

# LISA ASCHMANN

For Information and Booking:

Contact: Nashville Geographic  
4869 Torbay Dr., Nashville, TN 37211  
Phone: (615) 834-8052  
E-mail: [nashvlgeo@aol.com](mailto:nashvlgeo@aol.com)  
Web: <http://www.songwritingideas.com>

Involvement in music: songwriter, performing  
singer/ songwriter, publisher, record label, author.



Lisa Aschmann writes and co-writes songs acapella, and sometimes performs them that way, or with her friends backing on guitar, such as: Paul Nielsen, or Mike Taplinger, Gary Talley, Don Jones, Jim Lewin, Doc West, Brian Wright, C. J. Watson, Mark Simos, Rob Wolf, Bill Piburn, John Knowles, Pat Bergeson, David Lewellyn, Lindy Hearne, James Michael Taylor, Carol McComb, and Nancy Conescu, or on keys: John Tirro, Chuck Whiting, Jamey Whiting, Jeff Lisenby, to name a few. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee and Santa Cruz, California. Several folk, jazz, R&B, and country artists have recorded her work. She calls her style "Americlectic." She has released three folk/pop CDs, The Feast, The Birds and The Pear; The Sisters (folk/bluegrass), two jazzy CDs The Planets and The Stars with cabaret-style swing on them, and some demo compilations of inspirational music. Hear her at [SongWritingIdeas.com](http://SongWritingIdeas.com).

Lisa Aschmann has been a co-writer par excellence, a prolific professional songwriter for several years, and is currently enjoying the fruits of being a singer as well. Her first six CDs and are available through her web site, CDbaby.com, and Amazon.com. Some additional tunes and songs may be heard on [myspace.com/lisaaschmannsongwriter](http://myspace.com/lisaaschmannsongwriter). Lisa's music is eclectic, heart-felt, and inspirational, in the way you would expect from someone who is a songwriter first and foremost – that is, she creates some killer diller songs, and then sings them. Expect some Celtic and Latin influences on the first album, The Feast, and some French-style music on the second album, The Birds. The third album, The Sisters is bluegrass inflected acoustic music. Joining her are some of the West Coast's finest bluegrass artists, including Kathy Kallick, Amy Stenberg, Jim Nunally, Keith Little, Greg Spatz, Carol McComb and John Reischmann. The fourth album, The Planets is largely original swing and ragtime music and the fifth album, The Stars is largely original swing and contains two bossa novas. The sixth CD, The Pear, is subtitled "Lullabies For Adults". It's no accident that these songs could underscore some movies. With her partner, Joel Evans, Lisa has contributed source cues to several TV shows and films, and they are co-writing a musical, called *Songtown*. Her book, 1000 Songwriting Ideas is published by Hal Leonard.

"It's the daring that counts. Fear is the gatekeeper to the floodgates of inspiration. The best inoculation from learning something is knowing it already. So, dare to begin and begin again."  
-- from "1000 Songwriting Ideas"

Lisa Aschmann has an emotional style that's pure, simple and sincere. Her musical styles include folk, R&B, jazz, gospel, country, pop, bluegrass, Latin & Celtic-inflected music. Less common, but still part of her catalog include some rock, rockabilly, cajun, classical and calypso music.

## Cowriters & Cuts

**(The name droppers guide to the galaxy, just to namedrop a few:)**

John Michaels, Collin Raye, Diamond Rio, Caitlin Hanford, Joice Walton, Dana Cooper, Tom Kimmel, Si Kahn, Darryl Purpose, Johnsmith, Nancy Wilson, Shanley Del, Lisa Foster, Jana Stanfield, Celeste Krenz, Nancy Conescu, Joni Bishop, Michael Johnson & Karen Taylor-Good, Erik Moll, Oentas, Crannell and Krevans, The Waxmen, MotherLode, Tracy Parker, A.C. Bailey, Susan Vogt & Woody Mann, Karen Abrahams, Dennis Warner, Pat Sharp, Manuel Costas, Raoul Jimenez, Angela Mills, Joe Williams Jr., Henry Hipkens, Mollie O'Brien, Lisa Demel, Traveling Story, The Chenille Sisters, Michael Bransfield, Lynn Marie, Dan Taylor, Julie Capili, Dean Stevens, Lindsay George, Lynn Adler and Lindy Hearne, Lowry Olafson, Barry and Holly Tashian, Alice Newman-Vestal and Don Jones, Patti Mitchell, Lisa Palas, Jack Fowler, Gerald White, Michael Lounibos, Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer, Valerie Smith and Liberty Pike, Becky Buller, Broken Wire, Jamey Whiting, Paul Craft, Bill Piburn, Wayne Carson, John Tirro, Dwight Liles, Kyle Mathews, James Thiele, Michael Puryear, A. J. and Cleve Clark (Alvarado), David Scheibner, Greg Hind (The Little River Band), Karen Pendley, Ron Kristy, Bob Teesdale, Ralph Friedrichsen, Mark Simos, Hit and Run Bluegrass, Ellen Britton, Helen Moore (Queen of Hearts), Jim Lewin (Great American Taxi), James Michael Taylor, Rick Babb, Pat Humphries, The Jaybirds, and more – over 650 recordings.

Some of her co-writers such as Lowry Olafson and John Tirro have released their CDs with many multiple co-writes on them. Some choirs, such as The World Beat Orchestra, The Santa Cruz Peace Chorus, The People's Network, Unity Church, The Oakland Youth Choir, PosiSongs, and the Episcopal Youth Organization have also recorded her songs arranged for 4 voices.

She's co-written lots of source cues for film and television, including: The Man Who Skated Down Lombard, Winner of the American Circle Critics Award for Best Short Film, Magic Bubbles, Lila, Autistic in America, Where the Girls Are, Steel, Smoke, Date Fate, JAG, Hack, Shark, Numb3rs, Bones, My Name Is Earl, It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, Las Vegas, Providence, West Wing, The Young and the Restless, JAG, Providence, The Perfect Man, LA Doctors, Touched By an Angel, The X-Files, Sex & the City, America's TV Models, My Beautiful Launderette, and Horses and Men. The Disney Channel and children's musicals include: Life Is A Bowl of Cereal (with Molly Finkle, Tim Phalen Fike, and Paul Alan Smith), What Use Are Flowers?, The Three Seasons and Addy (with Karee and Daneen Wardrop), based on the book "Meet Addy", in the American Girls Collection. Position Music, Megatrax, PEN Music Group and Master Source handle some of her film music with Joel Evans.

Lisa has appeared in a variety of venues, including The San Francisco Folk Festival, Western Workers Labor Heritage Festival, Monterey Jazz Festival, International Womens' Music Festival in Beer Sheva, Israel, The Bluebird Café, The Radio Café, and house concerts. Recently, her book signing and concert at Border's was pick of the week in the Nashville entertainment paper, The Scene.

Lisa has given many songwriting workshops, including ones for The Puget Sound Guitar Workshop, California Coastal Music Camp, Belmont University, Vanderbilt University, Camp Harmony and Nashville Songwriters Association International. She could give one in your town, too.

## **Interview Notes to Annie Jennings from Lisa Aschmann**

### **Concepts about song writing and musical creativity:**

1. Creativity is your birthright. Genius and talent are destructive words because they mislead people into thinking that there is some special, favored class of people, unlike themselves, who are natively creative. We all are.
2. Use your magpie mind. Make new collections of your experiences. Saying that there are already too many great songs out there, “so why bother,” is like a cook complaining that there is too much food in the kitchen. Other music and other songs are a great resource for songwriters. Personally, my compositional method works more like a digital filter than a synthesizer. That is, instead of adding up sine waves to create a melody, I am teasing out frequencies of interest from my mental library of what music already exists. I use groups of notes, melodic motifs, and familiar chord patterns. Don’t worry about being original – you will be. There are easy ways to modify a melody and make it your own. For example, you can add, subtract, reverse or transpose notes and motives.
3. My motto is, “Dare to be stupid!” A thing worth doing, is worth doing any way. What usually impedes creativity is being overly impressed by what we think of ourselves, and what we fear that other people think of us. Knowing a thing already inoculates you from learning something. So, open your mind to beginning, being a student, failing, and beginning again. What’s the worst that could happen? You embarrass yourself and write a bad song? Take the risk, get over the pride, and humble yourself with yourself down to ground zero. You will enjoy the freedom. No ego equals no humiliation.
4. Songs are communication, not self-expression. Imagine there is a terminus – a listener outside of yourself. Like writing a letter, a song is sent into the world. It is important to have something worthwhile to write about. We don’t have to save the whales or to cure cancer with our songs. Be ambitious, but don’t burden yourself. Be willing to write the little song, but the one that’s honest. As Mother Theresa said, “We can’t do great things, but we can do little things with great love.”
5. The main aesthetic principle that can be applied to songs, or any art, is integrity. I mean integrity in two senses, sincerity and “hanging together,” being one thing. Integrity is achieved when the gesture is coherent with the intention. You can’t convincingly hold up your fist, and shout, “I love you!” Knowing who you are and what you want to communicate will help you achieve more integrity in your work. The words and the music should be appropriate for each other, and for the emotion you convey. A central focus, together with balance and contrast in your structure also help.

### Questions for Lisa Aschmann:

1. How and when did you get started in song writing?

I wrote my first song in a hospital, recovering from surgery. The bed was white, the sheets and walls were white, and I was bored: I wrote this funny song to amuse myself. After I got out of the hospital I went to a basement restaurant called Chuck's Cellar. It turned out that they had an open mike there. I asked them what they were doing, and they said they were the local songwriter's association. They asked me if I had written a song. I said, "One." I went on stage, sang the one song I had written, acappella, and won the prize for the best song of the night. The bar tender took me to another bar that night, and pointed to some singers. He asked me if I ever wondered where they got those songs. He told me that I could write songs for a living. He was right. (It only took ten years.)

2. What was the connection that led you from physics to song writing?

Physics and song writing have a lot in common. Math and music are processed in adjacent areas of the brain. Both physicists and song writers appreciate order and structure. Physics is an attempt to make sense of the physical world by testing guesses about it methodically. Song writers do this as well with sound and poetics. There have been many physicists who have become song writers – my own producer, Sam Weedman, has a degree in astronomy. It's a surprising career change, sure, but it's surprising that more physicists have not jumped the fence. For me, there just came a point where I had to follow my passion to Nashville. I understand Ken Krage owns an excellent telescope and so does Sam Tate. There are lots of music professionals who are astronomy buffs, and of course all sound engineers are "Techies".

3. What advice would you give people about increasing their creativity?

I had a friend who was a psychiatrist in Hollywood, specializing in writer's block of screen writers and artists. She told me that most people don't honor their own creative process enough. I would suggest that you make space for creative work in your life, find out what suits you in the way of process, and arrange to do that. If you like to take a walk, do that. If you like to compose in the bath tub, do that. If you need deadlines, make them for yourself. This works much better than following someone else's idea of creative process. Keeping a notebook and a recording device handy helps me to keep track of ideas. Song ideas are always falling out of the sky like rain drops. Some people stand out in that rain with their tongues hanging out and their arms outstretched. These people have the self esteem to trust that these ideas are meant for them. So, my general advice is to work on intuition and self esteem as much as on song craft.

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#### 4. What have been your most satisfying songs?

Songs that heal, and songs that heal relationships. I had just finished demo-ing a song called "Welcome to the World," a song for a baby, when I received a phone call from the wife of a friend who was in the hospital with stroke. She requested that I visit her husband. I sang Welcome to the World at his bedside, and he came out of his coma! Another favorite song, is a song against child abuse. It was written with Karen Taylor Good, and is called The Eleventh Commandment. The Eleventh Commandment according to us, is "Honor thy Children." This song was made into a video, sung by Colin Raye, and made hundreds of thousands of dollars for Child Help USA. The anti-childabuse video has been aired in 122 countries. Karen and I also wrote a song which will benefit an Autism Awareness project for Harmonizing With Humanity, called "The Life That's Chosen Me", about how parents of children with special needs have special needs themselves. A book/CD project by Penny Fereia includes "bereavement" songs, etc. Lots of places songs can be of service....

#### 5. Do you have a theme or message that you want your songs to impart?

I like to write songs that encourage people to have heart, to take heart. Also, when I talk about creativity, I want to remind people that they are freer than they think.

#### 6. Can you tell us about the beautiful covers of your albums?

My painting on the cover of The Feast, is about magical abundance, and the second, The Birds, is about trusting the love in which we live. Birds extend their wings, that is they give free expression of themselves. They exhibit their nature, which is to fly. They trust that the air will continue to support them. We can do this with love. The cover of The Feast is in oils, and my son, Avery, painted the cover of The Birds in water colors when he was 15. The cover of The Sisters was painted by my daughter Amelia in her last year in high school, and represents the gifts of friendship that women bring. The song that the artwork refers to, is the myth of the Pleiades. The covers of The Planets and The Stars, which are albums about romance, are from a painting by the visionary artist Ingo Swann. In outer space we have the "many body problem." The cover of The Pear was taken from a painting of mine and a D'Anjou pear, photographed. Julie Rust did the layout for all the covers.

#### 7. What are those numbers in your liner notes?

Those are chord charts in Nashville notation, to make it easier for people to learn to sing and play my songs. Nashville notation is a way of writing down chords with out respect to key signature, in terms of relative intervals. This allows musicians to easily transpose. More about this is included in the Appendix/Glossary in my book 1000 Songwriting Ideas. The bass player, Chas Williams, also published a book to teach the Nashville Number System, and Kerry Marx released two videos on the topic.