

LOREENA MCKENNITT

Canadian Songwriter's Hall of Fame - Induction Acceptance - March 8, 2023

Thank you so very much for this honour today. It is truly special to be included on the day that launches Women in Music Canada Honours.

I am deeply grateful to the Canadian Songwriter's Hall of Fame for deeming my work worthy of this distinction.

It has been a great, great pleasure to have made my way into this unbelievable world of music.

As a child, I wanted to be a veterinarian. But music captured me. In the lovely town of Morden, Manitoba where I grew up, my world was brimming with music— music festivals, operettas, church music, variety nights. It was a rich foundation.

As I grew into the wider world of singer-songwriters and discovered Celtic music and the legends of the Celts, I was inspired to take a journey that became my life.

As my career grew, I eagerly followed the history of the Celts from Ireland to Morocco, across Europe to Turkey,

Mongolia and Siberia, I realize now, that I was gaining an invaluable education in history, geography, and cultural studies.

In my music, I've sought to bring history forward, to explore its relevance to the present and to shine light on subjects of universal interest and concern.

My travels and experiences became the springboard for my song-writing. And I'm grateful that I've been able to share, what I've learned, with people all over the world where my music is heard and where I've been drawn to perform.

It is true, the success I've experienced has been *unusual*. For one thing, I've collaborated with a wonderful number of 'dead poets' – Yeats, Tennyson, Mr. William Shakespeare. It's been wonderful to work with these greats – deceased or not.

When it came to the actual management of my career and song writing, I brought a healthy dose of self-sufficiency to the effort, no doubt, something I acquired from my rural roots.

After a few years of searching for a music industry manager, *I realised I was simply unmanageable* – and if I was to succeed,

in the multiple meanings of that word, I was going to have to do it in my own way.

My success has been due to the invaluable help and support of a great number of individuals, some of whom are here tonight, such as Dave Tollington, Susan Abramovitch and more recently, my partners at Universal Music and Peer Music Publishing.

My career has been a group effort from the very beginning. My parents and music teachers encouraged my musical interests. Mitch Podolak, Artistic Director of the Winnipeg Folk Festival gave me one of my first professional opportunities at that great event.

Graham Henderson helped devise the famous “Loreena McKennitt deal” with Warner Music Canada in 1991.

I owe much to glorious musicians such as Brian Hughes and Hugh Marsh with whom I’ve created my musical ideas. I owe great thanks to the many retailers and public broadcasters around the world, who took my music to heart in the formative years, passed it on to their customers and listeners to complete the human connection.

Finally, I salute my current colleagues Mark McCauley, Errol Fischer, Ian Blackaby, Stacey Clark and Andrea Boswell.

To them all, my deepest thanks.

If I may, let me step back just a bit and to look at a bigger picture. noting that ...

We Canadian songwriters of all kinds have been truly fortunate to find our way in the world through music and song writing.

Music...is simply remarkable.

I think of how our ancient ancestors lived close to the natural world, taking in its rhythms and hearing its voices. Music makers absorbed these surroundings, interpreted them and spun them into *a weave of sonic connective tissue* that helped us make sense of the world and helped us make a priceless connection to each other. We are the inheritors of bards and troubadours and...of the birds of spring.

Music. It is hard to think of life without it.

Over the centuries, this extraordinary medium of communication has soothed the soul, been a voice of

protest. It has helped us grow up us teenagers, helped us look back on and know our history. It has sent us off to sleep...and... sometimes off to war.

I think of the music of farewell – with its shades of defiance and devotion ~ as is heard today in Ukrainian churches. ...or in the countryside, I smile to think of how farmers choose music they believe with help cows give more milk.

And who can forget events like the communal singing of the Welsh national anthem in an arena of 50,000 fans. At times, the power of song is simply overwhelming'.

Music is so often a force for good. Sure, at one level it's a lot of fun. For each of us it's a soundtrack to our lives. It can make us better. It can fill our hearts and enrich our souls.

That is music at its best.

I thought of that when I realized that today is International Woman's Day. It's also the day that sees the beginning of the Women in Music Honours at the Canadian Songwriter's Hall of Fame.

So let me add one other thought as I conclude.

On this day, it pains me to think of music that carries a message of misogyny – music that shows contempt for women, and which seems a license to violence. We have to remember, too, that music and words can be misused. I want to add that thought.

I think of all the power and poignancy of the songs written by song writers who inspired me – Joni Mitchel, Gordon Lightfoot, Buffy St Marie or Sylvia Tyson. Even as they sang songs of sadness or protest, they lifted us up. They didn't write to tear down.

I will treasure this award....and I salute the songwriters who have been inducted into the Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame. Each of them has delighted our ears and touched our hearts. ...To be chosen to be among Canada's great songwriters is such an honour.

Thank you to everyone who made this happen.

I am deeply grateful.