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MONTCLAIR WOMEN'S CULTURAL ARTS CLUB

20 YEARS OF COMMUNITY, CAMARADERIE AND INEXPLICABLE MAGIC



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Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club—We Will Never Forget You

Dr. Betty Sullivan & Jennifer Viegas

From the moment we first stepped into Boo Price's warm, welcoming and truly magical Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club, we felt at home. This was a beautiful place created by and for women, and particularly lesbians. As legendary singer/songwriter Cris Williamson wrote, "O, we are weeping-ripe for sanctuary. Carry us home, let sanctuary start." But this was a sanctuary that was also open: to the entire LGBT community, to people from all over the Bay Area and world, and to great ideas that would emerge during passionate conversations in the fireside salon and courtyard.

Williamson's words, and thoughts of Price's club, seem all the more meaningful for us today, given that the club has been sold and will be closing at the end of July. The announcement shortly preceded closure of San Francisco's only remaining bar for queer women, the Lexington Club, and news that



the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival would be holding its 40th and last festival this August. Price's club itself holds such venerable status, given that it has been in operation for 20 years.

Opened in a verdant corner of the Montclair district in Oakland in 1996, it was the site of over 2000 events during those

two decades. Consider that the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club has hosted the following:

- 150 concerts (which we can attest were fabulous, as we went to several)
- 350 weddings, including some of the first ceremonies ever for same sex couples

- 500 birthdays, anniversaries, memorials, corporate parties, organizational events, fundraisers, art exhibits, book readings, bar/bat mitzvahs, dance and music recitals, theater productions, musical theater, writers gatherings, film showings, graduation parties, school reunions, song circles, country western/salsa/ballroom/swing/kids dance, psychic readings, meditation groups, PTA events, labyrinth walks, drumming events, film shoots, book groups, Obama phone banks, bi-annual polling place and much more

- 100 individual classes with 1000 total meetings on subjects such as music, fitness, trapeze, Tai chi, Qigong, psychic readings, creative visualization, kids and adult dance, improvisation, goddesses, stretch, singing, writing, dream, meditation, cooking, postnatal mom's fitness, choral, kids' violin, other music classes of all kinds, kids' Shakespeare theater and again, much more.

Special mention also goes to the popular open mic Third Thursday events, most recently hosted by talented Janet Rachel.

For those of you who frequented events at the club, we are preaching to the chorus. For those of you who are not as familiar with it, we hope that you will enjoy learning about the club and its remarkable founder, for which volumes could be written, given Price's many noteworthy achievements. We hope to see you at the Farewell Celebrations, to be held later this month, when we will come together one last time at the beautiful club where so many treasured, unforgettable memories and friendships were forged.

Dr. Betty Sullivan and Jennifer Viegas are the publishers of the "San Francisco Bay Times."



Photos courtesy of Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club



ILLUSTRATION BY ANDRES GARCIA-PRICE



MWCAC's Fireplace Salon



Feminists Who Changed America Party, 2007



Valentine's Soiree 2003



Boo Price with singer/songwriter Margie Adam and activist Sally Gearhart



Women's music pioneer Alix Dobkin with Boo Price



Boo Price with performers Vicki Randle and Linda Tillery



Barbara Price's Remarkable Life and Work

"Life has its own idea of how things will work out," says Barbara "Boo"

Price, who continues to contribute immeasurably to the LGBT community both here and around the globe. The idea of which she speaks must have been quite outstanding and unique, considering her groundbreaking achievements over the years.

Here are just a few such achievements that we have summarized, in part, from the fantastic book *Feminists Who Changed America: 1963-1975* edited by Barbara J. Love (University of Illinois Press, 2006):

1973- Created the first lesbian caucus at the University of California, Davis

1974- Produced one of the first Women's Music concerts highlighting the work of lesbian artists; now-legendary performers Cris Williamson, Margie Adam and Vicki Randle were at this particular show in Davis

Regarding the concert, Price says that it was "a fundraiser for the beginning of the original Bakke case (concerning affirmative action). I sat in the halls of the Law School at lunchtime, and played a little tape of the women singing. I think Vicki Randle sang *Sweet Woman* and Meg Christian sang *If It Weren't for the Music*. I also called every woman's organization in Davis (garden clubs, sororities, everything) urging all women to attend this concert for and about women. I was so naive, but driven. Freeborn Hall holds 1000 people and 300 attended. It was actually a huge turnout given that it was so early, but I was a little disappointed. The following day I said it was too stressful, and I would never produce a concert again. However, within a week I was organizing two concerts for the spring: one was a woman-only concert with Meg Christian in a local saloon. The owner used only female waitresses since it was women-only! It was followed by a concert with Margie, Cris and Meg at a theater in Davis that held about 500 people and it was sold out. Women came from all over the state and even out of state. This was the inspiration of the Women on Wheels tour, which followed."



Enjoying the moment with dancers at MWCAC

1975 Co-founded Pleiades Records with Adam and began Women in Production, a production company that trained other women producers and technicians

1975 Became a member of the executive committee of the Women & the Law Conference, which was the femi-

nist law association of the 70s and 80s

1976-1986 Practiced law in San Francisco, with a focus on custody, entertainment law and small business for women

1976-1994 Produced stage performances at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival; from 1983-1994, she



Honorees featured in Barbara Love's *Feminists Who Changed America*, 2007

was an owner and producer of the entire festival

1977-1984 Member of the executive committee of the national board for the National Women's Political Caucus

1977 Produced the International Women's Year cultural program for the National Women's Conference in Houston

1978 Served as a delegate to the founding convention of the National Lesbian Feminist Organization in Los Angeles

1996 Founded the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club

In addition to the above mentioned productions, Price over the years has produced:

- The Malvina Reynolds' Memorial Concert with Pete Seeger; Country Joe MacDonald, Holly Near and Margie Adam at the Berkeley Community Auditorium, 1978

- Opening Concert for Judy Chicago's "Dinner Party" at the Herbst Theatre with Margie Adam in 1979

- NWPC national 17-city tour with Margie Adam for Women Candidates in 1980

- The first Bay Area theater performance by Sweet Honey and the Rock (with Ginny Berson), 1980

- Close of the ERA Campaign in Washington, D.C., Constitution Hall with Bella Abzug, Margie Adam and Sweet Honey in the Rock, 1982

- Radical Harmonies Benefit Concert in 1999 (at the MWCAC) with a dozen women performers

- San Francisco City Wedding Reception in 2004 for Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's first wedding at the Hyatt; Montclair Women's Big Band performed

- Ron Dellums Mayoral Inauguration LGBT Gala in Oakland, 2007, with Linda Tillery, Vicki Randle, and the Glide Memorial Choir

- *Feminists Who Changed America* by Barbara Love - All Contributor Reception 2007 (at the MWCAC)

- San Francisco City Hall Memorial for Del Martin with Carolyn Brandy, Sistah Boom, Holly Near, Margie Adam, Linda Tillery, Ellen Seeling, and the Glide Memorial Choir, 2008

- Cris Williamson's 35th anniversary of *The Changer and the Changed* for two nights at the Herbst Theatre, 2010

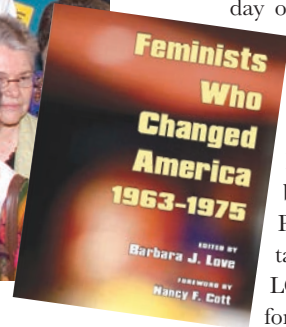
- Gwen Avery Memorial, 2014

- Multiple years of producing the stage for East Bay Pride, Oakland's Sistahs Steppin in Pride, New England Women's Music Festival and the West Coast Women's Music Festival

The above doesn't even address how Price worked at the White House for the Food for Peace Program as well as the President's Commission on Civil Disorders (the first entity of the U.S. Government to focus on racism). She additionally worked at the State House in Boston, and has traveled the world helping with numerous political and organizational efforts. In her "spare" time, she hosts scuba diving trips and is an expert diver!

Her list of achievements is enough to fill the resumés of multiple individuals because she manages to pack every day of life with meaningful

projects, and she is far from being done yet! What's next on the horizon? We will have to wait and see, but knowing generous Price, she'll somehow take us and the entire LGBT community along for the joyous ride.



Reflections on a Hallowed Club Infused with Spiritual Energy

By Barbara Price

Twenty years ago this summer, I was sitting in the audience of a Joan Armatrading concert at the Berkeley Community Theater just before the show began, and my partner at the time leaned over to me and whispered, "I don't know what you're thinking right now, but whatever it is is reverberating two feet beyond your head." I laughed and said, "Tell you later." I'd just received a message loud and clear that I was to drive up and down Highway 24 in the Oakland hills, and find a perfect place to create a community center and performance space primarily for women. That led me to the Montclair Women's Club on the corner of Mountain and Thornhill.

The club had been built as a hunting lodge by a group of men from San Francisco. It was the first piece of land broken out of the old Spanish rancho in the East Bay hills. Ground was broken in 1919, but by the early 1920s, the building had become a traditional Women's Club until 1994, when it was sold to Moyer Realty. They were looking for someone to operate the building as a rental venue. I told them I wasn't interested in renting the club and operating it for someone else—I wanted to buy the Club. I didn't have the financing and any idea how I would get it, but I

thought I would figure that out later. We worked out that I would lease the building with an option to buy it within 15 months. I picked up the key on October 8, my birthday.

I spent a couple of weeks just sitting in the bare bones of the Club and waiting for inspiration. Slowly I began to get images of how this utilitarian rental hall would become a beautiful, welcoming center for feminist cultural activities and performances, and would be financed by occasional rentals for weddings and other life celebrations. The entire club was white inside and out; no color, no draperies, no indirect lighting. There were sliding glass aluminum doors and two very utilitarian bathrooms.

I put the word out to friends that I was doing a "barn raising" and that everyone was welcome. Alix Dobkin had just moved into the house I shared with Susan Brennan. Retts Scauzillo was driving a school bus in San Francisco, but had evenings free. Peg Morris ran a t-shirt company in the South Bay, but put in lots of hours and brought her rolling scaffolding. We cleaned every surface, primed and painted—often a number of times as I was working my way through the color palette of Mark's Paint shop with advice from Jade Freed, a professional painter.



Barbara "Boo" Price

One night it was raining, and a woman came in under a full slicker and said, "I go by here every night on my way home and see you all in here climbing the walls with paint brushes. What are you doing?!" We laughed and gave her a paintbrush and she came nightly thereafter, crawling in the overhead kitchen cupboards, cleaning and painting. Even the inside of the cupboards had to look good. Late at night when we were exhausted, Alix would keep us going by calling out every old joke she could remember. More and more women came, giving a few hours (or days) at a time.

One night, Elizabeth Seja Min walked in and said, "I think you need a piano and I have one to spare." It turned out to be the first practice piano played by Antonia Brico as a child

(the first professional woman conductor in the world). That old 1920 Estey was the club piano for about 15 years—played by Mary Watkins (she always professed that she loved that old seasoned piano), Ady Torf, Barbara Higbie, Tammy Hall, Margie Adam, Cris Williamson and even Dave Matthews, plus so many others. A few years ago, Vicki Randle walked in and offered a significant upgrade with her much newer piano from Los Angeles, which wouldn't fit through her living room window when she moved back to the East Bay.

One day, I was testing a deep color of Cranberry Red (which I had mixed myself at the paint store) on the walls of the foyer. Friends hesitantly suggested that it was way too intense and alarming to be the first thing that greeted people. I said, "But it's magic. You walk in through a narrow opening that expands into a large open room and it's all red. What could be better? It kind of secretly anoints everyone in the Goddess when they enter." I was getting skeptical looks. Then Judy Grahn walked in to consider the club for her Goddess Series (that went on for several years), and pronounced, "This is my color!" She had published *Blood, Bread and Roses*. That sealed the deal. The warm magical color has been a hallmark of the club ever since.

I contacted my old friend Dreamwalker, who had been the quilter at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival during the 20 years I was producing it with Lisa Vogel. I invited her to come stay with me for a few months and paint a mural on the wall of the bar. I had dreamed a fanciful garden named Lilith's Garden that would be beautiful, fun and playful, and yet imbedded with much magic and deep women's energy accessible to all. She manifested that, and sponged a dozen colors of latex paint on the walls, which took two weeks. She then began to apply the images. The corners began to crack. We had thought the walls were plaster, but in fact they were 10 layers of paint and 3 layers of wallpaper going back to the 1920's.

So much water had soaked the walls for weeks that we were able to pull off large pieces of the original hand-screened wallpaper from under the paint. A large section of that wallpaper was framed by Elida Scola, and hangs in the foyer today to honor the original women who began this club. We moved on to painting the bar furniture and a whole new set of helpers arrived including Linda Tillery, Abby Abinanti, Margaret Sloan Hunter, Robin Flower, Ginny Berson and many others. Then I began to make table cloths for the bar, and draperies for my office in the adjoining caretaker's cottage.

Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club Farewell Celebrations

On May 23, the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club will host two Farewell Celebrations. The evening event immediately sold out, so a second event at 1:00pm was added. MWCAC founder Boo Price writes:

"Yes, it's true. After 20 years of producing a broad range of cultural events at the Montclair Club, the Club has been sold and will close at the end of July 2015. Of course, we will celebrate together big time. In the tradition of the

Concert series, the Community Sings, Breakfasts, Teas, Talent Nights, Dinners and Parties, we've planned a full day of love, fun, conviviality, great food, entertainment and singing together.

Linda Tillery, Holly Near, Melanie DeMore, Alix Dobkin, Terry Garthwaite, Barbara Higbie, and a special appearance by The Washington Sisters along with Mary Watkins, Tammy Hall, Adrienne Torf, Dave Belove and David

Rokeach, will perform and lead well-chosen songs for everyone to sing together.

We'll start with a grand picnic in the courtyard, move into the ballroom for the concert and a rousing sing-a-long. All the regulars will be on hand with Retts Scuzillo as Stage Manager, David Allen and Leslie Ann Jones running sound, KC Cohen running lights, Sharon Washington wrangling the performers, Sean Araneda as House Manager, Tia Watts, Janet Rachel and Barbara Zoloth in the box office for

ticket sales and drink tokens.

And all of you to raise your voices to celebrate the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club and our community over these last 20 years!"

For more information and to purchase tickets to the afternoon event, please visit: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1422925>



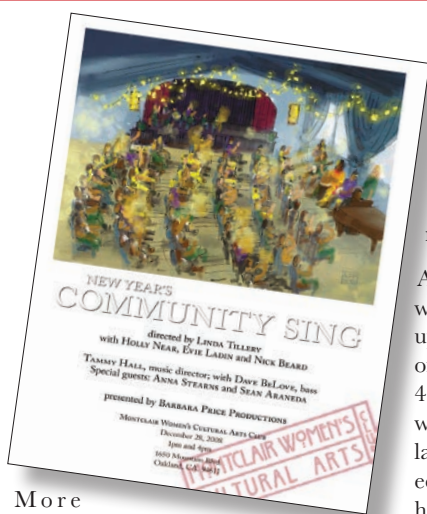
Boo Price (back row second from left) with Women's Word featured writers and event crew.



Laura Love, Boo and crew



Montclair Women's Big Band's Jean Fineberg and band members



but she wasn't. So I got a video recorder and taped myself walking through the whole club, explaining every corner to her. I wish I knew where a copy of that recording was now.

Around the first Thanksgiving (6 weeks after I first turned the key), I set up a large square table in the middle of the ballroom that would seat about 40 women. I invited a group of friends who had joined the work crew for a large feast I had cooked. They included singers, musicians, writers, natural health practitioners, body workers, psychics and my friends. There was an altar on the front of the stage, for thanks and many blessings for what would be manifested in this building. We began the dinner with a musical invocation from Linda Tillery, Alix Dobkin, Lauren Carley and Ellen Seeling on trumpet. We called the directions by each musician walking in from one corner of the ballroom, singing/playing a beautiful call. We all shared stories and blessings, and Debbie Fier played the piano in the salon (my growing up piano as a child). Her daughter Reina and Abby's daughter Emma were tiny girls and they passed trays of chocolates to everyone (eating quite a few as they went). I feel that evening protected the club, and invested it with the highest purpose. It laid the grounding for all that would follow in the next 20 years.

More women came to join afternoon sewing circles and to help with the hemming—Ali Marrero, Nancy Schimmel, Terry Sendgraf and Jackie Dennis (eventually Terry ran women's workout classes and Jackie ran women's intuition classes here for years).

By spring, I put out another call, and had legions of helpers climb on the roof and paint the entire exterior of the building, including my son Andres home from Los Angeles, Rhiannon, Martha Steinhagen, and so many others. There were lots of extension poles down from the roof. Susan Brennan's parents, Bob and Helen, came to visit and they bought me beautiful new front doors before they left.

One day I was talking to Therese Edell on the phone, and we both wished she were well enough to visit from Ohio,



A Halloween Party at MWCAC

So many events have happened at the club in the last 20 years. Concerts by all the musicians, from across the country and round the world covering 3 generations. There have been years of monthly breakfasts served by club members, cooked by Joan Antonuccio after she closed the Brick Hut; and monthly teas with scones and egg sandwiches and sweets from my hands, monthly game nights, monthly Third Thursday Talent Nights coordinated by Alix Dobkin, then Retts Scuzillo and me, and finally Janet Rachel. The Montclair Women's Big Band was created here by me, Ellen Seeling and Jean Fineberg. The band played here many times for parties, concerts and dances, but also at the Grammys, the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival at the Kennedy Center, and at the SF Jazz Festival with a recording at SkyWalker.

There have been so many people who have worked on staff in all capacities over the years, and I want to name those who have given so much. Retts Scuzillo as Stage Manager, Leslie Ann Jones as the first Sound Engineer, followed by David Allen from *Beach Blanket Babylon* who has been Sound Engineer for many years now, KT Graham as the first Lighting Director and then KC Cohen as the Lighting Designer who was on stage crew when I was Producer of the Night Stage at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, Tia Watts who drives down from Sonoma County each time to be the Box Office Manager, of course Joan Antonuccio from the Brick Hut days is our House Chef, Sue Stacey who set up my club computer and helped in so many ways, Peg Morris who was my right hand helper in the first year and actually gave me a loan for the down payment on the club until I could qualify for a bank loan, Susan Brennan who supported me emotionally in the first years when I leapt into this crazy made-up idea, Martha Steinhagen who flew in from Michigan or the Caribbean yearly to help with all the physical and mechanical repairs, Lynnee Breedlove who worked here for several years assisting with events, and a special shout out to my son, Andres Garcia-Price, who has crewed for shows, painted the front yard sign, provided many graphic artworks for

letterhead and posters, and produced and directed the Montclair Women's Big Band DVD. My great thanks goes to my House and Event Manager Sean Araneda who has worked with me here for the last several years from 8am-2am, setting up furniture, equipment and electrical, corralling outside vendors from band members to caterers to florists to sound and light guys to all. He's family to me, and I am indebted to him for accompanying me on this trip.

Of course, there have been many weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, bar/bat mitzvahs, memorials, recitals, casino parties, and art shows. This club is layered with thousands of celebrations. It is sad to close the doors on this era, but it will be transformed into its third life as a beautiful LaPort Montessorri School, and all those children will be infused with the spiritual energy embedded in this hallowed club.

My many thanks to the Women's Community, the LGBT Community, the City of Oakland, and to the people of the San Francisco Bay Area for embracing this club as a rich part of the great culture of the Bay Area. I treasure every minute of the whole run.

Barbara "Boo" Price founded the Montclair Women's Cultural Arts Club in 1996. See page 4 of this issue for more information about her incredible life, work and achievements.

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37th Annual Pride/
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Saturday, June 20, 2015

5 pm Film Premiere
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7:15 pm Book Talk
San Francisco's Jewel City
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8 pm Concert
Featuring
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and Special Guests

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MONTCLAIR WOMEN'S CULTURAL ARTS CLUB



"Boo Price has been a faithful supporter of women's culture for over forty years. Her journey as a concert producer and artist manager began when the genre known as "women's music" was in its nascent stages. We will all miss Boo and the Montclair Women's Club. I wish her the best of luck in this next chapter in her life."



Linda Tillery

"Barbara 'Boo' Price has consistently acknowledged that music being written and performed by feminist musicians needed an outlet, a venue, a festival, a sound system, pretty lighting, a tuned piano, a hot meal, an audience. We thank you, Boo, for your beautiful support."



Holly Near

"The MWCAC was such a classy performance space and Boo always provided a most professional production. I am so glad I got to perform there a few times! Adieu, Boo."



Kate Clinton



DEUCE (Jean Fineberg and Ellen Seeling) with Boo Price and event crew, Valentine's Soiree, 2003



Melanie DeMore

"There are so many reasons to say 'Thank you' to Barbara 'Boo' Price: first of all, anyone who's ever been to Michigan Womyn's Fest, met their partners there, had their kids happily running all across the land, or found their freedom in the joy of women making music and home together, gotta give it up to her. She helped start what became a lifeline to many in the community and a place for women artists, craftswomen, and healers to come together in a beautiful sacred (and at times), deliciously profane space. It was the place where Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir made its first appearance. I had the pleasure of singing on every stage and spending time with some of the most extraordinary folks all over the land as well as conducting the Gospel Choir for 2 or 3 years.

Secondly, When she opened Montclair, the club became the rehearsal home of the LT and the CHC. It was the place where Mary Watkins and I did our first concert together. I had the pleasure of being a part of the many concert series that happened over the years, hearing the Montclair Women's Big Band, Margie, Cris, Holly, Linda, June, Mary, Tammy...the list goes on and on.

Boo made a place where all kinds of folks married, celebrated birthdays and milestones and where we said good bye to cherished loved ones. She created a place for a lot of us to call 'home.'

So thank you, Boo, for caring enough to make sweet places for all of us to 'Be.'"

