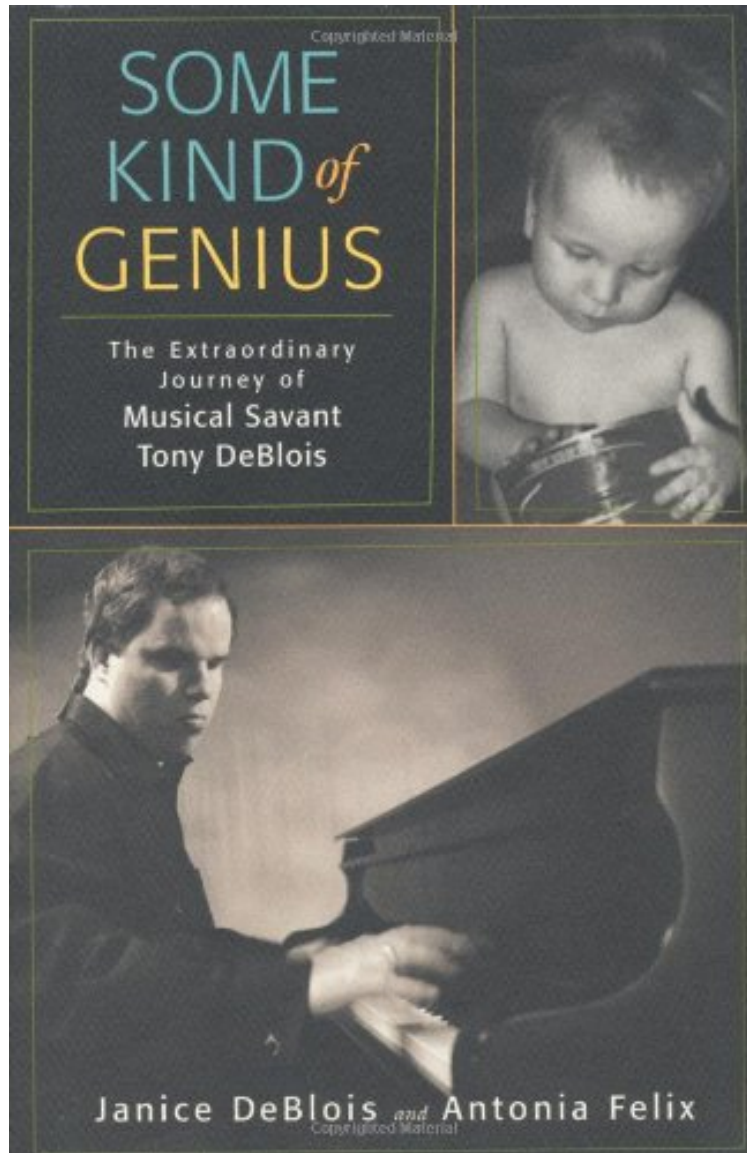


## Some Kind of Genius: The Extraordinary Journey of Musical Savant Tony DeBlois

Janice DeBlois, Antonia Felix  
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**Janice DeBlois, Antonia Felix : Some Kind of Genius: The Extraordinary Journey of Musical Savant Tony DeBlois** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Some Kind of Genius: The Extraordinary Journey of Musical Savant Tony DeBlois:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Music - a Language We All UnderstandBy BeatleBangs1964In 1976

Stevie Wonder said that "music is a language we all understand." That true statement beautifully underscores this wonderful biography of Tony DeBlois, a gifted musician who has autism, is blind and had developmental delays. Tony's story is a Song in the Key of Life. Tony DeBlois' story is indeed like that Who classic a fantastic journey. His story begins in South Dakota with his equally incredible and indomitable mother, Janice. In 1964, Janice, then 18 married the brother of the man she was in love with. By the time she learned the truth, her daughter Sonja Louise was on the way. Born in February 1965, Sonja Louise suffered from congenital hydrocephaly and a myriad of health problems. Sadly, she died in November, 1965. Around that time, Janice's first marriage did as well. Janice re-enrolled in schools and by the close of the decade met Owen Mooney. They married on September 6, 1969. Tony was born on January 22, 1973. Tony, like Sonja Louise was born with congenital health concerns as well. He had a heart condition; was premature; could not see; had sepsis and elevated bilirubin levels in his blood and would later display developmental delays. Janice worked tirelessly with Tony, who also had autism. He also had severe meltdowns that lasted for several hours. On a whim, she bought Tony a toy organ at a garage sale. Tony, then 2 was enthralled with it. He immediately began picking out tunes and before long, this musical toddler was never far from his beloved organ. His autism was diagnosed at this time and Janice never stopped her quest for appropriate programs for Tony, including one in a school in New Mexico when they were living in El Paso, Texas. On July 29 1979, Tony's brother Ralph (later Ray) was born. Ray also had congenital problems such as Klinefelter's Syndrome (XXY chromosomes) and Asperger's, a form of autism. Unlike Tony, whose speech remained marginal for years until music gave him the keys to his voice, Ray was quite fluent in speech. Like Tony, Ray was a late talker. Tony was at that time attending the El Paso Institute until Janice was able to secure a place for him at the School for the Blind Visually Impaired in Austin. Winning legal battles with the school district, she secured that place for Tony together with an arrangement with Continental Airlines to fly him to Austin for school and home for weekends. Thanks to Janice, Tony's story about his musical prowess and regular trips to Austin would make the local news. He also charmed patrons and shoppers alike in an El Paso music store with his piano playing prowess. Shortly after Ray's birth, Owen walked out on the family and Janice worked hard to raise two boys with very different types of autism and other special needs. By 1981 she went to Boston for work and from December, 1981 until April, 1982 the boys stayed with family including Owen in South Dakota until Janice was able to find a place for them all to live in Boston. She also wanted Tony enrolled in the Perkins Institute for the Blind where Helen Keller once attended. By the spring of 1983, Janice and the boys were firmly established in Boston. Ray, unlike Tony had severe behavioral issues including fire starting and running with a questionable group. At 11, Ray became quite gullible where peers were concerned and would do whatever other kids told him. Tony remained a shining star in the music world. On June 18, 1988 Janice married for the third time to Tom DeBlois, who adopted her sons. Ralph legally became Ray at that time and remained attached to Tom, even when that marriage ended. Tony, meanwhile, flourished in the 1980s. By 1989, he was enrolled in the Berklee College undergraduate program and was under the tutelage of John LaPorta (1920-2004). The gifted jazz musician was floored by the young man who could not see and who still displayed some autistic behaviors and pronounced him one of the most talented artists he had ever known. In 1992, Tony became quite well known throughout the Boston area and was a student at Berklee. This is a beautiful story of how music can literally transform lives. I think of a line Ringo uttered in the Beatles' movie "Yellow Submarine" that "nothing is Beatle Proof." In an extension of that sentiment, I think that nothing is music proof. Music, like piano keys proved to be the keys to Tony's speech; his independence and in time his ticket to the world. He has been featured on many shows and in recent years has traveled around the world giving concerts. His CDs reveal piano playing that is nothing short of outstanding. Tony is not only a virtuoso of music; he is a Virtuoso of claiming his Voice. His voice and his story are ones people want to hear. Some good companion books are Blind Tom, the Black Pianist-Composer (1849-1908): Continually Enslaved and Rex: A Mother, Her Autistic Child, and the Music that Transformed Their Lives, These books feature two other piano virtuosos who could not see and who also had autism. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating young man and his story By jazzneophyte I became aware of this extraordinary young man through a chance meeting with Bo Winiker in Boston while attending the Chris Botti and Friends: Live In Boston PBS taping. Bo sent me Tony's cd and I immediately ordered this book. This talented pianist has defied all odds and, through the persistence of his mother and mentors like Mr. Winiker, graduated from the prestigious Berklee School of Music and has performed all around the world. Here is a fascinating look at savant syndrome and a story well worth reading. Make sure you check out the cd Some Kind Of Genius also. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Manages to make a great story boring. By Olivia D. Shelton Great story, poorly written. I was excited to find this story. I read a third of it and had yet to read anything about Tony's amazing abilities. I knew all about his ancestors, etc., and family stories before he ever came along, but I wanted to read about HIM. I don't think I can exaggerate how poorly this book is written. A most ordinary account of an extraordinary person. DON'T BUY THIS BOOK.

For everyone whose heart was touched by the movie Rain Man, here is the inspiring true story of an exceptional autistic savant whose musical gifts thrill audiences the world over. Ever since he was born-blind and weighing less than two pounds-Tony DeBlois has been defying the odds and wildly surpassing others' expectations. Diagnosed early on

as autistic, at two years old his talent for music was revealed when he played "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on a toy piano. Going on to graduate with honors from the Berklee College of Music, today Tony leads an improvisational jazz ensemble and performs solo shows from Dublin to Taipei and even Washington, D.C.'s Kennedy Center. *Some Kind of Genius* weaves details of Tony's amazing musical accomplishments--he can play 20 instruments and his sixth CD, also titled *Some Kind of Genius*, is set to be released at the time of this book--with a fascinating look at savant syndrome, in which a person with certain developmental limitations exhibits brilliance in some other aspect of his life. Tony's fiercely devoted mother, Janice, also tells of her own crusade--not only for the rights of her son but on behalf of all those with special needs. Tony's story will hold special appeal for all who have seen him on the *Today* show and *Entertainment Tonight*; watched the Lifetime movie based on his life, *Journey of the Heart*; heard him in concert; or read about him in Dr. Darold Treffert's book *Extraordinary People: Understanding Savant Syndrome*.

About the Author TONY DeBLOIS AND JANICE DeBLOIS live near Boston, in Randolph, Massachusetts. ANTONIA FELIX is the bestselling author of 14 nonfiction titles, including biographies of Laura Bush and Condoleeza Rice. She is also a classical singer who has performed throughout the United States and Europe. She lives near Kansas City, Missouri.