



A close-up, low-angle shot of a person's shoulder and hair against a textured blue wall. The person is wearing a dark purple or brown t-shirt. The wall has a rough, stucco-like texture. The lighting is soft, creating a calm and intimate atmosphere.

# Amy Van Wagenen

INTERVIEWED BY AMY BAUGHER

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### What is your first memory of music?

When I was a child, I had the opportunity to record for the Church on a Primary album. I still own the original record. That was my first time in a recording studio, and I remember thinking it was pretty cool. I also remember singing for President Spencer W. Kimball when I was about eleven years old. We got to meet him afterward, and it was a wonderful experience.

### How did your musical career begin?

This is something that I've wanted to do since I was about fourteen years old, but I never thought that I would make it a reality. Then, a couple of years ago, I started taking vocal lessons from Dean Kaelin. He encouraged me to write music, so I thought that I would give it a try. The first song that I wrote was "Rain." I was really nervous to share it with Dean — I thought for sure he would think it was weak — but he actually liked it and encouraged me to write more, so I did. Things just fell into place after that.

### What has been your greatest challenge in starting your career?

Making a name for myself and trying to get myself heard. You don't usually pick up a CD in a store unless you've heard it before or you know the artist. Hopefully as people hear more of me, they'll like what they hear!

### What keeps you going?

My family. My husband is so supportive — he loves to google my name. It's pretty cute. My children think I'm a rock star — they think I could totally win American Idol. Blinded by love!

### Why did you choose "Waiting" for the title song on your album?

"Waiting" has special meaning to me. There have been times in my life when I have distanced myself from my Heavenly Father. I've been too busy to pray, or too prideful to turn to Him. But I am always humbled to know that no matter what mistakes I make or how far I stray, He is always there, "waiting for my return." I also thought that it was a

fitting title — I have waited a long time to make this dream a reality.

### Tell us about your choice to cover James Taylor's "Shower the People."

I'm a big James Taylor fan. I grew up listening to him, and this is one of my favorite songs. I love the meaning behind it, and I loved having my children sing on my CD. They are the ones that I shower with love, and they give it right back, so hearing their little voices sing is pretty powerful. It was also a great way to involve them and make them feel a part of my music; they are ultimately my inspiration.

### What inspired you to write "Tiny Graces"?

I'm not usually a morning person, but for some reason I got up early one morning to watch the sun rise. It was spectacular. I immediately grabbed a piece of paper (I'm pretty sure that it was the back of a receipt) and wrote down the first verse to that song. I sang it for my husband and he hated it! So I shelved it. As we were finishing up the CD, I took another look at it. I loved the idea behind the song, so I finished it up.

Sometimes we fail to look around us and recognize the small things that bless our lives and make life so meaningful. It's these "tiny graces" that help us see God in everything. I see Him everywhere, especially in my children's faces. This song has actually become my favorite song on the CD — and my husband's favorite as well, go figure!

### What musicians influence your musical style?

James Taylor (of course), Mindy Smith, Amy Grant, Nichole Nordeman, Natalie Grant, and Hilary Weeks. I'm sure there's a little Sting and Peter Gabriel mixed in there somewhere as well.

### Who or what has been your greatest inspiration?

When I was a young girl, I loved listening to inspirational music. It helped shape my testimony and helped me feel the Spirit. The music of Hilary Weeks probably had the most impact on me. I would love to meet her someday and thank her for sharing her music and having such a tremendous impact on my life.



### **How do you see your music building the kingdom?**

One of my favorite things to do is give firesides. I love combining my experiences and testimony with my music. I love watching the Spirit work in people's lives and seeing how different songs impact people in different ways. I hope that as people listen to my music and my message, their testimonies will be strengthened, and they will recognize who they are.

### **What part of your new career do you enjoy most?**

I love both writing and performing. Every song is like my baby. It's so amazing to watch an idea turn into something melodic and stirring. Some songs seem to jump onto the page, and others take time, patience, and a lot of prayer. I also love being on stage and sharing my voice with others. I would perform every night if I could — although my children would not approve!

### **What advice would you give to other LDS mothers who long to begin a career in music?**

Being a wife and a mother is the most rewarding thing that I have ever done. I wouldn't trade that for anything. My family will always come first. I think that as mothers we pour everything into our children — as we should — but sometimes we forget about ourselves. It's okay to have dreams and aspirations, to continue to grow and progress. That's what we're here for, after all. It might have taken me longer to achieve this dream, but there is a time and season for everything. Life is full of possibilities, and we just need to reach out and grab them. It may seem scary and impossible — it certainly did for me — but if I can do it, anyone can do it. Just keep reaching and just keep trying. You never know what the Lord has in store for you. ■

### **How does the gospel influence your music?**

I definitely rely on the Spirit as I write. There have been times when the message I needed to write about was as clear as day. Each song has strengthened my own testimony and helped me to recognize that our Father in Heaven is truly looking out for each of us.

### **Where do you see your music career going in the future?**

Hopefully in the near future I will be recording another CD. I'm working on several new songs, and I'm constantly trying to find new places to share my music.