

# Singers trades in pop hopes to spread gospel message

By Carol Anahid Azizian  
staff writer

A couple of years ago, Karen Kevorkian realized she wasn't going to find fame and fortune as a singer/composer of pop songs.

Rather than abandoning her lifelong dream, she discovered a new talent. The Lathrup Village resident is still singing, but she's changed her tune — from pop to gospel.

"It's been a change for the better — one that's provided her with a new outlook and renewed hopes for success," said Kevorkian.

She'll be appearing in her first concert as the opening act for gospel singer Jesse Dixon at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 27 at the Lakeview High School Auditorium, 21100 11 Mile, St. Clair Shores.

"This is a big opportunity for me because Jesse Dixon is a well-known gospel singer," she said. "I feel honored to perform with him."

Dixon, a singer/arranger/composer, has toured with Paul Simon and recorded with such noted performers as Phoebe Snow, Peter Yarrow (of Peter, Paul and Mary) and Diana Ross. He's a four-time Grammy Award nominee.

Kevorkian, who's been composing gospel music for about a year, has performed at churches in Bloomfield Hills, Toledo, Ohio and West Palm Beach, Fla.

She also has appeared on the local television program "The Word Will Make You Free" on Channel 62.

Kevorkian said she turned to gospel after more than five years of knocking on doors trying to become a pop singer.

DURING THOSE FIVE YEARS, she had some success. She performed at New York's Catch a Rising Star nightclub which features young talent. While at the club, she met such well-known comedians as the late Freddy Prince and Andy Kaufman.

Writer/producer Paul Mason saw Kevorkian's performance and asked her to appear as an extra on the "Welcome Back, Kotter" television program.

Kevorkian packed her bags and went to California to become a "sweatshop" on the Kotter show.

When her stint as a actress was over, she returned home, hoping to get back to work on her singing career.

Her hopes for a contract with Parachute Records were dashed when a record deal fell through in 1978. Still determined to pursue her career, Kevorkian went back to California in 1980.

"I kept saying to myself, 'I have to find my niche.' I thought Hollywood was the answer."

"I was singing at the Improvisation (a nightclub for aspiring singers and comedians in Los Angeles) and trying to get a record deal with anybody. I didn't have any luck."

"I had a handful of dreams and promises, and I was left empty-handed."

During the summer of 1980, Kevorkian decided to leave California once again.

On the road from Los Angeles to Detroit, Kevorkian had what she now believes was a "religious experience."

"I was driving along a road in Iowa and I heard a voice telling me to call home. When I left California, I had decided I was going to surprise my parents, so I didn't call them."

"At first I thought it was my friend (who drove back with her) telling me to call, but it wasn't."

"I called home, and my parents told me they were really worried because they couldn't reach me. They said they had joined a new church — Bloomfield Hills Christian — and learned how to pray according to the word of God in the Bible. That day, they had prayed for me to call home."

When she got home, Kevorkian's parents asked her to go to Cobo Hall with them to hear evangelist Kenneth Copeland.

"I WAS LERBY because I always thought going to hear an evangelist talk about God and Jesus was strange. I thought they were like the fire and brimstone preachers I used to see on television."

But Kevorkian, who presently lives in the United States as a senior Fellow of the Marguerite Eyer Wilbur Foundation and cooperating foundations, is seeking political asylum here.

For more information, call Mercy College at 592-6200.

"My dad convinced me to go, and I was totally mesmerized. He (Copeland) talked about God and Jesus, and he made sense. He explained how the word of God could work in my life."

Kevorkian, who calls herself a "born again Christian," said she started regularly attending the Bloomfield Hills Christian Church after that.

Not long after, she was "inspired" to write gospel songs, she said. "I always wanted to write songs for Jesus, but I just couldn't do it. One day, I prayed for the spirit of God to come into my life."

"This doesn't make sense logically, but it worked. A few minutes after I prayed, I sat down at the piano and wrote my first gospel song — 'Heavenly Angels.' That week I wrote five songs."

Kevorkian teamed up with Karl Nilsson, another member of the Bloomfield Hills Christian Church, and together they composed 25 songs within a year. Nilsson is program director for local Christian music station WMUZ.

"Our songs tell people that Jesus paid the price for them, and they can be free."

"There's a lot of people hurting out there. I can offer them an answer through my music," she said.

Kevorkian said one of the most moving experiences she's had as gospel singer was performing for inmates at the Oakland County Jail.

"They were one of the best audiences I've ever performed for. Men and women were crying and asking me when I was coming back."

"It wasn't because I had a good voice. I was telling them that God loved them and didn't condemn them."

"I was telling them the good news — that's what gospel means."

Kevorkian said she hopes to "spread the good news" by touring around the world.

"I'm not just entertaining anymore. I feel as if it's a ministry."



Karen Kevorkian of Lathrup Village is singing a new tune these days. Once she wrote pop songs and appeared on a national television series.

Now she says she's found her niche with gospel music.

MINDY SAUNDERS/staff photographer

## Scholar will speak on Polish problem

A Polish scholar in law and political science will be the first guest speaker in the 1982-83 lecture series at Mercy College of Detroit.

Rett Ludwowski, Ph.D., will speak at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 23 on "Solidarity: Past, Present and Future," detailing the current issues in Poland and their larger human significance. The evening will end with a question-and-answer session in which the audience and a panel of Mercy College faculty members will be invited to participate.

Lisa Uehno, chairwoman of Mercy's Master Events/Lecture Committee, said, "The Polish Solidarity movement

is larger than a trade union. The program is relevant because of recent events in Poland following abolition of the movement and because of the many human questions it raises. Such issues include the meaning of and the right to work, moral political systems, means and support for effecting social change, and elements of hope for human freedom."

Ludwowski, who presently lives in the United States as a senior Fellow of the Marguerite Eyer Wilbur Foundation and cooperating foundations, is seeking political asylum here.

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