

Crafting a Musical Life: Integrating Songwriting, Music Performance and Creative Business Approaches



All original songs written by Brooke Dunnagan

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Live from the Divide
Bozeman, Montana

The Man Who Has Many Answers

The man who has many answers
is often found
in the theaters of information
where he offers, graciously,
his deep findings.



While the man who has only questions,
to comfort himself, makes music.

-Mary Oliver

Artist Biography

My musical journey began at a young age. I recall humming melodies, and finding words to fit into them as I wandered around my childhood home in Bozeman, Montana. I got my first guitar when I was eight years old, smothered it with sparkly flower stickers and learned simple chords to sing my melodies over.

My older brother, Bridger, and I both took fiddle lessons growing up which developed a lifelong love for folk, bluegrass, and old-time music traditions. When Bridger would come home from college, he would teach me how to sing harmonies on old country songs, igniting a passion for singing with other people.

Upon graduating from Boise High School in 2017, I came back to Bozeman and enrolled at Montana State in 2018. Originally undeclared for the first three semesters, I was encouraged by mentors and peers to pursue the Directed Interdisciplinary Studies (DIS) program.

This program allows students to combine disciplines of their choosing to accomplish an interdisciplinary project. I applied to the program with a project that combined music, writing, literature, and business. I will be graduating with a major in the DIS program as well as receiving a minor in music.

For the past six years, I have performed both solo and collaboratively at various venues in the area, as well as participating in the Montana State choirs. My current musical focus has been working on my undergraduate degree.

Outside of my academic pursuits, I have worked as a cross-country ski coach and as a whitewater kayaking coach for local youth programs. My deep connection to rivers and the landscapes they run through influences my songwriting greatly.

After graduating, I am going to Europe to tour with the MSU choirs, followed by some independent travel. Once I am back in Bozeman, I will be working for Wave Train Kayak Team, organizing the Gallatin Whitewater Festival and playing music as often as I can. I hope to record and release an EP of my music towards the end of the summer.



Artist Statement:

This DIS project marks the culmination of my five-year journey at MSU, where I've delved into my creative, academic, and professional aspirations. The songs for this performance span the last seven years, each exploring themes surrounding relationships, nature, and navigating life's changes. Notably, these themes are often woven with landscape features of the Mountain West, crafting imagery with which the meaning is contained.

In my songwriting, the narrative occasionally unfolds as a dialogue with a beloved other, and often that figure is a representation of my younger self. This younger version, a constant guide throughout my life, embodies fearlessness, playfulness, and an unwavering curiosity to seek meaning through creative expression, particularly in music. She has been a driving force behind much of my songwriting.

These songs serve as an archive of the past several years of my life. They explore themes of change and the process of navigating and understanding these shifts. As I reflect on this journey, I recognize that my younger self has been instrumental in guiding me through the intricacies of life, allowing me to uncover profound meanings through my artistic endeavors. This performance represents not only a musical showcase, but also a narrative journey through my personal growth and self-discovery.

I express my gratitude to you for being a part of this experience and lending your ears to the melodies that have been shaped over these years of personal evolution.





Songs:

Otter Song

Mark My Words

Leave The Door Cracked

Siren Song

Take Me Down

Do You Feel Inclined

In My Mind

River Bed



Otter Song

In the river, there lives an otter
blowing bubbles, trying to speak to me
oh in the river, there lives an otter
in his curiosity trying to lead you to me

In the forest, they are walking
side by side walks and old oak tree
dazed and confused I look to the sky
dream to drift away along as a seed

Chorus:

Oh I'm trying to get away, so tomorrow, but now that's yesterday
Oh I'm trying to walk or swim away, but tomorrow just turns into
yesterday

Mmm and the meadowlark
she tells me not to be afraid
sing your song and I'll carry it on my wings
over the rivers and trees to the valleys

Chorus

To the river I return
so I can learn what they have to say
to the river, I return never to return
and tomorrow just turns into yesterday
and tomorrow just turns into yesterday
so tomorrow...



Mark My Words

Well I'm walking around, the same damn town
I could lie in its arms, and I could die in its arms

Well he's walking around, that little lonesome town
He could lie in its' arms, and I could die in his arms

I struggle to find, the meaning of it all
I woke up blue, and you woke up tall

So I went to the woods, to see the trees in all their glory
Oh and they don't make me feel small, no they don't make me feel small

I remember the time you told me honey have no fear
Mark my words and don't be scared, mark my words

Chorus:

Well the day is nearly broken and I'll keep the dark inside
It's better than getting sun burnt, I'll fuel the fire inside
I'll tear away at dusk, leave this chaotic mess behind
Where fear can't grab a hold of me, cause I'm running all the time

Well you're walking around, with your head held high
With no one else, you're the only one inside

You're leaving me in the dusk
I thought we had love, but I guess it was lust, I thought we had love

I'm walking on the coals I'm burning
But they don't buzz a feeling, I think I've buried you in them

I can't afford a single revisit
To that little lonesome town
With us tangled up in it



No I can't afford one damn revisit
To that little lonesome town
with us tangled up in it

Chorus



Leave The Door Cracked

See the bottle's still empty, with the lipstick stained red
I can still see the shape of your hand

You said the image of me was burnt into your head
Now I stand in this doorway, drenched in you instead

I fought with the demons, that you kept at bay
With the bottle all empty, they stand in my way

Of prizes, and riches and gold all inlaid
In a broken heart that once led my way

You live by what you die by and the air is stuck still
If you walk out that door my lungs they will fill

Chorus:

So leave the door open this time
I want to let the memories, flood in to my mind
So leave the door cracked a little wide
I want to watch you walk away
Flickering like a candle light



In knots are my chances, and the ropes trippin' me
If a net comes of this, I think you best leave

Caught up and caught in, oh watching our steps
Tryin' to tiptoe around our unhappiness

In the desert walks a devil so mighty so cruel
Long ago he told me all about you
Now I'm thinking I should have known all along
It wasn't the man in the red, no it was not that at all

You see I got myself tangled, it looked pretty grim
I shouldn't have pointed at you, I should have looked right within

I guess these moments are lessons, and ones I should learn
But my flame keeps getting bigger, I'm bound to get burnt

Chorus



Siren Song

I'll follow you down to the river so deep
I'll watch my steps so I don't fall in
I'll watch my steps so I don't have to swim



This river banks not gonna hold this heavy weight
This river bank is gonna fold on in
So I'll cross my fingers to cross this river with you
I'll cross my fingers to cross this river with you

In this watery landscape that we find ourselves in
The sounds are muddled here in the blue
Distant memories, far away friends
Currents of feeling all calling me in

Then I see her there, right before the drop
She's guarded herself and I had nearly forgotten about her

Chorus:
I'll sing a song, I'll write an ode
To the siren singing on this island
Alone

So I followed you down to the river so deep
I didn't watch my steps so I fell in
I'll still cross my fingers to cross this river with you
I'll still trust you again and again

Chorus:
I'll sing a song, I'll write an ode
To the siren singing on this sland
Alone



Here's to the one who, protected me who
Guarded herself and I had nearly forgotten all about her
I had nearly forgot

Take Me Down

Take me down, for good this time
Take me out, one last time
Darling I'm much better than you
How could I not see the truth?

I was reading, from my own book
My head down, I could not look
I was searching for a lord
One that did not lead with a sword

Free my soul, here down below
I read that line, in the chapter before
When I wrote that, I was blind
Did not know that, I'd be fine

Can not beg, for freedom from somebody else
I tug my sleeve and I look to myself
And I thank a lord, for being in me
I thank myself for tugging my own goddamn sleeve

I was told that, I was caged
I could swear at the people, who led me astray
I believed that, I was caged
I could swear at the people, who led me astray



But they tried, they tried their best
And I know, what it is like to be blind like the rest
Darling hold me tight
I had lied in that third line

Do You Feel Inclined

Do you feel inclined?
To take a ride with me
Do you feel inclined?
To take a ride with me



Cause I wanna be resting on your shoulders
Loving you over and over
Honey if you're available, please come to the table

Even when you are far away
I'll think of you and the words that you say
To me, and us, at the end of our days

You look at me and I get choked up
I wonder if you know what I am thinking of
Who's it gonna be, who's gonna say those three words
I love you, I love you I really do

Do you feel inclined?
To take a ride with me
Do you feel inclined?
To take a ride with me
Honey if you're available, please come to the table

In My Mind

I was sitting on the steps
amazed by the sunset
a bird told me I'd be free
I just had to let go of my dreams

I want to know more of her mind
all the colors that are swirling
but that's not for me to know
the bird was right I must let go

Chorus:

Oh, it gives me time
To find the colors swirling in her mind
Oh, and I don't mind
Loosing myself to the pages of red, green or blue
Oh thank you for making me feel, thank you for making me feel

This summer I've returned
to the book of my younger days
so I can remember
the weight of yearning

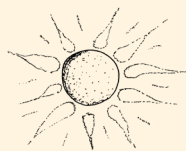
This tale of wolves in the woods
may do harm than any good
so I bed down in the moss
lay with them and just get lost

Chorus



River Bed

For a time, I saw our future in our hands
It was something too beautiful to understand
It was something like water through sand
You were the raindrops, honey I was the river bed



We met in the park that evening, heartbreak heavy on our minds
The stream was frozen, the eagle was standing by
An audience for the listening in when you asked me why
I'm sorry love I don't know how to say goodbye

Chorus:

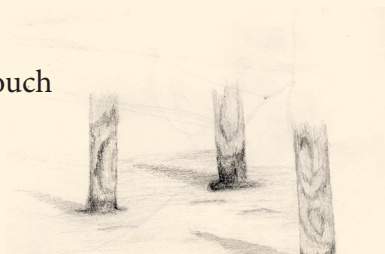
Cause I'd already forgotten how it was
And I was already moving on
And I was already longing for your touch, for your touch

We went to the river by our old house, on that thawing spring day
As if to return to something we could try and reclaim
You were picking rocks and I was watching logs drift away
Just like you to pick things up when I had already gone away

I see you now in my dreams in a meadow in my head
I'm picking flowers and your walking the streambed
I hold them up to the light, as if to pretend
We can see clearly when really we don't know how this could end

Chorus:

Cause I'd already forgotten who I was
I was already moving on
I was already longing for my touch, for my touch







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And finally, thank you to the girl in the photo, for dreaming. I promise to keep singing.

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