



FROM MY HEART TO YOURS

A Poem About Autism

A poem about autism? What? What could I possibly know less about? But the call intrigued me. It was the Crawford Gates, composer of renown asking me to write a poem for him to put to music—about autism. Some friends in Washington had a son with autism and had traveled the country to learn from conferences and symposiums about how to help him. How to cultivate understanding in these venues?

Music, Crawford was told, can reach the human spirit like no speeches or essays or pleadings might. Why not a piece by Crawford? With a poem to make his music to? And how about me to produce one?

The idea sent me on a journey as if I were in school again--to books and interviews, stories and case histories. What I found was a lot more than material for a graduate paper. Here was poignance alive.

Learning about autism and how it affects both the one with it and the one taking care of that person was beyond fascinating. Of course the poem needed to be more than about a disability. How about from the point of view of the boy? I wrote one. No. Not right. It had to include the other, the one devoted to his wellbeing.

And so--a dialogue between a mother and a boy. How better to tell their story? Crawford found the perfect singers, Contralto Doris Brunatti and boy soprano, Jacob Kenison, with Georgia Gates at the piano. Here is *From My Heart to Yours*.

Emma Lou Thayne

And the poem:

4/3/12
EMMA LOU THAYNE
AS SET TO MUSIC

FROM MY HEART TO YOURS

To the wondrous people who care

From the person with autism they care about

(BOY)

“LOOK AT ME, SEE ME,” YOU SAY AS YOU TRY

TO BRING ME SOMEHOW OUT OF MY SHELL.

YOUR WORLD IS SO FULL OF NOISE AND CONFUSION

MY SILENCE A DEEP FAMILIAR WELL.

(MOTHER)

HERE I AM READY NO MATTER THE YEARS

WE’LL SEARCH OUT WAYS FOR YOU TO AWAKEN.

OTHERS WHO KNOW CAN TAKE ON YOUR STORY.

TOGETHER WE’LL FIND A PATH NOT TAKEN.

(BOY)

SEE ME THEN--EVEN WHEN I AM IN A TANTRUM.

MY SPIRIT IS SCREAMING TO SHINE –IT’S TRUE

MY WAYS MAY BE DIFFERENT,

I’M TEASED AND LEFT OUT,

BUT INSIDE I PROMISE I AM JUST LIKE YOU. LIKE YOU.

(MOTHER)

YES, TELL ME, I LONG
FOR A SPOKEN CONNECTION
A WORD, A SIGN,
NO THOUGHT OF REJECTION. REJECTION, REJECTION.

(BOY)

PICTURES NOT WORDS
TELL ME HOW TO BE.
A FRIEND IS SOMEONE
WHO'S NICE TO ME.

(MOTHER)

WHEN YOU PUT THINGS TOGETHER
YOU WALK ON A CLOUD.
GARDENING OR DRAWING
YOU MAKE US BOTH PROUD.

(BOY)

EXPECT WHAT YOU WILL
JUST KEEP ON WITH HOPE.
YOU CAN MAKE IT O.K.
WHEN I CAN'T COPE.

(MOTHER)

YOU KNOW THAT I WILL

EVEN TIRED OR SCARED
WITH YOU I AM STRONGER
FOR WHAT WE HAVE SHARED.

(BOY)

MY HEART PUMPS ITS RHYTHM,
MY BREATH BRINGS ME LIFE

(MOTHER)

YOUR BRAIN AND ITS MYSTERY
IS WHAT BRINGS YOU STRIFE

(BOY)

MY OWN SELF FOR SURE
SOMETIMES TUNED IN AND CALM

(MOTHER)

MORE OFTEN DISTANT--
PLEASE KNOW YOU BELONG.

(BOY)

I'M BEWILDERED BY YOUR TOUCH
BUT YOU LOVE ME, I KNOW.

IT'S MY LOVE FOR YOU

I'M UNABLE TO SHOW

(MOTHER)

I MUST ASK FOR HELP FROM OTHERS

BUT PATIENCE I FIND
SO HARD TO KEEP MAINTAINING
I FIND IT HARD TO KEEP ON MAINTAINING.

BUT A POWER LIKE WIND
ALIVE IN TREES
RESCUES US BOTH
WHEN I'M CRYING "PLEASE!"

(BOY)

DON'T GIVE UP, DON'T I BEG
AS I'M TURNING AWAY
AS I'M TURNING AWAY

(MOTHER)

NOT EVER. GIVE UP?

NO, NOT EVER

I'M NOT TURNING AWAY.

I'M NOT TURNING AWAY

(BOY AND MOTHER)

LOVE IS OUR STRENGTH

MY HEART TO YOURS

WE'LL EMBRACE

A NEW DAY. NEW DAY. NEW DAY