

## Trevor Tchir – Biography

For over twenty years, Trevor Tchir's songs, live performances, and recordings have engaged audiences across Canada and beyond.

In summer 2021, Tchir finally returns with his fifth album of original songs, *Sun & Moon*. This is Tchir's first album in twelve years, and its songs speak to the midlife experiences of raising kids, losing loved ones, following dreams in a precarious economy, and acting as a citizen at time when democracy faces stark challenges. It features a talented cast of musicians from Tchir's new home in the Great Lakes gem of Sault Ste. Marie, his prairie home city of Edmonton, and Ottawa, where his musical journey took off.

This spring, Tchir, also a professor, received the distinguished faculty award for his efforts in indigenizing and de-colonizing the politics program at Algoma University, with its special mission of encouraging cross-cultural learning between Indigenous and other communities. This work, like his music, strives to build community by sharing our different perspectives and stories about the world we all call home.

Tchir was born in St. Albert, Alberta. His father's Ukrainian-Canadian family was filled with singers and musicians who played in regional barn dances and family celebrations, and both his parents were supportive of his musical interests. One evening, his piano teacher's husband, Reg, joined Tchir and his father at the Sidetrack Cafe to hear prairie guitar great, Jack Semple. Tchir was thrilled not only to get to finally experience a show at the legendary venue, but also because after the following week's lesson, Reg left a large stack of vinyl for him to borrow, featuring blues and roots guitar greats like John Hammond and JJ Cale. This introduction, along with discovering the music of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Mississippi John Hurt, and Townes Van Zandt, inspired Tchir, along with his younger brother, Stephen, to begin singing and playing guitar in the busking stalls of the Farmers' Market and Whyte Avenue, often joined by friend and drummer, Allyson Rogers. Tchir soon discovered the recordings and live performances of Albertan folk music icon, Bill Bourne, who became a lasting musical inspiration and, over two summers, Tchir's guitar teacher.

Tchir left Alberta at 17 for Ottawa, to study political science, work as a page in the House of Commons, and kickstart his musical pursuits. For the next seven years in the capital, Tchir cut his teeth at writing songs, performing live, and recording, as part of a highly collaborative and talented community of young musicians and poets. He played regularly at Sandy Hill's Dunvegan Pub, where he met musical friends, mentors, and collaborators, including Bill Barnes, Craig Simon, Peter Webb, Pierre Chrétien, Chris Lochner (Garritty), Nathan Morris, Julie Larocque, and poet Kristy (K.L.) McKay, now Tchir's wife. His first release, *The Way I Feel Today*, was recorded in 1999 by Peter Webb in his Nelson Street studio/apartment, as a live off the floor solo acoustic project. This record of Tchir's first serious songwriting efforts opened performance opportunities, and he played regularly at Zaphod Beeblebrox, Black Sheep Inn, Manx Pub, and Cajun Attic, and made appearances at Barrymore's, the Ottawa Tulip Festival, the National Art Center Fourth Stage, and the National Library Auditorium. Here, a young Tchir had the chance to open for Garnet Rogers, an early highlight.

In 2001, Tchir released *November*, recorded at Ottawa's Raven Street Studio by Jay Jaknunas. From 2001-04, Tchir co-hosted the popular Cafe Nostalgica weekly open stage with Kristy McKay, made possible by Marc Spooner and the UofO graduate students. On the second anniversary of the open stage, regulars recorded a live collection of music and poetry: *Thursday Heroes - Live at Cafe Nostalgica*, featuring musicians like Webb, Soul Jazz Orchestra, Phil Lafreniere, John Gillies, John Carroll, Lighthousekeepers (with Neil Gerster and Rozalind MacPhail), Pat Ang, Purple, Antoine Kerninon,

Graham Greer, and Emile Pelletier. Also featured were regular poets including McKay, Ronnie Deschenes, Kris Northey, Amanda Earl, Steve Sauve, and Max Middle.

The same year, Tchir completed his MA in Political Philosophy, focusing on the cultural theory of Charles Taylor. He continued to play regularly, backed by Webb, and members of Soul Jazz Orchestra: Steve Patterson, Lafreniere, and Chretien, organ player, founder of SJO, and Tchir's then roommate.

In his last year in Ottawa, Tchir recorded a second project with Jaknunas, and his third album, released in 2005 as *Wooden Castles Fall*. One of its tracks, "Fifty-Three Bells," about young love in the capital city, and about saying goodbye, was featured in a [music video](#) shot with Super 8 film by Pixie Cram. Its closing song, "Athabasca," was featured in Leslie Iwerks' film, *Downstream*, shortlisted for the 2009 Academy Award for short documentary, about the environmental health hazards of Alberta oil development.

In 2005, Tchir returned to Edmonton. The next year, he played a cross-Canada tour, playing 25 dates. Highlights included duo shows with his brother in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, with Peter Webb in Alberta and southern Ontario, sharing a bill with Amelia Curran in Halifax, playing to welcoming audiences in Montreal, Quebec City, and Rimouski, and fulfilling a dream of playing the Ship Inn in St. John's, Newfoundland. While in St. John's, Tchir played an extended impromptu set at a quiet open stage, guest hosted by the legendary Ron Hynes. When, after the set, Hynes casually told Tchir "nice songs," it made all the hours on the Greyhound bus worth it.

For ten years based again in Alberta, Tchir played with the support of bandmates Steve Badach, Mickey Vallee, Allyson Rogers, Michelle Sabourin, and his brother Stephen Tchir, who also contributes his talents to Five O'Clock Charlie, Provincial Archive (Craig Schram), Dead Red Pine, Charlotte Cornfield, Colleen Brown, and Bramwell and the Leftovers. Over the decade, the band's line-up also featured Aaron Sabourin, Dave Meagher, Sean Macintosh and Tyson Kerr, as well as guest appearances by Bramwell Park and Catherine Hiltz. The Tchir brothers and the band mates played regularly at venues like the Sidetrack Cafe, Blackdog Freehouse, Haven Social Club, Artery, and the Empress, and Trevor's songs enjoyed generous radio support from CKUA and regional CBC DJs across Canada. In 2007, Tchir played to a packed house at Cafe Carina, Vienna, Austria, with Nostalgica Cafe alumna, Mika Vember. In Fort McMurray, the Tchir Brothers kicked off CKUA's live Alberta-wide Backstage concert series and toured central Canada with Charlotte Cornfield. Trevor often shared bills with friends Jeff Stuart, Scott Cook, and F&M, and enjoyed consecutive appearances at Arts Wells, including an impromptu hockey song workshop with Dave Bidini (Rheostatics), where they performed "Tearing Down the Gardens" and supported Bidini enthusiastically on "The Ballad of Wendel Clark."

In 2009, Tchir released *Sky Locked Land*, recorded by Terry Tran at Riverdale Studios, Edmonton. The album features many talented Albertan musicians, including his regular band, as well as Lane Arndt, Jordan Faulds, Bramwell Park, Volya Baziuk, and Shannon Johnson. This record also included the stellar pedal steel work of Ottawa valley's Al Bragg, whose work was earlier featured on *Wooden Castles Fall*.

The same year, Tchir completed a PhD in Political Philosophy at the University of Alberta and wrote his thesis on Hannah Arendt's analogy between performing arts and political action (now published as a book). Tchir and McKay moved their young family to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, in the middle of beautiful Great Lakes country, in 2014. Since then, Tchir has been a professor of politics at Algoma University. During his years in Sault Ste. Marie, Tchir has continued to play, write, and record music.