



*"But when he smiles,
At once I recognize ~
My brother!"*

Stephen C. Pagano – guest contributing author

Brothers, A Story in Song

When a composer writes a piece, he does not know when, where, or IF it will be performed again and who it will touch along the way. A moment of inspiration happens and a song is created. This musical story begins in 1966 with a text of a Christmas card sent to a dear friend.

The composer, Carl M. Steubing, was born in 1922, served honorably in WW II and was wounded in Belgium. He eventually graduated with honors from the prestigious Eastman Conservatory. Carl became a very well-respected and beloved choral director for the Scotia-Glenville School District in up-state New York. Carl taught at Scotia-Glenville from 1953-1975.

The lyricist, Dr. Miles J. Martin was a dear friend of Carl Steubing. Miles was an engineer and at one time served as a member of the Board of Education of the Scotia-Glenville School District.

It began with a smile

Every year at Christmas, Miles would pen an original poem with a matching picture to send to his family and friends. After Miles retired, he and his wife went on an incredible tour around the world. At the very end of this amazing trip, Miles was in an open-air market somewhere in Asia waiting for his plane to return back home. Sitting directly across from Miles was an elderly man of Asian descent. This man was wearing a conical hat and traditional Asian garments. They weren't able to communicate because of the language barrier, but their eyes met and they both smiled at each other.

That moment began the journey of *Brothers*. As soon as Miles boarded the plane, within 10 minutes, he wrote the poem *Brothers*, starting with the first line, "Who is that man?" That year (1966) Miles used *Brothers* for his annual Christmas card accompanied by a picture of an Asian man dressed in traditional garments. Carl received the card and immediately realized it was a perfect text for a choral piece setting, and so *Brothers* was born! Soon after, it was published by Dickson-Wheeler (Scotia, NY) in 1967.

Carl premiered his piece with his fine Scotia- Glenville High School Choralaires and continued to perform it over the next decade. The Choralaires had a very active touring schedule, which included the eastern United States, Venezuela, and Europe. Throughout Carl's tenure, *Brothers* remained a staple of their concert program repertoire.

I first came across *Brothers* as I was looking through my Freeport High School choral library. The text spoke to me and I immediately programmed it for the 1980 winter concert. There was no Internet at that time, so my research of the song was limited.

A prestigious invitation

In 2015, I was appointed to create a chamber singers' ensemble for Five Towns College (FTC). The FTC Chamber Singers were invited by the Gemini Organization to join their excellent instrumental ensembles for an upcoming concert at Lincoln Center in March of 2017. We were so appreciative and thrilled at the prospect of performing at such a prestigious concert venue. I decided on a themed concert based on "Brotherhood," highlighting *Brothers*.

Lincoln Center asked for detailed program notes, so I set out on a quest to uncover the song's origins. This quest led me to connecting with Carl Steubing's son, Kurt. Kurt was overjoyed we were performing his father's piece at Lincoln Center. He shared an audio file of his Dad speaking about the genesis of the piece, as well as a recording with Carl conducting his S-G Choralaires. A 16-year-old young man named Bill recorded the original audio. Remember that detail for later.

After I listened to Carl's interpretation, I guided my singers toward a performance reflecting Carl's own tempi and phrasing. Kurt travelled down from the Poughkeepsie area to attend the Lincoln Center concert. After the piece was performed I recognized Kurt in the audience. The people in attendance greeted him very enthusiastically.

When the concert was over, Kurt met us at the stage door. The Five Towns College Chamber Singers surrounded him, and we performed the song again. Kurt started to mouth the text and sing with us. His eyes filled with tears. It was a very emotional and special moment.

A few weeks after the Lincoln Center concert, the FTC Chamber Singers made a monetary donation to the Carl Steubing Memorial Fund. Kurt and I became fast friends. He mentioned that he missed singing and soon joined a local community choir. During the pandemic, I founded the "Virtual Voices Chorale." Kurt sang on multiple projects with us and is still a member.

A surprise reunion

In 2018, I was asked to guest conduct a Suffolk All-County Choral Festival. I decided to program *Brothers* as our final song of the concert. The choristers loved the piece and were thrilled to hear me tell the story of the song's history.

But the big moment came after the concert was over. I was in the gym congratulating the choristers on their fine performance when a man approached me. He said he had not heard *Brothers* sung since the late 1960s. He said when he was 16 years old, he recorded the song for Carl Steubing in the Scotia-Glenville High School auditorium. This is the exact same recording that Kurt shared with me!

The gentleman introduced himself as "Bill" McIver. Bill has a company that records many festival choirs throughout New York State. He said we performed the piece just as he remembered. I told him I based the tempo and phrasing on the recording he made for Carl and that Kurt shared with me. I introduced him to the All-County Choristers and told them the story. They were thrilled! I can't believe it actually happened. I called Kurt the very next day to tell him. He thought it was amazing and remembered Bill very warmly.

As I mentioned previously, I founded the Virtual Voices Chorale (VVC) during the Covid pandemic. In December of 2021, I was considering *Brothers* for our next virtual project. I contacted Kurt and in our discussion I asked him the date of his father's birth. He said Carl would have been 100 years old on March 1, 2022. Well, that was all I needed! I suggested it would be lovely to invite the current S-G Choralaires and Carl's own S-G alumni to join the VVC performing his Dad's piece. Kurt was overjoyed!

I connected with Jessica Crisci, the current conductor of the S-G Choralaires. She was delighted and very excited to join us. She indicated her ensemble occasionally performed *Brothers* for events over the years. The virtual video begins with photos of Carl and his beloved S-G Choralaires accompanied by Bill's original audio. It then fades into our virtual audio performance, including pictures of the current S-G Choralaires, Carl's own S-G alumni, and members of the VVC. This project is the perfect exemplification of the VVC's credo- "Building Musical Bridges — Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow."

The magic continues

In January of 2023, Kurt contacted me with exciting news. He received an e-mail indicating *Brothers* had been selected as part of an interfaith service to be performed for the American Choral Directors Association's (ACDA) National Conference in March 2023. The ACDA conference theme was "A Place to Belong." The concert service was held at the historic Plum Street Temple in Cincinnati, OH, led by the nationally recognized conductor Dr. Iris S. Levine.

I was able to connect with Dr. Levine. She indicated she first heard *Brothers* during her college years (1974-78) at the University of New Hampshire. She loved the piece and it stayed with her. Upon graduation, Dr. Cleveland (Buddy) Howard, Iris's

professor, graciously offered to allow Iris to select music from the college's library to help begin her musical journey. Iris selected *Brothers* as one of her choices. Let me make this clear; Iris selected *Brothers* in 1978 and then programmed it for the ACDA National Conference in 2023, 45 years later! Both Iris and I fondly remembered *Brothers* decades after hearing it for the first time.

There is a distinct possibility that Carl Steubing knew Dr. Howard. Dr. Howard was the head of the music department in the Schenectady Schools in the 1960s. At that time, Carl and Dr. Howard could have met through various state and local music festivals. As I mentioned before, Carl's S-G Choralaires toured extensively. They were invited to visit the University of New Hampshire in 1971 (probably by Dr. Howard) for workshops and a concert. I assume Dr. Howard first heard *Brothers* performed at that 1971 concert.

I have been invited to guest conduct a high school district music festival here on Long Island this March and intend on presenting a themed concert of "Peace and Brotherhood," featuring *Brothers*. It will be a pleasure to share the ongoing musical journey of *Brothers* with these fine high school choristers.

It has been a privilege researching and writing about the history of *Brothers*. Carl and Miles would have been so grateful that their composition, which started with a simple smile, continues to reach and touch audiences all over the country. Music comes alive through performance, and I am certain this "story in song" of *Brothers* will continue to spread its positive message for many decades to come. ||

About the author:

Stephen C. Pagano has been a Long Island-based music educator for more than 45 years. He is still very active as a conductor, musical director, and composer. At this time, Stephen's passion is focused on reinforcing the belief that music has the power to connect us all in positive ways. He hopes that his article will serve as one example of music's ability to unite us by answering a very specific and meaningful question, "Who is that man?", with the answer, "He is my brother."

About the artist:

Kris Steubing Crollard holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting from Syracuse University. She worked in the corporate world of telecommunications, retiring in 2008, and has been gradually building her portfolio since then and in the Florida markets, including joining local art leagues; having her artwork appear in the Florida Humanities magazine; exhibiting at venues including city hall, wineries/vineyards, restaurants, and artisan shops, and donating some of her work to local charity fundraising ventures. Her medium is acrylic paint on watercolor paper and mixed media.

Kris Steubing Crollard is drawn to painting the human figure in landscape settings, mostly viewed from behind. This allows the viewer to pull from their own personal experiences of people, places, and life events and incorporate it into their own world.