

## **Hannah Christianson 2008 Celebration Award Winner**

Hannah Woods (Christenson)

### **1.) Do you remember how you first heard about Celebration?**

I don't quite remember... But according to my mom, I was playing at the civic center in downtown fargo for a youth music event, and a Native American woman heard my music and told us that I should audition for the celebration of women and their music.

### **2.) What are you up to nowadays, can you tell us what a typical week in the life looks like for you?**

Currently, I live in a tiny town in the Jemez mountains in northern New Mexico. It's a very peaceful, beautiful, and nurturing place to be. Every week is a little bit different, as I'm always up to various creative projects. One thing I do consistently is teach music to people online all over the world via a company called Lessonface. I usually do this about 3 days a week. I also teach lessons in person from my home. When I'm not teaching, I'm usually writing music or poems, or painting, or just being outside in nature, meditating, walking my dog, or going on hikes with my husband...Or planning the next show/event/tour or album release! I also meet with my friend/band partner who lives in LA a couple of times a week via Facetime/Skype. The band is called We Saw Lions, and I'm currently working on editing some videos for that project. We make electro-indie-pop music, and it's a lot of fun and much different than my solo stuff, which is very acoustic based, usually guitar/voice or piano/voice. A couple of weeks ago I was in LA, making children's music to pitch to a kids TV show, recording piano instrumental pieces for music licensing, making some more We Saw Lions music, and meeting up with friends/jamming and sharing songs. The week after that one of my paintings was in a show at a local gallery here, and I was asked to perform and write a song for the opening reception of the show. I'm currently working on rebuilding my website, planning some shows for next spring, and co-leading a music/yoga/wellness retreat with my neighbor who is a naturopathic doctor and Ayurvedic medicine practitioner. So you see every week is a little bit different, which makes life very interesting. There's always something new going on :)

### **3.) Have you continued with your music/art? Have you found new mediums?**

Yes, I have continued with my music. After high school I attended Berklee College of Music and majored in Music Therapy and Songwriting, and have been on the musical journey ever since! It's an ever-evolving path, and the music I write is always changing a little bit with each new phase of my life. And a couple of years ago I decided to start to explore the art world a little bit more and that's been fun to express myself in that way through acrylic abstract paintings. I've also enjoyed co-creating music and doing more collaborative work.

### **4.) How significant was your involvement with Celebration for your development as a woman after winning?**

I think it definitely impacted me as a young woman, in the sense that it allowed for opportunities I hadn't had before, and also in how encouraging it was to be surrounded by women artists. It's also something that over the years has been a wonderful community to come back to, to feel supported by and be encouraged by, especially during times when I've been confused about my next steps as a musician/artist. And it's always been very inspiring to see older women doing their music thing, even in their 50s and 60's, to keep on with the path of music; that it's something you can do your whole life long.

### **5.) What about Celebration draws you in to keep in contact/remember your experience? Well, first of all, Deb**

**Jenkins. She's been an amazing** mentor/friend over the years, and I am just so happy to know her. She's a very inspiring person to me, and we keep in touch, and so that's one way I stay connected! And over the years they've asked me back to do various things like house concerts or perform at the show, and one year they even brought my whole band back from Boston, which was just SO fun. It's just such a unique and beautiful community, and the main event is just one part of it. It's really special to feel a part of this wonderful group of women musicians and artists. In the 'real world' of the music side of things, it is rarely the case that you're surrounded by all women, and there's this wonderful magic that happens when you're in a room full of creative women. I always love when we all get together and sing the last song at the end of the show. I love that feeling of unity that happens. Those are all just some of the things that keep me connected.

### **6.) Any advice for our future young women award recipients?**

Choosing to follow a creative path is a brave choice. It's a non-traditional choice. It can be terrifying. But it is also unlike any other path out there. It's a path that allows you to feel deeply, deeply, alive. You get to make it up and create it as you go along. There's not one 'right' way to have a music career or creative career. It requires a lot of courage to always listen to that inner creative spark and honor it. Sometimes that looks like moving to NY and auditioning for Broadway plays. Sometimes it looks like living in nature and being kind to yourself, building up your creative reserves. As best as you can, honor that inner voice, that inner wisdom; honor your own artistic integrity and the uniqueness of your journey; what the path looks like for you might be different than what it looks like for someone else.

**7.) Can you tell us about the connections you made during your time(s) at Celebration?**

One of the people I've felt most connected to because of the Celebration of Women and their music is Deb Jenkins. As I mentioned above, she's just a really inspiring person to me, and she's become a wonderful friend and mentor over the years. We discovered that not only do we share a love of music, but we also both go to Itasca State Park at the same time of year in the fall. We've also run into each other in Jamaica of all places. I always just feel supported and encouraged by her presence whenever we get together. Another person I got to know better through the Celebration of Women was Rosie Sauvageau. We ended up writing a song together and doing a show together back in the day :)

**8.) Would you be willing to recall a story the last time you were genuinely touched by music?**

I am continuously moved by music, almost every day. There's always new music being made and I love listening to and finding the music that speaks the most to me. I recently had the song "Wings" by HAERTS on repeat. I would listen to it constantly as I drove, and it would bring tears to my eyes, and help me feel something I couldn't exactly find the words for. I let myself feel what I was feeling, and the music helped me do that. I recently wrote a song, a sort of hymn, while I was doing laundry, and that also brought tears to my eyes, as it conveyed a deep feeling and reflected something true from within my heart. I shared the song with my neighbors and their friends, and they too were moved/started crying, and so then I started tearing up again there as well. Music is such a huge part of my day to day life. I'm constantly singing and humming and making up melodies that reflect how I feel. And so yes, I am genuinely touched by music almost every day.