



I was born in Paris, Texas, and attended college here in the Lone Star state, majoring in music. I'm self-taught on guitar and piano, both which I've been playing for close to 40 years. I've written almost 800 songs and have had a handful published and/or recorded — both solos and choral pieces.

My performing career has taken me to a variety of places, both figuratively and literally. Back when I lived in Nashville I did some studio work and the same holds true for my time spent in Los Angeles. I've worked with church groups, comedy improv groups, big bands, small bands, vocalists of all styles. I was even the singing emcee for a rare holiday traveling venue called the Santa Claus Express, an actual train that went from town to town doing Christmas shows. In short, I've spent my adult life as a working musician. If it's a venue that requires music, most likely I've done that gig at one time or another in this lifetime.

Back in the early 1980s my love for theatre prompted me to channel more and more of my energies in that direction. While in LA I had a revue of my songs, *Music By George*, performed at the Crossley Theatre theatre in Hollywood. Since moving back to Dallas in 1992 I've played guitar and/or piano for several local musical productions. There have also been occasions when I did the musical direction as well, particularly for my own shows. These shows, produced by the Pocket Sandwich Theatre in Dallas, had their beginning back in 1989, when Rodney Dobbs and I first got together to write *Dues and Don'ts of Dating*, featuring my music and lyrics with Rodney as the book writer. Since then, with Rodney sometimes being a co-lyricist, we've collaborated on other shows including *The Cloak* trilogy (a spoof of a 1940's radio hero featured in *Cloak and Dagger*), *Spy in a Mini-Skirt* and the latest, *Stars and Spies Forever*.

My involvement with the theatre scene in Dallas has afforded me the opportunity to work with a variety of production companies including Undermain Theatre, where

my musical direction on their production of *The Joy of Going Somewhere* Definite earned me a Leon Rabin nomination, a local theatre award. On Our Endeavors Theatre Collective production of *Gorey Stories* I was once again musical director and I'm pleased to say that show won a Leon Rabin award for best production of a musical that year.

In 1996 I received a commission from C.A.T.S. (Creative Arts Theatre School in Arlington, Texas) to collaborate with local playwright Natalie Gaupp to create a children's musical based on the Japanese folk tale, *Urashima Taro*. I've also written incidental music for various plays produced here locally, including Ms. Gaupp's drama, *Big Band*.

Most recently (2011) I've been working with the Plano Children's Theater in Plano, Texas, as pianist/arranger for *How to Eat Like a Child* and *The Boxer*. In addition I'm the pianist for the Pocket Sandwich Theater's popular popcorn throwing melodramas, for which I also compose incidental music. These include *Captain Blood*, *The Final Adventures of Hercules* and *Camp Death* — to name a few.

Having spent a great deal of my life inside the church walls, I'm very much at home with the people of faith and continue to enjoy many opportunities to share my music with fellow "seekers" on the way. A CD of mine from 2003 attests to as much even by its title, *Poet and Pilgrim: Reflections of One Man's Spiritual Journey*.

One important part of that journey has been connecting with kindred spirits and even more so kindred musical spirits. Certainly gospel music legend Cynthia Clawson falls into that category. It's primarily through her efforts that my songs have made the inroads into the mainstream they have. In fact "Words and Music," a song of mine Cynthia recorded, was nominated for a Dove award in 1980. A few years later she recorded "My Finest Hour" and it was the title cut on an album that was nominated for a Grammy. In more recent years, three of my songs ("Episode," "What About the Children" and "Doubter's Prayer") were featured on Cynthia's 2008 album, *Episodes*. In 2009, Cynthia and I collaborated with the music staff and choir of Wilshire Baptist Church to present *The Journey Home*, a concert that included several of my arrangements and a couple of original songs. My CD *Poet and Pilgrim* features a song that Cynthia and I co-wrote, "How Do You Build A Bridge (To That Other World?)."

My newest CD, *Songs Unsung ... Until Now*, is a recording of a solo concert I performed in January 2011. The program featured 19 of my original songs, both sacred and secular, that for one reason or another had never been performed publicly. (You can hear some samples and find out how to buy a copy on the Music page of this site.) Just recently I've been invited to sing one of those songs, "A Soldier's Prayer," at a Veteran's Day program in Columbus, Ohio, sponsored by Grace Brethren Church there.

In recent years I've begun performing with a variety of groups on the Dallas scene. I play tenor banjo and guitar in Matt Tolentino's *Singapore Slingers* — an orchestra specializing in music from 1900 to 1935. The Mark McKenzie Quartet, in which I play piano and guitar, offers straight-ahead jazz. Both of those groups have featured my arrangements and original tunes. I play piano in the Nobles of Note big band,

serve as accompanist for a vocal group called the AChord Trio, and can often be found sitting in or subbing in other groups.

As if guitar and piano weren't enough, I've taken up the tenor saxophone in my spare time (ha!) and play in the Wilshire Wind Symphony, a concert band at Wilshire Baptist Church. I've also written a handful of arrangements for the group, including "Theme for an Unknown Hero," which the band premiered on its 2011 patriotic concert.

Besides my performing and writing, I have done a good deal of teaching, both privately and in public schools – the latter through the auspices of Young Audiences of North Texas, a part of the Big Thought organization.

— George Gagliardi