



A true preserver of the spirit of folk music, twice **Juno**-nominated **Maria Dunn** ([www.mariadunn.com](http://www.mariadunn.com)) is often compared to **Woody Guthrie** for her keen social awareness and her melodic, 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 2016 recording **Gathering** (2017 **Juno Nominee**; 2016 **Edmonton Music Prize Winner**), celebrates the love of family, community, and humanity 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.

Maria's earlier albums anchor her lyrics in music that melds North American roots with her Scottish-Irish heritage. For 2012's **Piece By Piece**, a tribute to immigrant women working at a Canadian clothing factory, she added musical inflections and instrumentation (from **Sharmila Mathur**, *sitar* and **Ojas Joshi**, *tabla*, for example) to evoke the countries of origin (Italy, India, Vietnam, Ukraine) of the women who inspired the songs. With **Gathering**, Maria continues to expand her musical palate with contributions from Sufi singer **Karim Gillani** and jazz saxophonist **Jeremiah McDade**.

Distributed in Canada by Outside Music, **Gathering** is Maria Dunn's sixth independent recording, produced by **Shannon Johnson** (**Juno** Winner with **The McDades** for 2007's *Bloom*; [www.themcdades.com](http://www.themcdades.com)). 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 **Chief 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.

- ... it's no stretch to say that Dunn's musical accomplishments have left us with a richer appreciation of our culture. I can think of few other songwriters who embrace the work of searching out and researching real-life stories from often overlooked corners of the world, only to turn them into memorable songs. – **Edmonton Journal**
- 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!**

In addition to her work as a songwriter and musician, Maria has researched, developed and performs four multimedia people's history shows (weaving original songs and oral history interviews) in collaboration with videographer **Don Bouzek**: *On The River* (with Indigenous women's trio **Asani**), *Packingtown*, *GWG: Piece by Piece* (with historian **Catherine C. Cole**), and *Troublemakers*.

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Edmonton-based, Maria tours (solo, ensemble) to theatres, folk clubs, conferences and festivals across North America and in Europe. Bravo TV, CBC Radio, CKUA Alberta and BBC Radio Scotland have all featured her music. Her songs are published in **Sing Out!** and **Penguin Eggs** magazines and **Rise Again** songbook (2015) and recorded by international artists, including **Niamh Parsons**, **The Outside Track** and **Bob Bossin**.

### Highlights

Awards / Nominations:

2017 JUNO nominee – Traditional Roots Album of the Year (**Gathering**);  
2017 Western Canadian Music Awards: Nominee - Roots Solo Artist 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 Tours: 2017 UK Tour (Maria Dunn Duo); 2017 NY State (Triple Bill: **Joe Jencks, Si Kahn & Dunn**); 2015 UK/Ireland Tour (Maria Dunn Duo); 2011 Netherlands (Double Bill with **The McDades**); 2010 Netherlands (Maria Dunn Trio)

Festivals: **Main Stage**: Edmonton (AB); Lunenburg (NS); Summerfolk (ON); Mission (BC); Stanfest (NS); Frostbite (YK); Canmore (AB); 2006 Smithsonian Folk Life (DC, USA), 2008 Celtic Connections (Glasgow) **Side Stages**: Salmon Arm, 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**; **CBC Sunday Edition** (Canada), **CKUA** (AB) etc.

Discography:

2021 Joyful Banner Blazing (May 2020 release delayed due to COVID19 performance and travel restrictions)  
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); *Packingtown* and *Troublemakers, Working Albertans, 1900 – 1950* multimedia shows; 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); Friends of Medicare (2019); Alberta Labour History Institute (2019); Public Interest Alberta (2009, 2014); Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (2006); Alberta Federation of Labour 100th Anniversary (2012)

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