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SOUTHERN YORK LIVING

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Meet
Robin Spielberg:
**Southern York County's Very Own
Internationally-Renowned Pianist**

Cover photo by Nicole Openshaw Photography



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RESIDENT FEATURE

Meet Robin Spielberg:

*Southern York County's Very Own
Internationally-Renowned Pianist*

BY ALCIA EDWARDS | PHOTOS BY NICOLE OPENSHAW PHOTOGRAPHY

Did you know Southern York County has its very own internationally-renowned pianist who has performed everywhere from Carnegie Hall to Seoul, Korea? Even more, a New York University-trained actor who was mentored by the likes of William H. Macy and David Mamet? Meet Robin Spielberg of New Freedom.

While at NYU, Robin received a BFA in drama. Along with her classmates and the aforementioned mentors, she formed a theater company called The Atlantic Theater Company. This endeavor allowed her the opportunity to act in dozens of plays and radio dramas, and even a children's musical which ran off-Broadway.

She recalls, "To support my acting dreams, I played piano for 12 years at the Grand Hyatt (above Grand Central Station) five to six days a week...for a decade. When I landed a record deal for my original solo piano works, I decided to take a break from auditioning...and the rest is history!"

Robin went on to sell hundreds of thousands of copies of her albums, mostly in gift shops, book stores, and chains including Borders Books & Music and The Nature Company. This led to her addition to the prestigious Steinway Artist Roster and a touring

career. Eventually, she set up her own publishing company and label imprint. As if that doesn't keep her busy enough, alongside husband Larry Kosson, she runs a boutique talent booking agency, Kosson Talent. Finally, she is an adjunct professor at Millersville University, teaching International Music Business.

So what, you ask, brought Robin to Southern York County? "In 2005, when our daughter Valerie was in kindergarten, we moved to New Freedom from Montclair, New Jersey, which is located 12 miles west of New York City. My New York City and Los Angeles friends were perplexed when I moved here, and I often am asked why I live here of all places. Well, I can tell you, I have traveled all over this beautiful country, and York County has it all. Beautiful scenery, hiking/walking/cycling paths, small town living, city life if you want it, cultural arts, one of the country's largest Rotary Clubs in the nation, all four seasons, proximity to an international airport in Baltimore, and more. I think one of the reasons I have been able to be so prolific in my work is because I am inspired by my surroundings."

Moreover, Robin shares that Valerie "absolutely thrived" in the Southern York County School District. She was a member of the marching band, even winning a number of competitions with her instrument, the marimba. Later, Valerie went on to compete in drum corps. She went on to study music at Lebanon Valley College and later Arts in Medicine in grad school. At the age of just 20, Valerie gave a TEDx Talk titled "Invisible Disabilities: Seeing Others with Compassion". Her Talk has since been added

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to a number of university/college syllabi, and she was recently invited to her alma mater to speak on how music helped her to achieve academic success. She is now 24.

Robin has also hosted some very influential workshops of her own. She shares, "A few years ago I was invited to give a TEDx Talk on the transformative power of music. I was shocked to see that my Talk now has over 350,000 views! Since the pandemic, I have been giving keynote addresses and workshops on the topic of 'Music and Mental Health'. Our brains are wired for music, and many people do not realize that they can harness the transformative power of music in their everyday lives to help support physical and mental health. Another workshop I teach is "Overcoming Performance Anxiety". I have met so many students who are remarkable, but 'choke' when it comes to auditions or university jury sessions at the end of the semester. This workshop helps them achieve their best performance. I love teaching these workshops because they give tools to people which they can use right away."

Robin is very humbled by her experiences as a professional musician over the years. "So much of what I do is alone in my piano room that it is easy to forget that there are literally millions of people who listen to my music from all over the world--especially during the pandemic when I didn't see anyone. Many have chosen to walk down the aisle to my music, or listen while undergoing chemotherapy, or enjoy during their commutes, or incorporate into their daily meditation practice. I am truly touched and humbled by this."

What is next for Robin? Later this year, she plans on releasing her very first album of fully orchestrated works, explaining It has been a lifelong dream of hers to have her works performed with a symphony--29 years in the making, in fact. Robin had recording sessions scheduled with the Budapest Symphony in Hungary, but the war in Ukraine prevented travel. Plan B it was--recording her piano parts in a studio here in the States and then zooming into the session in Budapest. Robin smiles, "It has been a really rewarding and amazing process; I am fortunate to work with arranger/orchestrator Louis Anthony deLise on this project alongside my husband Larry, who is producing."



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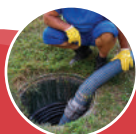
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Implementing Plan B--or even C--is not foreign to Larry and Robin, who were obviously majorly affected professionally by the pandemic. Their talent booking agency came to a screeching halt, forcing them to cancel 326 shows. Larry moved entire tours to Fall 2020--only to have them cancelled again. Robin remarks, "It was rough on our entire industry--the performers, the talent agents, the managers, the roadies, everyone."

I had JUST put out an album in February 2020 and had played only one show in our 20-city tour when the pandemic hit. We were really at a loss as to what to do. I read about the York County Re-Start grant in the paper, designed to give businesses an opportunity to pivot to something else during the pandemic. We applied and were awarded a small grant. We used the funds to purchase livestream equipment."

Since live in-person concerts were not allowed, Robin began live streaming piano concerts from her home. Larry learned how to use the gear, the sound equipment, etc. by taking webinars and classes online. He relied on his expertise gained from his many years as a photographer to handle lighting and set creation. Robin smiles, "Little by little, we learned and adapted to this new technology. It wasn't easy, and we experienced many technical problems along the way, but we eventually grew from doing 'Robin's Piano Bar' on Facebook every week, to streaming on four more platforms: Twitch, LinkedIn, Bandcamp and YouTube. In December 2022, we hit livestream #200! I pride myself on having never repeated a set. We had no idea what to expect, but it turns out that by doing these livestreams, we built a lovely online community which loves to meet every week, participate in the chat, and interact with us live every Friday night."

The Kosson-Spielberg family motto: "Tomorrow is not promised; do your absolute best today." And that they do.

Learn more about Robin at robinspielberg.com, or just ask Alexa, "Alexa, play Robin Spielberg!"




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