

**“There must be always remaining in every one’s life some place for the singing of angels, some place for that which in itself is breathlessly beautiful and, by an inherent prerogative, throws all the rest of life into a new and creative relatedness...”** *Howard Thurman, Deep is the Hunger*

The unexpected refrains, the “singing of angels” that I hear just when I feel the music’s been lost, and then, slowly, realize that I’ve been surrounded by music all along, and just didn’t hear it.

**Some place for the “singing of angels” in one’s life**--- the line catches me as I think about times that celestial – and earthly – choruses distracted me from the despair or sadness that enveloped certain times in my life, lifted me to the top of the second story in many former homes where I could finally see beyond the sealed rooms of “old, old hurting.”

When my mother died, and a fuschia plant appeared on my doorstep – brought by a neighbor, situated silently on the front step without her ringing the doorbell, left as a symbol of the love that would still bloom for me from how my mother had raised me – and how others would care for me.

When the museum guard at MOMA in NYC gave me his ‘admissions pass’ – he had one per day to give to a visitor trying to get into see the current exhibit – that summer, Surrealism and Dada beckoned. He had overheard me saying that I had limited time as I was on a short holiday in NYC to visit my sons, had a block of time that morning only – and my SJ Museum of Art membership didn’t qualify for ‘reciprocity’ with NY’s MOMA ---After I’d left the line which queued up around the MOMA building, he found me and gave me his pass – saying he wanted me to remember that day as a gift.

When, upon leaving an artist’s workshop near Bolinas, and traveling to the toll booth at SF’s Golden Gate Bridge, I found my toll fee had been paid by the car ahead of me --- passing it forward ---- the two women had been at my workshop, realized it was I who was behind them – and decided to take the community we had built over the long weekend of writing, journaling, sharing, walking along the beaches, honoring our first syllables of just-written works with quiet ‘yes-es’ ---on the road.

When, upon reaching Salisbury Cathedral at dusk, I also realized I’d been fortunate enough to happen upon evensong --- holy and sacred music for my soul that had been looking for those notes after a long trip from Boston to London and then to Salisbury – sanctuary after stress.

When, during a Christmas season – waiting for the dousing of lights in Santa Clara’s Mission Church, waiting for the choral singers, each carrying one taper, to walk down the center and side aisles, slowly illuminating the darkened sanctuary while also letting the glow of the season come to me, the presence of the glory and the Child.

When, after fall semester concluded, and students would begin to leave for the holiday break, and I would have piles of papers to grade and exams to correct, I would find notes that were the “singing of angels” that my students had left for me, letting me know I’d helped, that they were ready to “disturb the universe”, more confident in their voices that, perhaps in some infinitesimal way, had become louder, surer, notes of clarity in a world often chaotic, as they became another choir of singing angels.

When I hear the beginning babbling of my granddaughter, her early Russian phonics as she begins to name the universe in her mother’s native tongue, and adds me, “Baba – Babushka” to her singing as one of my precious angels.

When I still myself, and sense the commotion of the world’s din hushing, then, and now, and always, I hear the “singing of angels.”

Barbara Simmons

December 2018