

*from Joy of Music's Fall 2001 Newsletter*

*by Wendy Webster Ardizzone, Director*

Each of us has been deeply affected by the heartbreaking events of September 11. I am sure you have felt as I have at times, that there just isn't enough room inside of us for the magnitude of emotions we are experiencing in the aftermath of this tragedy as we move forward with our lives. During this time of recovery, many of us are re-evaluating our priorities and renewing our commitments to the people and things that are most important to us.

In the days that followed September 11, JOMP's future and that of all arts organizations seemed so fragile. A sentence from our vision statement suddenly took on a far deeper meaning than I had ever imagined when I wrote it. "We are dedicated to helping our students develop self-esteem and an inner relationship with music that is both empowering and comforting, something that becomes theirs to build on and draw upon for strength and enjoyment throughout their lives."

I was very grateful to have so many young people to focus on and so many families to communicate with as we fine-tuned our new schedule and came together again during that first week of the new school year. As I greeted students, many parents expressed how glad they were that their children had music in their lives and a music school like JOMP to come to. These comments helped me remember how far we have come in understanding how essential the arts are in the lives of children and in our adult lives. I hoped that this would not be forgotten during the economic downturn that was sure to worsen in the days ahead. It had been reassuring to hear how many people in New York City responded to museums reopening as soon as possible after this terrible disaster. Special concerts were scheduled to give people a chance to come in and find solace through hearing music and viewing works of art that were a testimony to humanity's ability to create beauty that has endured through the centuries.

I came down to Wesley during the wee small hours that Sunday morning, because I couldn't sleep. My goal was to get caught up on my work in the quiet peace of the empty church, but when I walked into my office, I took one look at the piano, and felt an overwhelming need to play - I hadn't played for two months. I brought all the emotions I'd been feeling for the past five days to several of my favorite movements from the Partitas by J.S. Bach. During the next hour and a half, I found a depth of beauty in those magnificent pieces I had never reached before. It was incredibly comforting to realize that these pieces, which had been written between 1726 and 1730, are still challenging us to master them, and still bringing enjoyment and healing to millions of people nearly three centuries later. Even though I was alone, the music made me feel as if I was playing for every soul that had been lost and for every person who grieved for them. I was finally able to weep freely, as I needed so badly to do.

Two weeks later, I received an extraordinary essay in the mail from one of our adult students. It was written on September 27, by a nun who lives in New York City. She had been going down to Ground Zero "to be a presence there" and do whatever she could. One of the coordinators of the relief area at St. Paul's Chapel discovered she was a pianist and asked if she would be willing to "provide some music for the workers who came into the chapel to sleep, eat, relax, pray or get medical help." I would like to share part of it with you:

"I felt really self-conscious when I first started playing, but only for a few moments. As the sound of Bach filled the chapel, I began to realize how badly it had been needed. Within moments, the music took hold of the place, and I realized that everyone, including myself, was getting a desperately needed shot of sheer beauty. What a relief! It was as though everyone who had been laboring on the smoldering mounds for so long was starved for beauty. How fine to put Bach into the air! It felt as though those present soaked it up, workers who probably don't normally listen to Bach, maybe haven't even heard of Bach..."

"...Harmony. Counterpoint. Rhythm. It was all so needed at Ground Zero. I never expected, when I began going down there, to play music at the site of the worst act of terrorism in history. I never expected, when I trained as a classical musician, that this gift would be used to help revive exhausted, grieving firefighters and police officers, in a little chapel turned into a relief station. As I played, I looked down at my feet. The grand piano was surrounded by hard hats, rubber boots, bottles of water, rappelling gear, bags of granola bars. It was so incongruous, yet so perfectly right. I thank God for the opportunity to bring a little beauty into that tortured scene of unbelievable destruction, to men and women who had laid their lives on the line, and are now my heroes..."

"...I pray that the extraordinary heroism and courage of ordinary people can someday be directed...into building a world that reflects the intricate and beautiful harmony of a Bach fugue." Sr. Helena Marie, CHS ([www.chssisters.org](http://www.chssisters.org))