

## Music Saved My Life: How I Survived My Parents, A Difficult Marriage, Crazy Religion, and Being Gay

**Grant H. Reynolds**

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*Music Saved my Life is a heartfelt musician's memoir that covers instances of survival and self-transformation.*

Grant H. Reynolds's memoir is compelling in discussing the importance of music.

Reynolds fell in love with the piano when he was seven years old. His piano lessons were an early source of solace, giving him the opportunity to express and explore his feelings. At home, his parents refused to express their own emotions; they didn't want Reynolds to do so, either. He endured constant barbs about his perceived lack of masculinity, fostering personal insecurity.

Because of these experiences, Reynolds grew up feeling vulnerable and longing for love. Later, though he was gay, he married a woman; their marriage fell apart. Reynolds is matter-of-fact in revealing information such as that he cheated on his partners; such admissions come sans attempts at justification. But through every change, Reynolds could count on the piano, going to it to release his concerns or to escape.

Though its accounts are most often shared in chronological order, there are also flashbacks and peeks forward as the book progresses. Throughout, Reynolds's feelings, and the sources of them, are captured with great clarity. His conflicting emotions surrounding his sexual orientation are related in particularly tangible terms, including his initial fear and confusion upon realizing that he was gay, which at first battered his already fragile sense of his own masculinity. As the book progresses, Reynolds's growing comfort with himself is apparent, though it also fluctuates at times, seeming absent at key moments in his tale. Still, the book works toward the triumph of Reynolds's coming out to his two children—a resonant scene that balances his fear with their acceptance of him.

Though the book works to mix the good with the bad, this also leads to some troubling scenes. Reynolds recalls how a gay classmate's breakup was met with joy by his own father, who wanted him to date women; the classmate was pushed toward a reconciliation with his father that is under-interrogated, making the story an odd fit within Reynolds's tale. More engaging are the constant expressions of Reynolds's deep love of music, which underlies the whole book. It was his passion and his profession, and each significant narrative event is complemented by references to music.

Working toward a reflective ending that expresses gratitude for safe spaces for self-expression, *Music Saved my Life* is a heartfelt musician's memoir that covers instances of survival and self-transformation.

CAROLINA CIUCCI (June 24, 2022)

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