

WASHINGTON COLLEGE

CITATION

Patty Griffin

In the tradition of Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen, Patty Griffin's music makes a space for the human heart in an often cold world. A true poet of popular music, Griffin creates a literary life in concert halls, dorm rooms and office cubicles. Her six albums of material have stoked the fires of dozens of other musical artists who have recorded her work and blown on the wind she summoned.

Born and raised in Old Town, Maine, Patricia Jean Griffin is the youngest of seven siblings. Her father taught high school. Her mother kept house and filled it with her voice. At 16, Patty bought her first guitar, but it was more than a decade later, knocking around the coffee houses of Harvard Square, on breaks from her jobs waiting tables and answering telephones, that Griffin began to perform her own compositions. "She was as shy as can be," said John Curtis, a noted musician and her teacher. "But when she sang—in this little 8 x 8 room—I had to peel myself off the wall."

When Griffin began to record her work, critics and audiences, too, had to peel themselves off the walls. And as she came to their notice, fellow artists jumped to record her songs, including the Dixie Chicks, Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt, Bette Midler, and even *American Idol's* Kelly Clarkson. Griffin's opus now includes *Living with Ghosts*, *Flaming Red*, *1000 Kisses*, *A Kiss in Time*, *Impossible Dream* and *Children Running Through*.

Spry, elegiac, and—above all—clear, Patty Griffin's lyrics draw on sophisticated narrative and lyrical techniques to create simple portraits of beleaguered, yearning, steadfast lives. Working with talented bands, she has created backdrops that range from driving rock, to soulful country, to popular gospel. There is artistry in ample quantity in the mere creation of her work. But when she delivers her songs, there is a critical transaction. They become ours. They articulate to us how we feel, what we dream, and how we hunger.

Patty Griffin has been twice nominated for Grammys, has often appeared in *Billboard* Top 100 charts, and been awarded the Americana Music Association's highest honor as Artist of the Year. More important than any of these honors, she has through her work established countless honest relationships with people she has never met. In recognition of her exemplary achievement in singing, songwriting, bandleading and producing, Washington College is pleased to confer on Patty Griffin the honorary degree of Doctor of Fine Arts.

Baird Tipson
President
May 18, 2008

B I O G R A P H Y

Patricia J. Griffin

THE MAINE NATIVE first became aware of music's capacity to communicate while growing up as the youngest of seven siblings, listening to her mother sing hymns, country songs and made-up ditties. Patty Griffin began singing during childhood, and wrote poems and songs as a teenager, but was too shy to perform in public. After she moved to the Boston area, her guitar teacher eventually coaxed her into joining him on stage in a tiny Cambridge club. That was in 1991. By 1998, she was opening for Emmylou Harris, and Harris, Bette Midler, Martina McBride and Linda Ronstadt were recording her songs. Today, Griffin is Americana Music Association's 2007 Artist of the Year and a three-time Grammy nominee.

Griffin began her recording career with A&M Records, winning widespread critical acclaim with her 1996 debut release *Living with Ghosts*. In 1997, Griffin took a radically difference approach with *Flaming Red*. After an album she recorded in 2000 went unreleased due to corporate shuffles, Griffin found a more hospitable home when fan Dave Matthews signed her to his new, artist-friendly ATO Records. With successive releases, *1000 Kisses* (2002), *Impossible Dream* (2004) and her latest, *Children Running Through* (2007), Griffin achieved Grammy nominations. Inspired by her work, filmmaker Cameron Crowe selected Griffin to appear in his 2005 feature film *Elizabethtown*.

Her new album echoes a variety of styles, most notably the classic R&B and gospel music that have long been a source of inspiration for the artist. *Children Running Through* was recorded in the artist's adopted hometown of Austin, Texas.