

Musical Notes



July 2013 Issue

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

Living Peace: Carrie Kawamoto's Journey by Gail Taira



Carrie Kawamoto:

"Words, music and people help
me live peace."

As I turned into her driveway, Carrie was waiting with a welcoming smile. She had graciously agreed to share her insights about how she came to write two very inspiring lyrics, both of which have won first place in the last two State Music Committee Gatha Lyrics Contests. Due to Carrie's very humble nature, it took a little bit of convincing for her to permit me to write this article. My initial question was, "What is it that inspired you to be able to write those lyrics?"

It seems almost as though Carrie and Dennis Kawamoto have been members at Mililani Hongwanji forever. But in our conversation, I was reminded that Carrie came to Mililani Hongwanji in 1990. Carrie was born and raised in Waipahu and grew up actively attending and participating in Waipahu Hongwanji activities...Dharma School, Jr. YBA, teaching Dharma School, taking turns playing the organ, being emcee and reading stories during Sunday service. She stopped attending temple sometime during her college years and just before marrying Dennis, she recounts, "Dennis said he's not going to be a Buddhist." I said in return, "I'm not going to be a Catholic." And so together, they visited different churches in Mililani and settled on a Christian church. After some time though, Carrie decided to stop attending the Christian church with Dennis' blessing.

Sorting through all that Carrie shared, I was struck by the thought that she had come full circle, back to her Buddhist roots. And, the path that brought her back was guided by the turmoil and pain that she was experiencing in life. As she explains, "About twenty years ago, I returned to my Buddhist faith. In using Rev. Ken Tanaka's metaphor, I was 'a drowning sailor', and in Rev. Taitetsu Unno's words, my self-power was 'bankrupt'. I remember Ruth Tabrah saying to listen to the Dharma as though your life depended upon it, because for me, it did!!! Let me explain briefly, and I have my daughter's permission to share this part of the story. That in itself is a healing. We adopted our daughter from Korea and especially during her teen years, our family was living through the most tumultuous period of our lives. So thinking peace, trying to live with peace, trying to be with peace... has been my life's journey." Carrie treasures Rev. Unno's words, "The compassion of Amida Buddha can transform one's pain into receiving deep wisdom that can ease one's suffering..." Thus began Carrie's journey to embrace Amida Buddha's compassion and wisdom and to be at peace.

As I sat listening to her story, I could see that Carrie Kawamoto is as transparent, real, honest and sincere as anyone I have ever known. The Carrie you see is the same Carrie deep down inside. She lives her life immersed in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. By her own admission, "words, music and people help me live peace." Her thoughts, words, and actions are guided by all that she has experienced in life...especially since returning to her Buddhist faith. Very meaningful to her are Rev. Unno's words, shared, and hand written on yellow construction paper:

The ultimate goal of being on the Buddhist path is...

to awaken with our spiritual eyes of self-reflections, repeatedly and deeply for as long as we are living and breathing

to awaken means to be able to see our own imperfections, to see the reality of life as it is, then there comes a transformation of our hearts and minds...

becoming more humble, more repentant, more grateful, more kind, extending kindness to others...

beginning with our own families and extending to the rest of society, as best we can...'dekirudake'...and so creating a more peaceful and harmonious world.

And, "My life is not just my life

My life is made up of the kindness, efforts, sacrifices, and patience of others...and so it is." **Socho Ogui**

(Continued on Page 4)



Music Editorial

by Francis Okano

What's in a Choir Conductor?

Unpacking their suitcases from their spring journey to Honzan's Mido Ensoukai in April, members of the Hawaii Betsuin Choir were surprised to learn their beloved choral conductor, Mrs. Mitsuyo Saito, had decided to retire from choir to relocate and enjoy golden years with family. Having had its share of good fortune under her leadership, the Choir naturally wishes Rev. and Mrs. Saito well – after first swallowing a lump in its collective throat...

Following nearly twenty years at Hawaii Betsuin Choir and a lifetime of choir-leading at temples on four islands, Mrs. Saito brings to a close a stellar career as minister's wife. Ministers' wives

who can lead a choir are rare indeed. Unless wrong, I count fewer than five wives with choir-leading success, among some three hundred who have served over the 125 years of the Hawaii Hongwanji. True, many wives play the organ. But few have conducted.

So, what does it take to conduct a temple choir? To talk of a successor, I would venture at least three qualities as key. First, I feel conducting skills are essential. Certainly one's technique need not be as sophisticated as Robert Shaw's, but technique's abundance or lack would be noticeable. These would include the conducting details of hand motioning to shape sound, listening for pitch and enunciation, and coaxing beautiful voice production, among other things.

A second consideration -- and most important -- is effective communication. Because singers are not mechanical devices but human beings with feelings, a choral conductor must relate in a way to gain the singers' cooperation and draw out their best. For example, the famed New York Philhar-

monic conductor, Leonard Bernstein, is said to have remembered each orchestra member's birthday with a card. A good conductor is at heart a people person.

Third, as a temple choir conductor, one needs to lead in observance of the rituals and teachings. One needs to understand the significance of lyrics in English or Japanese. Without an appreciation of the choir's purpose, the choir might as well be a community group that meets to sing for pleasure only.

A super conductor might have all these qualities and then some. Mere mortals usually make do with what they bring to the job. If there is a fourth consideration, I suppose we should never underestimate the role of motivation, for it is perhaps the asset least discernible at outset yet telling in the long run.

As we linger over Mrs. Saito's departure in the remaining months, we applaud her for her years of service rendered with enthusiasm, affection, and unbounded energy. Though her feet are dainty, Mrs. Saito leaves large shoes to fill.

Jennifer Taira Composes New Gatha



On May 21, 2013, composer Jennifer Taira was presented with a commission check of \$1,000 by Bishop Eric Matsumoto for composing the music to the text of *Buddha's Great Light* by Carrie Kawamoto, winner of the 2011 Gatha Lyrics Contest. The music of the new gatha was designed for a contemporary feel and to be sung by congregation or by two- or three-voice choir. This new work is expected to be featured at Choralfest 2014, tentatively planned for early fall of next year at the Hawaii Betsuin.



Jennifer is presented with a check by Bishop Eric Matsumoto. Also pictured is Chairman of Music Committee, Francis Okano.

Reminiscing...

CHORALFEST 2012 AT HAWAII BETSUIN

by Francis Okano

If passersby were curious about the melodious strains floating from the Hawaii Betsuin Social Hall on a bustling Saturday last August, and why the same melodies, sounding more polished, burst from the Hawaii Betsuin Hondo the next morning, they would have been delighted to know that Choralfest had come once again to Hawaii Betsuin. Some 115 singers from all over Hawaii – and the first singer ever from the Mainland – descended on the temple, toward the end of Bon Dance season, for a weekend of choral singing under the direction of Hawaii's beloved and extraordinary choral conductor, Nola Nahulu.

Taking a page from Puna Hongwanji's surprise welcome banquet when Choralfest 2010 was held at Hilo Betsuin, Music Committee planners put everyone at ease. The evening ended end's choral gathas, so participants could



staged an entertaining dinner Friday night that early, after a quick run-through of the week-rest for the long day ahead.

At the Saturday opening service, horted participants to consider that gathas and sung in English, speak clearly to the Music Director Nola Nahulu worked her in-blending over one hundred disparate voices into one harmonious whole and shaping the singing with interpretive beauty. She even added a dash of choreography!

Music Committee chair Francis Okano ex-born of the Japanese heart, when translated American heart. Getting down to business, comparable magic in the course of the day,

On Sunday, after breakfast at the Social Hall, the choir warmed up quickly before the 10:00 AM start of the Choralfest Music Service. In no time, the festival choir filled the Hondo with inspired singing, paying rapt attention to conductor Nola and backed by piano accompanist Francis. Gathas presented were *Amida's Compassionate Vow*, *Cosmos Flower*, *Entrusting Heart*, *Life*, and *Overflowing Light*, English translations all. The congregation gatha was *Shinshu Anthem*. When the last notes had reverberated into infinity, the congregation erupted into applause in appreciation of truly uplifting music. If thoughts could be read, a common query in the Choralfest 2012 congregation's mind might well have been, "When's the next one?"

(Kawamoto: Continued from Page 1)

Knowing this, how can we not do good, no matter how small.
And, Our task in life is to...

Open our hearts and minds to others
Treasure our relationships
Take good care of our bodies
Live fully and gratefully...for all of our
doings are expressions of gratitude.

Rev. Taitetsu Unno

Carrie's writing comes from deep within her and is part of her spiritual journey to find peace. She said, "When the gatha lyrics contest was announced, I was deeply compelled to write lyrics for peace. There was no question that I was going to do it. I encouraged others at my temple to write peace lyrics also." Just before turning in her lyrics, she asked her daughter to read through it to see what she thought. In a matter of a few minutes, her daughter was able to help Carrie edit her lyrics. Carrie said, "And in that unrepeatable and precious moment, I could feel healing vibrations coming through... between my daughter and I...that I couldn't sleep that night...being so grateful that my daughter would help me...so willingly...so graciously." How fitting that she won the contest!

May Peace Prevail

Lyrics by Carrie Kawamoto, Music by Takeo Kudo

Let Peace live as we talk
With kindness in our voice
Embraced in Buddha's Light
May Peace, Tranquility, Prevail Throughout the World.

Let Peace live as we learn
With eyes that self-reflect
To always light our way
May Peace, Tranquility, Prevail Throughout the World.

Let Peace live as we help
With rays of gratitude
Connecting hearts and hands
May Peace, Tranquility, Prevail Throughout the World.

Let's talk with everyone
Let's learn from everyone
Lend help to everyone
That Peace, Tranquility may Spread Throughout the
World

Namo Amida Butsu
Namo Amida Butsu
Namo Amida Butsu

Buddha's Great Light is the title of the newest gatha lyrics that Carrie has written. There is a consistency and undeniable bond between Carrie's daily life and the words she wrote for the song. She explained that in 2010, she attended the statewide Choral Fest in Hilo. She and husband Dennis went up to the summit of Mauna Kea and were able to take some very beautiful pictures from above the clouds, just at sunset. She submitted the photo that showed the light from the setting sun streaming over the white clouds to the 2012 Calendar committee. Along with the photo were the words that would be the basis for *Buddha's Great Light*.



Buddha's Great Light

Lyrics by Carrie Kawamoto, Music by Jennifer Taira

In times of difficulty I say Namu Amida Butsu
Doing my best with a calm heart,
Thankful for my life as it's given
Living in embrace of Buddha's Great Light
Of Wisdom and Compassion.

In times of gratitude I say Namu Amida Butsu
Doing good no matter how small,
Reaching out with a warm heart
Always in embrace of Buddha's Great Light
Of Wisdom and Compassion.

With hands of heart in gassho I say Namu Amida Butsu
Spreading spirit of living with brave hearts
Spreading spirit of caring, helping others
Buddha's Great Light shines into all hearts.
Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu.
Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu.

It is no wonder that when we hear Carrie's words, we connect and embrace them, for they come from within her heart and are real, true and honest reflections of her life. Through Carrie's journey to live peace, and the sharing of her journey with us all, may we also 'live' peace. These lyrics, along with the music that was composed for it will leave a legacy for generations to come.



Honolulu District

by Mitsuyo Saito

A MEMORABLE TRIP TO JAPAN

The **Hawaii Betsuin Choir** along with some members of the **Moiliili and Puna Hongwanji Choirs** were proud participants of the Spring Mido Ensoukai which was held on April 14, 2013 at the Amida-do of the Hongwanji Headquarters in Kyoto, Japan. Mido Ensoukai means temple concert



2013 Mido Ensoukai in Amida-do conducted by Hiroshi Nanjo

and it is held at the Goedo (main temple) or the Amida-do (temple enshrining the Amida Buddha) twice a year, in the spring and fall.

A hundred enthusiastic singers comprised of participants from Japan and eighteen from Hawaii gathered at the Amida-do and expressed their praises of the Amida Buddha by sing-

ing eight beautiful gathas under the direction of Rev. Hiroshi Nanjo, an accomplished choir conductor. Though the number of the participants were smaller this year in contrast to the usual seven hundred or so singers, the one hundred singers put their minds together and sang both dynamically and beautifully. Their collective voices reverberated throughout the large Amida-do inspiring the audience.

During the one-hour rehearsal before the actual performance, Rev. Nanjo encouraged us with valuable and helpful suggestions in improving our choral singing. He went over the Japanese pronunciation of certain words, singing



Hawaii Betsuin, Moiliili, and Puna Hongwanji choir members in front of Honzan

Beautiful ladies, beautiful flowers!



with expression and feeling and balancing of sound. Through his encouragement, all singers sang with one mind in deep confidence and pride.

The following gathas were presented: *Yasashisa ni Deattara, Go-On Ureshiya, Sogogoto ni Hyakusen no (Shinran Shonin Wasan), Nembutsu, Onamae Yobeba, Anata to Deatte, Hotokesama wa, and Futari no Kagen-imo.*

This Mido Ensoukai experience brought heartfelt joy to all participants and has further inspired their love of singing. It will hold cherished memories for them.

(Continued on Page 6)

More Honolulu District



ROTARY GLOBAL PEACE FORUM

by Ruth Tokumi

The **Hawaii Betsuin Choir** was honored to be invited to participate in the Rotary Global Peace Forum Celebration at the Hawaii Convention Center by Rotary International on January 26, 2013. A Global Peace Forum is an opportunity for people of different ages from different parts of the world to gather to share ideas and develop strategies to progress towards a more peaceful world. The choir presented four Buddhist songs: *Many But One*, *You Can Build a Bridge*, *Inochi Kagayaite*, and *Peace Begins With Me*. It was a once in a lifetime experience for all of us.

Keynote Speaker Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's message was "Peace and Prosperity for Burma." She was presented the Hawaii Peace Award by Rotary International for her leadership and stand for democracy, peace and justice in Myanmar.

Jikoen Choir News

The **Jikoen Choir** has been working diligently under the leadership of Mrs. Chihoko Yosemori and Ms. Janet Sasaki despite the absence of the director who is on extended health leave. Two new members, Keith Oshiro and Marlene Nishiyama have joined the choir.

During the Hanamatsuri service and Mother's Day service, the Dharma School children joined the choir which delighted the congregation. We thank the dedication of the choir members and Mrs. Yosemori and Ms. Sasaki for keeping the choir alive.



Moiliili Hongwanji Choir Happenings

Citing health reasons, Edwin Tanaka resigned from conducting the **Moiliili Hongwanji Choir** in May. This choir was formed in February 2005 specifically to help observe the centennial celebration of the Moiliili Hongwanji in 2006. The choir continued, with intermissions, until recently. Moiliili Hongwanji thanks Mr. Tanaka and choir members for faithful service.

Hawaii Island District

by Ethel Miyashiro

Gathafest 2013: change in style

On February 24, **Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple** hosted the 39th annual Hawaii District Gathafest. Approximately 200 Sangha members from across the Big Island met in sunny Kona for a fun-filled day of music, song and dance. The theme for this year's Gathafest was "Change in Style", and as Betty Takeoka, one of the organizers and chairpersons explained, was based on the Buddhist principle, the "law of impermanence" or nothing remains the same and change is a part of living. So, why not bring the Dharma into the present by involving our youth in music and dance?

A banner depicting a traditional Buddha and a "hip" or contemporary Buddha was created by the mother/daughter team of Laureen and Lindsey Byars along with members of Kona's Dharma School. The "hip" Buddha was based on the Korean celebrity "Psy" who, complete with dark glasses, made the song/dance *Gangnam Style* popular. (You may catch the video on YouTube.) Kona Hongwanji's Taiko Group first introduced *Gangnam Style* at their Bon Dance last year and it was such a hit with both the young and "mature" that it was incorporated into this year's "Change in Style" theme.

It was only fitting and appropriate, then, that *Gangnam Style* led by Kona Jr. YBA members, Michael Gusman and Trent Terada, joined by the island ministers and Bishop Eric Matsumoto



Gangnam Style led by Kona Jr. YBA



Honokaa Dharma Band & Choir

and his family, had everyone on their feet and moving to the beat that set the tone for this year's Gathafest.

The required gatha for all participants was *Everybody was Sutra Chanting*, lyrics written by Kona's Daren Katayama. This "gatha" was sung to the tune of *Everybody was Kung-Fu Fighting* from

the movie "Kung-Fu Panda" which continued the upbeat tone of the day.

In keeping with the theme, each participating group was encouraged to get creative with their selections and/or accompanying instruments. **Honokaa's Dharma band and choir** performed three numbers *What's so Funny About Peace, Love and Understanding* and *Here Comes the Sun*



Puna performs *What a Wonderful World*



Paauilo sings *Arigatai*

accompanied by Miles Okumura and friends.

Paauilo sang a much beloved gatha, *Arigatai* while **Puna** sang *What a Wonderful World* with Dharma School students Kai-noa and Kekona doing hand motions, followed by *Cosmos Flower* an English translation of *Kosumosu no Hana* (from Choralfest 2012).

(Continued on Page 8)

More Hawaii Island District

Our island ministers, led by the resounding voice of Rimban Jeffrey Soga of Hilo Betsuin sang *Shinransama* and *Onenju O-te-te-ni*.

Kamuela Hongwanji sang the *Six Paramitas* and **Hilo Hongwanji** accompanied by BJ Soriano and friends on stringed instruments sang one of her compositions, *Amida's*



Ministers join in on the fun!



Kamuela sings the *Six Paramitas*

Guide to Life and her adaptation of *Shinshu Pledge*.

Kona, once again, is fortunate to have the talented Daren Katayama, a Kona Dharma School and Kyodan board member, who, each

year, re-writes several popular songs with Buddhistic words. A strong advocate for change, to make Buddhism more appealing to the younger generation, **Kona Hongwanji and the Jr. YBA** sang gathas with Buddhistic adaptations to familiar tunes such as the Bon



Hilo sings BJ Soriano's *Amida's Guide to Life*

Kona Hongwanji hosts Gathafest 2013 "Change in Style"



Dance song: *Beautiful Sunday* (retitled *Namanda Beautiful Sunday*) and *Lean on Me* (retitled *Amida to Lean On*.)

Having come from dark and rainy East Hawaii, the trip home was brightened by our smiles and laughter and the joy we carried

in our hearts from participating in Gathafest 2013!!! As Betty Takeoka put it, "Everyone had a blast!!!" The world indeed was a happier place that day with all the voices singing out loud in harmony and "Change in Style".

Kauai District

by Gladys Fujiuchi

In Kauai, music fills the vacuum for a Dharma talk when we are without a minister, as on May 19. To set the mood, we opened with *Coming to Our Temple* and *Welcome*. Then we tackled Choralfest number *Amida's Compassionate Vow*, and practiced *The Beckoning Hand* and *On Shinran's Birth* for the upcoming Gotan-E service in May. We finished with *Farewell*. Lyrics from these gathas delivered the messages of Dharma.

As our temples' membership is reduced in number, the members are stretched in other directions and the members from **West Kauai Hongwanji** and **Lihue Hongwanji** were heavily involved in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life. The "music" generated from the teams' efforts was the caching of the donations raised by the two teams. West Kauai Hongwanji came in first place and Lihue Hongwanji in fourth place out of 58 teams. We will certainly make a big difference in the lives of cancer patients.

Maui District

by Joan Tamori

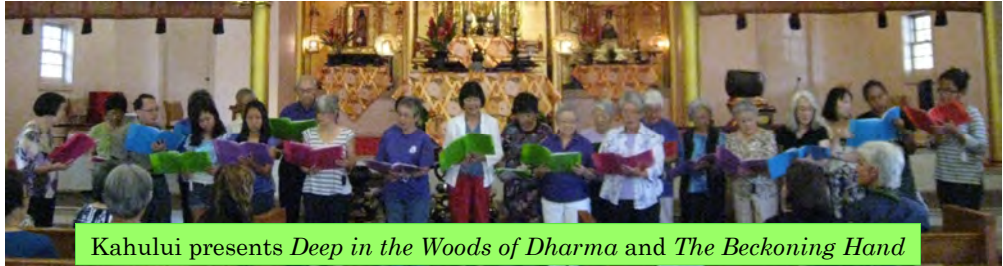


Jodo Shinshu Followers Festivize at Fujimatsuri



A huge birthday party took place at hosting temple, **Wailuku Hongwanji Mission** in May, in honor of the birth of Jodo Shinshu founder, Shinran Shonin. The annual celebration was embraced with a diverse mix of songs, games, food and fellowship. The SongFest follows the service portion and is welcomed with songs and gathas from all four temple memberships on Maui.

Kahului Hongwanji Mission led capably by director/organist Irene Imada, sang *Deep In the Woods of Dharma* and *The Beckoning Hand* both beautifully and proudly. Next came **Lahaina Hongwanji Mission** with a fitting rendition of *Arigato*. *The Pureland Connection*, sung to the tune of *The Rainbow Connection*, was Lahaina's second number sung with precision under the direction of Aileen Cockett's baton. (Background: Wayne Nishida, a dharma school teacher at Wailuku Hongwanji Mission, rewrote the lyrics to *The Pureland Connection* as part of the program at the 2012 State Dharma School Teachers' Conference held in Maui.)



Kahului presents *Deep in the Woods of Dharma* and *The Beckoning Hand*



Lahaina sings *The Pureland Connection*

Ed Yamamura, choir director at **Makawao Hongwanji Mission**, led the members in singing the gentle and meaningful, *Arigatai*, and an old favorite, *At Our Altar*. Members of **Wailuku Hongwanji Mission** rounded out the SongFest with *Shinshu Anthem* and the WHM choir presented an inspirational version of Choralfest 2012's *Overflowing Light*.

Arigatai and
At Our Altar
by Makawao



Closing the events of the fun-filled day, was a presentation by **Wayne Nishida and the teachers of VIDSTA (Valley Isle Dharma School Teachers Association)** doing the song and 'motions' to *Dharma Wheel Keep on Turnin'*, rewritten by Wayne and sung to the tune of Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Proud Mary*. "Rollin', rollin', rollin' on forever". Shinran Shonin would be proud of us!

New Members Join the Wailuku Hongwanji Mission Choir



The WHM Choir sang for its Ohigan Service in March with Choralfest songs, *Cosmos Flower* and *Flying Free*.

Its choir is proud and delighted to introduce nine new members who are all quick and eager learners! From left to right: Mike, Sylvia, Tamara, Helen, Mari Ann, Norma, Eric, June, and Ethel. Also pictured is flutist, Donna.

Oahu District

by Gail Taira

MILILANI HONGWANJI CHOIR SINGS IN JOY

As the **Mililani Hongwanji Choir** sang the phrase, “Shinransama no tanjobi minna de oiwai itashimasho”, the joy of sharing in and observing Shinran Shonin's birthday was brightened at the annual Gotan-E Service held on Sunday, May 12. *Shinransama no Tanjobi* is a lively and happy gatha, that says, “hibari mo pichiku tanoshisoo.” The second selection was *Nembutsu*, a gatha translated by the state music translation committee and first performed at Choralfest 2007. This very beautiful and meaningful gatha, written by Yukiko Yamamoto and Takuma Mori, tells us that by reciting “Namo Amida Butsu . . . sorrow's burden that so weighs vanishes away . . . gratitude unending is the gift of our life.”

Mililani's five men and ten women members of the choir work very hard to give and do their very best!

The service was made complete by a very wonderful dharma talk by visiting minister, Rev. Kevin Kuniyuki of the Buddhist Study Center. As always, the delicious refreshments after the service make for great fellowship and talk-story time!



TRANSLATION SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

By Mitsuyo Saito

The Committee is in the process of translating the following two gathas for this year and are looking forward to translating more gathas in the future:

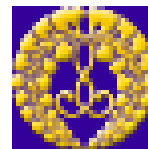
Yasashisani Deattara (When Kindness Greets You)

Yurusareshi (Be Allowed To)

Committee members: Francis Okano, Shigeaki Fujitani, Osamu Kawabata, Ruby Nagao, Florence Wasai, and Wendie Yumori

Music Committee

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Gladys Fujiuchi, Kauai
Osamu Kawabata, Honolulu
Ethel Miyashiro, Hawaii
Mitsuyo Saito, Honolulu
Gail Taira, Oahu
Joan Tamori, Maui



“Musical Notes” is published biannually by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii,
Office of Buddhist Education Music Committee.

Francis Okano—Chairman

Joan Tamori—Edit, Layout, & Design

Yoshiko Umitani—Distribution