



Pianist releases soothing songs to serve others

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Standard-Examiner correspondent

MOUNTAIN GREEN -- Walking into Loydene Berg's home, it's impossible not to meet one of her best friends.

The black baby grand piano takes up a good portion of her living room and is symbolic of the many sorrows and strengths that have come to Berg in the last decade.

"Although I realize that pianos are inanimate objects, my grand has grown to be like a wonderfully close friend," said Berg, a Morgan County resident for about 18 years. "I've shared tender moments with my grand."

The piano has become a much-needed friend in the wake of the deaths of several family members. She lost her father and younger sister to cancer about 10 years ago, then she weathered the murder of husband Peter almost six years ago.

Ironically, the piano came to Berg through both her father and husband.

With financing from a portion of her father's life insurance and the insistence of her husband, the piano took up permanent residence in her home.

She finds playing music as essential in her life as eating and exercising, a healthy way to deal with grief and suffering.

"When I'm by myself, playing, I find that I can pour out all the feelings of my heart," she said. "My grand listens without judgment and then reflects all my feelings back to me."

And sometimes, just sometimes, she feels her husband in the same room, listening while sitting on the couch like he used to do.

And now, Berg has taken a big step -- she shares her musical therapy with others.

What began as a method of documenting her arrangements of LDS hymns -- because she didn't have the time to transcribe the notes to paper -- turned into a recording adventure that has spread primarily by word of mouth.

On Dec. 17, Berg officially released "But If Not," a CD of 11 tracks with special meaning to her, close family and friends.

Two of the songs are original compositions, complete with vocal elements.

"It was really putting something very personal out there," she said of the two songs that speak of mercy and grace in times of pain and adversity. "It was more of a risk."

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She made 1,000 copies of the CD in a whirlwind venture that wrapped up just in time to give some of them out as Christmas gifts.

She wouldn't have made this move if not for the "accidental" success of her first CD, titled "On Difficult Days," which she copied for friends and family in four batches of 100.

"I never started out to make a CD," said the Corinne native, who was trained as a classical pianist. "I had no idea other people would be interested."

After her father died, she composed her first song about her memories of him. She had studied composition and theory at Brigham Young University years earlier, and writing that first song sparked her desire to study music again.

"I started using music to express myself rather than just play," she said.

Playing for expression is something that intensified after losing her husband in a 2000 shooting rampage in Sandy.

"After Peter was killed, things were very tough. Playing the piano was the only time I felt sort of OK," she said. "I felt more like myself when everything else had changed. It became a comfort."

She never imagined she could comfort others using the same music that soothed her own soul. But she is glad that she can serve others around her despite her busy life working and parenting two children, Whitney, 18, and P.J., 22.

"When I get feedback that it helped others, it fills a need in me to give back and help others," Berg said.

"I don't always have the time to serve and notice others, and this is my way to serve. It is a way to make something good come of something hard, to feel hope and bring peace in a life of turmoil."

Berg's CDs are available for purchase on her Web site, loydeneberg.com.

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