

THE ROLE OF GENDER IN MUSIC

February 25, 2011 Via Perkins

The first time I heard "Good Man," a song by singer/songwriter Josh Ritter, was on an episode of the TV show House, M.D.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C81SyunWMAQ>

The relaxed acoustic-folk feel, almost lazy croon of the vocals, and vivid lyrics intrigued me. I quickly set to learning it and performed it for my mother, hoping to get a good response. I'll never forget what she said: "Good *man*? How can you sing that? You're a *girl*!"

Before that moment, it has simply never occurred to me that it would be strange for me, as a female, to sing that song.

My default perception of myself is not as of a female - at least the way society has defined what it means to be a girl. I don't walk around totally conscious of the fact that I'm a girl and the way gender impacts my daily life. Often times I'm so focused on other things that define me that I forget that I even have a gender.

I think of myself as a conglomeration of personality traits, emotions, ideas, opinions that make up my sort of stream-of-consciousness thought life. Although I am definitely satisfied with being a girl, and identify with feminine traits, I can also be androgynous. Mostly, I feel very much *human*.

The songs that first stoked my passionate for music were almost exclusively written and performed by males. The only female music role model I can think of that I had as a teenager was Avril Lavigne. Although she was not the picture of femininity when she was first discovered, a big part of her appeal was her offbeat style. She was marketed as a female who wasn't feminine, and that in itself is gender association.

Kaki King is a great example of a music artist who isn't gender-focused. She is a brilliant guitarist and singer/songwriter. Here, she explains how her gender stereotypes have affected her career in music (starts at 1:34):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5pyTMeaPX8>

I love music because it can defy gender, and all other human characteristics with which we use to categorize each other. And, since every person is unique, music has an equally distinctive effect on every listening ear. I appreciate this gift each time I listen to a song that moves me, no matter who it is written by or about.

- Via

7 TIPS FOR TOURING WITH A KEYNOTE BAND

June 22, 2011 Via Perkins

For about a week, I have been on a tour as a singer and periodic guitarist and percussionist in Young Isaac. This is my first real experience touring as a musician, and I am thrilled to be taking this journey with my new acoustic/rock band!

We are all part of a Summer Project, which is a missions trip through an organization called Keynote. Our ministry this summer is mainly in correctional facilities in Florida. We play a set list of secular songs which have affecting and introspective lyrics, and share the Gospel through personal testimony. We have witnessed over 80 lives be transformed by Christ so far, and each one of us has been shaped by him during these past several days as well.

Here are 7 tips from my travels.



1. During long rides in the tour bus, make sure to enjoy the view. Maybe I'm geeky for loving this, but I don't think I'll ever get sick of staring out the window while riding in the

bus. The views so far have been fantastic, especially the wide open fields with grazing horses and cattle, expanses of trees and mountains, shantytowns, and farmlands. Also, make sure to spend time playing fun games with fellow passengers. I highly recommend Telephone Pictionary and Mad Libs (themed words and readings in funny accents are especially amusing).

2. Yes, baggy, relatively formless clothes are necessary prison attire. But no, they don't have to be totally un-cute. I soon realized all the Young Isaac girls had good-looking-but-not-overly-attractive clothes prepared, though I was ready to throw away my regard for self-dignity in that area. The upside is that I haven't been receiving any inappropriate male attention. It also helps that I don't wear makeup out of habit, and I happen to not be singing any of the romantic songs in our set. I enjoy my hair-flipping, belting rock songs, thank you very much!
3. Make sure not to stand too close to the electric fences that outline the facilities. One of our singers, Holly, did this by accident, and got electrocuted while we were loading gear for our first show. Although she has toured in prisons for many years, she'd never experienced that before. Thankfully, she wasn't hurt.
4. Read as many of the comment cards as possible (these are handed out to the attendees to share their thoughts on the concert). It's wonderful to hear how individual people were moved in their own words, because often you can't tell how engaged they were during the show (although we do sometimes see them singing along, crying, or bowing their heads). It is a precious gift to read the ways they felt infused by hope and touched by God.
5. If you ever get the privilege of being in a convict-lead Bible study, be honored. A handful of men ran a Bible study for us after we had a sweet jam session together, and it was the first study they had ever tried with outsiders. They reminded us that we would be

shocked to hear the things they did to end up in prison, but that their changed lives were a testament to the power of Christ in their lives. It was amazing to sit together as brothers and sisters in Christ, a ragamuffin group unified as one body.

6. Get ready to see more smiles than you have probably ever seen in your life. Although many may conceptualize prisoners to be a frightening group of hardened people, this is just not true. They are so grateful to have visitors come, and they love to shake your hand, look into your eyes, and thank you for coming. Just your presence means so much, because they have such a lack of joy. These men crave interaction, hope, and things God can funnel through us to them that they don't get much of otherwise, and we are excited to give it.

7. You will be challenged to question the importance of music - this is one of the biggest lessons I have learned thus far, especially as a music major in college. Although music is one of the most powerful things I have experienced in life, it keeps being more eclipsed by the power of God, especially when he is invited to work through music, the force that he himself created. I realize the temporary and fleeting meaning of music in relation to the creator of life, the weight of eternity, and the way Christ changes lives. I'll never look at music quite the same way again.

- Via

I AM NOT A MUSICIAN. (THOUGHTS FROM A STUDENT SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF AN UNDERGRADUATE MUSIC DEGREE.)

August 6, 2011 Via Perkins

I live in a world inundated by music. When I was accepted into college, music was the subject I committed to be absorbed with for four years. It's in my daily life - its components I continuously have to understand, memorize, and utilize. And the more I learn, the more I notice the music, and even sounds I hear on a regular basis, so I'm surrounded by it all the more. I notice its psychological and sociological impacts, and how those who create it have reacted to, or shifted, the course of history. It's a lot to take in. I wish the semesters were twice as long - it would give me more time to fully assimilate my new knowledge into how I see the world.

I have met many people who say music is their life; that it is the only way they can endure living in this world, and the only freedom they need to make them feel whole. I am not one of those people. And when I am dealing with something in my life, I don't necessarily run to write down some lyrics. Songwriting is not my only outlet. And although music has become one of my greatest passions, it is still only one of my many areas of interest. I can picture myself in a variety of different jobs or careers in the arts post-graduation - there is no one path that I feel would be solely the right one for me, so I'm excited to listen to God's voice as he calls me to the right road. Throughout my life I have explored many different types of art, such as photography, writing poetry, and drawing, and I desire to be involved in each of them in varying levels and at different times.

I recently learned that Joni Mitchell, famed singer/songwriter, also goes through phases with her art. She might only be able to paint for a few months, then might switch to only writing music for a while. Also, she was primarily a painter before her music made her a success. My first major form of self-expression in art was writing. I have many notebooks filled with lyrics and poems, and I've been journaling consistently since elementary school. In late middle school, I began writing the lyrics that would soon be transformed into my first songs, bolstered by my

introduction to the radio through my first stereo, and the purchase of my first guitar. After my first year attending the Creation music festival in Pennsylvania, I was completely captivated by music. By high school, I thought I knew a good amount about it. I had no idea how wrong I was - these past two years, I've learned so much more about music than I ever imagined existed, and it's been an extremely exciting path.



Mustering a smile at age 13 is always a challenge.

Along the way, however, it's been a struggle not to fall into the pattern of college on auto-pilot - to simply focus in on what's written next in my academic planner, and to simply complete the requirements that are set out for me by others. On the other spectrum, it's just as easy to fall

into obsession by hyper-focusing on my own efforts - having unrealistically high standards for my musicianship and feeling angry when they aren't achieved. At times, I have simply become caught up in what my professors or peers think is the best path to take, and have forgotten the true reason why I am getting an education, which is simple: it's completely up to me. I have the freedom to do what I believe is the most fulfilling option for me, and to reject the suggestions or opinions of others if I desire.

A mentor of mine recently offered up this bit of wisdom: *"Academia crushes the artistic soul by trying to put it in a box. But you can learn to use the box you are placed in to your advantage."* Because the nature of college is institutional, there is a default setting that is created for the average student. As college students, we can all too easily fall into line, even without realizing it. We forget how important it is to protect our passions in life. There are many people that will tell us what they think we are or what we should do, and that can veer us off the path we know we want for ourselves. Every activity that will require our precious time must be carefully evaluated, so we are assured we're doing things because our hearts desires them, and that it's the right time in our lives to pursue it. We must all develop a strong self-will and identity, even as it grows and expands with more experience and knowledge.



A photo from the video shoot for my song "Invincibility" over the summer.

In the sense that I have the ability to create music, and enjoy the process of writing, recording, and performing it, I am what can be defined as a musician. But that does not mean that that is the only thing I can or want to do. I could write songs because I feel pressured into doing so. I could live in that head space, but I don't want to. Even if someone in the audience doesn't like my songs, I can be at peace with it. I don't have to worry, because I am not defined by what people say I am. There are many roles that I play in life, and the list of things I want to do with my life is constantly being edited. I embrace it all, which is why I can say with confidence:

I am not a musician. I am a human being.

- Via

THE MODERN PRODIGAL SHOW

January 21, 2013 Via Perkins

Lo and behold, I am starting my final semester at Salem State University! For the past week and a half, I have been full of antsy anticipation, as I have many different projects, activities, classes, and work going on all at once. I am thankful for the privilege of having full, busy days (as long as I can find time to meditate and pray each day to keep me grounded!).

I thought I would use this blog to track the progress of one of my senior projects I am working on. This one is required to complete my music major. Most students who are concentrating in voice, as I am, choose to perform a recital as their senior project, but I wanted to take a different route. Here's an excerpt from the proposal I wrote for my music seminar class that explains my project:

Reading and listening to interviews with musicians have always inspired me, shaping my thoughts about music, and expanding my understanding about songwriting, performance, music business, and many other topics. Therefore, my senior project involves interviews with local musicians... I will craft individual series of questions for each participating musician or group, depending upon the type of music they write, how much exposure they have gained, etc.

My goal in interviewing is primarily to explore what it is like to be an independent artist in the Boston area today. The music industry has changed rapidly in the past few years, and although it can be easier for artists to get their work heard by larger than in years past, it is often more difficult to stay relevant because of our media-saturated lives – not to mention make money doing it. I want to hear how each artist chooses to deal with these realities, and how they combine passion and business, especially after acquiring a degree in music.

An interview series is a great way for Salem State students and other listeners to learn more about musicians living and working in their area, and what sacrifice it takes to make the music that non-musician music lovers can often times take for granted... I hope my show will educate and inspire listeners, as well as bring attention and respect to my interviewees, while providing me with DJing, music organization, networking, and interpersonal skills.

As you may have noticed from the title of this blog, my show is called "Modern Prodigal." To explain it, let me take you back in time...



This is my best friend in high school, Deb, and myself, using a timer to take this picture as a band. We played original music, with both of us on guitar, and myself singing. We were originally called Breaking The Silence, until another band by that name got popular, and kicked us off Myspace (remember that site?). We slaved long and hard over a new name, and I finally thought of Modern Prodigal. Although the band no longer exists, I still wanted the name to serve some further purpose in my life.

The name originates from the beautiful story of the prodigal son in [Luke 15:11-32](#). In the story, two sons each get their share of their inheritance from their father. One leaves home, and uses all of his money up on irresponsible activities. Broke, he sells himself into slavery for a man who refuses to even give him food from his pigs' trough. The son decides to go back to his father, so humiliated that he doesn't even feel worthy to be called his father's son. To his surprise, his father welcomes him back with a huge hug and a kiss, and throws a party for him! His father is just happy that his son is home, safe and sound, because he was "lost, and now he is found".

I am a Modern Prodigal. The only reason I am safe and sound today is because I have a father, God, who loves me, and I am so grateful for that! Every time I run away and am ashamed to come home, he embraces me and tells me I'm loved. That's ultimately where I get my confidence, where I get my drive to do anything in life. It is why I am interested in music, why I wanted to take a leap and try this radio show - he put those goals, desires, and dreams in me, and now I'm living them.

The Modern Prodigal Show will be airing on WMWM radio, 91.7FM every Monday from 2-4PM! Tune in on a radio, or listen online [here](#).

- Via

INTERVIEW #1: ROBERT J. BRADSHAW

February 21, 2013 Via Perkins

Yesterday, I completed my first interview with my first musician (and one of my old professors for multiple courses), Robert J. Bradshaw.



[Click the image to visit Robert J. Bradshaw's website.](#)

He is a locally-based composer, songwriter, and a visiting lecturer at Salem State, among other things. His wide range of experience, and the unique, meaningful work he creates was what drew me to want to question more about what he does, and why he thinks his work is important.

After some research and trial and error, I decided on using a combination of Skype and Garageband to simultaneously conduct phone calls with my interviewees, and record the conversation while we talk. It was exciting to export my first mp3 of my interview series, which is about a little over 17 minutes long.

It also took me some time to figure out what I wanted to ask each musician, but I now have a working document that features two sections. The first set is a handful of personal questions

tailored to each of the musicians' backgrounds, musical style, and future plans. The second features five broader questions, which are more focused on the music industry at large and how my interviewees see their place in it.

I am looking forward to seeing how the next few interviews will go - I knew I wanted to ask a variety of artists, of different ages, genders, and musical styles, so that the diversity in the answers can teach the listeners of these interviews new and unique things. I love comparing and contrasting answers that people in the same area of study, work, or trade give, because it makes me realize how many ways there are to approach the same topics!

While I edit the recording of my interview, I want to provide a few quotes to give a taste of what's to come:

"It's about being dedicated in your art, and confident in your abilities to do it. If you doubt yourself, you cannot succeed. And believe me, there are plenty of people out there who will be happy to help you doubt yourself."

"I want to help students with things that have given me trouble in the course of my career... my career is outside of academia, and so, I could not even begin to count the times I have been taken advantage of... I just don't want students to fall into those same traps."

"My art is not driven by making a paycheck... I'm the person who is searching for ways to make ends meet, and to have my art pay, but at the same time, I never put that before taking a risk in my art."

Check back to this page to hear the rest, which I will air on my radio show in the next upcoming weeks - I will post the date and time here as soon as I decide on it!

- Via

UPDATE:

I am airing this interview today, February 25th, between 2 and 4PM, live on the air! [Listen here.](#)

INTERVIEW #2: EMILY CORREIA

February 23, 2013 Via Perkins

On Friday, I completed my second interview, with the lovely Emily Correia, a friend-of-a-friend, and a fellow singer/songwriter.



Fresh out of Berklee College of Music, Emily is a well-trained and experienced songwriter. I was drawn to ask her for an interview because I came across her page on Facebook, and I was impressed by how well she updated and interacted with her fans, who are responsive and supportive of what she posts.

She not only writes and releases her own work (including a five-star rated album on iTunes), but she also performs for commercials and voice-overs when she can. I enjoyed meeting her for the first time over Skype, and hearing her thoughtful responses to the questions I had for her.

Here are some tidbits of what's to come:

"Being surrounded by amazingly talented musicians who actually think... they can change the world through music... made me a better artist because I saw so many of these people believing in something that so many others doubt is a viable option for making a living."

"Anyone can write for fun or because they feel like it... but if you can write a song on command with a deadline or about a certain topic... then you can consider making money from it and doing it professionally."

"I've really been touched by the loyalty of fans... and I try to remember, once you've got them, hold on to them."

"It just takes a lot of work to be, not just a good musician... but to be professional at it... and I want people to know that I pursue this career because I love it, and noticed others loved what I was making, so I wanted to get better at it."

Check back to this page to hear the rest, which I will air on my radio show in the next upcoming weeks - I will post the date and time here as soon as I decide on it!

- Via

UPDATE:

I am airing this interview today, February 25th, between 2 and 4PM, live on the air! [Listen here.](#)

INTERVIEW #3: THE DEJAS

March 17, 2013 Via Perkins

I am very excited to have Callie Lipton and Aaron Katz live in the studio tomorrow to complete an interview (and maybe play a couple of songs?!)



This musical duo is well-known on the North Shore, and has been getting their name out more and more these past few years. It is clear to see that they are committed to their craft, giving 100% to their art by releasing music, networking, and performing constantly.

I don't know why I waited so long to buy their album *Speeding Softly*, but I am so glad I did so just recently! It is a lovely collection of lush, atmospheric ballads that the two have written, backed by a full band in-studio.

Be sure you listen in to the Modern Prodigal show tomorrow between 2 and 4PM on the radio (91.7 FM), or by using [this link](#).

On March 19th or 20th, I will post some notable quotes on this blog, and let you know when I air the interview again in the upcoming weeks for those that can't listen in tomorrow. Check back soon!

- Via

UPDATE:

I had a wonderful time with Callie and Aaron today during my radio show! Unfortunately, the online sector of WMWM was not functioning correctly, so the only way to listen was to tune in on the radio. However, Eric Roberts, the General Manager of WMWM sent me a link that is working at the moment, and which may prove more effective than the one I had previously been posting: <http://www.live365.com/stations/salemstate>

I was lucky enough to not only conduct the interview with The Dejas, but to also hear two songs from them. The first was a new song, "Save My Soul," which will be featured on their new album, and the second was "Beneath You," one of my personal favorite tracks on their album *Speeding Softly*.

Here are some quotes from the interview:

"The more we're paying our bills doing art, the more art we're doing, so the ultimate goal is for all of our income to come from the creative side of things." - Aaron

"It all really comes down to your own individual voice and song. You could autotune everything to death, and man effects that you think [are] going to hit the right algorithms that will sell, but... no one's ever felt the feelings in your heart, that's completely individualistic, and that'll never change." - Aaron

"When you're in the studio, you have a vision... and once you're in there, I think some of that can change, just from inspiration of the musicians you're playing with in there, different instruments in the studio - all of a sudden, there was a ukulele, and next thing you know I'm learning to play the ukulele, and doing a track." - Callie

"We aim to have our music heard by anybody, and... having [our] songs in the shows has been a good platform... we've had really good responses from it, so instead of going out and touring the world, you can have the television on, and then hear some music of ours." - Callie

Be sure to check back, as I will update again when I plan to air the interview and the live performance within the coming weeks!

UPDATE:

I'm going to air the interview and the performance of two songs today during my show! Listen in to get some great insight on Callie and Aaron.

INTERVIEW #4: XATATAX (BEN MORSE)

March 24, 2013 Via Perkins

Tomorrow, if all goes well, I will be interviewing Ben Morse from Xatatax (he the lead member of the band, pictured at the right in the photo below)!



All of the members of this band attended the same high school in Natick as I did. The first time I saw them live, they were doing an acoustic set at the Walnut Street Cafe in Lynn, and I was really impressed. I hope to see them again, next time in all their amplified, distorted glory.

They work extraordinarily well together as a group, and their heavy music is purposefully written as well as skilfully performed during live shows. The visuals of their dark outfits and their intense onstage personalities don't hurt, either!

It seems that the new link I posted for the first time when I last blogged is the only one that is working consistently now, so [use it](#) tomorrow between 2 and 4PM.

Quotes from the interview will be coming in a few days!

- Via

UPDATE:

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, Ben wasn't able to make it to the studio today! Check back for our rescheduled interview.

UPDATE:

I interviewed Ben today over Skype, and I will most likely air it during my show this upcoming Monday. We had a great time chatting, and I was intrigued hearing about his well-thought-out perspectives, past goals, and future dreams!

Here are some quotes for you:

"Originally [Xatatax] was just me saying, 'Play this exactly how it's recorded, and it'll be fine,' but... Now I've got these two other amazing musicians in their own right, and at their own instruments, who contribute so much musically to the band."

"Luckily there's a really big market for DIY right now, especially for metal, and for other harder genres of music... Touring is my greatest dream, I just want to tour. I just want to go all over the place, see the country, see other countries."

"[Making all our money from music] would be a perk. It would be something that would be really great if it happened, but with the music industry the way it is, I don't foresee that unfortunately... But, we're not making music for that... We'll keep making music no matter what."

As I am writing, the link I posted above in this blog is working, so with any luck, it should continue to work through Monday between 2 and 4. Tune in!

INTERVIEW #5: TERENCE RYAN

March 31, 2013 Via Perkins

During the first hour of my show tomorrow, I will be interviewing independent artist Terence Ryan.



We first met as freshman music majors at Salem State in 2009, and I still remember receiving a CD of songs he wrote in high school, and loving every track. I got to know his music better while we were in [Robert Bradshaw](#)'s songwriting class together, and then he left school to pursue music in his own.

Since then, he's put his heart into producing music, and he has been gaining buzz through multiple social media sites, including Youtube, Twitter, Datpiff, and Facebook. Over the years,

he has delved into pop, hip-hop, electronica, and singer/songwriter styles to craft his ever-evolving sound.

[Listen in](#) tomorrow to hear our interview around 2:15 PM!

- Via

UPDATE:

Here's a bit of what Terence and I covered in our interview:

"I definitely want to perform more. I've actually been practicing... this new live show where I play live instruments along with having my laptop with me. So I'll loop Logic stuff... And I'll just play the accompanying piano, drums, or guitar."

"At first, most artists say they don't care about the money, or they just love to make the art for the art, and I'm still about that, but realizing that I could pay the bills and send my kids through college in the future."

"I think if you're an honest person and you work hard, that just shows, and I think you can weed out the people that don't really take what they're doing too seriously, as opposed to the people that really have a true passion."

I'll be sure to update when I air this interview again, so check back periodically...

Also, believe it or not, I only have two interviews left to go! I'm really leaning towards making Podcasts of all of these interviews, similar to what my friend Tony Papia did with his senior project when he was an undergrad at Gordon College (You can download the interview and performance that I contributed to it [#5] and any of the rest [here](#)). I want to be able to make the great perspectives expressed in these interviews available for anyone who's interested at their convenience. I'll update as I get further in that process!

INTERVIEW #6: EXITING THE FALL (DJ WILLIAMS)

April 8, 2013 Via Perkins

I had a nice conversation on the phone with DJ (the bassist for Exiting the fall - pictured below at the far right) yesterday, and he said he could most likely call me when I'm in the studio today during his lunch break at work today.



[Click the image to visit Exiting The Fall's Facebook page.](#)

Remember [my post](#) about my old band and how I came up with the name for my radio show? Well, back in high school, my bandmate Deb attended Lexington Christian Academy, and she knew Matt, the lead singer of this band. She mentioned to me that we might have a gig opportunity to play with them some night.

Unfortunately that never ended up happening, but while our band was passing out of existence, Exiting the Fall has skyrocketed to ever-higher heights. They have over 7,000 dedicated

followers on their Facebook page, and they churn out high-quality tracks, music videos, merchandise, and photos constantly.

One of the most distinctive things about Exiting The Fall is their message of faith and hope in Christ, which they share through their lyrics, and the way they interact with the fans. I'm excited to talk about this, and many more things with DJ today between 2 and 4 PM!

As always, [here is the link to listen in.](#)

- Via

UPDATE:

Time for quotes!

"A lot of people... They won't even give us the time of day as soon as they find out, 'Oh, they have a faith-based background, I won't bother to listen to them.' ...But we've also had a lot of great feedback, and a lot of people respect us for it. I think it's really great and really awesome when people who have different views still respect us."

"I remember the first time I typed in... our second EP, Parables, and I found torrents so people could download it, I'm like, 'This is awesome! People care enough to download our music for free!' And it wasn't so bad because we already had that EP paid off, so anything that we sell we're making a profit on. But it's when we're in a situation when we're still trying to pay off debt for a record, and people are downloading for free, that's when it gets kind of frustrating."

"We try to stay as humble and real as possible... It's not so much what's relevant, or what's hip, or what's cool right now... It's raw, it's real, and it's our feelings, and I think that just kind of attracts people."

This was my last live interview, so now I can play past interviews during the rest of my shows for the semester. There won't be a show next Monday because there's no school, and there are

at least two weeks left of the Modern Prodigal show - I have yet to find out if shows run through finals week, but I will find that out.

I will definitely play my interview with DJ on the air on April 22nd, but be sure to leave a comment or contact me on Facebook if there is a particular interview you'd like me to play!

INTERVIEW #7: MANNY

April 14, 2013 Via Perkins

I just finished up my final interview for this project tonight with Manny! He is quite the busy man, but we finally found time to chat for a few minutes, before he jets off for his well-needed vacation in the Dominican Republic.



Click the image to visit Manny's Soundcloud page.

Just like [Terence Ryan](#), Manny and I met in [Robert Bradshaw](#)'s songwriting class a couple of years ago. Out of the whole class, he was probably the furthest along in terms of the

sophistication of his website, how regularly he updated his fans with news and new music, and the number of songs he had posted and was selling on iTunes.

His loyal fans have kept the momentum going during the times he doesn't release music, and his songs are still quite well-listened-to on Youtube, and are still often downloaded or bought from him, even through his recent move from Massachusetts to Florida.

Here are some of the topics we touched on today:

"One of the coolest things one of my [fans] has done for me is... took one of my photos on my Facebook and drew it and sent it to me... That just caught me off guard, I didn't expect it."

"I got where I am today just asking fans to tell their friends and family, and then their friends and family would hit me up and I'd tell them the same... Hopefully with the word of mouth it gets to the right ears, [and] somebody gives me a call one day, and I tell you what, if I got that call right now, I wouldn't miss that opportunity."

"I feel like that's actually a good thing, that there's more music out there, that it'll kinda bring the bigger guys down, and everybody will be on the same playing field... It's very hard to live off music, and I just feel like, as the record companies get smaller, and the independent companies will grow, it's gonna be a better thing overall."

Again, no radio show this Monday because it's a holiday, but the Monday after that (the 22nd), I will air this interview, and any other interviews that listeners want to hear. Give me a ring during my show between 2 and 4 PM (the number is 978-542-8500) or contact me on Facebook to let me know!

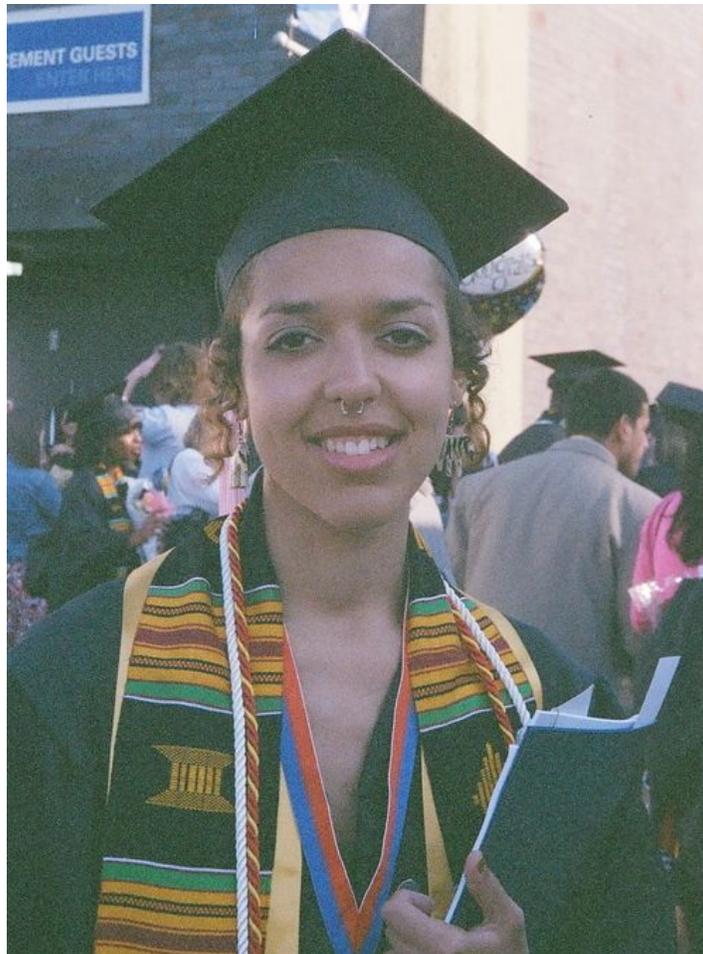
- Via

MUSIC MAJOR, POST-GRADUATION: ONE YEAR LATER

May 17, 2014 Via Perkins

It has been one year today since I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Salem State University. Like most recent college grads, school was the framework for my life for almost two decades. I never considered quite how fundamental formal education was to my lifestyle until it ended.

Cue sleeping on a pull-out couch at my grandmother's house with my family, set in a suburban wilderness, far from the social and academic connections I'd made over the years. Rough.



The nice thing about being out of school, though, is that it gives you time and space to consider the life you want to make for yourself, without the constant background urgency of having to pass this class or complete that degree. In some ways, it is easier to create the space to reflect on where you've been and where you want to go.

Here are four things I have learned in 365 days since graduation:

1. I am still not a musician.

[As I learned back in 2011](#), I keep reminding myself that I am not solely defined by my skill set or occupation, and I have the freedom to explore all of my interests. This is challenging, as there is always pressure to conform in many ways. Spending time alone to take inventory of all my projects and goals is important, so I can refocus my sights on what truly drives me.

Life circumstances not only affect your ability to *do* what you love, but it can also affect *what* you love. I spent countless hours in high school and college writing and performing original songs, which I haven't done in two years. This has not signaled a lack of creativity in my life – it has simply been redirected. It is likely that I will write music again, but for now, I've been exploring other areas.

I have been able to take advantage of other great opportunities, from assisting a photo shoot for Ocean Spray, to performing classical arias and jazz tunes at Finz Restaurant, to drafting a work of non-fiction. It is natural to grow and change, especially during transition periods. There is nothing wrong with doing work in a different field than your degree, or realizing you have a different dream, or perhaps multiple dreams for your life.

2. There is no such thing as a “dead-end” job.

Since I knew I had to live at home after graduation, I considered my options. My must-haves when looking for employment were, firstly, working for a company whose values I believed in, and secondly, working in a field of genuine interest to me. I was blessed to find two jobs that fit under that umbrella, both of which are a good fit for me at this time in my life, and from which I am growing and learning a lot.

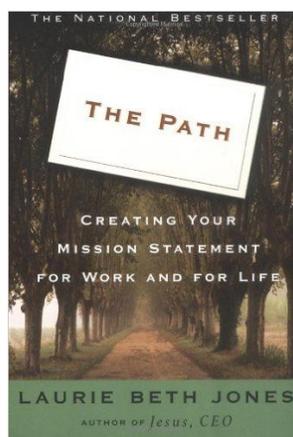
At Whole Foods, my knowledge of the natural food movement has increased, and I am privileged to meet people of all backgrounds who I can help guide on their journey to health. The skills I have gained from Baldwin Hill Art & Framing are varied, including art preservation and restoration, Photoshop manipulation, and, of course, the complexities of framing. In addition, I freelance when possible, which is typically on-location assistance and graphic design/Photoshop work for local photographers.

I want to see myself as having taken the first step on my journey, not defeated because I haven't found that one, ever-elusive "dream job" yet. Even if it was staring me in the face, I am not sure if I would recognize it yet. I think it is these formative experiences that eventually reveal to me what my "dream job" really is, while getting great experience along the way.

3. You don't need to take everyone's advice.

I received a national bestseller called *The Path* by Laurie Beth Jones as a graduation gift. Using her wise words and exercises, I am working to uncover my deepest passions and convictions, which I can use as a blueprint to find a career that fits me. In her book, she suggests:

In developing a mission statement that is unique to you, you must, at least temporarily, dissociate yourself from the influence of those around you.



There will always be someone in every stage of life that will try to offer you advice, alter your mindset on a topic, or persuade you with opportunities that, though they may be well-meaning,

simply are not right for you. It takes a discerning person to figure out which these are, and confident person to reject them with politeness and grace.

As difficult as it is, I remind myself that I should never feel guilty for choosing my own path. It is good to get wise counsel, and often, good advice can be greatly benefited from. But if you feel someone's advice is not right for you, it's valid to choose a different route. Ultimately, I try to take the opportunities I believe in and that fascinate me, and leave the ones that don't.

4. Freedom can still be found in constraining situations.

All college graduates enter into unique scenarios after leaving school, and have varying levels of control when it comes to their living situations and lifestyle. I spent a while being frustrated because I did not have the freedom I was used to at school, and I knew, for the time, I was stuck living at home. Without a graduation or degree in sight, sometimes it feels as though life is stretching out before you infinitely, and it doesn't seem to matter as much what choices you make on a daily basis.

Although I could not change that fact or some of the other elements of my situation that frustrated me, I realized I always have the power to make changes, even if they are small. For one, I change my surroundings - study at the library instead of at home, spend time in nature to elevate my mood, and plan time to see faraway friends. I also make time to try something new every once in a while, so that I don't get stuck in the rut of a same old routine.

It is easy to compare, and there is always going to be someone who seems "ahead" of you - you could perceive them as living a more exciting life, achieving more goals, etc. It is hard to escape from the mentality that we are all running the same race, and that there are winners and losers. To me, this is the most constraining (and just plain untrue) situation of all. I am working hard to reorient my thinking to see that I am free, if not to change my whole life right now, to take a step towards a better day - not to get "ahead" of anyone else, but to make a better world for myself and those around me.

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