Emily Pinkerton, Biographies

SHORT (150 words)

Emily Pinkerton is a folk songwriter who is rooted in tradition and unafraid of reinvention. A founding member of old-time trio The Early Mays (and an occasional composer of chamber music), her output is expansive, but always intimate. Over intricate banjo and guitar textures, the past and present intersect in every song.

This year, Emily set down her banjo and returned to the piano to record a collection she calls **"Quiet Anthems."** After years away from the instrument, the piano became a place of comfort and permission: safe enough to tell hard stories. These are women's stories—but they are also for anyone who has lost the ability to speak, whose voice has been softened, diminished, or denied.

MEDIUM (350 words)

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This year, Emily set down her banjo and returned to the piano to record a collection she calls **"Quiet Anthems."** After years away from the instrument, the piano became a place of comfort and permission: safe enough to tell hard stories."These are women's stories" she says, "but they are also for anyone who has lost the ability to speak, whose voice has been softened, diminished, or denied."

This album invites slowness—an intentional refusal to rush meaning or perform healing. "Making an album often feels like climbing a mountain. But as my life became crowded with challenges, I needed simplicity. Just me with the piano, trying to find a way for the storms inside to reach the surface." The result is a collection of songs whose gentle delivery belies the giant feelings beneath. And it's been lovingly co-produced with sound engineer Sam Torres and composer/pianist Sophia Vastek who hosted a local release celebration at Troy Listening Room on April 18. "I'm so, so happy with the warmth of the mixes and. It's right in tune with lyrics, like an immersion in deep inner dialogue."

Song videos for "Quiet Anthems" will also highlight new artwork from longtime collaborator Joanne Wiggins: woven sculptures of paper that echo the starkness of Emily's lyrics. "A penetrating solitude runs through these songs, but in the process of putting the album together, I've been sustained at every turn by friends in Pittsburgh and in Albany." As Emily releases these songs into the world, she does so with care, community, and the hope that they will find those who need them, exactly when they are ready to be heard.

LONG (475 words)

Emily Pinkerton is a folk songwriter who is rooted in tradition and unafraid of reinvention. A founding member of old-time trio The Early Mays (and an occasional composer of chamber music), her output is expansive, but always intimate. Over intricate banjo and guitar textures, the past and present intersect in every song.

This year, Emily set down her banjo and returned to the piano to record a collection she calls “Quiet Anthems.” These songs are unguarded conversations—music that feels like sitting with an old friend in a safe room. After years away from the instrument, the piano became a place of comfort and permission: safe enough to tell hard stories. Some are her own. Some belong to others. In the song, titled: “Not a Game,” Emily takes you on a journey of exploring the difficult process of starting to speak again:

It’s been so long
since we sat down together
I walk around
more than a bit off-center
Too scared to make a sound
Worried my voice might fall right out
and hit the ground

“These are women’s stories—but they are also for anyone who has lost the ability to speak, whose voice has been softened, diminished, or denied.” Emily says. The lyrics–that begin as a patchwork of personal experiences–unexpectedly open into a larger cultural landscape, reminding us how private truth often echoes collective experience.

This album invites slowness—an intentional refusal to rush meaning or perform healing. “Making an album often feels like climbing a mountain,” Emily explains. “But as my life became crowded with challenges, I needed simplicity. Just me with the piano, trying to find a way for the storms inside to reach the surface.” The result is a collection of songs whose gentle delivery belies the giant feelings beneath.

The album features live takes from recording sessions in a beautiful former church hall with a beautiful instrument. And according to Emily, it’s been lovingly co-produced with sound engineer/composer Sam Torres (Polymouth Mastering) and composer/pianist Sophia Vastek (Sova) who hosted the local release at Troy Listening Room in Troy, New York on April 18. “I’m so, so happy with the warmth of the mixes,” Emily adds. “It’s right in tune with the lyrics, like an immersion in deep inner dialogue.”

Song videos for “Quiet Anthems” will also highlight new artwork from longtime collaborator Joanne Wiggins. Wiggins’ woven sculptures of paper echo the starkness of the album’s lyrics. “A penetrating solitude runs through these songs, but in the process of putting the album together, I’ve been sustained at every turn by friends in Pittsburgh and in Albany.” Emily said.

As Emily releases these songs into the world, she does so with care, community, and the hope that they will find those who need them, exactly when they are ready to be heard.

Additional information:

Emily is co-founder and member of acclaimed folk trio The Early Mays, The group has earned a #1 debut on the National Folk DJ Charts, performed on NPR's Mountain Stage twice, and won the International Acoustic Music Award for Best Group/Duo. As a solo songwriter/composer, Emily brings folk instruments into chamber music and multi-media performances, including *Rounder Songs* (New Amsterdam Records 2017), folk opera Looking for Violeta (Quantum Theatre 2019), and a new work for banjo, voice, flute, clarinet, piano, electric guitar and bass (*Ephemera Ballads*, release date: November 2026).

Studying Ethnomusicology at University of Texas at Austin launched Emily into 20 years of researching and performing South American music, especially the songs of Violeta Parra. A translation of her work on 25-string *guitarrón* was just published with support from the Chilean National Council of Culture. After a long career of performance and production in Pittsburgh, PA, Emily moved to Albany, NY to teach Songwriting at The College of Saint Rose Music Industry program. Following the college's closure, she joined the faculty at Albany High School.