



Agape Performing Arts Theatre



Olympic Bound
Sydney 2000

Miracle On Broadway

By Lindsay Miller – Dancer, Age 13

(With a little help from her dad)

In the fall of 1998, Grace Bush was informed that a group had dropped out of the upcoming Winter Choral Festival to be held at Carnegie Hall in New York City. A spot on the program was suddenly available. Would her new dance troupe, the Agape Performing Arts Theatre, like to take it? She told the members and their parents about the opportunity. It would be our first performance together and to have it on Broadway at Carnegie Hall was more than we could ever have imagined. How could we say, “No.”



With only two months to prepare for Carnegie Hall, there was a lot of work to do. The dancers decided to perform a liturgical ballet about God’s creation of man from the book of Genesis. It would depict the creation of Adam and Eve, the temptation of Eve by Satan, Adam’s fall, and then conclude with man’s redemption and his protection from Satan by a circle of angels. It would last about seven minutes and be performed to a dramatic instrumental piece called “*Eagles Path*” by the group, Narada Equinox. In addition to the *Creation* dance, Agape singers would perform two songs and join other groups for the opening and closing choral numbers.

When the big weekend finally arrived, eighteen performers, along with many parents and other family members piled into vans and drove to New York City from Northern Virginia. On Friday night, we checked into our hotel right on Broadway just two blocks from Carnegie Hall. The next morning began with Master’s classes in singing, led by Kermit Finstad, a well-known composer/conductor who is professor of music at Gettysburg College and director of the Jubilate! Chamber Choir. The afternoon found some Agape members touring the city while others caught Broadway shows. That evening, most of us went to another dance festival sponsored by the same National Association of Performing Arts Educators as the Choral festival the next day.

Early Sunday morning, the performers gathered in one large suite for prayer, breakfast and makeup. From there, it was off to Carnegie Hall for more classes, a group photo, a short rehearsal, and then it was almost show time. We were to be the second group on stage.

Ten minutes before the program was to begin, Mrs. Bush was informed that no compact disc equipment was available to play the music for our dance. She was stunned and we were devastated. After all the work and effort to prepare, and after travelling all that distance, our dream was about to crumble. Tears ran down our cheeks, streaking carefully applied stage makeup. But we were not going to give up. Two dancers reminded us that our first song was “*God Will Make A Way.*” We had to pray and trust that He would do just that.

Mrs. Bush decided that she could clap out the beat and we could perform the dance a cappella. We were frightened at the prospect but willing to give it our best. And if the lack of music weren’t enough of a challenge, we would also have to adjust our choreography on the fly because the risers for the choral groups, along with the grand piano, had been left right in the middle of the stage. It would be difficult but we hadn’t come this far to quit. Then our pianist for

the other songs, Peter Darling, offered to play a little music to help us do a final run through in a practice hall. His improvised music was so beautiful that we asked him to play for the real thing.

A moment later, an announcement was made in the hall. *“Due to a misunderstanding, the Agape Performing Arts dancers are unable to perform with their prepared music,”* the announcer said. *“Therefore, they have redesigned their performance.”*

After a quick prayer and with no music in his hands, Peter walked onto the stage. Having first seen the dance in the prior ten minutes, he sat down at the grand piano and began to play. We dancers dried our tears, put on our best smiles, and took the stage as well. An anointing fell as we danced and Peter played along in a beautiful Spirit-led accompaniment. The singers flowed in behind us and the entire performance was far better than it ever could have been with the original music. God knew what he was doing. He gave us not only an experience to cherish in dancing at Carnegie Hall but an incredible testimony of His faithfulness as well. We had to trust completely in Him to make the way and He responded with what we truly believe was a miracle on Broadway.

Postscript: One week after returning home, we received two wonderful letters. The first, from Kermit Finstad, commended troupe members for being super students and for providing an *“inspiring and professional performance.”* He then added the following P.S. – *“It’s amazing how God turned a potential catastrophe into Glory for Him! Praises.”*

He also wrote that *“this event should have sent your spirits soaring and off to a great season ahead.”* This raised an exciting and challenging question for us as we were already wondering what God could possibly do to follow such an opening blessing at Carnegie Hall.

That question was clearly answered in the second letter from Matthew Straub, executive director of the National Association of Performing Arts Educators. After commending the group for its character and thanking us for a wonderful performance, he wrote that as far as he was concerned our performance at Carnegie had served as a special audition for another event that he was coordinating. He then extended a formal invitation for our fledgling troupe to join a small number of other performing groups representing America at the *Year 2000 Summer Olympics* in Sydney, Australia! How could we say, “No.” Isn’t God wonderful and to Him be all the glory.

Postscript #2: Several weeks after we received the invitation to participate in the Sydney Olympics one singer’s path crossed providentially with another local couple. They were intrigued by the Agape story, met with troupe leaders, were drawn to both the mission and the opportunity, and asked if they could join us as guest artists. Again, how could we say, “No.” As a result, our first guest artists were none other than David and Sharon Savoy, the only competitive dance pair to hold all three major World Exhibition Dance Championship titles simultaneously. They danced with Agape at the Sydney 2000 Olympics, which “coincidentally” were the first Olympic Games to feature competitive ballroom dancing as the host country’s designated exhibition sport.

About Agape: The Agape Performing Arts Theatre was formed in 1998 to provide opportunities for talented multi-cultural local performers to develop their full potential through numerous and varied performance opportunities under professional guidance and direction. Troupe members also serve their community by performing in charitable fund raisers and benefits for general audiences, by conducting performing arts workshops and camps for the underprivileged, and by providing special performances for community groups, churches, nursing homes, and other such venues as opportunities arise.

(**Note:** The Agape Performing Arts Theatre subsequently evolved into the performing company of HeartBeats Music & Dance Center, Rockley Miller, Executive Director, 8060 Rolling Road, Springfield VA 22153, 703-440-9000, Rockley@hbeats.com, www.hbeats.com.)