

Anita Hollander has been part of The Village Temple's music team for 30 years and children's choir director for 19 years. She has dedicated her life to the enhancement of others through art and advocacy, in a career that has included singing, acting, producing, directing, musical theater, television drama, composing, teaching and conducting. At age 21 Anita was diagnosed with neurofibrosarcoma, a former of cancer of the nerves. After surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and 5 years of walking and dancing in a leg brace, the cancer recurred. At age 26, her left leg was amputated. Anita went on to pursue her musical theater career, and became a tireless advocate of fellow performers with disabilities—and to build a beautiful family with her husband Paul Hamilton and their daughter Holland.

Q: What brought you to the Village Temple?

In 1983 I moved to NY as an adjunct professor at NYU and found Village Temple around the corner. I eventually started coming to services and loved them. In 1986, when I wanted to join but couldn't afford full dues, I offered my musical services to make up the difference, and the rest is history!

Q: Could you tell us about your first connection to Jewish music?

I was born into Jewish music. My dad was cantorial soloist at Fairmount Temple in Cleveland OH, and my sisters and I were singing before we were speaking! I honestly can't remember a time that I didn't hear Jewish music. Not only at temple, but my dad also loved the Israeli music on a local radio station.

Q: What are the requirements to join the Village Temple Children's Choir?

To join the children's choir you should be between 5 and 18 years old. It helps if you can read, but not entirely necessary. If you love to sing, make new friends, and can deal with rehearsals every Tuesday night 6-7 p.m., the Children's Choir may be for you.

Q: What are your goals for the kids who join the choir?

The VT Children's Choir motto is: We Support Each Other. The most important goal for me is that we are a group of people who care about each other and love to sing together. We are *ruach* [spirit] cheerleaders here to serve the congregation.

Q: You are a very active performer—most recently, starring in the Off-Broadway revival of Charles Ludlam's "The Artificial Jungle." What is the same and what is different about performing onstage and creating music for Shabbat services?

As I tell the children's choir, they don't call it "service" for nothing. We SERVE the congregation. That's what I feel I am doing when I create music for the temple. I am SERVING our congregation. When I'm onstage in a musical or play, I am PERFORMING for an audience. Singing at a service is not what I consider performing, and I tell the choir we should reserve the word "perform" for the Purimspiel, when we're actually doing a play (spiel) and not a service. The two jobs are alike (serving & performing) in that I'm expressing something that helps everyone to feel emotions such as joy, pain, celebration, mourning. In the theatre, I hope to inspire laughter, wonder, surprise, and depth of understanding. In the sanctuary, I mostly hope my music will

inspire comfort & healing in body and spirit. Having said all this, the two aren't that far apart! But while in theatre, I hope to hear laughter & applause, in Shul, I hope to hear **everyone singing along!**