



Playing a Familiar Tune

BY JADE SWARTZBERG

For the Brinton family, the joy of music and the love of the gospel blend in perfect harmony.

Nestled in a quiet neighborhood in Salt Lake City, Lindsey Brinton's home is alive with the sound of music. Perhaps this is only to be expected when your mother is a concert pianist. But 16-year-old Lindsey and her 18-year-old sister, Stephanie, who have studied the piano since they were 5 and performed in competitions and concerts across the world, appear to be following in the footsteps of their mother, Sally—and the three of them love to play together.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRAIG DIMOND



For example, last year, on September 11th, they performed together at Carnegie Hall in New York City. “It’s the best feeling to be sitting at the piano and look across to the other piano and see either my mom or my sister playing with me,” says Stephanie.

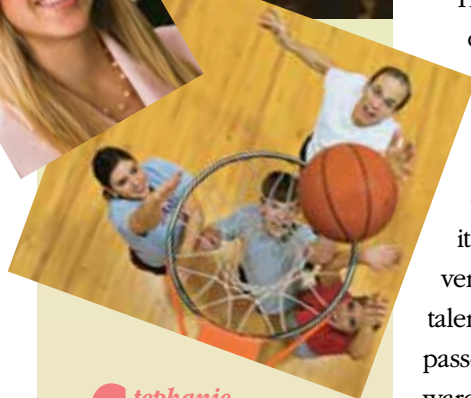
Lindsey says hearing her mom and sister play pushes her to do better. “It gives me motivation to continue practicing and learning because I have to be on par with them to play together.” And spending all that practice and performance time together has drawn them closer.

For the Brintons, music has been a family affair. There are seven children in the family, and all of them know how to play the piano, although only Stephanie and Lindsey chose to focus on it as their main instrument. From oldest to youngest: Jonathan plays the cello, Jason the trumpet, Erica the clarinet, Jessica the harp, Stephanie and Lindsey the piano, and Sam the cello—almost enough to start their own symphony.

As for their father, Gregory Brinton, if you ask him what he plays, he’ll tell you—basketball. And it seems Lindsey and Stephanie inherited that from him. Both have played on teams in high school and love to practice at home with their dad, although they have learned from experience that jammed fingers don’t do well on piano keys.

Family Traditions

Actually, the musical tradition started with Sally’s mother. As a little girl her mother lived in a rural area in Idaho, and she sold milk to earn money for piano lessons. She also managed to earn enough money to buy her first piano. Knowing that her mother had made sacrifices in her



Stephanie (above) and Lindsey love to share their music with each other and to perform with their mother. Their sports enthusiasm comes from their father, who gives them basketball tips they can use while playing on their school teams.

The Brinton family loves to play together (far right) even if it’s just for family home evening.

life to play the piano, Sally grew to love music as well, and she has passed this love of music on to her own children.

But mother and daughters agree that one of the main reasons they continue to play the piano is because of the joy it brings to others. “You have to make so many sacrifices to play the piano at high levels that it wouldn’t be worth it unless you have the reward of blessing other people’s lives,” says Stephanie.

This is why Lindsey can claim a standing ovation not only from a New York audience in Carnegie Hall but also from the Young Women and Young Men in her ward after she performed for an etiquette night activity. To the Brintons, it doesn’t matter how big or small the venue is as long as they can share their talents with others—another tradition passed down from Sally’s mother, who was ward organist for 30 years and never turned down an invitation to perform, including for the ward Christmas party.

That’s not to say the venues they play in aren’t prestigious. The trio has performed in major cities around the world—Cairo, Egypt; Naples, Italy; and Washington, D.C.—but they are also happy to play at a local nursing home and in church on Sunday. Some of their sweetest memories have come during these times.

For Lindsey, Stephanie, and Sally, playing music is a spiritual experience as well. They pray before performances not only that they will feel good about the way they played but also that others will feel the Spirit through their music.

“I like to think I may have influenced someone through my music, even in a small way, like if they are having a hard day and it helps them think about other things or think about how they can help others,” Lindsey says.

Family Support

Relying on prayer doesn't mean that Lindsey and Stephanie don't prepare for performances. Lindsey says she typically practices about two hours every day, but if she has a competition or performance coming up, she pushes it to three or four hours. As well as playing solos, the sisters play duets with each other or with their mother, so they need to practice together. Now that Stephanie is away from home at Harvard, coordinating their practicing is a challenge. They practice their pieces separately but make use of holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas when they are together to play their two-piano pieces. "A lot of two-piano playing isn't just knowing the notes; it's feeling the music together," says Lindsey.

With that much practicing, it isn't surprising that Lindsey's youngest brother, Sam, can whistle or sing every musical theme to every song that she plays. But even though the rest of the family hears Lindsey every day (and Stephanie when she's home), they are still supportive and go to all the concerts they can. This can be hard now that many of the Brinton children are married and have other

responsibilities. However, all except one were able to come with their spouses to the Carnegie Hall performance.

And Lindsey says that part of the fun of performing is knowing that her family will often be there to watch her.

As they have been blessed with opportunities to perform, Lindsey, Stephanie, and Sally have been able to attend Church meetings around the world. They find the same spirit in each setting. "It's wonderful to see that it is the same true Church in all areas of the world and that music has a powerful influence on everyone," says Stephanie. "Music crosses cultural boundaries, and so does the gospel. That's why they are complements of each other."

Any of the Brintons will tell you that music has enriched their lives. "There are profound spiritual experiences that come through beautiful music," Sally says. "It really is a wonderful feeling being able to share our love of music and our love of the gospel, and playing together is just so much fun."

Because of the gospel, the Brintons know they have the potential to be together forever, and that's another incentive to stay in tune, not only with each other but with the Spirit as well. **NE**

