

Adrienne Torf

Local Girl Makes Good

by Barbara Stack

Adrienne Torf became a Smithie in 1973. She left after one year to become a rock-n-roller with the women's band, *Liberty Standing*. I talked with Adie on the afternoon of February 7, backstage at the UMass Fine Arts Center, a few hours before what would be her spectacular second debut to the Valley as Holly Near's pianist. Here's the scoop:

Northampton drummer Micki Faucher recalls the 19 year old drummer in *Liberty Standing*: "This was her first band. She didn't know about band practice, about equipment, about bars. But she could play anything-- disco, funk, accompaniment, rhythm, background, leads. Her parents were hassling her about playing rock n roll. But she was full of energy, enthusiastic, and very funny. She wasn't a feminist then. I wasn't a feminist then, either."

Micki sighed. Yup. We all *became* feminists. Let's not forget the becomings. "Anything else," I asked. Micki grinned. "She deserves it. She's good. She should be there."

Though she liked Smith "a lot," Adie decided to finish her degree (political science) at Stanford University in northern California. "I sold all my equipment and vowed I wouldn't be tempted by music until I finished school." As a student, she helped establish a women's newspaper, *Aurora*, which "served as a meeting place for women who considered themselves feminist thinkers and wanted to explore that together."

"In the summer between my junior and senior year Holly called me. I auditioned just before they did the *"Imagine My Surprise"* album. I wanted to do it very much, but I decided to stay in

school because I suspected that if I didn't get right back, I wouldn't finish." She finished.

"A year ago, in December, I heard that Holly was auditioning piano players again. I've been friends with J.T. Thomas (H's previous accompanist whose debut with H, as I recall, was in Amherst) since that first audition and when she told me she was moving back to New York, I called Holly up and said, 'I'm serious this time. I want to do it.' So just

after New Years 1980, I auditioned again and she offered me the job.

"I'm very happy. The work is like a dream come true for me. I'm meeting women in cities and rural areas all over the country and I hope I can do it forever. I'm interested in developing skills as a composer, but I want more education. Now I don't think it's necessary to go to school to get an education. I learn from people." Adrienne thinks a lot of Holly Near.

I asked Adie about the west coast, about San Francisco, where she lives with another former Northampton resident and musician, Kathy Piccus (who is happy, teaching special ed., and not doing music). "It's a blast, a lot warmer, a very comfortable place to live. I keep meeting people there who have moved out from the Valley." "No shit!" I replied, "to us it looks like you are all headed east." "Nope," she insisted. "You are all coming west."



Photo John Bunting