



Americana/Folk Concert Season opens with Canadian Singer-songwriter, Shawna Caspi

Interview by Michelle Hughes

Shawna Caspi will bring her songs of honesty and vulnerability to a Columbus audience when she launches the CFMS 2023/2024 Americana/Folk Concert Season. Join CFMS members and guests Saturday, September 30, 7pm at Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave, Columbus.

Michelle Hughes: Shawna Caspi – "Folk Roots Singer-Songwriter" — how do you define "folk / roots"? How and when did you know that this is the style or genre of music that best suited you?

Shawna: I think "folk/roots" can be a pretty broad term, and includes elements of instrumentation (often more acoustic instruments), production, song structures and themes, vocal style. I think the lyrics and the story in the song are paramount

[See Shawna, pg. 3](#)

I think the more the listener can contribute to the song, the better. The more they become part of the song, and they fill in the blanks.

-John Prine

A Different Strummer Newsletter Highlights

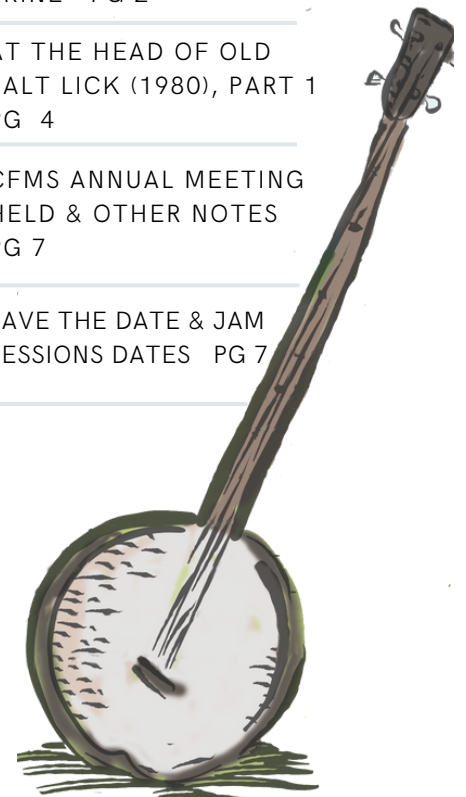
AMERICANA CONCERT SEASON OPENS WITH SHAWNA CASPI PG 1

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Sunday, Sept 17 Concert is Tribute to John Prine's Compelling Music

For five decades, John Prine (1946-2020) churned out dozens and dozens of songs that sparked laughter, empathy, and tears. Winning four Grammys as well as a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, he is widely recognized as one of the most influential songwriters of his generation. *Rolling Stone Magazine* says: "for 5 decades [he] wrote rich plain-spoken songs that chronicled the struggles and stories of everyday working people and changed the face of modern American roots music." Prine's music influenced Johnny Cash, Bonnie Raitt, and Roger Waters, and is seen in works of younger artists he mentored including Brandi Carlile, Sturgill Simpson, and Kacey Musgraves amongst others.

On Sunday afternoon, Sept. 17, from 1-3:30pm at Nocterra Brewing in historic downtown Powell, you can join in a musical tribute to John Prine. The concert is planned for outdoors at the brewery and food and drink are available.



Photo Courtesy of Dreamstime.

The Columbus Folk Music Society is sponsoring the concert, which is a fundraiser for next year's Central Ohio Folk Festival. The band, "Dirty Windows," consists of four seasoned Columbus musicians: Mike Hale, Renilda Marshall, Ed Tatum, and Brian Szuch. They share a special love for Prine's Americana-style, story-telling songs about down-and-outers and just plain everyday people. They have performed Prine tribute concerts for the CFMS in the past to a packed house. The band's name was aptly inspired by one of Prine's phrase turning lyrics with a nod to sequel albums "Broken Hearts and Dirty Windows" showcasing classic collections of Prine songs performed by an admirable list of modern day musicians.

We'll ask for a \$15 suggested donation and we'll pass the hat at the event. Proceeds will help us put on the 2024 Central Ohio Folk Festival.

So, mark your calendars for Sun, Sept 17 and we hope to see you there!

Shawna, from pg 1



Photo by Terrence Gui

in folk music. When I first studied music, I was a classical singer and found folk and roots music through the music scene in Ottawa, Ontario when I was a teenager. I was playing classical guitar at the time and I loved the whole group of women singer-songwriters who were rising in the Canadian music scene thanks to Lilith Fair. I wanted to do what they were doing. It was so honest and personal and powerful. I stumbled on the Ottawa Folk Festival when I participated in their youth audition series, and also learned about a (now sadly long gone) folk club in the city, where I ended up playing lots of open mics and meeting other musicians in the folk music scene. And I realized that's where I belonged.

Michelle: Who are some of your musical influences? What part do you think they've played in your approach to songwriting?

Shawna: I love lyrics, so singer-songwriters that have great poetry in their lyrics are what influence me. When I was a teenager, I was big into Sarah McLachlan, which led me to many other indie artists in Canada who were writing original songs and playing

them in acoustic settings, often solo with just their voice and a guitar and piano. I found that really inspiring. I always try to write songs that can stand alone as solo guitar/voice songs. Over the years, I've been trying to simplify more in my songwriting, really try to get to the heart of the story, and to tell more personal stories. Here's a playlist of artists I was listening to when I was working on my last album:

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1BW6oK7zNTDK9yjA5z4iQw?si=b56fb725b1c14575>

Michelle: Shawna, you've been at this for a long time now — your first album *Paint by Numbers* came out 15 years ago! What do you think has changed the most about your approach to songwriting? Do your older songs still resonate with you in the same way as they did at the time?

Shawna: Wow! That's wild. It has been a long time. My songwriting definitely has much more structure now than in those earlier years. I still love playing with words though . . . I don't think that will ever change. I think my newer songs dig deeper and are more personal, whereas some of my older songs were keeping people at arm's length. I'm trying to write with as much honesty and vulnerability as possible now. There aren't many songs from my first three albums that I still play live these days, and there are many that would make me cringe! But I will say . . . a few years ago, I was redesigning my website, and in the process, I was copying and pasting the text of all my old songs, so I had a chance to sit with them for while . . . some of those lyrics are really good! :D

Michelle: Truth-telling time – I read some other interviews you've done to prepare for this one! And something [See Shawna, p.6](#)

At the Head of Old Salt Lick (1980), Part 1

An astute recollection of old-time musicians gathering Saturday night in Lewis County, KY (the head of Old Salt Lick), true 'fiddle country'.

By John Harrod, April, 2019. Used with permission. From blog:
<https://www.johnharrodmusic.com/blog/2019/4/11/at-the-head-of-old-salt-lick>.

Some will remember the wonderful old-time tunes performed by John Harrod and his wife Tona at the 2023 Central Ohio Folk Festival. The below recollection penned by John captures the authentic feel of an old-time gathering in the Salt Lick Creek region of one of Kentucky's northernmost counties bordering the Ohio River and positioned slightly south and west of Portsmouth, OH.

The old barn leans in about equal proportion to the fences, the gates, the sheds, the old house, and even the people who live here, Charlie and Noah Kinney, and Noah's wife, Hazel. Past the barn and the garden, a tiny shed crowded with Noah's wood carvings: an ensemble of life-sized female musicians with guitar, mandolin, dobro, and fiddle; a miniature old-time threshing machine; a fire engine; a horse-and-buggy; and a mule pulling a plow. The front porch of Noah's and Hazel's house is piled with rocks and lumps of coal that Hazel, not to be outdone, has painted with faces, flowers, and forests. Charlie's shanty across the creek is littered with strips of hickory bark that he uses to make garden baskets. The old house where the brothers were born

is inhabited now by Charlie's puppets, bizarre creations assembled from rags, aluminum foil, and bits of junk that hang from the end of a tobacco stick and dance while Charlie fiddles. The stripping room and barn display Charlie's paintings: crayon, house paint, and acrylic on window shades and poster board. The gate beside the barn keeps nothing in and nothing out. As visitors arrive and enter the yard, the last one through is left to figure out how to stand it back up and get it to stay. No farming has gone on here for a long time. To pass through that gate is to enter another world.

For years now neighbors and visitors have entered this world, struggled comically to replace the impossible gate, and settled themselves in the barn on apple crates and old car seats for a Saturday night round of music. Nearly everyone here is a "musicianer" of sorts or a dancer, but the fiddle is the instrument of choice, and the pickers, dancers, and listeners align themselves around the circle of fiddlers like filings pointing to the pole of a magnet. "This is fiddle country," Brooks Mineer explains. Indeed, few places in North America at that time could have



provided such a collection of genuine old-time fiddlers from the same neighborhood as the head of Salt Lick in Lewis County, Kentucky.

Unlike a jam session today where fiddlers play familiar tunes all together in a group, in the Kinneys' barn one fiddle is passed around the circle and each fiddler plays individually. A guitar and sometimes a banjo, are likewise traded around as the fiddle is passed, giving everyone the opportunity to second as well as lead. The order of performing is set by a custom long established among themselves—no one better to lead off than Brooks Mineer, who always claims he has to play first because he's not even supposed to be here and has to leave early or his wife will kill him. When he plays his "Gray Eagle," the fiddle held low on his left arm the old-fashioned way, his body swaying in counter-rhythm to the rolling of his bow, his eyes gleam and sparkle, and he seems transported to another realm beyond this brief instant of time in the old barn. "What? Play the 'Gray Eagle' AGIN?" he whines in disbelief. Gus didn't have the tape recorder on, so Brooks will oblige, but with a condition: he will play it again if someone will dance. The plywood board is dragged out into the driveway and another instrument is added to the ensemble, its partner in evolution, the ancient rhythm of the feet. Now he plays for a long time and puts the young lady through a real workout until finally, when one or both of them has had enough, they end with a flourish, bow strokes and feet together! Brooks protests he has already stayed too late: "I'm a dead man when I get home." He passes the fiddle to his brother-in-law, Bob Prater, the premier



John Harrod, Photo by Guy Mendes

dance fiddler in Lewis County, and so the music continues as different ones, from old men in overalls to adolescent girls in designer jeans, try out their steps on the plywood board.

These fiddlers are close observers and students of each other's playing. Noah leans over to me and allows, "Bob's got a keen cut with the bow, don't he?" In fact, there is some similarity in the playing of all these fiddlers, having grown up and learned from a previous generation in the same place, an exaggerated emphasis on the bowing, artful, graceful, and flamboyant, articulating difficult and complex phrases that most other fiddlers would not attempt. As we were learning, it was something that had to be seen as well as heard. The way they played could not be learned from tapes or records.

Editor's Note: *To be continued: look for Part II and the conclusion of the recollection in the next newsletter issue.*

Shawna, from pg 3

in your interview for myscena.org caught my attention — that your latest album *Hurricane Coming* is about "telling uncomfortable truths". Does this characterization resonate with you? If so, are they truths that are uncomfortable for you to tell or for others to hear (or perhaps both)? Can you speak more to the value of the act of "telling uncomfortable truths", especially via music?

Shawna: For me, that often means that I write about darker subjects that we sometimes avoid bringing to light in everyday life because we're afraid of making people sad or afraid of causing conflict. Some of those themes in my music include mental illness, intergenerational trauma, climate anxiety, and sexual assault. When I was writing *Hurricane Coming*, I spent a lot of time alone and was really trying to look inward, to be honest about my own faults and challenges while also trying to have more compassion and care for myself, to not be so hard on myself. I want to bring that reflection to audiences too. That being said, I always try to find some light in any dark subject that I write about, that vein of hope that runs through everything.

Michelle: I would be absolutely remiss if I didn't ask you to talk about the stunning abstract artwork you created for your most recent album *Hurricane Coming*. Can you tell us a little more about how your music inspired these pieces? Do these works of art help you express something that maybe the music and the words can't quite get at in the same way, especially given that they are such a departure from



the more realistic, scenic landscape art you are known for?

Shawna: I love having another artistic outlet besides music. When I was creating the original artwork for each song on *Hurricane Coming*, I was still quite new to abstract painting. As you noted, I had mostly been painting literal landscapes before that. So, in order to give myself a starting point and some structure, in addition to being inspired by a song, each painting was also inspired by an art or craft form that I felt had something to do with the song (for example, a song about searching for home being associated with the craft of quilting, or a song about hope being associated with the art of flower arranging). I also learned a bunch of new painting techniques in order to create those works, like acrylic pouring, and experimented with some new tools, like the palette knife and the catalyst wedge – I watched a lot of YouTube tutorials!

You can read more about each painting here: <https://shawnacaspi.com/songs-on-canvas-shaped-by-craft/>.

[See Shawna, pg 7](#)



Welcome NEW Members

All Those Who Wander Band
 Park of Roses Band
 Christine Whittaker & Thane Thompson
 Mark Znidar Robert Furillo
 Janice Alvarado Margaret McCullough
 Katie Glumac Dennis Smith
 Harvey Schwartz
 and **Welcome Back** returning members!



Save the Date!

John Prine Tribute Concert

Sun, Sept 17, 1 - 3:30pm featuring the "Dirty Windows." Venue: Nocterra Brewing, 41 Depot St, Powell, OH. \$15 suggested donation. A Festival fundraiser concert.

Concert Series

Shawni Caspi in Concert, Sat, Sept 30, 8pm; Open Mic: 7pm (pre-signup).

Venue: Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 Oakland Park Ave., Cols, OH. Door donation: \$15/\$10 for CFMS members.

Jam Sessions

Thursdays 10am-12pm via Zoom

Sat, Sept 16 10:30-Noon – Worthington Farmer's Market, Village Green

Sat, Sept 30, 1-4pm – Darby Days at Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park

Sat, Sept 20, 4pm – Octoberfest (Clintonville)

Saturdays 9:30-11:30am, Whetstone Community Ctr, 3923 N High St., 2nd floor. Register for free class at this link for [Columbus Recreation & Parks website](#).

For more Jam Session information, contact Jane at vanaukj@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER TEAM

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CFMS ANNUAL MEETING HELD

The Annual Meeting of the Columbus Folk Music Society was held June 3 with the main business being voting for the new adds to the CFMS' board. We give a hearty WELCOME to our newest board members, Michelle Hughes and Eileen Smith and welcome Mike Hale and Jan Flory, as our newly-elected President and Vice-President (respectively). We also give a huge THANK YOU for all the wonderful service of our outgoing board members: Charlie Flowers, Bill Cohen, Mary Finney, and Bob Lipetz.

ANOTHER THANK YOU!

In August, 5 CFMS members volunteered their time/talent to sew "quilt tops" made from hand drawn art squares by kids at the 2023 festival. Look for an article on the entire project in a later issue, but for now – THANK YOU to all involved!

Shawna, from pg 6

Michelle: Ok, truly the last question — can you give us three songs you'd want listeners new to your music to hear before coming to see you perform this September?

Shawna: Here are three – one from my album *Forest Fire*, one from my album *Hurricane Coming*, and one song that hasn't been recorded: "Devil's Rolling Pin": <https://youtu.be/I64f4yAkbOc>; "Celebrate": <https://youtu.be/ypbsEmPuODM>; and "Give In": <https://youtu.be/d5NbgW9mD8o>.



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Phone _____ (Cell) _____ If Band, website _____

E-mail Address _____ Additional e-mail (if a household or band) _____

We are also a growing, vibrant community of volunteers; the awesome force behind our work! Please at least 1 box.

- | | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> May folk festival | <input type="checkbox"/> General Help | <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CFMS concert events | <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic Design | <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Design |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Musician | <input type="checkbox"/> Publicity | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE DUE ANNUALLY ON DECEMBER 31. one of the membership levels listed below.

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To join/renew by credit card, visit CFMS' website: columbusfolkmusicsociety.org (About Us/Join)

OR click here: <https://tinyurl.com/CFMS-Join>

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