

## Sunburst acquires a new audience - Gospel and Hospital Shows in New York area

Sandra Lang [Lowen]

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*Sunburst arrives at Harlem's Apollo Theatre*

Sunburst, the Korean Folk Ballet and the New Hope Singers have been seeking opportunities to perform in preparation for Yankee Stadium. Sunburst had several engagements in December, described here by one of Sunburst's members, Sandra Lang. Sunburst acquired a new type of audience as it began gospel and hospital shows in the New York area. With Larry Moffitt now serving as public relations man, Sunburst was able to make several contacts, including Bishop Billy Robinson of the Garden of Prayer Cathedral Church of God. The bishop provided two engagements for Sunburst in December.

The first was for the bishop's Sunday night radio broadcast over Station WADO, a popular "soul" radio station in the area, from his church. The dynamic young "Bishop Billy," as his congregation calls him, has a large following, estimated at over two thousand people. "They are good Christian people of character and heart," said Sunburst Director Frank Grow. "They respond to personal experience over what they read in the newspapers. And because we attend their revivals, several ministers have expressed interest in bringing their flocks to our revival in Yankee Stadium."

Bishop Billy introduced us as "Sunburst of the Unification Church" and described us as a fine group of Christians. He also announced that we would be featured at his upcoming gospel program on the following Friday evening. Despite the recent Daily News articles about our Church, no one batted an eyelash; the single selection, "O Happy Day," was warmly received by the congregation.

Revival tunes issued from Sunburst's rehearsal room all week as Sunburst worked up its new style of music. Only one member of the group, Rob Schwartz, has ever sung gospel music professionally before. Finally Friday came and we headed for the Apollo Theater, where the gospel program would take place.

The Apollo was "the" theater to perform at during the 1920's and 30's. Originally designed for vaudeville, the Apollo became a showcase theater for black artists desiring to enter the entertainment field. Many now-famous artists, such as Jimmy Durante and Ethel Waters, launched their careers there by being discovered by talent scouts in the audience. Even to perform at the Apollo was a major event in the life of an entertainer; some spent their whole lives just waiting for a chance to appear there. With the change of

the times and the neighborhood the theater has changed its character, but the greats still clamor to perform there.



*Bishop Bill Robinson invited Sunburst to participate in his gospel revival*

We not only performed there; our name appeared on the marquee (a surprise to the Sunbursters!), and we were seated on the stage in a place of honor. Although our music was gospel -- "O Happy Day," "A Place in the Sun" and "Father's House" (the latter an encore) -- it was very different from the foot-stomping, handclapping gospel presented by many of the other groups, and the atmosphere after Sunburst left the stage was "just entirely different," several people commented. Other churchmen present expressed interest in the group.

Gospel music was not Sunburst's only new direction for the month. We also visited the Bellevue Hospital and intend to schedule more service organization events, if possible. The hour long program featured instrumental selections, solos and group numbers.

One woman commented to Sunburst members after the show, "It is such a shame that the Unification Church is getting such bad publicity. But the Lord will make it come out all right." Many people expressed their shock at the disparity between the negative News report of two days before and the flesh-and-blood Church members before them. Needless to say, Sunburst was welcomed back to Bellevue, one of the largest medical facilities in New York. Representatives from other organizations present at the program sought to get the group to perform for them as well. The coming year promises to be very busy!