

## Songs of Mercy from Around the World

If you are part of the Mercy community, you most likely have sung the songs produced by Sister Dolores Nieratka—*Circle of Mercy*, *Suscipe* and *Celebration*, to name just a few. The album and songbook, *The Circle of Mercy, Songs of the Sisters of Mercy*, was a project conceived and produced by Dolores, but it represents the contributions, both musically and financially, of Sisters of Mercy from around the world.

Although she didn't write the songs, Sister Brigid Johnson was Dolores' right-hand person, doing much of the important behind-the-scenes work. The two made a great team as they brought Dolores' idea of an album of Mercy songs to fruition. This year, the 25th anniversary of the album, Brigid recalls and cherishes the memories that continue to live on in Mercy history.

A professor of psychology at Mercy College of Detroit (now University of Detroit Mercy), Dolores was a musician and prolific songwriter, composing pieces for special occasions—the wedding of a good friend, the birth of a child, the funeral of a friend's mother. By 1991, she had produced three albums of her own music.

"Dolores had the idea of producing an album of original Mercy songs that would be timed for release at the formal dedication of Mercy International Centre in Dublin in 1994," said Brigid, who was a math teacher by day and a musician in her own right, playing the piano, singing and teaching music. Dolores proposed the idea to the leadership team of the Detroit Regional Community, which approved it. The

two sent letters to all of the Mercy Communities around the world asking for original songs, lyrics, poems and samples of recorded music, and gauging their interest in funding such a project.

"One of the many things Sisters of Mercy do well is sing, play instruments and write music," said Brigid. "To our surprise and delight, the music and money almost literally flew in!" Within one month, they had the funding needed.

The album features songs by a number of composers, among them Sister Claudette Schiratti from Omaha who wrote *Dancing, Singing, Circling*, and Sister Erica Marshall from Australia who composed a version of Catherine McAuley's *Suscipe*. Another *Suscipe* featured on the album was written by Sister Elaine Deasy from Connecticut and sung by Sister Marie Cox from Ireland.

The title song, *Circle of Mercy*, was composed by Sister Jeanette Goglia from Merion, Pennsylvania. To include more voices, as she was producing the song *Circle of Mercy*, Dolores sent tracks to Mercy communities around the world and asked them to record their singing of the refrain. She incorporated many of those tracks—from Argentina, Australia, Belize, Chile, Guam, Guatemala, Ireland, Panama and the United States—into the final production. "If you listen closely, you will hear those voices toward the end," said Brigid, which makes the song even more precious.

Dolores died in 1995, but Brigid has faithfully kept the records that she and Dolores created so many

years ago. "With the 25th anniversary this year, it has been a wonderful opportunity to share the story of the creation of these songs with others," said Brigid. What better time to give this album a listen and be reminded of the connectedness of the Sisters of Mercy across states, countries and continents.

To purchase *The Circle of Mercy* in cassette or CD, email or call Sister Brigid at [bjohnsonrsm@gmail.com](mailto:bjohnsonrsm@gmail.com) or 734-604-4113.

—Sandy Goetzinger



Sister Brigid Johnson holds *The Circle of Mercy* book that accompanied the album she and Sister Dolores Nieratka (top photo, left, shown with Sister Brigid) produced together in 1984.