



COLLEGE OF MUSIC

University of North Texas College of Music

Guest Artist Recital | Wednesday, September 6, 2023 | 7:30 pm | Union Lyceum

Allison Ponthier, vocals, guitar, songwriter
Stuart Pender, guitar, backing vocals
Zoë Brecher, drumset, percussion

- Autopilot (2022)Allison Ponthier (b. 1996)
- Hollywood Forever Cemetery (2021)Father John Misty (b. 1981)
- Hardcore (2022) Allison Ponthier
- Harshest Critic (2021)Allison Ponthier/Adam Melchor (b. 1992)
- The night josh tillman came
to our apartment (2015) Father John Misty
- Hell Is a Crowded Room (2021)Allison Ponthier/Rick Nowels (b. 1960)
- Crash Test Dummy (2023) Allison Ponthier
- Cowboy (2017) Allison Ponthier
- So Hot You're Hurting My
Feelings (2019) Caroline Polacek (b. 1985)
- Faking My Own
Death/I Lied (2021) Allison Ponthier/Ben Schneider (b. 1984)
- Shaking Hands with Elvis (2022) Allison Ponthier
- Character Development (2023) Allison Ponthier

*Twenty-sixth program of the 2023–2024 season
Photography and videography are prohibited*

Allison Ponthier has been called the "next great singer-songwriter" by *Glamour* magazine. She has toured as the opening act for top producer Jack Antonoff. And she's even been interviewed by Elton John. Ponthier's dream of becoming a professional musician has come true. "Some of it is luck. Some of it is hard work," she says. "I like to think most of it is hard work, but I'm pinching myself every day. It feels really, really amazing to have people that I love not only know I exist, but enjoy my music."

Ponthier, who attended UNT as a College of Music student from 2015 to 2017, has been performing since she was a child. She struggled with anxiety and ADHD, but she made a bold choice to move to Brooklyn to pursue her music. She has released two EPs, *Faking My Own Death* (2021) and *Shaking Hands with Elvis* (2022), which tackle her struggles honestly—and resulted in performances on "The Tonight Show" with Lord Huron and features in *Rolling Stone* and other publications.

"Even though I have struggled with low self-esteem or anxiety, I knew that if I tried hard enough and kept pushing and was kind to myself that maybe these were possibilities all along," she says. "So it's nice to prove yourself wrong sometimes"—she laughs—"and actually succeed and do the thing you always wanted to do."

Ponthier, who was raised in Allen, grew up singing in a church and in show choirs and played the piano and guitar. She knew UNT—with its world-renowned College of Music and its proximity to her family—was the best choice for her. She majored in jazz studies, focusing on voice. "I didn't understand how much I would love jazz until I got into the program," she says. She worked with faculty members Rosana Eckert ('95, '99 M.M.) and Jennifer Barnes. She especially liked the weekly juries, in which students would listen to performances from other students and provide advice. And she sang at West Oak Coffee Bar and LSA Burger Co., as well as house parties. She went to three or four performances a week. "That was my favorite part of Denton," she says. "You can find music anywhere."

In her second semester at school, while hanging out in her dorm room at Bruce Hall, she wrote her first song, "I Do." "It was not good," she says. "I wrote it because I just randomly was like, 'It's time. I've got to start writing.' I wanted to do it so bad. I wrote it in a day and it was the only song I had and I played it literally all the time everywhere because it's the only song I had. In my last semester of UNT, I took a songwriting class with Rosana and I ended up writing a lot more songs."

All that exposure to music inspired her. So, after one and a half years at UNT, she was off to Brooklyn to make it her career. "I just had a feeling that I knew, I knew what I needed to do next," she says. "I don't know how it happened or where it came from. But I just had this like overwhelming feeling that I knew what I needed. The education I got at UNT and having the community of being around musicians all the time I think is partially what gave me that confidence."

In Brooklyn, Ponthier took on a variety of odd jobs and made TikTok videos to get her songs heard. In 2020, she landed a record deal with Interscope.

Her lyrics could be interpreted as dark. She wrote "Shaking Hands with Elvis" after the death of a friend, and "Hollywood Forever Cemetery" also tackles mortality. But she embraces that side, as she always loved movies from Tim Burton and Henry Selick.

The whole point of my music is making it easier to talk about difficult things," she says. "And the way that I did that when I was a kid is through movies or through musicals that had darker undertones. If we're like making a music video and I step on a set that looks like a 1960s sci-fi movie or a 1950s scary movie, it just makes it easier to talk about. It's talking about things through the lens of camp or something whimsical. I love the balance of something that may be difficult and kind of making it in another world, like something more fantastic."

Another song, "Chasing a Feeling," is about her ADHD, while "Autopilot" is about her fear of driving. Her honesty has resulted in deep connections with her audiences, such as when she talked to her fans at her first two headlining shows in New York City and Los Angeles.

"Even though some of them were anxious or maybe shy, like all of them were so polite and kind and sweet, and I've even had other people who work at venues come and tell me, 'Your fans are especially very nice,'" she says. "So what I'm learning is that the type of music you put out really does attract the type of fan that you want."

AN EVENING WITH

ALLISON PONTHER

WEDNESDAY

SEPTEMBER 6th

UNION LYCEUM

Free for UNT Students!
\$5 UNT student guest ticket (limit 1)
\$10 for UNT Staff / Faculty / Alumni
\$15 General Public

Tickets @ [UNTunions.com](https://untunions.com)

DOORS OPEN — 7:00PM
CONCERT STARTS — 7:30PM
30min Q&A after performance

PRESENTED BY THE MARY JO AND V. LANE RAWLINS

FINE *arts* SERIES