



A true preserver of the spirit of folk music, 2017 Juno nominee **Maria Dunn** (www.mariadunn.com) is often compared to **Woody Guthrie** for her keen social awareness and her unvarnished songs about the lives of working men and women.

Thirteen years as a volunteer DJ in community radio (1987-2000) encouraged Maria to listen widely to the master songwriters, singers and instrumentalists of folk and roots music. Discovering their recordings and becoming an avid fan and supporter of live music in her community, she absorbed the important messages of compassion and human struggle that have always been central to the writings of folk artists from **Buffy Ste. Marie** to **Hazel Dickens**, from **Bill Broonzy** to **Dick Gaughan**.

By the time she began writing her own music in the mid-90s, Maria was learning to draw deeply on the folk tradition of storytelling through song to honour the resilience and grace of “ordinary” people, past and present.

In keeping with **Pete Seeger’s** words (1994), “*The key to the future of the world is finding the optimistic stories and letting them be known*”, her latest recording, **Gathering** (April 2016), highlights stories of love—not songs of romantic love, but songs of family, community, humanity and the love that fires our actions to make the world a better place. The songs range from historical and narrative to personal and immediate, inspired by social justice stories both global and local.

Stylistically, Maria continues to expand her musical palate from her original influences: North American folk/roots and the music of her Scottish-Irish heritage. With her 2012 recording, **Piece By Piece**, Maria added musical inflections and instrumentation (**Sharmila Mathur** on sitar, for example) to evoke the countries of origin (Italy, India, Vietnam, Ukraine) of the women who inspired the songs. With **Gathering**, Maria again sets the songs in styles that complement the stories: *Malala* features guest vocalist **Karim Gillani**, an Alberta-based Sufi singer originally from Pakistan (www.karimsangeet.ca). *The Milkman* is based on an African guitar rhythm and features **Jeremiah McDade** with a jazz-inspired saxophone solo.

Distributed in Canada by Outside Music, **Gathering** is Maria Dunn’s sixth independent recording, produced by **Shannon Johnson** (Juno award winner with **The McDades** for 2007’s *Bloom*; www.themcdades.com). Guest musicians include: **Shannon Johnson** (violin, harmony vocals), **Ojas Joshi** (tabla, percussion), **Solon McDade** (upright bass), **Eric Breton** (percussion), **Jeremiah McDade** (bansuri, whistles, saxophone, guitar, harmony vocals) with guest vocals from **Karim Gillani** and harmony vocals from **Asani’s Debbie Houle**, **Sarah Pocklington** and **Terry Morrison**.

The 11 songs on **Gathering** range from *Malala*, a buoyant call to action inspired by **Malala Yousafzai**, to *When I Was Young*, a flowing old-time ballad inspired by Alberta indigenous leader **Dorothy McDonald-Hyde**. *How I Live* shares the quiet courage of families supporting their children with disabilities, while *When The Grandmothers Meet* celebrates women across the globe, with its exuberant vocals and joyful horn lines. The recording finishes with *Music In The Meadow*, a bluesy bow-driven wordplay on the wonder of the Rocky Mountains.

- *A wonderful collection of new songs from one of our most important and vital songwriters...If it doesn’t bring a lump to your throat, you’re already beyond help. Essential listening, then, this **Gathering**. – Penguin Eggs Magazine*
- *An arrestingly powerful singer-songwriter who writes great historical and social commentary. - WFMT Chicago*
- *...remarkable singer-songwriter, think of her as a distaff Woody Guthrie. - Edmonton Sun*
- *...this is history come alive. Her lyrics are sharp and poignant... - Sunday Edition, CBC Radio*
- *She’s assured, strong, and her versatile voice carries her songs straight to the head and heart. - Sing Out!*

Maria performs (solo, duo, trio) at theatres, folk clubs, conferences and festivals across Canada, the USA and Europe. She has been featured on Canadian TV, CBC National Radio, CKUA Alberta Radio, BBC Radio Scotland, and her original songs published in **Sing Out!** and **Penguin Eggs** magazines and the **Rise Again** songbook (2015). Other artists, including **Niamh Parsons**, **The Outside Track** and **Bob Bossin**, have recorded her original songs.

ARTIST, AGENT North America: Distant Whisper Music • PO Box 4463, Edmonton, AB CANADA T6E 4T5 • (780) 430-8560 • www.mariadunn.com
AGENT UK: Oscar Music Agency • Lochgoilhead, Argyll and Bute, PA24 8AA Tel: 0044 (0) 1301 703 747 • oscarsfolk@aol.com • www.oscarmusic.co.uk
AGENT Continental Europe: Mc-Ent Management • PO Box 599, 8200 AN Llelystad, Netherlands • info@mcent.nl • www.whoisontour.org
PUBLICIST North America: Marlene D’Aoust • Free Expression • (403) 455-3175 • mdaoust@shaw.ca
CD DISTRIBUTION Canada: Outside Music Distribution • (416) 461-0655 • www.outside-music.com

Maria Dunn Biography – Page 2 of 2

Highlights

Award Nominations:

2017 Juno nominee – Traditional Roots Album of the Year (**Gathering**);
 2016 Edmonton Music Prize – Winner (**Gathering**);
 2016 Independent Music Awards nominee – Social Action Song (**Malala** from **Gathering**);
 2013 Canadian Folk Music Awards nominee – Solo Artist of the Year (**Piece By Piece**);
 2013 Edmonton Music Prize – shortlisted (**Piece By Piece**);
 2013 Independent Music Awards nominee – Concept Album (**Piece By Piece**);
 2009 Canadian Folk Music Awards nominee – Solo Artist of the Year (**The Peddler**);
 2009 USA Songwriting Competition Honourable Mention (**The Peddler**);
 2002 JUNO nominee - Roots/Traditional Solo (**For A Song**);
 1999 Prairie Music nominee - Outstanding Songwriter (**From Where I Stand**)

International Festivals: **2008 Celtic Connections, Glasgow, Scotland; 2006 Smithsonian Folk Life Fest, Washington, DC**

International Tours: **2015 UK Tour (Maria Dunn Duo); 2011 Netherlands Theatre Tour (Double Bill with The McDades); 2010 Netherlands Tour (Maria Dunn Trio)**

Canadian Festivals: **Main Stage:** Edmonton (AB); Lunenburg (NS); Summerfolk (ON); Mission (BC); Stanfest (NS); Frostbite (YK); Canmore (AB); **Side Stages:** Vancouver, Comox, Powell River (BC); Calgary, Bear Creek (AB); Winnipeg (MB); Mariposa, Ottawa (ON)

TV: **The Carol Project** (Bravo TV, Canada); **Huron Carole** 2002, Jubilee Auditorium, Calgary (CMT); **Voice of America** (Washington, DC); **Mac-TV** (Scotland); **Alberta Primetime** (CTVtwo, Alberta)

Radio Features: **BBC Radio Scotland, Travelling Folk** (Scotland); **WFMT Folkstage** (Chicago); **Folkscene** (Los Angeles); **Bound For Glory** (Ithaca, NY); **KVMR** (Nevada City, CA); **CBC Canada Live** (Canada); **CBC Sunday Edition** (Canada); **CBC This Morning** (Canada); **CBC DNTO** (Canada); **CBC Key of A** (AB); **CKUA The Celtic Show** (AB); **CiTR** (Vancouver)

Discography:

2016 Gathering
 2012 Piece By Piece
 2008 The Peddler
 2006 Alberta: Wild Roses, Northern Lights (Smithsonian Folkways)
 2004 We Were Good People
 2004 Songs of the Christmas Carol Project (Brass Monkey Productions)
 2001 For A Song
 1998 From Where I Stand

Other Projects: *On The River* multimedia show with **Asani**; *GWG: Piece by Piece* multimedia show (and 2015 video with curriculum guide for Aspen Foundation); *Troublemakers, Working Albertans, 1900 – 1950* multimedia show; host of annual *Women of Folkways* concerts for folkwaysAlive! and Winter Roots Roundup (2011 – 2016); Pacific Northwest Labour History Conference (2008, 2014); 2001 Artist-in-Residence, Edmonton Labour Council; Song Commissions: CBC Radio “Canada Reads” (2007); Public Interest Alberta (2009, 2014); Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (2006); Edmonton Trades & Labour Council 100th Anniversary (2006); Alberta Federation of Labour 100th Anniversary (2012)

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