



Women to Know

THIS WEEK WITH

Tirtza Singer

BORN:
NYC

LIVES:
Yerushalayim

CHILDREN:
2

OCCUPATION:
Healer Through Music

“Music has tremendous potential for healing both body and soul.”

—Tirtza Singer

Tirtza Singer, a multi-talented woman, lives up to her name. Tirtza (“delight” in Hebrew) has always delighted in music. Noticing her four-year-old daughter’s melodious voice and response to music, Tirtza’s mother gave her a little toy piano.

“My first piece was *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*,” Tirtza recalls with a smile. “Then I continued to try to play other nursery rhymes.”

The musical career of Tirtza Singer was launched.

A native of New York City, Tirtza attended the High School of Music and Art, then obtained a BA in early childhood education and a master’s degree in arts and education from Lesley University, in Massachusetts.

In the early 1970s, petite, dynamic Tirtza

was active on the folk music circuit. After marrying Dr. Reuven Singer, relocating to Connecticut and having two daughters, she became the head of an early childhood music program at the JCC in Stamford. Around this time, she began to follow her husband’s growing interest in *Yiddishkeit* and both eventually became full-fledged *baalei teshuvah*.

FROM SECULAR TO JEWISH MUSIC

“In 1985 we attended a Shabbaton where I heard the music of Shlomo Carlebach and Michael Shapiro for the first time,” says Tirtza. “Through music that was holy, I began to see a channel for what Hashem has in mind for me,” she explains. “I wanted to connect to my Jewish soul and use my musical abilities to touch the hearts of other women.”

“Canfei Ruach” was my first album. Inspired

by *Tehillim* and Tanach, I wanted to work with lyrics that were meaningful and timeless and above all spoke to the heart of the Jewish woman. Throughout our rich history, we sang at the sea and wove tales for our children. Our songs helped us endure the suffering throughout our history as much as they enable us to survive our hardships today.”

PERFORMING AROUND THE WORLD

For many years Tirtza had a deep “desire to inspire” Jewish women through song and story, uplifting them with joy and faith. Her prayer was fulfilled when she began giving concerts for women in the US. Tirtza went on to perform in Israel, Europe, South Africa and Australia. She also released three albums, two based on Jewish themes, and one for children.

LIVING IN JERUSALEM

“In 1993 my husband and I and our two daughters settled in the Jerusalem suburb of Ramot overlooking the Jerusalem forest. As soon as we bought the house, I knew that its charm and loveliness were such an enormous gift that I just had to share it with others,” she states.

Throughout the years, Tirtza has invited many women to appreciate the beauty of her home and garden, enjoy her musical talents, and share the spirituality of Yerushalayim. Her special gift is enabling women from across the spectrum to feel welcome and united. On Rosh Chodesh and sometimes on Chol Hamoed, Tirtza hosts a musical *Hallel* program, playing the melodies of Shlomo Carlebach on the piano and harp while her friend sings the timeless words of *Hallel*. Soon the entire spacious house resounds with music.

Colorful flowers at the front entrance of Tirtza’s home are as welcoming as she is.

Tirtza’s gracious home is also a venue for concerts, music and creative programs and a welcoming place for women to receive spiritual nourishment. These gatherings often begin with inspiring words of Torah from Tirtza’s friends.

In addition to playing the piano, singing and composing, Tirtza learned to play the *darbuka* (a Middle Eastern drum), the mandolin, and most significantly, the harp.

LEARNING TO PLAY THE HARP

“I always knew that music had tremendous potential for healing both body and soul,”

says Tirtza. “I was inspired by the words of *Tehillim*: ‘Unto You will I sing *with the harp*, O Holy One of Israel.’ One of the commentaries says that Dovid Hamelech would arise at midnight when the wind blew through the strings of his harp. Then as Dovid himself plucked the strings with his fingers, the vibrations echoed through the harp and into his heart, reducing the perception of distance between himself and Hashem, his thoughts and words moving in harmony with the melodies. This music came from within his *neshamah*, overflowing onto the strings of the harp, and from there out into the world.

“*L’havdil*, a book called ‘The Mozart Effect’ also piqued my interest in the harp. One chapter explains how the vibration of the harp can heal the body. I knew that the harp was the musical instrument I had to learn how to play.

“Amazingly, a talented harpist named Sunita Stanislav then came into my life. She so inspired me with her playing that I immediately wanted her to be my teacher.

“Though I struggled trying to learn to play for several years, Sunita was so encouraging and such a wonderful teacher that I persevered with it. Sunita had a dream to raise money for a harp for Shaare Zedek Hospital and obtained a donation to buy a harp for the oncology patients there.

“It’s been a tremendous blessing to be able to see the healing that the harp has brought to so many patients through the years. For me to play for the patients has been a dream that has finally been realized. May we all be able to realize dreams that are important to us!” exclaims Tirtza fervently.

MUSIC FOR ALL AGES:

Once again this past summer Tirtza went to study with her teacher Lisa Parker, an expert in Dalcroze Eurhythmics. “Dalcroze is a unique method of music education and a powerful tool to cultivate music awareness. It connects the brain and body, using the body as an instrument. I feel that, in a sense, it is the source of music,” explains Tirtza, “as it is deeply creative in all its many facets. It’s a beautiful teaching tool for early childhood music education, connecting little ones to their innate musicality. It gives them tools that they can later use in playing an instrument. People come to study the Dalcroze method with its many applications: teaching, performing, and creating music. It’s wonder-

ful for all ages and learning levels and suitable for schools, special-needs classes, music therapy or theory classes,” she adds.

Now the grandmother of two little girls, Tirtza has started a Dalcroze music program for them and other small children. In this enjoyable class, mother and child bonding takes place together with language skills, coordination and brain development.

“Research shows that the Dalcroze method helps the child focus on musical cues, and locomotive skills are heightened by musical awareness,” she explains. “Dalcroze is applicable to both ends of the life cycle. Seniors or ‘women of wisdom’ as I prefer to call them, benefit by getting in touch with their inner music while singing or playing the piano. It helps develop their innate creativity and delays the onset of dementia.”

INTEREST IN HEALING

“At the early age of 30, I had low energy, body stiffness and already felt like an old lady!” Tirtza laughs ruefully. “I felt I needed to heal my body, but I didn’t know how. Then I was introduced to the bioenergetic work of Alexander Lowen and felt Hashem had led me on a path that would totally change my life, connecting mind and body, *nefesh* and *guf*.”

“Now I give bioenergetic exercise classes for women, working with the energy patterns in the body through breathing and stretching. Harmonizing the relationship between body and mind, they get in touch with what their bodies are telling them. All our challenges and trauma are stored in the body. Breath allows a softening and release of the tension on physical and spiritual levels,” she adds.

Connecting her musical and healing talents, Tirtza often concludes an exercise class by playing the piano or the harp.

HELPING WOMEN NURTURE THEMSELVES

One of Tirtza’s dreams was to provide a beautiful nurturing place for busy women to feel rejuvenated and revitalized. After renovating the house, one area was set aside for the purpose of providing women with a “marvelous morning.” Over the years, women of all ages, from new brides to great-grandmothers, have come to enjoy this special area.

“*B’ezras Hashem*, I pray that I may be *zocheh* to use the abilities Hashem has given me to bring healing and happiness to others,” concludes Tirtza. ■