

October's Song



October sings of birth and death, the melodious happy sounds recalling my daughter Alicia's birth on October 25, 1985, and the harsh discords of my son Danny's death on October 31, 2007. October's song is composed of the spectrum of life's emotions, the joy of the birth of a child, the pain and sadness of the death of one. The lyrics of October's song reflect the changing colors of the season, the changing emotional moments of the cycle of life. The melodies are full of highs and lows, the soft chords that bring out the harmonies of life, and the sharps the touch the depth of life's losses.

October's song needs to be sung, but not alone. It needs a chorus made up of different voices: basses, tenors, and sopranos, complimenting and supporting each other the way families and communities, celebrate our joys and sustain us through our sorrows. Music transcends months, seasons, time but respects and reflects the changing moment's life brings. A song is really never played or sung the same way twice because we are always confronting and rocked by life's changes, especially if we risk being close to others as parents, friends, family, fellow travelers on life's journey.

Before October 31, 2007, October's song was always a happy one. It was the month we looked forward to our daughter birthday: six, twelve, eighteen, twenty-one, and now twenty-three. Each year I gave her a rose for each year of her life. She is the flower of my life, blossoming now more than ever because the son I love so much, her beautiful brother, his mother's marvelous gift, is no longer with us, lost on October's last day.

Danny sang, left his lyrics and music to brighten even the darkest October day. Danny's October song is unfinished, still being composed by those who loved him, learning to live without his smile, sense of humor, sensitivity, openness to others. The lyrics and melodies are being written as music's memory, drawing on remembering Danny, especially his songs, and the sounds Danny's spirit evokes in our hearts.

October's song is that of anyone who celebrates life: births, deaths, challenges in-between, seeking harmony in discords, clarity in confusion, hope in despair, light in darkness, open to the opportunities each new day brings. October's song is classical, rock, folk, rap, country, and spiritual, an evolving reflection of the music of life. October's song is familiar but new each year, much as the colors of autumn are similar but different every October. October will always be happy and sad because of the celebration of life and death it brings, but October's song will always be filled with gifts given and received, discovered and yet to be found, especially the joy of songs composed of life's lyrics and melodies.

Frank Riley
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