
Comfort through Music

For the whole family

When my mother passed away suddenly some years ago, it was an unexpected and great loss to our family and community. My mother, in her 70s, was very active and deeply involved in the spiritual and musical life of the ecclesia. Music was her passion, and her guidance was felt in every praise and worship event, her presence a gift of love cherished by her family and many others in her circle of influence. Her loss ran deep and was far reaching. One of our family had put together a collation of her favourite music – spiritual, choral and classical pieces – which was played as background music at her funeral service. Afterwards, a CD was made of this music, and given to each member of the immediate family as a keepsake. Whenever I felt the need to remember my mother, to feel her presence, or the need to grieve this great loss, I would put on the CD and listen to the soulful but uplifting music.

For many months, the music would elicit tears and heartache, but I could feel that the grief was gradually being released as the tears flowed. As the months passed, the tears were replaced by quiet reflection, and eventually, by a great sense of peace.

I have told of this experience many times to others who have lost loved ones and have suggested that such a collection of a person's favourite music can be a valuable tool for healing. I have even put together a collection of my own favourites, music which feeds my soul, which could be helpful at the time of my own demise. There is connection and healing in music which brings us closer to those we love, even in death. Over time, the music reaches deep into the heart, releasing the grief and pain, and replacing it with a gentle and loving memory of those we have lost.

Ruth Stibbs

For parents

As a piano teacher, I can have close relationships with my students and their families and this is one of the endearing features of my job. One of my most difficult times as a teacher was when one of my long-term piano students died unexpectedly at 13 years. The trauma for this family was immense and in the early days after the funeral his Mum asked me to record all the pieces that he had been practising in the months before the tragedy. It was a small thing for me to do, but I know those recordings were listened to many times across many years. Music is strongly associated with both our emotions and memories and can provide some solace in times of great distress.

Louise Buttsworth

For an individual - Music during my illness

Besides prayer, music had the greatest effect on my mental state when I was receiving treatment for Lymphoma. Whilst undergoing treatment which I had twice as it returned a second time, which led to a Bone Marrow Transplant just over two (2) years ago I listened to a half hour of J S Bach every day, without fail. Mainly Bach's Orchestral Suites and the Brandenburg Concertos.

As well as this, every day I listened to two uplifting songs: 'God will make a way' by Don Moen and 'You Raise me up' by Josh Groban. Many days, I would listen and listen again, and again.

So, during much of 2019 and the first half of 2020, together with prayer, this music helped me accept where I was and what was to come. Music and Sacred Songs, no doubt helped put me in the right space. J S Bach, as well as the words and music of the songs listened to every day, will be remembered by me for a long time to come.

Barbara Clementson
