

Interview of Jonathan Gullery about His Life and His Silent Meditation Album

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Jonathan at age six playing the family piano

Jonathan Gullery works with FFWPU USA's National Headquarters media team. He has been in the graphic design field for many years and also regularly plays piano and keyboard at events. Here he talks about the new album that HQ has just produced. He fills us in on some details from his very musical life.

Question: What was your inspiration for Silent Meditation?

I love the part of our church service when we call for Meditation. I am reminded of the line from Maltbie Babcock's classic hymn *This Is My Father's World*, "To my listening ears, all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres."

Even in the quietest note imaginable, the "magic" can still happen. This has always fascinated me. There are not a whole lot of magic moments left in our busy, online, immediate-gratification world. In meditation you close off your mind to the clutter of noise and allow it to organically follow inner paths. The exact same process exists in music, and this is where I've attempted to go with this album.

Question: Tell me about your first musical experiences.

My parents raised us in a small town in provincial New Zealand. I can remember their vinyl 45's of Irish singers. My dad could play a few tunes on the accordion and loved his harmonica. That accordion was a fixture in the house and he played those same tunes his whole life. My dad's mother had played piano in silent movies; something I imagined was a real feat that required a good musical vocabulary and the ability to improvise. We had a piano at the house and when I was around seven I started classical music training with the nuns. Sister Cecilia would give me a hard rap on the knuckles for every major mistake and a sharp look for minor ones. My big brother, Tim, was playing saxophone in a swing band. When I was about 14, their piano player got really ill, so I started playing with them every weekend. I had to learn how to read chords since they didn't use notes. I really began exploring musically a couple of years later and starting to buy my own vinyls. At the same time I played the huge old pipe organ at church and the smaller pump organ at school.

Question: Did you play professionally?

I played in a few rock and jazz bands, and once with a piano and double bass. I left my job at the local newspaper, moved to Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, and played there professionally. I eventually came to a realization that all the musicians I listened to and liked believed in something larger: They all talked about God, the light, or a divine consciousness. I felt I'd never discovered this through my Catholic upbringing or my search with Tibetan Buddhism. I began to feel that I didn't want to play piano anymore unless I discovered what these musicians were talking about.

One of the guys in my band had met a few people from the Unification Church. Together we went over to their house, and I recorded the visit in my notebook, being a newspaper man and all. I was fascinated to know what the group really believed and not just what the press said they believed.



Jonathan playing in a band in Wanganui, New Zealand in 1974

Question: How did you meet our church?

It was 1976, and one day, sitting quietly in my room, I heard a voice say, "America." And it wasn't like a voice in any conversation. It was something that I heard much deeper, like something you hear in your heart; like music that reaches beyond just your ears. It was real. I didn't even think to question the logic of what had just happened. The next day I started to plan out my travels. I sold everything I had in order to afford the expenses, including a huge vinyl collection that would be worth a lot today!

I arrived in Los Angeles on Christmas Day, and after a few weeks I made my way to San Francisco. I was approached by Ed Taub at Fisherman's Wharf, who walked up to me and simply asked what I was looking for. I replied with, "I'm looking for God." Ed invited me to a workshop and that's where it all began.

Question: Did you stopped playing altogether?

Through my many adventures with the Unification church, I found myself back in Oakland, CA. Rick Joswick, one of the church musicians, wanted to form a band and approached the Oakland Ministry directors who said, "Great idea, but do this in your free time." Free time meant after midnight prayer and before 5:00 am daily pledge service.

Regardless, Rick, Josh Cotter, Mark Ungar, Joe Taylor and myself started the Heart of Oakland band. We'd drive over to Hearst Street house in Berkeley after prayer, rehearse in Loyal DeLong's studio, and then drive back to Washington Street in San Francisco around 3:00 am, in time for pledge in the morning. Soon we were playing for church events, nightly programs, weekend workshops, and a few gigs at the UC Berkeley Campus.

Question: Why did people sing so much in Oakland?

Music was integral to the Oakland experience. Every gathering was anchored by song. Every program we did featured music before any Divine Principle presentation. No lecture started in a workshop without being preceded by several songs. The secret and magic power of music to open people's hearts was integral to our daily experience. God works through spirit, and sometimes it takes a little more than one song for people to stop listening to the clutter in their heads to actually open their hearts. Music dovetailed so much more organically into the Oakland lifestyle than anything I'd previously found. That was the way that new chapter in my musical life started.

Question: Have you had any musical experiences with True Parents?

Yes, I've had the opportunity to play for True Parents. Recently True Mother came to New York on her

way to Ghana. She visited National Headquarters, and made a point of stopping in the studio to listen to our Apple Heaven USA band play. For me, music is always about playing with the right heart. So I tried to open my mind and heart to playing what I was feeling.

I remember once playing background music at an event at East Garden. I was playing a bit of a mash-up of *Tongil* and *Home On the Range*. That might seem a bit odd, but they went really well together, and are actually about the same sentiment. I looked over and True Mother was tapping just one finger on the arm of the chair in time with the music.



Heart of Oakland band (left to right): Rick Joswick, Joshua Cotter, Jonathan Gullery, Joe Taylor and Mark Ungar playing at an Oakland church at Berkley Street House in 1979.

Question: We heard you love opera. Why?

I'm lucky enough to live in New York where I can get very cheap lottery tickets to the Met Opera. Every night they have some of the world's top talent, greatest productions, best conductors, and top opera orchestras into that opera house. When the lights go down, the performance on stage has no regard to who's in the audience. No matter how famous or humble anyone is, we all have the same capacity to be profoundly moved.



Apple Heaven at Madison Square Garden after the show

Question: Tell us about Apple Heaven and playing the Garden.

At Christmas 2016, our HQ musicians were asked to play at East Garden when True Mother was visiting. We took that opportunity for True Mother to give us some input on a name for the band – later we heard the band was to be called Apple Heaven USA!

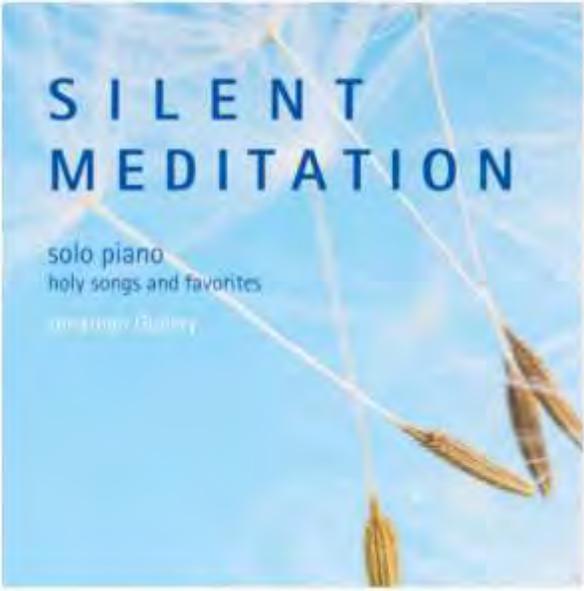
In 2017, when True Mother gave the landmark speech at MSG, Apple Heaven band in Korea was coming to perform with us as a united band. They came a week early to begin rehearsals right away. We all worked so hard to express the language of music through "magic," which turned out to be a huge success! Now our two bands are united in heart for life.

Question: Tell us a little bit about the album.

Little of the music on *Silent Meditation* was planned, and most of it was not arranged in any way. I usually sat down at the keyboard and let things work. I decided to focus on the quieter Holy Songs. Special thanks to the editing team for digitally bending my dubious rhythm and throw-away notes to some level of normalcy. Please listen -- enjoy -- and use when you want for your own moments of silent meditation.

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