

MM in September is screening SHINE, a movie that is hugely changing people's attitudes about those afflicted with mental illness.

*These segments from Gillian Helfgott's marvelous book, "Love You To Bits And Pieces", the true story behind SHINE, are from a chapter called "Heaven" which describes the Helfgott's present home where they have lived since 1991. It's near Bellingen on the north coast of New South Wales, an area the locals call "The Promised Land"

After a couple of years, David's new environment began to manifest a miraculous healing power which I had never even dreamt of. Genuine peace started to take over David's mind and soul. For the first time since I had met him, he would spend long periods in quiet contemplation. At sunrise and sunset – his favourite times of the day, which he calls "morningtide" and "eventide" – he would walk to the boundary line of our property and stand there very still, communing with nature.

"What do you think about when you stand there looking at the mountains?", I asked him one day.

"Well," he sighed, "it's a sense of freedom, it's a sense of wonderfulness, it's a sense of creativity. I think of the great music I'm gonna write here one day, when I settle. Yes, and I'm gonna play some great piano, and I'm going to be much more loving, much more caring and much more different altogether, and I'm going to be much more aware. I'm going to get an awareness of the world – it's the only cure. And I have to accept too, I have to accept the help, and I have to have lots of chutzpah and lots of courage . . . Be completely different, completely different, you know?"

I did know. David had already made such incredible progress and still, every day, he was following his intention of becoming "completely different" and transforming in front of

David Helfgott's very positive story shows how supportive family/friends, environment and encouragement for ones abilities can make all the difference in the outcome of a mental illness.

Bruce Saunders

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my eyes. His need to 'go walkabout' gradually waned, and he would spend many more hours at the piano, interrupted only by short, frequent swims in the "cathedral". Over the years, David's stoop had been slowly disappearing and, in the Promised Land, he straightened out completely. With his shoulders firmly held back, he stands and walks tall and proud.

David loves saying that he is particularly privileged, and I often have to agree with him. In all our travels around the world I have not heard of any other international pianist who gives recitals at home. David, on the other hand, has played nearly thirty recitals in "Heaven" since 1991.

The performances usually start at 5 pm. David plays for approximately seventy minutes and then the guests wander out into the garden for a stroll and a champagne supper. During this interval, David has a chance to go for a swim – definitely not something too many concert pianists are able to do halfway through a concert – and emerges from the water to don a superb black robe dotted with notes and the word "RELAX" inscribed on the hem in large red letters. The robe, a wonderful present from Kirsty, usually attracts considerable attention.

After the interval, everyone returns to the house for the 'request' part of the evening and the guests have often commented to me how special they feel to be able to listen to David in his own home, and how they love the interactive part of the performance. These recitals are always completely booked out well in advance.

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When night falls in the Promised Land, and the moon slowly rises over the mountains, it is another awe-inspiring moment for David. He will rush into the house calling, "Darlinka, Darlinka, you must come and see! Now!" And we will walk out into the garden and stare at the infinity of stars and the Southern Cross and he will say, "Can we see the world as a wonderful world and just have fun? I reckon we can. We can choose to have the world as a wonderful world and look at the world as brightly sparkled and just enjoy all this awesomeness!"