



IS IT BETTER TO GIVE OR RECEIVE? BREAD & ROSES VOLUNTEERS SAY IT'S BOTH

By George Nevin

Every Bread & Roses volunteer knows the joy of giving. To borrow from **Joni Mitchell**, they are intimately familiar with “That dizzy dancing way you feel/When every fairytale comes real ...”

But who would suspect that there is as much receiving as giving when a musician performs at a family homeless shelter, a host introduces an act at a school for developmentally disabled children, or an office volunteer stuffs envelopes? And that the giving and receiving appear to be in equal measure?



Photo courtesy Si Perkoff

Keyboardist/singer Si Perkoff: “My sense of who I am in this life gets a big boost from performing.”

Who indeed – other than every person who entertains, facilitates or helps produce a show – or 10, or 100, or (our current yearly pace) 600 shows for Bay Area audiences hungry for contact with the outside world.

Si Perkoff, a jazz keyboardist, singer and a longtime Bread & Roses performer, knows this fundamental truth well.

“Many of the people I perform for are isolated, ill or confined. They need the stimulation. They need to think about something other than their own problems. What we as performers are doing for them is very clear.”

So, we understand the importance of giving to an isolated audience. But what about the reverse?.

Si recalls a poetic line he heard once: “Contact is the only love.” He says: “Audiences need that love, that contact, and it goes both ways. My whole self-esteem and sense of who I am in this life gets a big boost from performing. With Bread & Roses, that boost has been there right from the start. I am much better at what I do as a result of the Bread & Roses experience.”

Every Bread & Roses gig – and Si has done many – is a growth opportunity. “In some way they all make you grow,” he says. Sometimes, a performance takes him out of his comfort zone – to a

county jail, for instance. “It’s not comfortable for me, going through security, knowing that I can walk out and they can’t. It’s a level of stress to perform in that environment, but I want to do it. It’s almost like a visit to a foreign country.”

Si can point to one hugely important benefit he’s taken away from the Bread & Roses experience: “When I was a younger musician, I didn’t sing at all while playing the piano. Then, when doing Bread & Roses shows, I started to sing. Now I have a regular singing personality, and I like it a lot.”

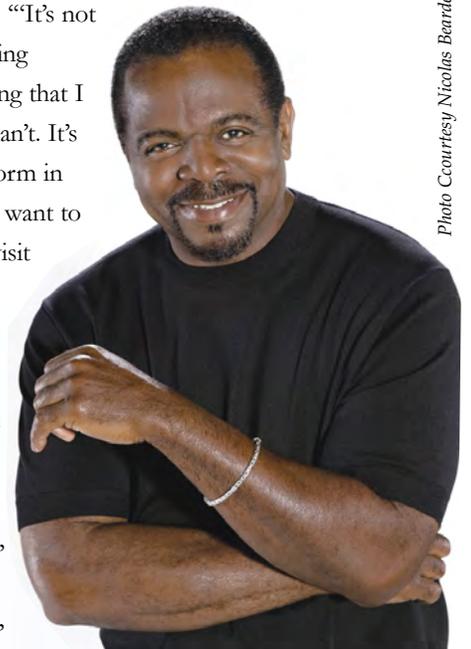


Photo Courtesy Nicolas Bearde

Jazz singer and Bread & Roses volunteer Nicolas Bearde: “It’s very gratifying to learn the stories of people in the audience.”



Jazz singer and Bread & Roses volunteer performer **Nicolas Bearde** freely admits it – “I am a guy who likes to connect with my audiences. I like to hug and to shake hands.”

Nicolas inherently believes that having physical contact with the people in his audience, even something as innocent as a handshake, is “very powerful.”

He relates a story of conducting a program a while back, and at the end, making the rounds among the people in the audience.

“As the class was ending, I embraced some of the participants, including one particular woman. She stiffened a bit. I told her, ‘Come on, loosen up, let go.’ I was challenging her.

Photo by Katy Wallis



Linda MacVey: “Music speaks to our emotional selves and allows us to communicate emotionally what we may not be able to speak or even understand through words.”

“A few minutes later, she came up to me and said, ‘I want to thank you and let you know you did nothing wrong. I lost my husband years ago, and the thing seniors don’t have regularly is touch.’ For her, touch was a very powerful, basic human need, but something she did not get very often.”



Each Bread & Roses audience gets a two-for-one deal – not only a musician, or sometimes several, but also a host to help set up, welcome the performer and introduce the act to the audience.

Oakland resident **Linda MacVey** has been a volunteer host for four years. The experience has been of enormous benefit to her.

Says Linda: “I grew up in a musical home with a father who is a musician, donating his time as a church organist. My mom is a nurse, and both are deeply engaged in the community.

‘Singing Surgeon’ Eases Stress By Mixing Music and Medicine

It is 8 a.m., and **Dr. Laura Esserman**, the “singing surgeon” at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), readies her patient for surgery, as usual, by singing a song as the patient is wheeled into the operating room.



Dr. Laura Esserman

This particular patient (who wishes to remain anonymous) happens to be a former Bread & Roses Board member and long-time supporter.

The patient already knew about the scientific data attesting to the healing power of music. Yet it wasn’t until she found herself going into surgery last fall that she truly understood the immediate and positive effect that live music can have.

Dr. Esserman had told the patient, “Pick your song,” and her

“As kids we all participated in vocal and instrumental programs and performances. We cut the tips off gloves to play accordion to accompany holiday caroling with neighbors in the snowy Midwest. We attended every church service, wedding and memorial service. It’s what we did. I didn’t realize how this caring integration of music, medicine and community contributed to our own health and well-being until much later in life.

“Music is a core element of the human experience. We learn our alphabet through song and simple childhood stories captured and repeated through generations.”

Introducing Bread & Roses acts is a “rare and meaningful opportunity to share in an organization whose mission far transcends the sum of individual contributions. Bringing hope and healing through live performance gathers the very best of our human spirit as hosts, performers and receptive audience members when we all find ourselves engaged in something that evolves from our mingled experiences, gifts, sensitivities and needs.”

Linda says, “Performance is a shared moment of vulnerability, where we all step out on a limb and give of our best. The magic happens when it is received and reflected back through the experiences of another that goes beyond anything happening in the room. And, I think that for some this continues after the performance.”

She concludes: “The gift benefits the giver as much if not more than the recipient. We can get caught up in the busy-ness of modern life and our daily routines, isolated from the larger community around us.

“Technology allows us to work globally but at times limits our ability to interact with the world around us. Bread & Roses provides a rare opportunity for performers and audience members to come together and celebrate our shared humanity by giving and receiving in equal measure.”

choice was **James Taylor**’s “Shower the People You Love With Love.”

Having practiced its beautiful harmonies, Dr. Esserman and her staff were all smiles as they sang and wheeled our friend from the prep room into surgery.

Of her experience at the UCSF Cancer Clinic, our supporter said this surgeon was both “rock star and life-saver.”

Dr. Esserman provides a positive affirmation of the healing power of live music. She says that singing “creates a warm and supportive atmosphere that serves as an antidote to the fear usually engendered by a diagnosis of cancer and the trepidation of going into a foreign place for a surgical procedure.”

Visit www.breadandroses.org/blog to read more about Dr. Esserman’s story.



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Benefits of Our Work – 7/1/2011 - 6/30/2012

Hope – 600-plus shows • Healing – 29,000 audience members

Art to Heart: A Musical Evening to Benefit Bread & Roses

Reserve your tickets now for **Art to Heart: A Musical Evening to Benefit Bread & Roses** on Tuesday, April 23, at the **Julia Morgan Ballroom** in San Francisco. Featuring exciting performances and a delicious, four-course dinner in an elegant setting, the evening will also honor **Sudha Pennathur**, past Board chair and generous patron, with the Bread & Roses “Labor of Love” award.

Our lineup features internationally known talent, as well as up-and-coming local performers. **Tim Hockenberry**, our headliner for the evening, has been described as San Francisco’s “prize jewel” – a modern troubadour with a huge heart.

A finalist on the 2012 season of “America’s Got Talent,” he was the judges’ favorite and longest-standing singer until he was ultimately unseated in the semi-final by five dogs, a sand artist and a comedian. Visit: www.timhockenberry.com.

The show will also feature **Audrey Auld**, a memorable and uplifting singer-songwriter/guitarist who is a spontaneous comedienne and writer of humorous, provocative and soulful songs, as well as a Bread & Roses volunteer. Accompanying her will be **Nina Gerber** and **Felix Lucero** on guitar. Visit: www.audreyauld.com.

The **Jazz Cats**, from **Marin Academy**, will open the show. This

talented and dynamic teen jazz quintet features **Ellie Cope** on vocals/piano, **Michael Hasson** on bass, **Aidan Nelson** on guitar, **Lena Redford** on vocals and **Cameron Stanton** on drums.

Tickets (\$200 and \$400) also include outstanding wines, a live auction and a fund-a-need drive.

All proceeds help us bring art to the hearts of isolated children, teens, adults and seniors living in hospitals, recovery centers, detention centers, homeless shelters, convalescent homes and other institutions. Purchase your tickets today at www.breadandroses.org or by calling (415) 945-7120.

