

## Miriam Barkin Karnow

March 20, 1948 – November 3, 2011

by Gerald Karnow

**Miriam Barkin Karnow** died suddenly and unexpectedly at the Fellowship Community in Spring Valley, NY, on November 3, 2011, in the morning as the work day began. The outer cause of death was pulmonary embolus. November 3rd was the day after All-Soul's Day, which was celebrated at the Fellowship Community and during which Miriam lead all present in the eurythmy Hallelujah. Gwendolyn Eisenmann, a Fellowship resident and poet, read the poem below at the Memorial Celebration for Miriam on Sunday November 6th.

### She is Needed

*She is needed. Up there.  
Now. So she left immediately.  
Just around the corner  
Where the words she left behind  
Still sound.*

*Did she know  
As she led us in eurythmy  
On All-Soul's Day, it was her Hallelujah?  
Of course she did.*



Miriam's earthly life began in Hamilton, Ohio on March 20th, 1948. She was the second daughter of Leonard and Maeluise Barkin; sister Judith had preceded her two years earlier. Her parents were artists and teachers, Leonard later a professor at Rochester Institute of Technology and Maeluise an Arts and Crafts teacher; both were also independent artists. Thus, Miriam grew up in a stimulating environment and was exposed to the full spectrum of a life devoted to artistic pursuits and self-expression, on the one hand, and selfless service to the needs of humanity, through teaching, on the other. The tension of this polarity, of striving for beauty through the arts and striving to serve the needs of others, remained a lifelong concern for Miriam. She developed a mastery of flute playing to a very high level but was then, through Anthroposophy, also lead to a lifelong training and study of eurythmy. She encountered Anthroposophy through her husband, Gerald, when they met in the Symphony Orchestra at the University of Chicago in 1967. A prolonged courtship lead to their marriage in 1975 in Spring Valley, where Miriam would spend the rest of her life striving to fulfill her search for the balance in the tension of artistic self-expression and service to the needs of others in helping to work towards healthy social forms.

The years between graduating from the University of Chicago and settling in Spring Valley were years of searching for life fulfilling relationships and tasks. Before entering the eurythmy training in Spring Valley, she spent time at Emerson College in England and two years at a school for drama in Stuttgart, always accompanied by her flute and never leaving that by the wayside.

Before Miriam's father died in the early 70's, he had come to the point of giving up academia and wanting to start a community of artists. When he died in the beginning throws of that life change, Miriam was deeply affected. Her relationship to the Fellowship and her doctor, Paul Scharff, began at that time. It was Miriam's connection to the Fellowship

and Dr. Scharff that drew her then future husband to the Fellowship; both became Community co-workers when their studies were completed. Both had taken the therapeutic eurythmy course in Vienna and together, with the care experiences at the Fellowship, Miriam was well on her way from artistic expression to caring for the sick, the old, and the dying, and striving to develop and maintain a healthy community life.

Life was a struggle for Miriam. Her health was not the best; she had constantly painful feet and her relationships did not always develop in the way she would have liked. Nevertheless, she never gave up and always brought her wonderfully warm smile towards the world, to add to her unceasing striving for a healthy spiritual, social, and work life at the Fellowship Community. A very painful experience for her was the stillbirth of her full term son, Raphael. The great joy of her life was her daughter, Alexandra, born in 1985. She was also a loving stepmother to Peter, who joined the family for much of his early youth.

The circle of her acquaintances and friends was huge and she drew many others to the work of the Fellowship with her enthusiasm and her capacities. Many considered her the heart and soul of the Fellowship Community because, I believe, they experienced that Miriam strove to call forth from their heart and soul ever greater depth of devotion to the tasks at hand.

I would like to close with two quotes and a final verse that Miriam lived with. The first, from a notebook she kept when she was 17 years old:

*"...I am beginning to think perhaps it is only the small things that are important. The big idea, the big chance...the big happiness may never come. I must learn to love the small things best of all."*

The next is a quote from Mother Theresa that Miriam cherished at the end of her life:

*"We need to love without getting tired. How does a lamp burn? Through the continuous input of small drops of oil. What are these drops of oil in our lamps? They are the small things of daily life: faithfulness, small words of kindness, a thought for others, our way of being silent, of looking, of speaking, of acting."*

Finally, this is a verse that Miriam lived with daily:

*"Spirit triumphant  
Flame through the impotence  
Of faint-hearted souls.  
Burn up self-seeking  
Ignite compassion  
That selflessness  
The life stream of Mankind  
Pour forth as well-spring  
Of spiritual rebirth."*

— RUDOLF STEINER