he studied organ under Edmund Ladouceur, and is a lifelong member of the American Guild of Organists. He is a retired Delta Airlines pilot.

Working with Church Organs



Rick Mazurowski was a guest organist at Hilo Betsuin's dedication of its new organ. Barry Taniguchi and Roberta Chu, members of the Kono Foundation, join Rick beside the organ.

Hawaii, the Allen organ was custom built in Pennsylvania to specifications designed by owners, Bob Alder and Jude Oliver, who also did the installation and tonal finishing of this magnificent instrument.

"The Hiroaki, Elaine and Lawrence Kono Foundation made this gift a reality. Their kindness, generosity and vision ensure sharing of the Buddha's dharma through gathas for decades to come," according to Karen Maedo, grant recipient. Through the years, the Kono

(continued on page 3)

Music Editorial

by Francis Okano

Why Choralfest? (II)

Someone once asked, “What is the purpose of choralfest? The massed choir sounds great and the choral gathas are beautiful, but then what?” Back when, I usually replied that choralfest was “a celebration of Buddhist choral music,” based as it was on Honzan’s “Midou Ensoukai” (temple concert). But what did that mean? Later, I elaborated: “So, why a choralfest? If temple is many things, surely one of them is to experience the deep joy of the Buddha-Dharma through music. Not only are we Buddhists open to a range of *musical* expression in the temple, we are mindful of *religious* expression of our faith through music. What better time than at choralfest to explore Buddhist feelings that are born in the hearts of composers and gain life in the hearts of both performers and listeners?”

Today, I’d add a bit more. Sure, music is one of many aids to spirituality. Sure, a hundred voices harmonically and rhythmically harnessed can uplift us all. Sure, service singing links us all in shared intimacy. And, sure, we have fun at rehearsal. But, when all is said and done, what makes gathering at Hawaii Betsuin to sing worthwhile?

If song, as art form, were

not invented, maybe we need not be having this discussion. But poems *have* been set to music, and songs often express feelings better than words or music alone. In fact song’s ability to speak to what really matters in our lives – feelings of happiness, sadness, joy, despair – qualifies it uniquely to express insights in the temple. And at choralfest we allow song to speak the message of faith that we share. So, among Choralfest 2018’s offerings, *Upon Clouds* sings of irrepressible joy when dreams “soar up high upon clouds streaming by” as our hands irresistibly meet in gassho. *Amida Within My Heart* leads us from adulation of Amida to assurance that Amida lives within our hearts, a realization that gives us “moments restful, free, moments of treasured peace.” *Live and Light the World*, composed on the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing, warns us against the fate of the two-headed bird, the *gumyocho* of Buddhist fable, urging instead “the road to peace.” The list goes on. And we employ a massed choir because many human voices together in harmony can project the beauty of words and music as no musical instrument can.

The women and men of a choir also suggest the artistry and legacy of many. Thus, we honor composers and poets their inspiration. We praise musicians – conductor, accompanist, singers – their creation of each song’s moment of truth. We acknowledge the congregation their devotion that gives meaning to all. And, we pay deep gratitude to the Hongwanji, its founders, its open embrace – with Buddhism’s worldwide presence – that give context to our lives.

As such, choralfest’s music service re-creates the joy of the Buddha-Dharma through the medium of choral gathas and their myriad insights beautifully expressed. If maybe, during service, we feel a certain electricity in the air, we might remember it long after. If not, we have received a chance to give thanks for the gift of life.



New Organ (from page 1)

family has made other noteworthy contributions to Hilo Betsuin--their home temple--for which the sangha will always be deeply grateful.



Megan Pascual, violinist and member of Hilo Betsuin, plays a duet with Rick Mazurowski. They are playing *Gabriel's Oboe* from "The Mission" by Ennio Morricone.



Experience **MUSIC** as an expression
of **FAITH...**
Become one with others
as you listen to
a hundred voices in harmony...

Choralfest 2018

Music Service

Sunday, September 30, 2018 at
10:00 a.m.

Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin

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MAUI DISTRICT by Joan Tamori



Music Resounds in Historic Lahaina Hongwanji Temple



Situated in famous Lahaina town, once the capital of the Hawaiian kingdom as declared by King Kamehameha, sits majestic Lahaina Hongwanji Mission temple designed with Indian elements. This was the site of the 2018 Fujimatsuri (Wisteria Festival) celebration in honor of Shinran Shonin's birthday. The only event of its kind in the state of Hawaii brings Hongwanji temple members from Wailuku, Kahului, Makawao and Lahaina. There was an outpouring of happy faces as a gloriously beautiful and sunny day greeted those attending the event.

Rev. Ai Hironaka, resident minister of Lahaina Hongwanji, delivered a sermon capturing the core teaching of jodo shinshu using examples and emphasizing the concept of Amida embracing all of us just as we are. As Lahaina Hongwanji Mission does not have a volunteer organist, the vandana ti sarana and nembutsu were sung a capella by the congregation. Incredibly, the sound of voices were loud and true in this temple with wooden walls. Following the service, a singing workshop was conducted by Maui district representative of the OBE music committee, Joan Tamori. She began by having the congregation do a person to person shoulder massage, an introduction of breathing exercises, and voice exercises before teaching the congregation the singable gatha, ***Living Gratefully***, composed by Debbie Kubota of Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin. Assisting with the workshop by providing ukulele accompaniment, were several members of the Wailuku Hongwanji Dharma Strummers under the direction of Florence Tanaka. Everyone learned quickly and was soon capable of making an impressive musical sound.



Joan Tamori conducts a music workshop at Fujimatsuri.



Florence Tanaka (far right) and the Wailuku Hongwanji Dharma Strummers provide accompaniment for the gatha, *Living Gratefully*.

The program continued with a dharma school question and answer activity conducted by emcee, Sylvia Neizman. The children were awarded prizes as they confidently and joyously answered questions. At the entrance of the temple were displays of drawings with explanations shared by dharma school students of each temple on their relationship with Amida Buddha.

A scrumptious lunch along with delectable desserts were prepared and served by members of Lahaina Hongwanji Mission. It was a wonderful day for church members to mingle and 'talk story' with each other!

HAWAII DISTRICT by Ethel Miyashiro

Hawaii District Council 2018 Gathafest



Gathafest: the combination of two words, gatha and fest. The first word, “Gatha” meaning verse or song, originated from western Persia as it referred to the psalms and songs of the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster in 1000 BC. Prior to the time of King Asoka, the teachings of Buddhism were divided into dharma (doctrines) and vinaya (precepts). Under the dharma there were Sutra, Gatha and Jataka, etc. The sutra consisted of the prose of discourses of the Buddha, while the gathas were the teachings in verse. The cultural interchange between Japan and the Western world led Japanese composers to write Buddhist songs in the Western tradition. These songs were called **sanbutsuka** in Japanese or “Songs in Praise of the Buddha”, now referred to as gathas (songs praising Buddha, an expression of celebration of the Dharma). The second word “fest” is the shortened version of the word “festival” or a day or period of celebration typically a religious commemoration, typically held annually. Combined the **44th Annual Hawaii District Council 2018 Gathafest**, was celebrated at Puna Hongwanji Mission.

February was a very rainy month in Puna, but as luck would have it, we were blessed that the rain held and the cloud cover provided cool temperatures for Gathafest. Hosted by Puna Hongwanji, the annual service/music event welcomed a standing room only crowd of singers and Dharma listeners. The format of this year’s Gathafest was to integrate music from the start throughout the program, beginning with the welcoming gatha, **A Special Place**.

After a short service we were treated to a special performance by Master Genzan Miyoshi, master shakuhachi player from Japan. Miyoshi Sensei, explained the derivation of the compound name shaku hachi which means an archaic unit of length equal to 30.3 centimeters (**shaku**) and eight (**hachi**) sun (pronounced soon) or tenths of shaku. Thus, the name **shaku-hachi** means “one shaku eight hachi” or **54.54 centimeters**. The shaku-hachi was introduced to Japan from China in the Nara era.

Following Miyoshi Sensei’s two classical solo pieces, he was then joined by local boy, Darin Miyashiro, on the koto. A graduate of Waiakea High School on the Big Island, Darin studied at the University of Redlands and Waseda University in Tokyo, where he was introduced to Koto master, Kazue Sawai, and began his tutelage under her. To the delight of all, Miyoshi Sensei and Darin played two very moving duets.

Miyoshi Sensei



Darin Miyashiro



The Honokaa Band led by Miles Okumura (on guitar).

Emcee Blayne Nakasone then presented the groups representing temples from around the island performing their gathas and/or songs that convey Buddhist messages through their lyrics.

The ever popular band from Honokaa, led by Miles Okumura, performed **Tomorrow Never Knows** and **Ripple**.

The energetic one man show, featuring Tracy Tsuha of Honomu Hongwanji, performing his rendition of **We’ve**



Tracy Tsuha

Got That Dharma Feeling had everyone in the audience clapping and singing and moving to the beat as only Tracy could inspire us to do.

The “Four Temples”, Papaikou, Honohina, Papaaloa and Pepeekeo, accompanied by their talented ukulele/guitar group, and Noriko Kawagoe on the clarinet, performed **Aloha and Four Temples Tour**.



Big Island’s ‘Four Temples’ with strings and clarinet.

Big Island Gathafest (continued)

Making the long trip from across the island as faithful participants, Kona Hongwanji entertained us with their singing of **Amida's One Call Away**.

Strength in numbers, Paaulo Hongwanji performed their gatha, **Buddha Too** with heartfelt emotion to the delight of everyone there.

A terrific turnout by the Hilo Hongwanji Dharma School and combined choirs led by BJ Soriano, singing **I can Make a Difference**, demonstrating to all that their voices can and do make a difference.

Puna Hongwanji singing **One Little Candle** and signing using American Sign Language taught by Karen Mason.

Big Island Ministers showed us why we have a most talented group serving our temples and they sing **Yuuyake Koyake** accompanied by Reverend Satoshi Tomioka on ukulele.

Jr. YBA, once again demonstrated the spirit and energy of youth, by rocking to the beat and singing **Don't Stop Me Now**.

The final gatha for the day was the group singing of **Together As One**, written and directed by BJ Soriano. And as the goal of the planning committee was to have the entire day celebrated through music, the day ended by singing **Happy Birthday** to February celebrants, followed by **Hawaii Aloha** as we extended our love and aloha to all Big Island style.



Kona Hongwanji with video presentation.

Paaulo Hongwanji in splendid regalia.



Hilo Betsuin combined choirs.



Puna Hongwanji, signing and singing with audience participation.



Big Island ministers with Rev. Tomioka on ukulele.



The Jr. YBA, a group for all ages.

