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## How to sing

Performer and resident writes unprecedented book

By Sonia Andresson  
Current staff writer

When Barbara J. Simon of Hoboken says she's eclectic, she isn't exaggerating. From her singing, dancing and acting to a career in marketing and teaching - naming only a few - Simon has managed to add another accomplishment to her list: a book.

Simon's book "Singing: Body & Soul" started as a mere pamphlet, but the more she wrote, the more her ideas morphed into whimsically titled chapters filled with useful singing lessons.

"The more I wrote, the more I felt I had to say," she said. "I wrote it in short snippets because that's how I like to read a book."

Simon wrote the book in the course of four years while giving private singing lessons in Hoboken. Her goal was to write a book on singing that would be interesting enough to hold the attention of a 16-year-old, and appeal to a professional singer and the ordinary reader.

"Barbara's book is unique in that it combines the technical and interpretive aspects of singing in a very user-friendly way with pages and pages of wonderful practical advice," said Stephen Flaherty, Tony Award winning composer of *Ragtime*, *Seussical*, *Once on this Island*, and the animated film *Anastasia*.

A resident of Hoboken for 20 years, Simon moved here from her hometown of Cherry Hill while studying musical theatre at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in the early 1980's.

"Any dream I have, I can get there from here [Hoboken]," said Simon, sipping tea in her apartment filled with antiques, including her grandmother's Mason-Hamlin black grand piano. "I feel safe here. I lived in Manhattan for three years. I lost the moon in Manhattan and I can see the moon from here."



DO RE MI - Barbara Simon of Hoboken has had a long career and has written a book on singing. Photo by Evan Cohen.

### On HBO

After two years at Tisch, Simon transferred to the Gallatin division of the school - an independent study program that allowed her to receive a broader education. Aside from an academic curriculum, Simon studied at studios with instructors working on Broadway.

She also starred in the comedy *Hidden Desires*, a student film written and directed by Laurie Craig - screenwriter of the movie *Paulie* - who was Simon's roommate in Hoboken during college. *Hidden Desires* was so good that it was aired on HBO in 1982, said Simon. Following her graduation in 1982, Simon spent several years auditioning and performing, including singing in two cabaret acts directed by Flaherty in NYC.

But her next move had nothing to do with performing. Simon thought it was time to work with the "big boys" in Manhattan. She got a job with a company that produced independent films, called Double Helix Films. From there

she went to Nickelodeon as a project manager for the creative director and stayed there for over a year.

Despite her diverse interests, teaching has always tugged at Simon's heart and remains the one constant in her life. She started teaching by giving singing lessons at NYU to dancers in a college dance company called Kaleidoscope, which performed at elementary schools.

Since then, Simon has taught and directed performances in a number of schools and churches, including the Mustard Seed and Hudson schools in Hoboken. Her book is also being used as a supplementary text by Dr. Glen Olsen, director of the choral activities at Hawthorne Christian Academy, said Simon.

After the release of her book, Simon also noticed an influx of students signing up for her private singing lessons, which she hopes will continue.

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**She is taking dance lessons alongside Liza Minelli.**

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But even Simon needs a break sometimes. To unwind, she heads to the Starbucks on 12th and Hudson streets, where she sews or writes beside its gas fireplace.

And for a good meal, Simon takes advantage of the early bird special at Amanda's Restaurant on Washington Street or goes to Anthony David's Gourmet Specialties on Bloomfield Street.

### Held on to Hoboken

But things haven't always been that simple. When Simon's parents suddenly fell ill a few years back, she made regular round trips for three years straight from Hoboken to Cherry Hill. Despite the tiresome commute, Simon held on to Hoboken.

"I needed to keep the apartment as an anchor to the world I wanted to return to," she said. She did return, continuing with her private lessons and finishing her book, which was released last year.

Simon's book has received compliments from friends like Flaherty, who is part of a long list of prominent performers and professionals who she has built lasting relationships with throughout the years.

"I would be happy to recommend this book to any singer," said Joshua Greene, director of Cantalyrica Women's Chorus in New Jersey and Simon's voice teacher for over four years.

Simon is already making plans to write a second edition to her book. But in the meantime, she's taking dance lessons from Luigi, a renowned jazz dance innovator, alongside her classmate Liza Minelli, who recently asked Simon for a copy of her book.

For more information or to purchase a copy of the book, call Barbara Simon at (201) 798-5029 □