

Passion, practice and support

Pianist Michael Collins pursues his talent and finds the melody in life

You close your eyes and there's the seashore, moonlit waves rolling in from the horizon. You're not asleep. Though you're so relaxed you might be. It's simply the pleasure of listening to Michael Collins on a baby grand, playing Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata.

Whether he's weaving a musical tapestry to delight those attending The Alliance for Full Participation's reception at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, or he's launching the festivities at Looking Upwards' holiday celebration at Salve Regina University's Ochre Court, Michael Collins is a versatile musician who brings heart to whatever he's performing. Michael plays entirely by ear.

At the essence of Michael's talent is his sensitivity. His mother, Sheila Collins, remembers that as a boy Michael had a fascination with sound, a keen sense of hearing and an irresistible love of music. "Music always touched him to the point that some music would make him cry . . . Michael feels music differently. It's almost a physical presence for him."

Michael says he can't imagine life without music. It's been a compass in his life. After years of playing the family piano, at age 13 Michael at-



Michael Collins rouses the festive spirit during Looking Upwards' holiday celebration at Salve Regina University's Ochre Court.

tended Camp Belvoir in Lennox, Massachusetts. Belvoir is a music camp for children with William's Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that manifests in medical and developmental issues, with many children having a love and talent for music. It was there that Michael and his family came to fully realize the extent of Michael's abilities. Later Michael attended The Berkshire Music Academy, where he explored the work of baroque, classical and romantic composers as well as discovered he liked to sing.

According to Michael his biggest challenge in developing his talent has been practicing. "You have to learn a piece until you can memorize it. You keep on practicing over and over until you can get it right."

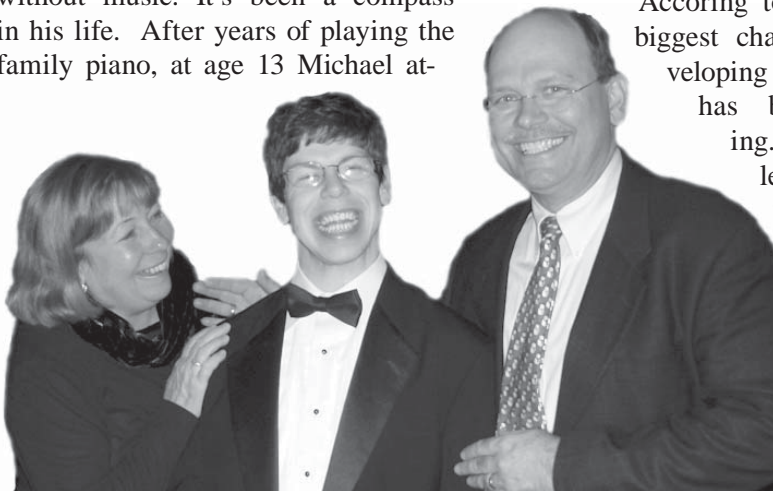
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Michael feels proudest of one night in December two years ago. "I was so nervous because I didn't want to sing at my first concert with the Navy Choristers. I did it. Now when I look back on it, it wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. I've been in more concerts with the Choristers and I'm not nervous now."

Mrs. Collins notes, "Looking Upwards has helped Michael with his anxiety and has found ways to bring his talents to others."

Michael beams as he talks about the music appreciation class he just co-facilitated. His advice to other young people who are working to develop their abilities, "Take deep breaths and relax . . . Know it's going to go well. Just get out there and do it."

Michael is available for hire for concerts and background music for a variety of occasions. For more information call him at 253-3344.



Michael with his parents, Sheila and Charles Collins.