

CANADA

Secret to success? Ask a pianist.

Valery Lloyd-Watts knows hard work and sweat equity pay off



DONNA JACOBS
MONDAY MORNING

The day before she was named one of Canada's 2008 Most Powerful Women: Top 100, Valery Lloyd-Watts — concert pianist, recording artist, author and teacher — did what she has been doing since she was 12.

She got up at 5:30 a.m. and practised the piano — that morning it was George Gershwin and Ludwig van Beethoven — for two hours.

The next day, in Toronto, she found herself in a crowd of “incredible and inspiring” women, who — in her category of arts and communication — included *Globe and Mail* columnist Christie Blatchford and Michèle Fortin, president and CEO of Télé-Québec in Montreal.

Top 100 winners (www.xnnetwork.com) ranged widely across disciplines — former prime minister Kim Campbell; Dr. Nancy Grant, radiation oncologist at Saint John Regional Hospital in New Brunswick; Beverley McLachlin, chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada; Cynthia Devine, executive vice-president and CEO of Tim Hortons; and Jodi White, president of Public Policy Forum in Ottawa.

Such super-achievers are well-described, says Ms. Lloyd-Watts, in a just-published book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, in which author Malcolm Gladwell attributes exceptional success to dedicated hard work — and she says, 10,000 hours of sweat equity. These individuals lie well outside the bell-curve average.

In junior high school, only after early-morning sessions conquering scales and piano pieces, did the sometimes-restless extroverted Valery go to class. And even then, she came home early — special dispensation — to practise piano another two-and-a-half hours.

“In high school, my mother allowed me to go out one night a week. She said: ‘Even the stars have one night off a week.’”

These days, at 5:30 a.m., Ms. Lloyd-Watts reads the newspaper at her Kingston apartment on Lake Ontario, sipping a mug of Salada tea with milk and sweetener.

Breakfast is black coffee, shredded wheat and raisins

with one-per-cent milk. Then she practises two hours for concerts or recordings before going jogging or doing pilates.

The strong-willed and passionate British Columbia native knew at age four that she wanted to play piano. Her mother, Marguerite Lloyd, was a piano teacher. She told Valery's older sister when she was six that she could start piano lessons and hired a teacher.

Valery, then four, would stand beside the piano and insist: “Is it my turn now?”

“I was demanding to play the piano,” she says, and raced inside whenever she heard her mother playing. Her mother relented. Valery started lessons, too. At age 12, she performed *Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 23 in A major (K.488)* with the Vancouver Junior Symphony.

By age 16, considered something of a prodigy (she winces at the word), Valery performed the *Tchaikovsky Concerto No. 1* with the Vancouver Symphony. At 17, she was awarded an Eaton Scholarship to the Toronto Conservatory of Music and then a scholarship to the Royal College of Music in London.

“No child really has the desire to play away at something that many hours,” she says, and when she occasionally gave her lessons short shrift, her mother brought her into line easily.

“The threat — that I couldn't be very interested in piano, so we'd better stop the lessons — would throw me into an absolute panic.”

“Yes, there were elements of conditional love. I knew I pleased her greatly by practising and it was certainly the way to have a happy mom. Yes, there was a lot of control. Only in the last 15 or 20 years have I been able to realize what a wonderful teacher she was. All I can say is ‘thank you’ to my mother.”

A theme drives her performances, in a recording studio or before an audience of hundreds — whether she's playing Chopin, Beethoven, Mozart and Brahms or Bumble Boogie.

It goes back to competing for her first big prize. She was 16. The prize was to go touring. The winning pianist would play a solo and would also accompany the winner of the vocal competition. Each young contestant was given a song to play for a vocalist — in Valery's case, another young woman.

“I remember falling in love with that song,” she says. “I was on fire with love of that music. I played it for her in a way that it was magical.”



PHOTO BY BERNARD CLARK

Valery Lloyd-Watts, named one of Canada's 2008 Most Powerful Women: Top 100, is a renowned concert pianist, recording artist, author and teacher.

She won the competition and went on her first tour.

Two years later, she got married to Don Watts, who was working on a master's degree and going to England. “If I didn't get married, I couldn't go with him.”

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VALERY LLOYD-WATTS

Her parents gave them a wedding, and later, her mother confided her resignation. “Well, Valery, when you got a bee in your bonnet ...”

In 1970, when the couple moved to Kingston, she launched herself into the Suzuki Method, which Dr. Shinichi Suzuki, renowned violinist and teacher, developed to draw on a child's innate ability. “We

know that teaching music doesn't work,” says Ms. Lloyd-Watts. “Teaching the child to love music does work.”

In 1974, she teamed up with pianist-organist Carole Bigler of Corning, New York, to form the musical partnership,

rectors of the largest — and still ongoing — Suzuki and traditional piano teacher-training and student summer workshop in North America. For 32 years, the two-week Suzuki Kingston program at Queen's University drew hundreds of students from Canada, the U.S., Puerto Rico, England, Ireland, Bermuda and Singapore.

Ms. Lloyd-Watts has performed and/or taught across North America and Australia, Puerto Rico and Bermuda and for the BBC, CBC and National Public Radio in the U.S. broadcast her work from among dozens of CDs (www.valerylloydwatts.com)

NEXT WEEK: A CONCERT PIANIST'S TIPS ON PERFORMANCE, TIME AND STRESS-MANAGEMENT AND HER PLANS TO LIVE — AND PLAY PIANO — PART-TIME IN OTTAWA.

DONNA JACOBS is an Ottawa writer; e-mail: donna.jacobs@hotmail.com

MANITOBA

Autopsy may explain pepper-spray death

An autopsy will be conducted today on a 43-year-old man from The Pas, who died Saturday afternoon after being pepper-sprayed by RCMP officers. RCMP spokeswoman Sgt. Line Karpish said the death stemmed from a domestic dispute call Friday morning to a home in The Pas. When officers placed the man under arrest, he became combative and officers used pepper spray to subdue him. Sgt. Karpish said the man then began exhibiting signs of medical distress and was rushed to a hospital, where he subsequently died.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Boy, 8, clings to life after brothers killed

Two young brothers, ages six and nine, died in hospital early yesterday following a three-car crash on the Trans-Canada Highway on Saturday morning. Their eight-year-old brother is still clinging to life, with his parents and one-year-old brother at his side. According to police, a grey Toyota minivan with eight passengers, including the four boys, their 40-year-old mother and three other family members, including three women, ages 49, 74 and 76, had pulled over with mechanical problems. A BMW driven by a man, 26, struck the van from behind, causing his car to spin 90 degrees. The BMW was roadsided by a third vehicle. The driver of the BMW suffered no injuries, while the woman in the third vehicle was taken to hospital with minor injuries. Police are still investigating the cause of the accident, but have ruled out alcohol and drugs. No names have been released.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Severe flooding hits St. John's

Newfoundlanders were cleaning up yesterday after nearly 100 millimetres of rain fell in some parts of the province Saturday. One of the worst hit spots was St. John's where the most rain — 97.2 millimetres — while areas including Cape Race, Bonaville and Terra Nova saw between 15 and 67 millimetres. There was significant flooding and some damage to parts of the capital city. One of the worst hit spots was the King George V soccer pitch. Around 7 p.m. — about an hour after the Canada Games girls soccer team finished practising — water was rushing out from the field, lifting the artificial turf. There was significant flooding in the downtown area of St. John's. The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary said calls started coming around 5 p.m. about several washouts and rock slides. Environment Canada is blaming a low-pressure system from the southeast of the Grand Banks that tracked across the island.