

## album review: 'Where the Ocean Meets the Sky,' Heart Dance Records Bend's Julie Hanney brings emotional weight to third album

Julie Hanney wrote "Ocean Song," one of the pieces found on her third solo, instrumental piano album, "Where the Ocean Meets the Sky," when she was 19 years old.

Inspired by George Winston's new age solo piano explorations, the song provides a good encapsulation of the album as a whole: an emotional journey that, while fitting for peaceful meditation or introspection, holds more beneath its surface.

The record is Hanney's first for Phoenix, Arizona, label Heart Dance Records, and follows 2019's "Painting in Sound" and "A Peace-Filled Christmas." Hanney is known for directing the Gospel Choir of the Cascades for 10 years. She also hosted a Peace Through Music concert at Bend Church in early 2020 (planned as a series until the pandemic struck).

"I've been wanting to do a CD for a while, and I just didn't have the recording technology to make it happen," Hanney said. "The idea of going into a studio and paying for time just always stressed me out, because every mistake you made, there's

another hour of time. That always was a little intimidating financially and just pressure-wise. Once I got the ability to record at home, that's really what opened up this ability to finally get these songs recorded."

Produced by Hanney and mixed and mastered by Louis Ramsey in Los Angeles, the album features 14 tracks that run a gamut of styles, including jazz, gospel, classical and pop.

Standout tracks include "Echo of a Seashell," a yearning, minor-key ballad; the aforementioned "Ocean Song" and the waltz-y

"Reverie."

While "meditative piano music" certainly conjures up a mental image (or sound), "Where the Ocean Meets the Sky" bucks many of the stereotypes. Rather than rest on lilting piano arpeggios, Hanney composes strong melodies with emotional heft that dig under the skin.

There's a good reason for this. "Where the Ocean Meets the Sky" is dedicated to Hanney's mother, who died of natural causes in January 2020. The album's title track and its closing song,



Pianist Julie Hanney released "Where the Ocean Meets the Sky," her first album for Heart Dance Records, in January. Submitted photo

"Small Things with Great Love," were both directly inspired by her mother.

"The song 'Where the Ocean Meets the Sky,' that was the title of a poem that I wrote for her memorial service," Hanney said. "(The poem was) basically about how — I don't know how and I don't know where, but I know that she is not

gone; I know that she exists somewhere. She loved the ocean so much, and that idea of where the ocean meets the sky — that great beyond — I know her spirit survived somehow. That's really what was the focus of the album, was that idea of hope and that idea of love not dying."

— Brian McElhiney, *The Bulletin*



**NEW EXHIBIT 1.30-10.3.21**

**DAMN IT!**

**BEAVERS AND US**

## HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

BEND, OREGON • 541-382-4754  
HIGHDESERTMUSEUM.ORG



Smithsonian  
Affiliate

Made possible by



Project Zero



With support from

Bend Magazine

OPB

Bespoke 3D Prints

Smart Shopper

James F. & Marion L.  
Miller Foundation

The Source Weekly