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What should Susan Boyle sing next?

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Jun. 4, 2009 NCR Today

When Susan Boyle first sang "I Dreamed a Dream" [1] from Les Miserables, I cried every time I clicked on YouTube, and heard, watched Susan singing it. She conveyed such pathos. Her performance can still move me to tears because Susan's story and the play's character Fantine seemed to share something. I have gone from watching it or showing it to someone every day to once a week.

Some may think a Disney soundtrack should be Susan's first release, but I think she could sing "Send in the Clowns" [2] that so many famous artists have voiced before: Judy Collins, Barbra Streisand, Shirley Bassey. "Send in the Clowns" was created for the British actress Glynis Johns (bn. 1923) who played Desiree in Sondheim's 1973 "A Little Night Music" based on Ingmar Bergman's 1955 film, "Smiles of a Summer Night".

A singer, or artist, who has led a deeply felt life, for whatever the reason, brings those experiences to their art. Whatever has brought Susan to where she is today as an artist is because she so sincere.

I think she is incredibly brave.

People have blamed the producers of "Britain's Got Talent" for perhaps pushing Susan to her reported state of exhaustion, or failing to see that she was unprepared for the pressures of life in the limelight. It does not see, however, that anyone forced Susan to audition. I think she took a breath and decided to take the next best step in her life. And as my sister Libby says, "Life is school." You live and learn and hopefully grow.

These are sad songs, but they are true. Real life has the capacity to reflect authentic beauty, truth, and goodness when it is deeply felt.

Have you ever heard of the opera singer Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink (1861-1936)?

Wikipedia merely glosses over her life and never tells about her deep depression that was pushing her to suicide when "only the entreaties of her eldest child prevented her." Her unique tone sprang from poverty, illness, and concern for her children after her husband deserted her. I read about her years ago in one of my favorite books, *You Cannot Hold Back the Dawn: Faith and love in a new dimension* by Rev. John C. Dowd and I have never forgotten it (1974, St. Paul Editions, Boston. It is out of print but I found a copy via the Internet).

The author writes:

> "This was for her the darkest hour before the dawn, which when it came, was indeed a wonderful dawn. A few years later she was a world-famous singer with the opera houses of Berlin, London, and New York. Literally, success sprang from failure, because she declared that the tragedies of life enriched her singing. A mysterious quality, a blending of understanding and tenderness, had come into her voice which thrilled and captivated the hearts of millions of listeners."

Whatever your future path, Susan, there are a lot of people praying for you. Tread mindfully through the music

business; it can be treacherous. But know you have captivated our hearts, too. If you choose to do so, sing loud, sing strong, and thrill us again.

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[1] http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/lesmiserables/idreamedadream.htm
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