

R PEOPLE [Uniquely Nevadan]



Music Defines a Surgeon's Life

WRITTEN BY JUDITH HARLAN

What three things do playing the piano and performing surgery have in common? Creativity, artistry and skill, says Louis A. Bonaldi, MD, F.A.C.S.

The music and medicine combo, which makes sense for Bonaldi, an accomplished pianist and surgeon, twists the mind at first, but stop and think about what it takes to do both well. Both begin with innate ability and require years of training and concentration to get them right.

Bonaldi comes by his music artistry naturally. His father, Burt Holiday, is a musician-comedian who gained fame in the 1950s as part of The Gaylords. The group's pop hits included "The Little Shoemaker" and "Isle of Capri" and were sung by the greats of the era — Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland.

Just a few years ago, Louis Bonaldi appeared with his father at New York City's Carnegie Hall. He was billed as a featured pianist, he says. And it was a big moment, but he's had big moments in surgery, too.

From Music to Med School

"A huge part of the field of plastic surgery demands creativity and imagination," Bonaldi says. He was drawn away from music when channeling his talents into medicine as an undergraduate at the University of Nevada, Reno in the early 1970s.

He switched majors from music to biology, went on to Nevada's medical school, and followed that with two years at Tufts University School of Medicine. Then there was a residency in San Diego, a research fellowship at



Dr. Bonaldi plays everything from classical to rock music on his piano; his own compositions, however, run toward light rock and jazz. Music is his second passion, but medicine is his first. Photo by Jeff Spicer.

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the University of California, San Diego, and a six-month microsurgical fellowship in Australia. After eight and a half years of training, he was firmly in the field of medicine.

Tuning in to Surgery

Bonaldi used his microvascular surgery training to work with post-cancer and post-trauma reconstruction and limb reattachment. His 1992 work on James and Jennifer Stolpa, who'd been lost in a snowstorm and severely frostbitten, won him national fame and a feature on *The Today Show*.

Most recently, he's turned his attention to cosmetics and performing plastic surgery at

Reno's Center for Plastic Surgery. "The most challenging surgery is facial surgery," he says. "There's so little room for error; you have to be precise and demand a lot of yourself."

And does that kind of concentration leave any room for music? Absolutely yes, Bonaldi says. He's writing music, cutting a demo CD, and he plays for his church. The Bonaldi beat goes on for this piano-playing plastic surgeon. **R**

Judith Harlan is a Reno freelance writer, an online media strategist, and a great appreciator of music's deep effect on life.