

Helaine Feivelson
1947 - 2018

Funeral Service

Saturday, August 25th, 2018

At the Festival Hall, Minister Benjamin Yudin's Introduction

A warm welcome to dear Robert and to all of Helaine's friends and acquaintances, both here and abroad. Here in this moment, we are united in celebrating the life of our beloved friend, Helaine Feivelson.

That so many of us are gathered here shows how grateful we are for Helaine's dedication to her evolution, and the indelible mark she left in the hearts of students throughout the School.

One of the most stirring gifts that Helaine bequeathed to our School is from a letter she wrote to Robert:

Helaine wrote: *We used to say payment was a principle but now we can say payment is a privilege.*

Let us stand, and honor Helaine with our presence.

(Silence)

Helaine's return to the source of creation is a fate that we all will ultimately share. Robert teaches that ascending souls finish their roles very well prepared for their next role, having received the presence fully allotted to them in this life.

Dear Friends, let us take solace in the knowledge that Helaine's divine soul is but one brief lifetime away from completing its task on this level of the Ray of Creation.

Reading: Hafiz, Who wrote all that music, read by Gwendolyn Marks

Why is it now

That I come to you like a humble servant

Willing to feed you brilliant words and love

From my sacred mouth and hands.

Willing to say, "I am sorry, I am sorry for all your pain"?

It is because when God

Fully revealed Himself in me

I saw that it was Hafiz

Who wrote all the music you have been playing.

I saw it was Hafiz

Who wrote all your notes of sadness,

But also etched and gave you

Every ecstatic wince of joy your face, body,

And heart has ever known.

Music: Bach, Arioso, performed by Michael Parks and Rebekah Hood

Eulogy for Helaine Feivelson, given by Guy Pontecorvo

With only a flickering magnetic center, we somehow found a real school with a conscious Teacher. Our friend Helaine fully recognized and never lost sight of this miraculous connection with C influence, a miracle that connects us all. Many of us did not know what we were looking for; but we knew when we found it.

Helaine had a marvelous ability to find her own way. Before Helaine met the school, she waitressed at a New York restaurant with, at that time, a student in the school. Helaine recognized something special about this student and persisted with questions until the student invited Helaine to the teaching house. Helaine saw a piano, sat down and spontaneously began to play. Upon finishing, she was startled to hear applause behind her. She turned to find a room full of students, seated and listening attentively. Helaine stayed for dinner and later that same evening, attended a hastily organized prospective student meeting.

Helaine joined our school in New York, 1978 and moved to Apollo two years later. In those days, we were encouraged to 'find the school within the school', which she took to heart and as a result, three areas of her work blossomed and stayed with her for the rest of her life:

1. Service to the school.
2. Pursuit of Beauty in the form of music.
3. Love of presence and her teacher.

At Apollo, Helaine placed herself in the thick of things and completely immersed herself in the flow of Robert's conscious influence. Like many of us, she had many jobs and lived in many places. Being an emotionally centered Mars Jovial, she seemed to have twice as many amazing, harrowing and shocking experiences as the rest of us. Her jobs gravitated towards health care and included working at Urgent Care in Yuba City, the Harvard Teaching Hospital in Boston, the Stanford Medical Center, and for the California Department of Health Care Services.

But her real career was the three lines of work, and like all true students, she found opportunities for work on herself. One day, after a Galleria meeting, she walked through the kitchen and saw unwashed breakfast dishes. She learned that Robert's entourage often did not have time to wash them before the meetings on Sunday mornings, and without being asked, she washed the dishes. She assumed the role of washing the Sunday morning breakfast dishes which expanded to include preparing Robert's breakfast, and inviting other students to help. It is advanced work when a student creates third line opportunities for other students.

I met Helaine in New York in 1979 one year after joining the school. Both being New Yorkers and involved in the performing arts, we made an immediate connection. I noticed immediately that she was unpretentious, direct and generous in a warm considerate way. She was not a shy person and of course, there was that sense of humor.

Helaine was an exceptional musician. Her love of music developed early through studying the piano and performing in vocal groups with her brother Allen. Already an accomplished pianist, she studied with Anna Gold once she arrived at Apollo. Although she could play many instruments, trumpet, violin, guitar, mandolin and piano among them, she did not lose her identity in being a musician. Music was her way of communicating her sense of joy and beauty with friends and strangers and when she brought joy to others, she glowed. She sang in our chorus, played trumpet in the orchestra and performed solo piano at our Cabaret and for countless other events. But her favorite was playing with the mandolin ensemble.

She had a special bond with the members of the mandolin ensemble, and one of her friends from the ensemble said:

Helaine was very good at reading timings in the music. I frequently relied on her musical ability when I got lost... Helaine always had it, probably coming from her background as a jazz pianist.

Helaine's love of music was only eclipsed by her love of Robert and her friends. Robert's appreciation and love for Helaine, and her love for him, deepened during her illness. He would tell everyone that the thought of her helped him transform some event or difficulty; and he thought of her often. She was deeply moved by this attention. When she could not attend the ballet, he gave her a porcelain ballerina saying if she could not go to the ballet he would bring the ballet to her. Robert often spoke about her courage and heroic efforts of transformation. She was in a state of wonderful confusion and gratitude at how this dear connection with her teacher came to be.

Helaine was also overwhelmed and profoundly grateful for the love she received from her friends who came forward in her time of need and made exceptional efforts on her behalf. I chose not to name them here because, in the words of Walt Whitman, 'The gift is to the giver and comes back most to him - it cannot fail.'

Rodney Collin writes: [The] fourth way ... consists in mastering instinctive, emotional and intellectual functions at the same time; in transmuting pain, fear and thought into their higher counterparts of will, love and understanding.

Throughout her illness, Helaine became a living example of Rodney Collin's words.

After her first surgery Helaine moved in with Kathryn and myself in Sacramento. Her weakened state and frequent chemotherapy sessions indicated she needed to recuperate and be close to the hospital. But she did not rest. She organized a fundraiser to send Graylin and Daniel to Europe, maintained her role as chairman of member support and frequently made meals for us. And we could not stop her from washing the dishes.

Taking Helaine to Chemo was an event. One of Helaine's friends would accompany her and I was always puzzled when I came home and heard the story of what a great time they had at Chemo. Somehow Helaine turned a physically painful experience into a celebration. She had a way of interacting with the nurses, staff, and other patients that elevated everyone's state. She found a way to transform her own state by taking care of her friends and those around her.

Helaine was a fighter. Her martial sense of justice and active emotional center could lead her into crusading for justice when she felt wronged. Eventually she was able to see this for what it was, that it was blocking the light from entering. She learned it is more valuable to drop and transform being right than to pursue an argument and win.

Helaine's last gift to our school is the way she soldiered on with serenity, feeling joy in her friends in spite of her worsening condition. One of her fellow mandolin players said, Walking with her to the car after one rehearsal, she said to me quite simply, 'I am not getting out of this'.

On a Saturday, six weeks before completing her task, and in spite of waking up to, and spending the day in pain, Helaine was determined to perform with the mandolin ensemble one last time in front of the love of her life: her teacher. And she did. All who attended that Saturday evening event, including Robert, silently savored not only her presence, but the super-effort required to play through the entire performance.

Following the concert, Robert hugged and kissed Helaine's forehead forty-four times. Robert recently said of this moment: "after the twentieth kiss she was cooing in my arms, as an emotional statement of gratitude."

Helaine returned once more for her 40th anniversary in the school, on July 23rd. She took some pictures with Robert and sat with him during the concert. Everyone could see in her a tranquil blossom on a tortured stem. Thank-you Helaine for showing us the way.

Music: Lute concerto in D major by Vivaldi, by the Mandolin Ensemble

Reading: Walt Whitman, Quicksand Years, read by Graylin Ross

Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither,
Your schemes, politics, fail, lines give way, substances mock and elude me,
Only the theme I sing, the great and strong-possess'd soul, eludes not,
One's-self must never give way—that is the final substance—that out of all is sure,
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life, what at last finally remains?
When shows break up what but One's-Self is sure?

Minister Yudin's Conclusion:

Those students who shared the vigil of Helaine's last few hours were vividly aware, watching Helaine's breaths and heartbeats diminish, that the meaning to life may be reduced to three aims:

to promote presence always and everywhere;
to serve something higher than oneself;
and to learn to Love.

Now, it is time to bid farewell to Helaine.

With the help of Higher Forces, may the love that Helaine developed during her lifetime linger in our hearts, and as Walt Whitman wrote, may it be seen in our actions, in our looks, and in our words.

Candle ceremony

'Our body is just a shell, our soul will continue.'

Extinguish and light the candles.

Please stand.

Funeral procession, to the reception area.

At the Cemetery, Minister Yudin's Introduction

Dearest friends, here in this sacred place, consecrated by those here present, and by those whose bodies lie here, we witness the completion of a cycle. In grateful presence, we release Helaine to her's and our true home, even as we return her remains to the earth from whence it sprang.

Reading: Rumi, Rebecca George

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.

Ideas, language, even the phrase "each other"
doesn't make any sense.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.

Don't go back to sleep.

You must ask for what you really want.

Don't go back to sleep.

People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.

The door is round and open.

Don't go back to sleep.

Minister Yudin

As the earth returns to the earth, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, we look toward eternal life.

Urn is lowered, with orchid spray.

Minister Yudin's Conclusion

Rabia said, 'Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity'. A divine flame returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete. We part, only that we may meet again.

Minister guides funeral party in placing rose-petals into the grave.

Let us withdraw for a farewell toast to our Beloved Friend at the gazebo, and celebrate the life still yet allotted to each of us.

Toast Offered by Daniel Goldman

At first one would consider a painful terminal illness a terrible fate. And yet, for Helaine she bore that pain nobly and experienced her illness as a great opportunity for transformation and awakening. This led to the understanding she shared, which each of us hold in our hearts now, "Payment is a Privilege"

In thinking of Helaine these lines from Rumi come to mind.

“This is love: to fly toward a secret sky, to cause a hundred veils to fall each moment. First, to let go of life. Finally, to take a step without fear.”

To Helaine, she showed us how to live and how to die.