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Larkin Gayl's 'I Do' a Wedding Gift to Gays

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FOR MARIN singer/songwriter Larkin Gayl, Tuesday was joyous, emotional and incredibly timely.

She was at San Francisco City Hall first thing in the morning, handing out CDs of her same-sex marriage song, "I Do," to gay and lesbian couples lining up to get married at City Hall.

The song is one of 10 originals on her debut CD, "Two Hands," on Mill Valley's About Records. The album was released that very day, which just so happened to be when the first gay weddings were allowed, coming six weeks after the state Supreme Court overturned a ban on them.

"I had to sit down and cry for a half hour before I could walk in," she said over her cell phone. "This is so dear to my heart. Of all the issues in the world, this is the one I'd fight for."

In another instance of perfect timing, she arrived just as Mayor Gavin Newsom prepared to officiate the first ceremony.

"I gave a copy to him personally," she told me. "And I thanked him for being the inspiration for the song. He said, 'Thank you, thank you,' and flashed his big, beautiful smile."

With its uplifting lyrics about tolerance and acceptance and its irresistible sing-along chorus, "I Do" is rapidly becoming an anthem of the same-sex marriage movement.

"One of the mayor's assistants said, 'We've been playing this song in the office all week. We love it,'" Larkin said. "Another told me, 'I'm marrying my partner and we're choosing this as our wedding song.' I'm not sure where they heard it, but they already knew it."

As a wedding gift to all the same-sex couples who have waited so long for this to happen, Larkin is offering "I Do" as a free download on her Web site, larkingayl.com, and on her MySpace page, myspace.com/larkingayl.

The idea for the song came to her even before she devoted herself full-time to music. For seven years, she worked as an in-home care giver for the terminally ill, often singing and comforting people dying under hospice care.

"I kept hearing about same sex couples who were denied their right to be together in the hospital because they weren't married," she remembered. "To think someone couldn't be with the one they love the most in their final hours was devastating to me. It just killed me to hear that. One day, the song just came to me when I was imagining that day when the mayor would open up city hall and the couples would line up to get married."

A 1993 Drake High grad, Larkin, whose sultry, sweet voice has been compared to that of Norah Jones, didn't get into music full-time until four years ago.

Her big break came when she won the Marin Idol contest at the Mill Valley Variety Show, which led to a record deal with About Records, founded by Mill Valley's George Daly.

On July 5, she'll sing "I Do" on the "West Coast Live" radio show (10 a.m. to noon, 91.7 FM) as a same-sex couple gets married on the air.

Coincidentally, Larkin will soon be a newlywed herself. She's engaged to Joaquin Lujan, a cameraman she met when he filmed her record company audition.

"I got a record deal and a husband in one day," she said with a giggle.

I had never heard Larkin sing until the Stop the Spray concert in Sausalito a couple of weeks ago.

I was impressed by her easy command of the audience, how she had everyone singing along on "I Do" as well as the title song of the album, "Two Hands," and its repeating refrain, "I'm not afraid."

With her admirable social conscience, natural beauty, talent as a guitar-playing singer-songwriter and now with a timely debut album, she has a lot going for her. I wondered what she had in mind for her future, now that she's got the beginnings of a legitimate career.

"I want to make sure I'm in the music business for the right reasons," she told me. I'm not in it for fame. I would definitely accept fortune. But I don't write pithy songs that don't mean anything. I hope my skills as a lyricist will open some minds and hearts. That's why I'm doing it. I believe in people singing positive songs together. I truly believe in that stuff. I think it makes a difference."

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