



A SONG FOR MANON

What was originally envisioned as an evening's entertainment grew into an outpouring of love for an individual young woman.

By Richard M. Romney
Church Magazines

The young women were excited. In fact, the entire ward in southern France was excited. To encourage greater unity, leaders were planning a ward social, with dinner and entertainment. Knowing that the Beehives, Mia Maids, and Laurels had already been learning songs and dances during some of their activities, the leaders invited them to provide the evening's entertainment.

And so the ward's young women began practicing in earnest—all of them but one. Manon would not be able to perform. She had been undergoing cancer treatments for more than two years.

Manon C., age 16, still came to meetings and activities as often as she could, and she always shared a bright smile despite what she was going through. But during chemotherapy she was sometimes too weak to do much more than rest. Ward members had fasted and prayed several

times on her behalf. No one expected her to practice or to dance.

But she *could* attend the dinner. So why not dedicate the evening to Manon?

A Dedicated Evening

The idea quickly caught on.

"We wanted Manon to feel the ward's love and support for her," explains Emma S., 16. "If our ward wanted to become more unified, what better way to do it than by working together to show our love for Manon?"

The entire ward became involved in the preparations. Families received assignments to bring food for the dinner; the Relief Society helped make costumes for the young women; the young adults provided technical support (lighting, sound, and background videos) for rehearsals



From left: Emma wrote a song, young women performed, Manon was guest of honor, and youth and leaders all helped.

and the final performance; and priesthood brethren helped set up tables and chairs.

All of this work was done by ward members spread out over a large area. “The youth in the ward are very close in spirit, but we live far apart,” says Aiolah V., 16. “We don’t see each other in school because we live in different parts of town, so we make an extra effort to ensure that no one gets left off to the side.”

“We also stay in touch all the time, thanks to cell phones,” says Inka S., 15. “We teach each other by sharing our different experiences. We know we can count on each other, and we try to set good examples for each other.” The young women, who love being together whenever they can, found that rehearsals for the dinner show provided additional opportunities to deepen friendships.

“Before we started rehearsing, I was quite shy,” Inka explains. “I was afraid of making a mistake. But when we danced as a group, I put my shyness aside. I knew it was time to show the ward how hard we had worked.”

Manon, for her part, was both humble and gracious. “When they told me about the dinner and show and that I’d be the guest of honor, I thought I’d be bothered that they were making a fuss,” she recalls. “On the other hand, I was excited to be there!”

A Show of Love and Support

Soon the evening arrived, and it was a perfect occasion to offer love and support for Manon. “The food, of course,

was excellent,” Aiolah says. “This is France, after all!”

And then the entertainment—called a *spectacle* in French—lived up to its name. Games, vocal presentations, and dances delighted the audience. Then the young women, as a combined choir, provided the highlight of the show. They dedicated a song to Manon, a song Emma wrote and composed herself. The lyrics in the chorus sum up the love and support everyone wanted Manon to feel:

*Please don’t give up,
‘Cause we believe in you,
And don’t forget who you are,
‘Cause we believe in you.*

As the young women performed the song, it was as if everyone in the ward were singing along, at least in their hearts. It felt like Emma’s simple song was transformed into an unsung chorus that resonates in the hearts of Latter-day Saints wherever they are—an anthem of courage and compassion; family and friends; unity, faith, and hope; a never-ending prayer that is heard in heaven.

The leaders’ intent in organizing the social was to unify the ward. Dedicating the evening to Manon not only helped to accomplish that goal but also generated an enduring sense of support for Manon and her family and an understanding that every child of God is important. “It is the goal of the Church to help us be closer to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ,” Aiolah says. “We know that They love us and that we are never alone.” ■