

BRIER PATCH MUSIC

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KEN MEDEMA

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About Ken Medema and Brier Patch Music

From the time Ken Medema was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 1942, he has been unable to see with his physical eyes. "As a kid I was not widely accepted," he says, "and I spent a lot of time by myself. Because I have lived with some degree of being different all my life, I have some sympathy for people who have been disenfranchised."

"I started banging on the piano when I was five years old," he says, "making up crazy little fantasies on my mom's piano. When I was eight years old my parents got me a wonderful teacher who taught me the classics with Braille music and taught me to play by ear. And every time I learned a piece my teacher would tell me, 'Now you improvise.' So music became a second language."

Medema earned a master's degree in music therapy from Michigan State University and worked for several years as a musical therapist. While thus employed he began writing songs about his patients' lives, and they responded enthusiastically. In 1973 Medema began a career as a performing and recording artist, recording albums for Word and Shawnee Press.

In 1985 he founded Brier Patch Music, an independent recording, publishing, and performance-booking company with headquarters in Grandville, Michigan. Brier Patch creates musical expressions that celebrate all aspects of the human experience, with an emphasis on spirituality and such universal concerns as peace, justice, hunger, homelessness, and the environment.

Brier Patch's name is derived from the Uncle Remes stories that picture Brer Rabbit as having been born and raised in the Brier Patch, a place that is not comfortable for anyone else.

Today Medema performs in a wide variety of venues, from local congregations to charity fund-raisers, to corporate conventions, to high school and university campuses, to major youth gatherings, to universally televised religious programs, to annual assemblies of national organizations. He and his wife Jane have been married since 1965 and live in the San Francisco Bay area of California. They have two grown children, Aaron and Rachel.