

# California Transplant Puts Down Jazzy Roots in New England

## Julie Lavender's Artistic Journey Leads to National Radio Show, Recordings, Art, Kids Books and Creative Synergies

When Julie Lavender moved with her family from Southern California to a pre-revolutionary New England property in 2003, she never foresaw that her greatest artistic and personal journey would begin only after she settled into her new home.

Lavender's New England musical odyssey has included creation of an intimate, in-demand, private performance series called the DreamFarm Café; a budding role as southern New Hampshire jazz impresario and radio broadcaster; and has led to numerous collaborations with musicians from all over the world. Her journey has also led to her work as a visual artist and children's author.

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, but "the only piece of the puzzle that didn't fit was leaving the Southern California music scene," Julie recalled. 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 her community of music pros, those albums earned national distribution and nation-wide radio airplay.

Would similar collaborations be possible in New England? The question would go unasked for a time, as Lavender made home-schooling her children her priority in the first years after moving to their New Hampshire farm.

Before long, Julie's desire to continue recording and performing became a distant dream when the life-long performance anxiety she battled began to take center stage. Still, her beloved guitars and grand piano were given prime placement in the converted barn overlooking their DreamFarm—which served as her family's art and music studio and home-school center. "I would sit at the piano and look out at the rolling fields," she said, "and dream of turning the barn into a performance space — a place where I might bless others and conquer my fears."

## **Barnstorm Brainstorm**

A decision to share that space, and the music she made in it, with a few new neighbors, proved pivotal. Julie knew it was time to finally overcome the paralyzing stage fright that she had kept hidden from the world, so she decided to turn 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,” Lavender thrilled her friends and herself with an intimate set of songs.

Encouragement from one of the guests fueled Julie’s determination to overcome her performance anxiety. This, combined with the town’s need to raise funds to build a community center, prompted her to host two expanded, packed-out performances. The events, which included art exhibitions as well as Lavender’s performances, were huge successes.

These performances sowed the seeds for her ongoing recovery as well as the launch of her 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. [www.dreamfarmradio.com](http://www.dreamfarmradio.com)

## **Taking the Reins in the Studio**

Julie’s continuing journey into fear-free performing motivated her to record an intimate album, *Interior Design*, featuring her solo performances. Following this personal victory, she then launched into two very large and ambitious themed projects combining her original music and paintings.

In her groundbreaking CD release, *The Siddur Project*, Lavender set English texts of ancient liturgical prayers to fresh, jazz-influenced music creating a multi-layered recording for spirit and soul alike. The CD features the talents of some of

the East Coast's finest jazz musicians. Lavender also 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.

Her most recent recording 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 voice-ings, and celebrates the featured artistry of 4-time Grammy-award-winning cellist Eugene Friesen along with numerous legendary Hollywood studio musicians and Boston area professionals.

### **Touching Dreams and Unleashing New Synergies**

As her field of creative endeavors continues to grow, Julie is currently finishing her fifth, middle-grade kids' fiction book for, *The Amazings Series*, which begins release in 2023. She is also composing, performing live, and collaborating with musicians from across the country and around the world. As a visual artist, she delights in finding inventive ways to integrate her original paintings with her music and now, with her writing.

Having overcome so much debilitating, dream-crushing fear, Julie Lavender has a passion to unlock the dreams of others. As well as providing personal mentoring and teaching on this topic, she has developed a comprehensive, multi-dimensional breakthrough program that helps people to beat their own fears and anxieties. "Living fear-free is a life-skill that can be learned," Julie shares. "I hope I can inspire and empower others to overcome their own fear, so they can share their gifts with the world and fulfill their created purpose." [www.julielavender.com](http://www.julielavender.com)