

## **Dorothy Barnhouse, mezzo soprano**

### **1930's:**

Very, very lucky. From toddlerhood, family worship included singing Bach chorales in 4 part harmony and reading the Bible in 5 languages. We lived in Philadelphia near Curtis, and I often fell asleep listening to Curtis students practicing, also getting first piano lessons from them. Before WW II, family often in Europe on business, so was surrounded by and acquiring many languages.

### **--Secondary schooling and training**

1940's: Lots more piano, singing in choirs, a year in Cuba living with family friends, several years at Lycée Français de New York, more music, more languages.

### **--Higher Education and other professional training**

1950's : Harvard, academic work on this and that, mainly linguistics, began singing with the Harvard Glee Club/Radcliffe Choral Society.

G.W.Woodworth: "You know Dorothy, you ought to take voice lessons." I did, and then did the *stupidest* thing I ever did in my life, I stopped practicing the piano. Immense amount of solo performing at Harvard and around Cambridge. Of course no credit for performance at Harvard (only for musicology) so I was pretty busy trying to study TOO.

After college, lived ten years in Germany. Married to Dr. Ulrich Wever, twins, Stefan and Kirsten Wever born 1958. Studied voice with Doris Winkler at Berliner Hochschule für Musik. Later, at San Francisco State, a Masters degree in Music Theory.

### **--Performing**

1950's and early 60's In Germany, soloist in church concerts and Lieder recitals. Concerts of American Music sponsored by USIS. After one recital a critic wrote that the French, Russian and German were great ... "but a German singer should not try to sing in English without first learning the language..." (Actually he was right... I had never given English lyric diction a thought!) 1960's: Returned to Boston area, church, concert, and university work. Made a living teaching languages and in high school administration. 1970's and 80's: SF Bay Area, mezzo soloist (San Jose Symphony, Oakland Symphony, 1750 Arch, Pocket Opera, SF Bach Choir etc.) With soprano Renee Grant-Williams, the only complete recording of the Brahms duets.

### **--Teaching**

Members of choirs sometimes asked for lessons, I was sure I had no idea how, but started to dabble, realized that a) I DID know how, but b) needed to learn a great deal more. Asked more experienced teachers in the area if I could observe lessons.

I connected with NATS, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, learned more, expanded teaching. Taught lyric diction at the SF Conservatory, voice in the Conservatory Prep/Extension, voice at the SF Community Music Center. Started the

local Bay Area chapter of NATS, which grew from zero to 150 members in a year or two. Active participation in national conferences and workshops.

### --In 1988

I passed all my students on to others, and went to Nicaragua, where I spent 9 years. I initially went to help start an English department at the Agricultural University, but soon became involved doing music with children in the poor barrios of Managua. A small chorus of 8 children grew within a couple of years into a flourishing organization, *Música en los Barrios*. I trained some teenagers who played and sang in a guitar choir to teach music to little children. Soon we had about 15 teenagers teaching about 200 children in ten barrios. All the children learned to play the recorder, and sang in choirs. Since then, *Música* has continued to spread and is a cultural force in the country.

I gave piano lessons to a few of them, not pianos as we in the rich north know them, - small electronic keyboards which of course hold up in the tropics better anyhow. One of my piano students, a 12 year old boy who lived with his mother and two little sisters in a house with a dirt floor and a tin roof, running water out back shared with 3 other families, grew up to start a rock band which is popular throughout Nicaragua. Ah sigh, he played Mozart and Chopin so well, but of course couldnt support his extended family that way, so I am glad he could transfer his skills to the keyboards of rock music.

### --In 2000

I returned to the Bay Area, began teaching again at the Community Music Center, and singing whenever asked... premiere at Old First Church of a song cycle for mezzo and clarinet by Jono Kornfeld, Ravel Kaddish and 5 Greek Songs with CMC Orchestra, Prokofieff and Schumann songs in a chamber recital of Soiree Musicale in Los Altos, Mahler's 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony with the CMC Orchestra... In 2012, was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the California Association of Professional Music Teachers.

In this long life of musical wonders, the most marvelous moment was the look on a little boys face in Managua when he put a recorder to his lips and heard in awe the sounds he could make. I think if I had discovered the manuscript of a lost Mozart opera I could not have been happier.