

Kittens on the Keys

It was Will Rogers who said: "It's a whole lot easier letting the cat out of the bag than it is putting it back." It's too bad Mr. Rogers' humorous aphorisms have fallen out of public consciousness these days, especially now that we have an Internet and a much quicker view of the whole world than when he was alive.

What would he have made of the many cases of "loose cats" racing around the planet? What a sight! People of every description – some drowning kittens at birth to make sure they can't make trouble later on – petitioning others for sympathy for their acts, past and future, often accompanied by appeals to their god and blaming overpopulation and starvation for holding the bag. The concept has led to the belief among some that they'll need to smite the believers in others' gods to assure their god is respected above all the rest, which isn't at all peaceful, given the plethora of beliefs.

For resolution we have to turn to the United Nations. The United States was the prime mover in its founding. The inspiration came out of the horrors of armed conflict in the first half of the 20th Century. The UN was intended to be a forum in which the world's peoples may see for themselves who is holding what "bag," and just what "cats" may be trying to cause troubles for the rest. The exercise is not well imbued with good nature, which has proved the rarest of traits. Where's Will's successor?

There is an organization, ours, whose mission it is to offer help. Our official standing as a Non-Governmental Organization obligates us. The UN accorded official accreditation to the NFMC in 1949. The UN Charter specifies the Economic and Social Council consult will accredit non-governmental organizations concerned with matters within their competence. There are over 1600 NGOs that have consultative status with the Council in three categories – reflecting degrees of competence in specific areas. NGOs may send observers to meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies and may submit written statements relevant to its work. They may also consult with the UN Secretariat on matters of mutual concern. NGOs are seen by the founders as partners providing a valuable link to civil society, helping achieve UN objectives.

It is a privileged status for the NFMC, bringing with it a high obligation to make real contributions in our area of expertise -- music. We are. In addition to the reports you see in the Music Clubs Magazine (circulation circa 200,000) and my speech at the most recent Biennial Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the NFMC made the substantive gift for the 40th Anniversary of the UN in 1985 of a piano. Club members from all over the United States contributed to the fund used to buy the instrument. Thelma Robinson was then NFMC President. Dr. Merle Montgomery is the person whose idea it was to make the gift and she carried it through from start to finish. The instrument was restored 20 years later during the presidency of Dr. Ouida Keck.

Now a new need has arisen. The UN building is in such a state of disrepair that it will be undergoing extensive renovation in the not-distant future. When it does, the existing instrument will be moved to a secure location during the refurbishment, which is to include a new auditorium to replace the existing Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium. The piano has been welcomed and is widely used, but doesn't reside comfortably there because the auditorium was designed primarily for speaking. There is no cabinet for the piano, and no back stage area for performers. Our current president, Elizabeth Paris, would like us to lobby for a proper musical

presence in the design of the new auditorium, to which she feels it could well be appropriate to add a brand new, larger concert grand, again donated by NFMC and paid for in part by proceeds from the sale of the existing instrument. This would obviously be an eleemosynary effort with no commercial strings attached, an ideal role for the National Federation of Music Clubs. A UN Piano Fund for the purpose could be started right away that would add momentum to the project in time to present the prospect to the authorities responsible for the renovation, making the desired outcome more likely. The Secretariat expects to take the existing piano with them to the new location. They can only be pleased at an offer to store it and turn it in on a new, bigger instrument. (The present instrument is 6 feet long; a seven foot instrument would probably be a better size.)

Our membership should remain well informed about the work of the UN. You can and should find out all you can by turning on your computer (if you've got one) and typing into your search engine the following chain www.un.org. There you will find all the information concerning the work of the UN, current, historic and world-wide. There is even a link to their site from ours, which is www.nfmc-music.org

When you think you know what kittens are able to attain a status among the living, your fellow music lovers will wish to hear their purr -- and your song about them -- so do remain informed and pass along what you learn.

President Elizabeth Paris, will have attended the conference of the NGOs at the UN on September 6, 7, and 8, 2006, the second of her presidency by the time you read this, and will no doubt have a report in the next issue of Music Clubs Magazine. She considers the NFMC role as an NGO role of great importance to the goals of the UN and of the NFMC. Assisting her is the Representative to the UN, me, and my Deputy Representative, Gail Kruvand. Ms. Kruvand has traveled widely, is a musician (playing bass in the NY City Opera Orchestra and New York Philomusica) with wide experience as a negotiator and community leader in educational and public school affairs locally (New York City). She and her husband Eugene Moye, a 'cellist, have two children. Ms. Kruvand and I will endeavor to keep you informed of the many varied activities that we might be in a position to report to you during the course of the year from our by attendance at meetings for NGOs held weekly at UN Headquarters. We both maintain busy professional schedules and have families so we cannot attend them all. We are committed to helping meet the obligation to all of you to bring news of the many challenges facing the UN into sharper focus. You may think of things you and we can do, and that the NFMC can do to help produce results in striving for comity among peoples of the world and offer assistance where needed. Make sure you state organizations know about this link. Keep your voices in good trim and your fiddles tuned, because ultimately our musicality may be called upon to win a few precious moments of respite from the never-ending streams of contention under review there.