

RIP MARNI NIXON -

I don't music direct very often, but sometimes special occasions come my way. In 2002, I was asked to music direct the first WHAT A PAIR benefit in LA for Breast Cancer Research - a concert of musical theatre duets for women. I said I would if I could arrange everything for piano with string quartet, and enlisted my friends, the Angeles String Quartet, with my very dear friend cellist Stephen Erdody. They had just won a Grammy for their complete Haydn set, this would turn out to be one of their very last concerts.

Daniel Henning directed, he asked Marni if she would do "A Boy Like That" (which of course she famously dubbed in the film), and when she agreed, we asked the great Tia Texada if she would sing Anita. We gathered at my place in Santa Monica, Marni's husband was with her, and as I recall he talked about having played flute in the pit of the original Broadway production. I think I won Marni over a bit when I showed her my LP of her recording of Schoenberg's Cabaret Songs (highly recommended).

Some of you may know that in fact the actual duet section, the middle when Anita and Maria sing against each other, is not in the film - and Marni informed me that in fact she had never sung that part! So we all sat around the piano drilling it, Marni and Tia going over/talking through the rhythms (it varies from 4/4 to 3/4 a lot, that sort of thing), learning it together, and there were moments when I thought there must be a bunch of music directors out there who would kick me out, wondering how I ever got this amazing gig - a very cool and unique musical theatre rehearsal, quite an honor. Marni sounded great - she wanted to take the "I Have a Love" section maybe a little quicker than I might have, but she was Marni Nixon, and who was I to argue.

All went well, though a day or so before the concert, Tia unfortunately had to withdraw, and Daniel brought in his pal the great Susan Egan - we ran it in the morning, and went on that afternoon. This video collage includes an mp3, haven't listened to it in years, don't know who recorded it or where from (a bit too close to my piano playing, seems to me, especially given how great the string players and everyone else is) -- all pretty wonderful, Marni is just great.

And now she is gone - I am so grateful to her for a wonderful few weeks of great spirits, smart solid chops and musicianship - and such sweet meaningful memories - thank you.

Randy Newman was at the concert, when we talked afterwards he just said, "Wow, Marni Nixon."

Yes - - wow, Marni Nixon, that says it all - Marni Nixon, RIP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhEftgi6Yws>

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