

"All Shall Be Well".....The Story Behind the Song

I remember falling in love with T.S. Eliot's poem, "Little Gidding," when I was in college, especially these words at the end of the Four Quartets:

"We shall not cease from exploration, And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started , And know the place for the first time....."

"....And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well...."

This last part was a quote from Julien of Norwich, a 14th century woman Christian mystic. She was speaking this wise and comforting message from her own deep religious experience, at a time of turmoil when England and France were embroiled in the bloody Hundred Years War....And now, 700 years later, those words echo down through the centuries, and, at least for me, they inspire as much hope and gladness now as they ever did. It really is a perfect message for our complicated and challenging times.

Fast Forward to the winter of 2018, and the Positive Music Awards in Tampa, Florida. JD and I had managed to wrangle a keyboard up to our hotel room, and I was hiding out there one morning during the conference, having decided to skip the business meeting downstairs. Pretty soon there was a knock on the door and Megon McDonough and Karen Drucker bustled in, explaining that they were bored with the business meeting too, so how about writing a song together, and wasn't it handy that I already had a keyboard all set up?

Even if nothing came of it, I knew it would be lovely to hang out with these two, tossing inspiring ideas back and forth....Karen with her great sense of humor and affable creativity, and Megon, who looks like an adorable Irish pixie and has the voice of a kick-ass angel....so we dived in. Megon said she had always loved the "All Shall Be Well" quote from Julien of Norwich, so we started with that.

I was sitting at the keyboard noodling around with what felt like an iconic Celtic melody and chord structure, while Karen and Megon were immersed in a creative conversation in another part of the room.

Meanwhile, back at the piano, I began to hear phrases I had memorized in my 4th grade Sunday School class....lines from the 23rd Psalm. I will point out that this is about the only thing I can quote from the Christian Bible, but those Psalms (from the old testament) began as songs after all, and even if we don't have that ancient music, the lyrics are still full of beautiful poetic imagery. In my mind I could see the still waters, and feel myself walking through those green pastures.

It had been a long time since fourth grade, and I ran up against some memory gaps in the text, but it ending up working in our favor because then Karen and Megon and I could fill in the

missing pieces with our own personal sensory images, which we liked better anyway. Soon we had the first 2 verses and agreed on the melody and chords for the chorus, happily singing "All Shall Be Well" over and over again.

I suggested starting a 3rd verse with "Surely goodness and mercy will follow.....and love will be leading the way...." and then it was time for lunch, so we agreed to leave it unfinished and wait for further inspiration.

Later that afternoon I was sitting alone in the downstairs hotel lobby, spacing out and enjoying not having to think about anything, just looking idly out the window....when, out of the blue, with the force and authority of thunder clap, (and I am not kidding here) these words sounded clearly in my head for the second half of that unfinished verse: "Every shadow will shine, in the fullness of time, and bloom in the hearts of the Brave."

What?!? Tears sprang to my eyes, and I got a full-body chill. YES, that's it! I completely saw it, and felt it all the way through, and it made perfect sense. It felt prophetic. Plus, it rhymed! And then....my inner English teacher started strolling through my mind with her red pencil and her prissy attitude, and she said, "You know, you're mixing your metaphors here, right? And how can a shadow bloom? Especially in the hearts of the Brave. And who are the Brave, anyway? You've really stepped over the line here, girl, and I'm going to have to mark you down."

This intervention was annoying, because I was quite sure I had heard the voice of God, or at least one of her more earnest literary representatives, who also looked a little like Joan of Arc in my mind.

I have to say that this criticism knocked me off balance for awhile, and it made me question my own direct and personal creative process. Was I crazy? After all, I was hearing voices. Or was I really tapping into a higher inspiration?

Once I recovered my balance, I went ahead and presented those lyrics to Megon and Karen anyway, and although it did take a little time for them to sign off on the words, and on that strong and unusual image, they both eventually agreed that the song as a whole turned out exactly right.

Anyway, the second half of that last verse makes JD tear up, and that's good enough for me.

We hope you will sing along with us.....