

California Transplant Puts Down Jazzy Roots in New England

Julie Lavender's Artistic Journey Leads to National Radio Show, New Recordings, Art Projects and Creative Synergies

When Singer-songwriter Julie Lavender moved with her family from Southern California to New England in 2003, she never foresaw that her greatest artistic journey would begin only after she arrived in her new home.

Her New England musical odyssey has included creation of an intimate, indemand private performance series called the DreamFarmCafé; a budding role as southern New Hampshire Jazz impresario and radio broadcaster; and has led to numerous collaborations with East Coast musicians taking her to new levels of creative excellence and inspiration. The culmination of it all is her latest work, a jazz canata entitled, *Rising: A Modern Cantata for the World to Come*.

Ms. Lavender, a classically trained guitarist and pianist as well as a composer and vocalist, wasn't worried about sunshine deprivation, snow, rural living, or other challenges New England might pose to a transplant from greater San Diego. The move was the right one for her, her husband, and family. Nevertheless, she was concerned about leaving behind her community of musicians in greater San Diego and Los Angeles.

"When we moved here, the only piece of the puzzle that didn't fit was leaving the Southern California music scene," recalled Ms. Lavender. That scene had helped shape her musical vision, and had supplied collaborators for her first two CDs, *Good Woman* and *Never Felt The Sun*. Recorded with longtime colleagues from Southern California's extensive community of music pros, those albums earned national distribution and national airplay.

Would similar success be possible in New England? The question would go unasked for a time, as Ms. Lavender made home-schooling her children her priority in the first years after moving to her historic farm in New Hampshire. But if her recording career was on the back burner, music always remained central to her life. Her guitars and beloved piano were given prime placement in the converted barn that serves as her family's multi-purpose room, art and music studio (and home-school classroom). One of the many joys of her new home was the pastoral view out the windows in that room. "I can sit at my piano and look out at these beautiful farm fields," she said. "I love it!"

Barnstorm Brainstorm

A decision to share that space, and the music she made in it, with a few new neighbors, proved fruitful. Ms. Lavender decided to make a small dinner party into a sort of artistic *salon*, inviting one guest to bring some of her paintings to share with the group, while offering to perform some of her original songs. With her son acting as emcee, and a handmade sign proclaiming the space “The Jazz Barn,” Ms. Lavender took steps to conquer her performance anxiety, and thrilled her friends and herself with an intimate set of songs.

Encouragement from one of the guests – combined with the need to raise funds to renovate a local community center, prompted Ms. Lavender to host two expanded performances in the barn, each for several hundred guests. The events, which included art exhibitions as well as Ms. Lavender’s performances, were huge successes. They sowed the seeds for an ongoing series of invitation only jazz-and-art events in the barn, called the DreamFarm Café. Buzz about the exclusive events was so strong that a Concord, NH radio station (WKXL 1450 AM and 103.9 FM) approached Ms. Lavender about broadcasting DreamFarm Café performances. The station also eventually offered her a show of her own, which she used to showcase the work of friends and fellow-artists who appeared at DreamFarm.

After winning New Hampshire magazine’s “Best Of” award for her regional radio show in 2010, Julie decided to take the DreamFarm live experiences to listeners across the country. Launched in 2012, DreamFarm Radio is now a nationally syndicated radio experience featuring original “Synergy Jazz” music, and providing an intimate window into the very heart of an artist’s creative process. Heard on dozens of public radio stations across the nation, DreamFarm Radio is reaching hundreds of thousands of listeners each week and continues to grow. Julie regularly collaborates and performs with top musicians from across the East Coast and beyond.

Taking the Reins in the Studio

Lavender’s latest project is a full-scale jazz cantata, *Rising: A Modern Cantata for the World to Come*. With its enchanting musical vistas, unexpected melodies and contagious grooves, this hip, new approach to the classical cantata form appeals to listeners with a wide range of sensibilities. *Rising* was arranged by internally known, Grammy-nominated jazz orchestra composer and saxophonist, Kim Richmond, who also performed on the recording. The multi-movement piece takes flight on the wings of Julie’s soaring vocals and innovative guitar voicings, and celebrates the featured artistry of 4-time Grammy-award-winning cellist

Eugene Friesen along with numerous topflight Hollywood studio musicians and Boston area professionals.

In her groundbreaking CD release, [*The Siddur Project*](#), Lavender set English texts of ancient Jewish prayers to fresh, jazz-influenced music creating a multilayered recording for spirit and soul alike. The CD features the talents of some of the East Coast's finest jazz musicians. Lavender also jumped into visual art and created paintings for the project that are vivid reflections of the songs. Together art, music, poetry and prayer blend seamlessly to engage her audience on multiple levels.

Lavender's earlier CDs, *Good Woman* and *Never Felt The Sun*, earned national airplay and critical acclaim. Tracks from *Never Felt The Sun* and *Interior Design* were selected for inclusion on "Jazz on Disc" CDs that accompany print copies of the popular *Jazziz* magazine.

As her field of creative endeavors continues to grow, Julie is currently working on new recording projects, performing live, collaborating with musicians and artists across New England and developing the national syndication network for DreamFarm Radio. As an artist she delights in finding inventive ways to integrate her paintings with her music.

Touching Dreams and Unleashing New Synergies

Beyond that, Ms. Lavender says, "Family continues to be the priority, but creativity will continue to flow out of the barn. The DreamFarm Radio show, live events and art will continue, because they're my gift to the community. I hope they inspire others to share their gifts as well. My heart is to touch the dreams of artists and musicians and encourage them to fulfill their created purpose. DreamFarm is a place where serendipities and synergies of all kinds are generated and released."

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