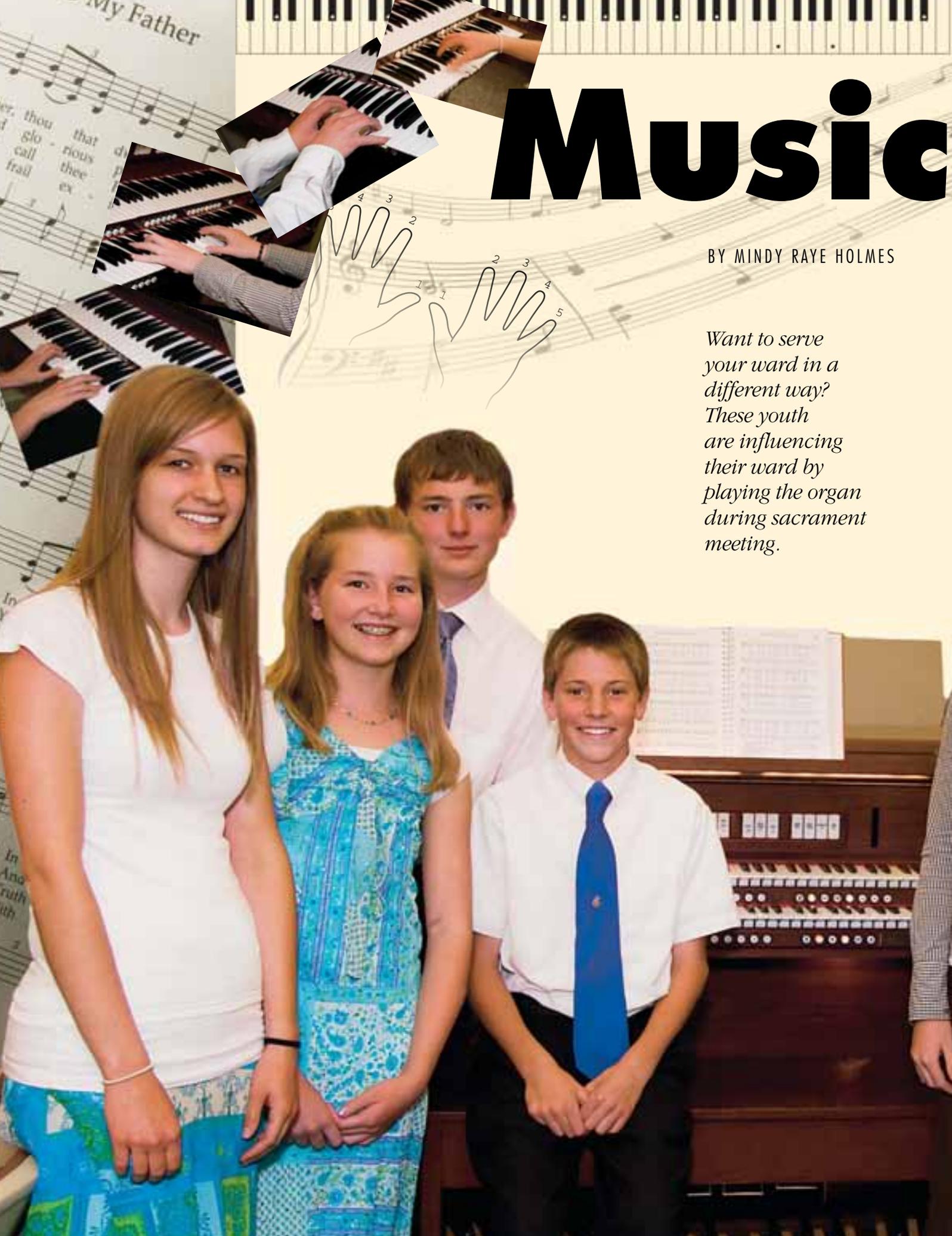


Music

BY MINDY RAYE HOLMES

*Want to serve
your ward in a
different way?
These youth
are influencing
their ward by
playing the organ
during sacrament
meeting.*





Makers

Sacrament meeting is going to start in a few minutes, and Steven Forsyth, 13, is well prepared. He isn't going to speak, though; he's going to play the hymns.

Steven warms up by practicing the hymns he will be playing for the meeting. The ward organist, Kathy Craven, sits nearby to help with whatever he needs. Marla Bishop, the ward chorister, stands next to the organ and

conducts the hymns as Steven practices, making sure he is following the beat. "Remember to hold that for three counts," Sister Bishop says, pointing to one of the notes. Ward members continue coming in and taking their seats while Steven plays in the background.

Five minutes before the meeting starts, Sister Craven takes over playing the prelude music. Steven sits near the organ and watches her, shifting nervously as he waits to play the opening hymn. He has nothing to worry about, though; he plays all three hymns for the meeting beautifully.

"I get very nervous the week I'm supposed to play, and my hands get all sweaty," Steven says, "but it's a good feeling afterwards."

Some people may think it's unusual for someone as young as Steven to play the organ for sacrament meeting, but for the Parkway Eighth Ward in South Jordan, Utah, young players are a regular occurrence. Steven is just one of seven youth in this ward who take turns playing the organ for sacrament meeting.

Switching to the Organ

The youth involvement started when Sister Deanna Sorensen, the former ward organist, was going to retire from her job as a schoolteacher and go on a mission. There was only one other person in the ward who could play, so Sister Sorensen decided to teach some of the youth who already played the piano how to play the organ.

"Sister Sorensen was always talking about how the world needs more organ players," says Emily Holbrook, 17.





Emily decided to learn the organ when Sister Sorensen was tutoring her in math and mentioned she would be teaching the organ. Emily thought it sounded exciting and wanted to learn how to play.

The most important thing she and the other students would learn was to hold down the organ keys for the duration of the notes, because unlike a piano, an organ has no sustain pedal. An organ also has two keyboards, a number of foot pedals, and things called stops, which change the type of sound that comes out of the organ.

Learning the organ can be difficult, but these youth have put in the effort and received

support from their leaders and parents. And they know their efforts make a difference.

“It’s really blessed our ward because we’ve all developed a greater love and appreciation for the hymns,” Sister Craven says. She also says the ward has grown closer as they’ve come together to support the youth.

“A lot of people come up and give me compliments and they seem really happy the youth are helping out,” says Landon Howard, 14, another organist.

Overcoming Fear

Playing for sacrament meeting was not easy at first. Lauren Howard, 17, remembers being nervous. “I was terrified,” she says. “I remember my hands were just shaking.” All the youth admitted they were scared, but they did it anyway.

“I knew it would be a good experience and it would help me overcome my fear of playing,” Lauren says. “And now it has. I’m a lot better than I was my first time.”

The key to overcoming fear, they learned, is putting effort into preparation.



"I just practiced a lot," says Randon Fullmer, 13. The other youth agreed that practice helped them overcome nervousness. They also relied on the Lord.

"I think that the Lord has helped me play by calming my nervousness before I play," Steven says. "I pray before I play, and it helps me play better, without too many mistakes."

A Life-Enriching Experience

These students started taking lessons so they could learn a skill and help their ward, but in the process they learned a lot of other things.

"I know Heavenly Father is there," says Jenny Forsyth, 16. "I know that I can't do it without Him."

Sharli Fullmer, 11, the youngest of the group has learned that "your testimony can grow when you sing and play because the hymns teach you truth."

Sister Craven says the youth have also learned how to magnify a calling. They choose the hymns they would like to play, subject to approval from the ward music leader and the bishop. And not one of

them has ever missed a Sunday assignment. Learning to play the organ will prepare them for future callings, especially if they are somewhere an organist is needed.

"I think it could be a good talent to use on a mission, for example," Landon says.

Advice for Learning Something New

Many youth at some point have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument, and some have the chance to play in sacrament meeting. The youth of the Parkway Eighth Ward know youth can be successful at both.

"Stick with it; don't give it up," Emily says. "A lot of people do it because their parents want them to. Or they get really discouraged because they're not doing very well. I say just have fun with it and have a good attitude."

"Pray to Heavenly Father that He will help you, and practice really hard and practice a lot," Jenny says.

It's the positive attitude, practice, and reliance on the Lord that has helped them to play and to serve, something they do so well that the members of their ward are excited to look and see who is playing. **NE**

A REVERENT INFLUENCE

"Music is of enormous importance in our worship services. I believe that those who choose, conduct, present, and accompany the music may influence the spirit of reverence in our meetings more than a speaker does. God bless them."

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Reverence Invites Revelation," Ensign, Nov. 1991, 22.

