

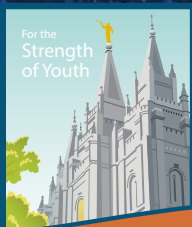
*I couldn't understand why I was always in such a bad mood until I started listening.*

By Natalie Harker

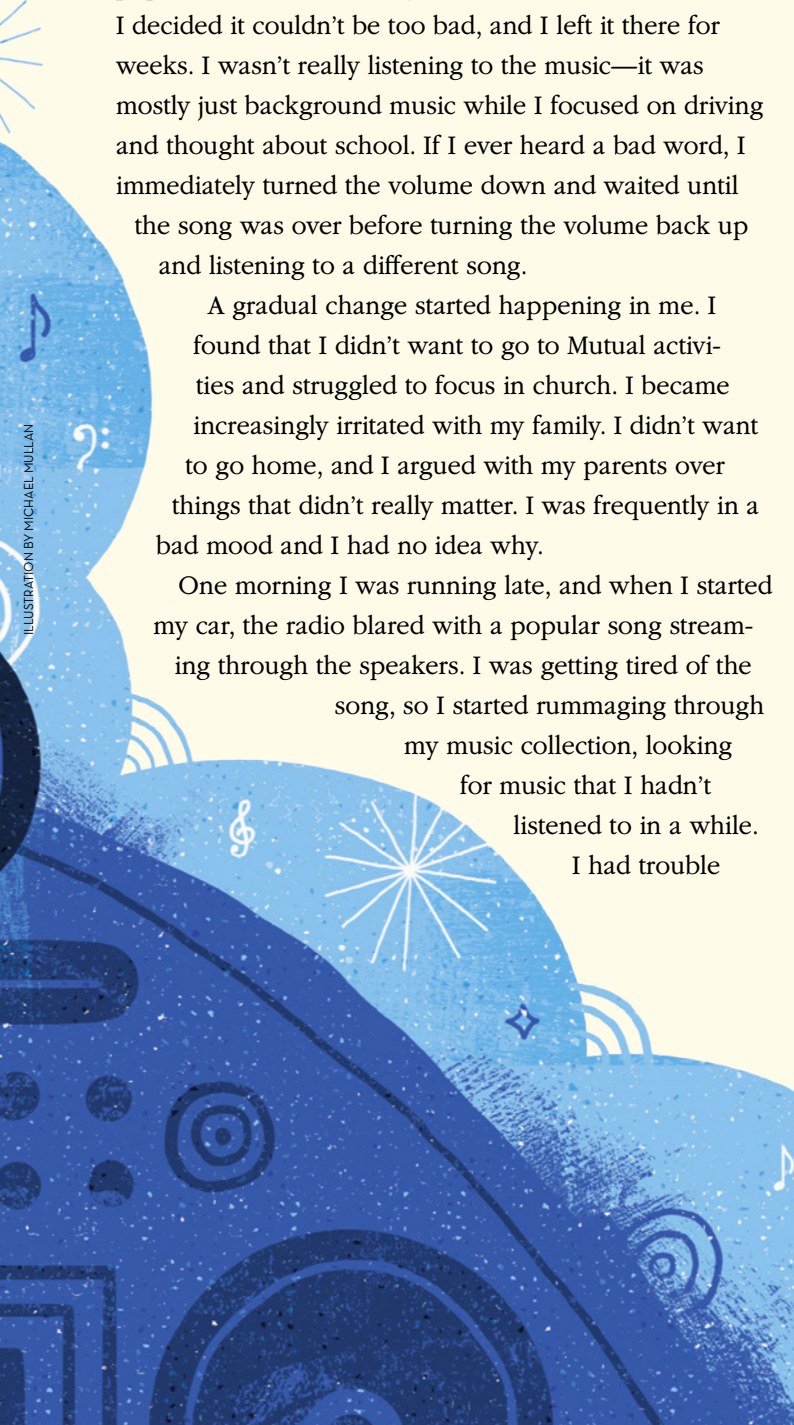
I decided to enroll in early-morning seminary, and I was eager to learn. Every morning I woke up at 5:00 a.m. to get ready for school, and then I drove to the seminary building. I was amazed at how much I enjoyed early-morning seminary.

A stylized illustration of a woman's profile in shades of blue and black. She has long, wavy hair and is wearing a yellow dress with colorful polka dots. The background is filled with musical symbols like notes, treble clefs, and bass clefs, as well as clock faces and a sun. A large dark blue circle in the center contains the title text.

# A LITTLE off KEY



MUSIC



Halfway into my early-morning seminary experience, I grew tired of my usual music collection and decided to turn on the radio. I didn't listen to the radio often, so I turned the station to a popular one that I knew my friends listened to. The station streamed fast-paced, popular music that I recognized from school dances. I decided it couldn't be too bad, and I left it there for weeks. I wasn't really listening to the music—it was mostly just background music while I focused on driving and thought about school. If I ever heard a bad word, I immediately turned the volume down and waited until the song was over before turning the volume back up and listening to a different song.

A gradual change started happening in me. I found that I didn't want to go to Mutual activities and struggled to focus in church. I became increasingly irritated with my family. I didn't want to go home, and I argued with my parents over things that didn't really matter. I was frequently in a bad mood and I had no idea why.

One morning I was running late, and when I started my car, the radio blared with a popular song streaming through the speakers. I was getting tired of the song, so I started rummaging through my music collection, looking for music that I hadn't listened to in a while. I had trouble

finding something, and I kept thinking, "Just leave it, you're already going to be late!" Still, I kept looking and settled on the soundtrack of a fun animated movie I enjoyed.

My mood changed. For one week I left that soundtrack playing in my car, and my mood immediately took a turn for the better. I focused on church more, eager to feel the Spirit and become closer to my Heavenly Father. Then one day, as I drove to seminary, I thought about what could have been the cause of my sudden sour mood and what had fixed it. I offered a prayer in my heart for the answer so I could prevent it from happening again.

Then it hit me: even though I hadn't been listening to the messages of the lyrics, the songs played on the radio station I'd been listening to didn't have an uplifting spirit to them. Even when the message wasn't bad, the sound of the music was dark. The music, which I'd only left on for background music, had started affecting my spirit, without my even realizing it.

I'm not saying all popular music is bad, but I learned that day that it isn't just the lyrics we need to focus on when choosing good music but also the feel of the music as well. I started asking, "If I just listen to the sound of it, how does it make me feel?" I am so grateful to my Heavenly Father for teaching me this lesson. Music is a very powerful thing. Wholesome, spiritual music can bring us almost as close to our Heavenly Father as prayer does, but music that doesn't possess these qualities can drive us dangerously far away from Him. I love music, but I love my Heavenly Father more, and I'm grateful He has provided music that brings us closer to Him. **NE**

*Natalie Harker lives in Utah, USA.*



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