

Maria Dunn – Bio

Maria Dunn was born in Glasgow, Scotland. Aged one, her family emigrated to Canada and settled in Sarnia, Ontario, on the southern tip of Lake Huron, where her father worked for a chemical company. Nine years later, the Dunn family moved further west to Edmonton, Alberta. Maria's parents had a large record collection that they had brought from Scotland, and she grew up listening to old Irish and Scottish songs, as also joined in on family music sessions. In time her parents bought her a guitar and she also took classical music lessons. Maria's parents visited Scotland and stayed with relatives, approximately every five years, and in her early twenties Dunn lived there for about nine months. During that period, she also visited England and Ireland.

At the outset of her musical career, Maria played her original songs at Sunday night open mic sessions at Edmonton's Rose Bowl. In 1992, Maria formed The Invisible Jug Band with singer and guitarist Dawn Anderson, and with a rotating line-up of other players, they performed a mix of traditional and contemporary folk music. The pair had previously played in a band called Greasy Lake. In 1995, Maria joined the Celtic band 'Miosg na Stumps, with whom she also performed her own songs. That year Dunn also took part in The City Media Club's Songwriter Series, the following year she appeared in the Sonic Sisters concert, and in 1997 Old Strathcona Singer-Songwriter contest. Concurrently, Dunn hosted a folk music programme on CJSR FM88, titled Barely Awake Roots. In May 1998 Maria gave up her day job in research to concentrate on her musical career, made her debut at the Edmonton Folk Festival the same year, and has since played the event a number of times. In late 1999 Maria was invited to compose a song about Alberta for the Millennium Project, and along with other local musicians performed her creation, "For Peace And Plenty," at Edmonton's First Night festival on New Year's Eve 2000. The latter song opens Dunn's third solo album. In 2000 Maria showcased at the Folk Alliance Conference in Cleveland, Ohio.

Following the late 1998 release of her debut CD, "**From Where I Stand**," produced by Shannon Johnson, Maria went on to play a number of Canada's major summer folk festivals as a solo act - Victoria Folk Festival, Comox Music Festival and the Islands Festival in Duncan, Vancouver Island, and she also appeared at a number of festivals as a member of Laura Vinson's band, Free Spirit. She continues to play with Vinson's band when her solo career allows. At year-end "**From Where I Stand**" was nominated for the title Outstanding Songwriter at the Prairie Music Awards and although she didn't pick up that award, Maria did win the Alberta Recording Industry Award for Best Folk/Roots Recording. The cover of the album portrays Dunn, as a youngster, on the beach at Lake Huron, and her original songs included "Shoes Of A Man" written for her maternal grandfather.

In 2001 Maria was the Artist-in-Residence at Edmonton's annual May Week Festival. In 2002, Maria received a Juno and Prairie Music Award nomination in the Solo Roots/Traditional category for her Shannon Johnson produced sophomore recording "**For A Song**." Onstage Dunn plays accordion and guitar, and is usually supported by Shannon Johnson [violin] or Fiona Call [violin]. In early 2003 Dunn was in Glasgow once more for the annual Celtic Connections Festival, where she was filmed by the BBC. That year she also appeared in the Canada Showcase at the Folk Alliance Conference that took place in Nashville, Tennessee.

Dunn has matured into an accomplished storyteller, who consistently writes songs that are inspired by, mostly Canadian, historical events and contemporary characters. Her third recording, "**We Were Good People**," once more a Shannon Johnson production, is filled with stories about working people in Western Canada during the opening half of the twentieth century, and covers subjects as diverse as immigration, internment during World War I, exploitation, as well as The Depression. The McDades, Craig Korth [banjo, guitar, dobro], Byron Myhre [mandolin] and Michael Jerome Browne [gourd banjo] contributed to the recording sessions. "**The Peddler**," a ten-song collection of Dunn composed originals, produced [once more] by Johnson, surfaced on her Distant Whisper Music label in late 2008.

Discography : "**From Where I Stand**" [1998] ; "**For A Song**" [2001] ; "**We Were Good People**" [2004] ; "**The Peddler**" [2008] :

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