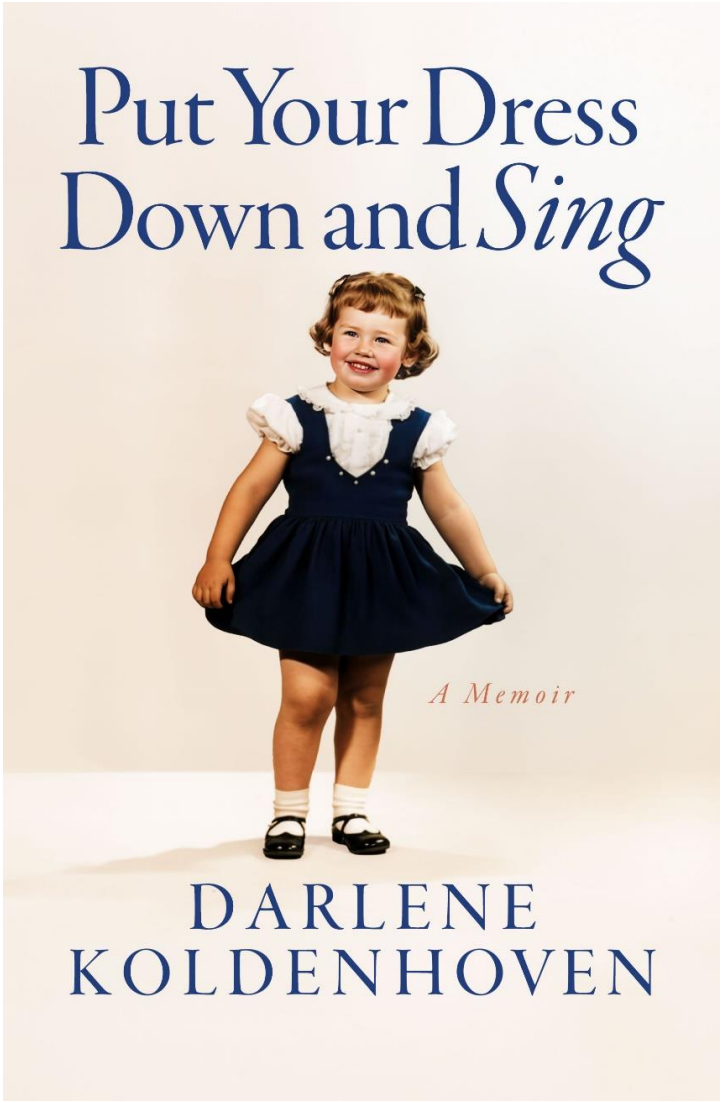
INTERVIEW WITH DARLENE KOLDENHOVEN – NEW AGE NOTES MAGAZINE – JULY 2026

Darlene Koldenhoven is one of the icons in New Age music, but more than that she's a legendary singer and so much more. Darlene has recently written her memoir "Put Your Dress Down and Sing," as well as the companion solo piano album "A Grand Memoir." We did an interview with Darlene in our May 2026 issue of New Age Notes Magazine, which featured women in New Age Music. Darlene is going to be our cover story in November 2026, and we will have another interview with her then too. For now, let's delve a bit more here into the phenomena that is Darlene Koldenhoven.



Darlene, tell us what your main purpose was in writing your memoir, "Put Your Dress Down and Sing."



My main purpose was to inspire people to never give up on their dreams, no matter what. Also, to share a lifetime of knowledge and experience to help others. I couldn't bear having all that go to waste. There are some "do what I did" and a few "don't do what I did" lessons. Then there are special scenarios that are helpful to women.

You succeeded! It's a great book and I found I couldn't put it down. Do you clearly remember the feeling of that particular moment as a child on stage when your mother told you to put your dress down and sing? Please describe. And how did you feel afterward?

When an experience is connected to an emotion, it gets embedded deep in the memory banks. I remember it as clear as day. It was Easter Sunday at the Fourth Christian Reformed Church of Roseland on the South Side of Chicago. It was April and I was 3.5. Mom's dad passed away a few months before, so his seat was vacant. He was a pro singer and sang to me a lot. Between him and my mother, I could sing in tune and hold my part by that age in *Row, Row, Row Your Boat*, a three-part round. So, singing a solo for me was no big deal.

First, there was the anticipation of singing outside my home for the first time, which suddenly gave way to the fear of 200 people looking at my shy face. Impulsively, I hoisted my Easter dress high over my head so I couldn't see them. As I wrote in my memoir: There I stood in all my glory, revealing my fancy, lace-covered panties and three poofy, itchy crinoline slips bunched up beneath my new Easter dress. Sure, I couldn't see the congregation, but they certainly could see me.

From the first row, my mom bolted from her seat and rushed to the platform, flapping her hands and exclaiming in a harsh whisper, “Darlene, put your dress down and sing!”

As usual, I obeyed my mother, dropped my dress, turned to the organist, and said, “I’m ready now.” She started over, and away we went. As I sang, my shyness receded. I thought, *Singing like this is so much fun!* The audience rewarded me with many smiles but no applause because it was church. Whether the smiles resulted from my singing or my frilly display, I was hooked.

What did you learn from that experience?

I learned to keep my dress down when I sing in public!



1985 NARAS MPVS, THE ROXY, WEST HOLLYWOOD, DARLENE KOLDENHOVEN BAND

Did you ever experience stage fright again after that?

No, because I learned, although my young mind couldn’t put it into words, that by taking action (putting my dress down and singing), I overcame my shyness and enjoyed the experience. One good experience singing led to another, and I have always remembered that. If I ever get into my head and start ruminating on a debilitating scenario, I take a deep breath or two, and I just remember to put my dress down and sing, and it all seems to work out.

What can people do if they experience stage fright?

They can put their dress down and sing. Seriously, there are wonderful neuro-linguistic scenes to run that will really help a lot. It helps to do it with a certified NLP practitioner. That is THE best way to overcome it. Seek, and ye shall find one of those people.

You have such an amazing voice. When and how did you discover you had this talent? And how was it nurtured?

Thanks, I've been blessed, and I work very hard at it. The older I get, the harder I work at it! I still sing, just not with all 6 octaves I used to have, and with a different style, due to a physical injury. Insert a long but interesting story here that's in my memoir and written in a medical journal. There are 4 octaves left, and that's more than enough. I've made peace with that.

There was always singing going on in my household when I was little. It was a part of everyday life. I discovered I had a voice that day in church when I was 3.5. Back in 5th grade, it was my school music teacher, Mrs. Snapper, who was teaching us about the various instruments of the orchestra. In the middle of the string section lecture, she blurted out to the class, "Darlene has the voice of a violin, high, clear, and lyrical, but Deanne has the voice of a trumpet, loud and brassy." From then on, I sang a lot of the high obligatos in choir and in church.

I didn't start formal voice training until I was 16 at the Chicago Conservatory College with Ms. Virginia Parker. I started college there at 17 and got a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education with two majors: education and voice, and two minors: piano and conducting. Then a Master's Degree in Vocal Performance.



DARLENE KOLDENHOVEN - CHICAGO SYMPHONY HALL 1970

The clincher was at age 19 when I sang a coloratura opera aria with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Orchestra Hall, quite young to be doing such a thing. When it was my turn, I remember walking through the door, through the string section to the front of the stage near the conductor, and a complete, grounding calm came over me, as if I had done this before; as if I belonged there, destiny-like. Plus, I knew how to put my dress down and sing.

You have done so much in your life, but one of those things is that you have taught people to sing. How do you teach someone to sing?

Very carefully! Singing is a learned experience that begins in the ear. There are several skills to develop: matching pitch, distinguishing notes, breathing the singer's breath, timing, phrasing, style, and so forth. One must vocalize daily because you are dealing with muscles, specifically the vocalis muscles. One must know how to work with vowels and how the shared coordination between the muscles works to have a full, workable range with zero strain or pain. It should just flow.

For those who cannot match pitch, I have several methods to correct that. One, I call the Listening Eye Technique. Mix in some sonic therapy and weekly lessons with the right teacher (me!), and depending on how challenged you are, within 3 months to a year, you should be good to go. Not every voice teacher knows how to do this. The best voice teachers in Hollywood would send me their pitch-challenged individuals. I've had great success with my methods, and I love to see the joy on my students' faces when they are achieving their goals. I've been teaching since I was 19 and have taught over 1,000 people by now.

Do you have a course? If yes, where can people find that?

Yes. *Tune Your Voice: Singing and Your Mind's Musical Ear*. It is a 94-page book with 7 instructional CDs or downloads, with me doing the narration. I've gotten a lot of feedback that I make it fun. Plus, it is endorsed by faculty from The Juilliard School, Berklee College of Music, NYC, American Idol, and more. It comes in High for women and children and Low for men. TuneYourVoice.net (not Amazon!!! Buyer beware!) You can also access it through my main website: DarleneKoldenhoven.com. For those not living in the LA area, I teach remotely: What's App or Facetime works best.



When did you learn to sew, and do you still sew? Why?

My maternal grandmother taught me when I was seven, because we couldn't afford to buy Barbie Doll clothes. I took a summer course at a fabric store when I was 13, but I already knew a lot. I continued sewing my own clothes after that, and in my 20s, I even made 5-piece suits for my boyfriends who didn't have the money to buy one. After I moved from Chicago to Los Angeles when I was 28, my sewing tapered off because I immediately got busy singing in the studios every day, all day, because of my range, versatility, and I could sight-sing well. (I eat notes for breakfast! Ha-ha).



THE MUSHROOM DRESS

I picked it up again in 2015 because it was getting too expensive to buy a new gown for every show I did. Then not only did I make gowns, but all my clothes, including ankle-length flannel nightgowns with pockets for the cell phone. Gotta have that cell phone pocket. Some dresses have names. One of my favorite creations is The Mushroom Dress. Sewing is my hobby because it is creative, good for the brain, and rewarding. And if I get a compliment, then that's the frosting on the cake.

I really admire how you have overcome so many obstacles in life, including integrating your very strict Dutch Calvinist upbringing with "Hollywood." What's your best advice for people facing obstacles?

My best advice is to stay in the present moment, keep out of your head, and take action without emotion or judgment about any of it. Just do the task and finish the task. Don't think about it, just do it. One must take action to change their feelings. That's just how it works in human psychology. Find who you are and what your gifts are, develop them, and stick to it. You are not your parents or anyone else.

Perpetual persistence is what I learned from my Dutch Calvinist community growing up. After all, my people built a whole country out of water and ran it on air. That's one good thing I learned from such a repressive, sometimes debilitating, upbringing. Always be grateful and say out loud, "I have everything I need and good things are coming to me."

How do people know they've "made it" in life? What is the measure of success in your opinion?

One must set one's own reasonable bar in life. Money doesn't measure that success. Winning awards doesn't do it either. Only you know deep down inside, and no one can take that away from you. I just kept going no matter what life threw at me, and I'm not slowing down now, not till they put me in a physical grave, and even then, I'm thinking of having GRAMMY® Winner inscribed on my tombstone. Self-promotion for a musician is eternal. *Wink-wink*.

Official artist website: https://www.darlenekoldenhoven.com/

Get "Put Your Dress Down and Sing" here:
https://www.darlenekoldenhoven.com/book

Get Darlene's new CD "A Grand Memoir" here:
https://www.darlenekoldenhoven.com



VIDEO - WRIGHT'S ROMANZA BY DARLENE KOLDENHOVEN



Album Review – "A Grand Memoir" by Darlene Koldenhoven – Review by Keith Hannaleck

Darlene Koldenhoven delivers a profound testament to exceptional musicianship with *A Grand Memoir*, a solo piano recording that serves as a companion to her book *Put Your Dress Down and Sing*.

To coincide with her book *Put Your Dress Down and Sing*, a memoir, Darlene Koldenhoven is releasing a recording titled *A Grand Memoir* as a companion to that book.

Darlene's career spans several decades as a singer, songwriter, musician, actor, and workshop leader in spiritual healing. Her accolades and accomplishments over the years are too many to count.

Sometimes, the most beautiful and expressive music can come from one instrument, and the piano is one of those instruments that creates the purest setting for that. It is, in fact, like a book taking you page by page through the life of one person.

"Love and Devotion" begins this life account and journey with Darlene behind the acoustic piano. An instrument she is very familiar with. I anticipated a lot of emotion flowing through her fingers. The melody immediately pulls you in as the notes enter your space and consciousness, and the track's title unfolds note by note. This is beauty and feeling captured in the perfection of music.

"Impressions" begins, and my first thought is "artwork," impressionism. However, in this context, I believe the artist refers to impressions of people she has known and loved over the years, starting with family and extending into her professional life. The piano's keys are lilting and elegant, sounding like what a ballerina would look like sweeping across the floor with grace and conviction of the art form. Towards the end of the track, the keys undergo a profound shift, with multiple keys sounding as if two people were playing together; it's quite impressive. An arpeggio, with the volume up a notch for emphasis.

“Lilac Tears” is simplistic in form and executed precisely to give definition to the pain being felt, but some of that is softened by the flower. I heard classical influences and a strong sense of drama being felt throughout this more mellow track. It is mellower for a reason, and the approach is pragmatic to form the story, so you feel the emotion involved.

“Wright’s Romanza” begins like a slow dance with a purpose in mind. The melody is sublime, and the sounds will enrich your environment wherever you listen. Towards the back end of the composition, she moves those keys so fast, it’s a thing of beauty and eloquence, and a musician or listener would appreciate it.

“Caprice” is romanticism set to music for my ears; however, the meaning of the word has different implications. It is a decision made on impulse, for instance, and when there is a transition around midway, you can hear that loveliness of the keys change in a sidestep that captures the word “impulse” because the change is sudden. It is a brief change, then she returns to the more fluid notes we are now accustomed to hearing.

“Jacaranda Joy” is a reference to the absolute beauty of the jacaranda flower. Jacaranda is a genus of 49 species of flowering plants in the family Bignoniaceae. Assuming that is what this song is about, you must picture the flower, a delicate, colorful, and fragrant living thing that brings so much joy to people. The track’s tempo is measured and slower, fully capturing the artist’s love for this subject matter. The music blooms and thrives as any healthy plant would.

“Le Petit Carrousel” is an amusement park in France. I felt a sense of sadness in this track, but a certain beauty and innocence also came through. I think this was a special place held in the artist’s heart, with wonderful memories attached. That touch of sadness I felt could be the absence of that location and time in her life, which she now misses. The piano’s keys sound like tears of joy and a long look back at a younger, happier day, but a gratefulness for the memory.

“Winter in Vienna” is a definitive time and a strong memory for the artist. I heard a song with a purpose, meant to take her time to look back, as the keys seem to sing the unspoken words. It felt like a long stroll filled with emotions and reflection. An experience to relive a moment in time held close to the heart. Its sheer beauty and eloquence paint the scenery on the canvas of your soul.

“Gentle Song” is to emphasize the “gentle” touch we all need at times in our lives. The warm embrace of a loved one, the handshake of a friend, the reassuring nod of the head. All the songs that life can sing, there is emotion and depth to it, and you can feel that in the music here. The pace is easy, and the notes of the piano resonate and echo through your consciousness like a gentle invitation to a better place.

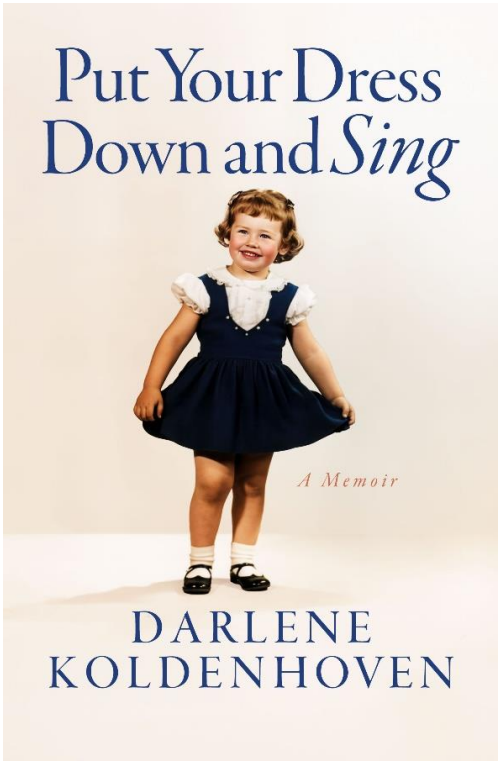
“Flying With Kites” is something we all should do more of. It can take you back to being a child and, as an adult, serve as a symbol of freedom as you watch the object float in the air and reach higher into the sky as you continue to add balls of string. I can remember one instance of doing that with the boys from the neighborhood and getting a kite to go as far as possible while buying up all the string from the corner store to advance its flight, something so simple and such a wonderful carefree memory that brought us all so much joy and wonder for one day. The track title sparked that memory, and the piano brought it back to life, bringing a smile to my heart.

This is indeed *A Grand Memoir* from start to finish—a profound testament to both exceptional musicianship and the transformative power of music itself. This is solo piano work extraordinaire that cannot be missed, performed with technical mastery and emotional depth that elevates each composition beyond mere notes into lived experience.

Darlene Koldenhoven’s virtuosic command of her instrument serves a higher purpose: to chronicle a life’s journey through sound, making each memory, emotion, and moment resonate with universal meaning. These classical-influenced contemporary instrumentals transcend mere entertainment, becoming an essential soundtrack for a lifetime, speaking to the human condition itself. Music matters because it captures what words cannot: the essence of a life fully lived. When you are done listening, you don’t just feel as if you have lived it; you understand why these stories, these memories, and this artistry must be preserved and celebrated.

Keith “MuzikMan” Hannaleck-New Age Music Reviews Founder

Get it here: https://darlenekoldenhoven.bandcamp.com/album/a-grand-memoir



"Put Your Dress Down and Sing" by Darlene Koldenhoven

Book Review by Dyan Garris, *New Age Notes Magazine*

It's sometimes funny what sticks with us from childhood. Those memories have the ability to shape our lives into adulthood. One of the big lessons in life is learning to overcome fear, as well as to find your own voice, and be who you came to be. In this case, I'm happy to discover that Darlene Koldenhoven found her beautiful voice early on and stuck with things through thick and thin. That's grit.

The title itself of Darlene's memoir "Put Your Dress Down and Sing," comes from a childhood lesson from her mother and becomes a recurring theme throughout this engaging and unforgettable book: Despite embarrassment, fear, or adversity, just keep on going. That central message gives this book an inspiring emotional continuity without ever becoming overly sentimental.

Here is an uplifting, deeply human, brutally honest memoir that goes far beyond the story of a successful music career. It is a true testament to perseverance, self-belief, reinvention, being true to oneself, and the transformative power of music.

Koldenhoven's memoir traces her remarkable journey from a shy girl growing up in a strict Dutch Calvinist household on the south side of Chicago to becoming an internationally recognized Grammy®-winning vocalist, composer, performer, and more. Along the way, she shares candid stories about overcoming emotional and physical hardship, navigating through the competitive entertainment industry, and finding her own unique voice in spaces where women were often expected to remain unseen or unheard.

What makes the book especially compelling is its honesty and raw candor. Beautifully edited and written, Koldenhoven writes with warmth, humor, humility, and vulnerability, making even extraordinary moments feel personal and relatable. Her stories about performing with legends such as Paul McCartney, working alongside

Whoopi Goldberg in the “Sister Act” films, and becoming the soaring soprano voice featured in Yanni’s “Live at the Acropolis” are fascinating. But the emotional core of the memoir lies in the quieter moments — self-doubt, family influence, resilience, and personal growth.

Koldenhoven excels at bringing readers behind the scenes of the music and entertainment industry. Her descriptions of studio work, performing, teaching, and the unpredictable realities of surviving as an independent artist in this very competitive business provide an insider perspective that musicians and creative professionals will especially appreciate. Yet the memoir never feels industry-heavy. Readers unfamiliar with Darlene’s career can still connect deeply with the universal human themes of persistence and creative passion.

Another strength of the memoir is its balance. The book is motivational without ever being preachy, reflective without becoming self-indulgent (something I like best), and entertaining without sacrificing emotional depth. Koldenhoven’s voice on the page mirrors what many listeners also describe in her singing: Expressive, sincere, and unmistakably authentic. Refreshing and interesting, it’s one of those books you don’t want to put down.

Fans of memoirs by artists, inspirational autobiographies, and stories of triumph through adversity will likely find this book particularly engaging. More importantly, “Put Your Dress Down and Sing” reminds readers that success is rarely linear and that great courage is necessary to continue to show up and share your gifts with the world.

Ultimately, this memoir is not just about music or fame or self-aggrandizement — it is about resilience, and the lifelong journey of learning to stand fully and confidently in one’s own voice. In other words, just “Put Your Dress Down and Sing.”



As a companion to her memoir, Darlene has created a beautiful 10-track solo piano CD, “A Grand Memoir.”

Get Darlene’s memoir here: https://www.darlenekoldenhoven.com/book

Get Darlene’s CD here: https://www.darlenekoldenhoven.com/agm

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