

Giving thanks: for good Bethlehem people

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the, Touchstone Theater November 28, 2019

 73rd in a series of posts on Touchstone Theatre 

There was sooooo much in [Festival UnBound!](#) Here we are two months later, and Gadfly has still not exhausted the file of good things he wanted to share with you. What better time than the day on which we “officially” pause to give thanks to our blessings to bring you some more clips of the wonderful people who participated in the Festival.

Here is the fourth installment showcasing the outstanding Bethlehem women who participated in the panel that followed a performance of “The Secret,” the play about H. D.’s life. Moderator Jennie Gilrain gave the eight panelists about five minutes each to talk about their “dreams, hopes, works” and perhaps to recount a time when they were “encouraged or inspired or discouraged and oppressed from following your music.” Short biographies of these women can be found [here](#).

The Secret

The Secret begins one day, in late nineteenth century Bethlehem, when sixteen year-old, Helen Wolle, mother of H.D., entered a Moravian Seminary classroom to rehearse a song she looked forward to performing. Much to her shock and, in fact, trauma, she was roughly told to be quiet, to end “this dreadful noise” by her pastor grandfather, Papalie. And Helen, who loved to sing so much and so well, would never sing again in public. The focus of the panel will be on women in leadership. We will connect the panel to the play via a question that Mamalie (Hilda’s maternal grandmother) asks Hilda in the beginning

of the play, and H.D. asks the audience at the end of the play: “Who will follow the music?”

Yalitza Corcino-Davis is one of the first women in her family to graduate from college, an uphill battle, for she remembers the family response to her distress at receiving a low first-year college grade to be that it doesn't matter for she would get married and not use her education. Which broke her heart, especially knowing that her aunt, mother, and grandmother all had “dreams” that they had to give up. Her dean, however, would not sign her drop-out letter, and now, based on her own experience, she works to empower students to succeed in the college environment.

<https://youtu.be/QjqlQpuVlx0>

Phyllis Alexander describes coming from a culture so hated that white people sold their houses simply because she and a small group of black students walked by on their way to the predominantly white school. That hate framed her life. She became a civil rights activist at age 14, making a decision to change her environment. The need to resist has been central to her life, and she can point to “allies” that made a difference. A big moment was realizing that she had to resist what she had internalized. So her message: resist that which you have within you that makes you fear the Other.

<https://youtu.be/NNtn1MFn1Lo>