

2019

# Heirs to Those Before us: An Exploration of the Influences on a Young Artist

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# **SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL**

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Heirs to Those Before us: an Exploration of the Influences on  
a Young Artist”**

written by

**Hannah Saunders**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for completion of  
the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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04/24/2019

HEIRS TO THOSE BEFORE US:  
AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCES ON A YOUNG ARTIST

Hannah Saunders

Submitted for partial fulfillment of the Carl Goodson Honors Program  
at Ouachita Baptist University

April 2019

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## Introduction

The central concept of this thesis all started in March of 2018 when a friend of mine recommended I listen to Joni Mitchell's album, *Blue*. I loved it immediately. There was something raw and honest about the words she wrote and something fresh about the melodies. Nothing was forced; everything was natural. Not only did I love it, but the melodies constantly swimming around in my head started to sound similar in style. The recitative-like rhythms and the flowing melodies had worked their way into my head. So I started to wonder - how can I use this in my art?

I have always learned by imitating. In every aspect of my education, I always look for an example before I continue in my own way. Why not do the same in creating music? In his autobiography, Mark Twain said:

There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply take a lot of old ideas and put them into a sort of mental kaleidoscope. We give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. We keep on turning and making new combinations indefinitely; but they are the same old pieces of colored glass that have been in use through all the ages."<sup>1</sup>

Put simply, everything is derivative. So I set out to write and produce the album which accompanies this thesis, *Heirs to Those Before Us*. I did this by imitating four artists whose harmonic and lyrical style I felt were compatible with my own.

In selecting my models, I tried to choose a well-rounded variety. I chose two late 20th century and two contemporary writers, one male and one female of each. Each of them has a different personal background. Each of them has a distinct process of writing. In the following pages, I will include:

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Own Autobiography: The Chapters from the North American Review*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael J. Kiskis, Wisconsin Studies in Autobiography (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

1. a short biography of each artist -- Joni Mitchell, George Ezra, Regina Spektor, and Billy Joel
2. a description of each of the writing process for each song
3. and a description of the production process.

Without further ado, *Heirs to Those Before Us*.

## Joni Mitchell

"I'm so hard to handle,

I'm selfish and I'm sad.

Now I've gone and lost the best baby

That I've ever had.

Oh, I wish I had a river I could skate away on"<sup>2</sup>

Roberta Joan Anderson was born in 1943 in Fort Macleod, Canada.<sup>3</sup> Early in her life, she was drawn to art. When she was about five years old, she started drawing as a response to the trauma induced by seeing *Bambi*. For the next fifteen years, art was her refuge. Two major experiences pushed her into music as a young girl. When Mitchell was nine, she contracted Polio. During the year in the hospital, someone sent her a book of Christmas carols. She began singing for herself to pass the time.<sup>4</sup>

In early grade school, she was inspired by Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* when she heard it in the soundtrack of a movie called *The Story of Three Loves*. She decided then she would play the piano. She begged her mother for a piano for months. "Finally, one winter night... this van pulled up with a lot of spinets on the back. Mine was not a good instrument at all." Still, Mitchell took to the piano with gusto. Unfortunately, an overly strict piano teacher drove her away from music after just a couple of years.<sup>5</sup> "Hitting me with a ruler... sent my love of playing music underground for ten years or so."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Joni Mitchell. *River*. Reprise, 1971.

<sup>3</sup>Jeffery Rogers. "Joni Mitchell: The Untold Story of Her Radical Guitar Style." *Acoustic Guitar*, August, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Malka Marom, *Joni Mitchell: In Her Own Words* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

In sixth grade, Mitchell had an assignment for an English class to write a poem. She worked long and hard on a poem about a stallion, but when she got her grade back, it was an A minus. She was especially confused because other students who did not do as well got better grades. When she confronted her teacher, he said, "That's the best poem he's ever gonna write. This is not the best poem you're ever gonna write." Mitchell's first album is dedicated to him.<sup>7</sup>

After Mitchell graduated, she went to school for art. In order to make money, she auditioned for coffee houses with her Martin Tiple, a guitar she describes as "a glorified South American ten-string ukulele." And so she began singing in a coffeehouse in Calgary called The Depression. Her experience with "territorial" music during this time was what prompted her to write her own music.<sup>8</sup>

Not too long after, Mitchell dropped out of art school to become a musician, about the same time she discovered she was pregnant in 1964.<sup>9</sup> In an attempt to keep her child, she married Chuck Mitchell, from whom she takes her current surname. Things did not go well, and Mitchell realized it was not a marriage into which she could bring a child.<sup>10</sup> Joni's song, "Little Green," is about giving her daughter up for adoption.<sup>11</sup>

When the marriage ended, Mitchell moved to New York and in 1968 recorded her first album, *Joni Mitchell or Songs to a Seagull*. She released two more albums in the next two years, *Clouds* and *Ladies of the Canyon*.<sup>12</sup> When she was twenty-seven years old, Joni found

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<sup>7</sup> Maron, 11-13.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 16-18.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Brian D. Johnson, Dale Eisler, and Danylo Hawaleshka, "Joni Mitchell's Secret," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/joni-mitchells-secret>.

<sup>12</sup> "Joni Mitchell," *Biography*, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.biography.com/people/joni-mitchell-9410294>.



herself deep in depression, scarred by "the way of the world." So she "quit this crazy scene," as she said in her song "River." "I lost my daughter. I made a bad marriage. I made a couple of bad relationships after that. Then I got this illness - crying all the time." After two years out of the music scene, it was in this state of depression Joni Mitchell wrote what would be one of her most well-known albums - *Blue*.<sup>13</sup>

Up till *Blue*, Mitchell had written mostly fiction.<sup>14</sup> "I don't like being vulnerable."<sup>15</sup> *Blue* was a totally different story. When she played it for fellow artist Kris Kristofferson, he said, "God, Joni, save something for yourself."<sup>16</sup>

Since *Blue*, Mitchell has released fifteen studio albums. Of her nineteen albums, only four have ranked lower than #50 in US charts, and only two under #100. *Court and Spark*, her sixth album, peaked at #2.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Maron, 55-57.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 38.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffery Rodgers. "Joni Mitchell: The Untold Story of Her Radical Guitar Style." *Acoustic Guitar*, August, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> "Joni Mitchell," *Billboard*, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.billboard.com/music/joni-mitchell>.

## The Process

As mentioned in the introduction, *Blue* was a major inspiration for this project. It was also the inspiration for "What Daddy Said." For each of the songs on the accompanying album, I chose a specific piece or album that inspired me both personally and artistically. *Blue*'s raw honesty and vulnerability and the recitative-like folk style really drew me in. The songs "Little Green" and "River" especially sparked an interest. The line "child with a child pretending" really helped inspire the look back on childhood that became "What Daddy Said."

"What Daddy Said" was the first song to be written and probably the easiest to write. I was dealing with a lot of personal things in my own life and reflecting on what had brought to that point. I wanted *Heirs to Those Before Us* as a whole to be a story about my influences, and there was no better place to start than the things that "grew me up."

It has been my experience that most people measure their lives by the relationships they have with the people around them. Each verse of this song tells the story of another relationship and all its struggles through advice from one of the most important relationships in my life. These words of wisdom have shaped who I am and how I relate to other people, making it the perfect starting point for this concept album.

From a musical perspective, I felt the disjunct style of Joni Mitchell's melodies really worked to support the emotion behind the piece. The line feels almost incomplete in some places, just as the memories that it relays are fragmented and incomplete. The recitative-like rhythm gives a sense of stream of consciousness, like the real, flowing thoughts of someone remembering things.

## George Ezra

*"He said, 'Why why, what a terrible time to be alive*

*If you're prone to overthinking and*

*Why why, what a terrible time to be alive*

*If you're prone to second-guessing."*<sup>18</sup>

George Ezra Barnett broke into the music scene fairly quickly for a solo artist. Born in Bristol in 1993, Ezra began by messing around, playing bass at 13 because he "wasn't good at sport."<sup>19</sup> As the rest of his friends' interest in music began to fade, Ezra began to discover even more in music he loved. He started listening to rock and roll and mid-century country artists.<sup>20</sup> When he was sixteen, he gained a genuine interest in performing and writing music,<sup>21</sup> but never really thought he could make it full time as a performing artist<sup>22</sup>. However, his parents were extremely supportive of him and what he wanted to do, so at 17 he started attending the British and Irish Modern Music Institute.<sup>23</sup>

Less than a year later, with his rich bass voice well beyond his years, a YouTube video he uploaded caught the eye of Columbia Records.<sup>24</sup> By the time he was 21, his first single,

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<sup>18</sup> George Ezra. *Pretty Shining People*. Columbia, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Gillian Orr, "George Ezra Interview: The Singer-Songwriter On His Stunning Rise and What to Do Next," *The Independent*, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/george-ezra-interview-the-singer-songwriter-on-his-stunning-rise-in-2014-and-what-to-do-next-9950985.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Rob LeDonne, "George Ezra On His Hit Song "Budapest" and Burgeoning Fame: George Ezra On His Hit Song "Budapest" and Burgeoning Fame," *American Songwriter*, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://americansongwriter.com/2014/10/qa-george-ezra-hit-song-budapest-burgeoning-fame/>.

<sup>22</sup> Leah Brungardt, "An Interview with the Incredibly Promising Singer-Songwriter, George Ezra," *All Access Music*, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://music.allaccess.com/an-interview-with-the-incredibly-promising-george-ezra/>.

<sup>23</sup> LeDonne.

<sup>24</sup> LeDonne.

"Budapest," made it to #32 on the *Billboard Hot 100* chart and his debut album, *Wanted on Voyage*, hit 19 in the *Billboard* top 200.<sup>25</sup> Three years later, his second album, *Staying at Tamera's*, peaked at #68.

Despite his success, Ezra still desires some amount of anonymity. On being signed, Ezra requested his face not be on the cover of his album. Speaking about Arctic Monkey's Alex Turner, he said, "He's released, what, five albums now? And still, I never see his face in papers. You don't ever hear what he's up to, and I think that's cool."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> "George Ezra," *Billboard*, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.billboard.com/music/george-ezra>.

<sup>26</sup> Orr.

## The Process

Ezra's writing is heavily influenced by older blues music. He loved musicians such as Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, and Woody Guthrie. He says, "I was overwhelmed by the honesty and heart put into this music."<sup>27</sup> You can hear a little bit of the blues scale in the verse and bridge of "Runnin'," pulling from these earlier influences.

Probably the most interesting thing about Ezra's writing process is the need to travel. He wrote both of his albums while touring across Europe. He finds it difficult to write at home and cannot simply sit down and write a song.<sup>28</sup> As I was refining the concept for this album, I was also preparing to study abroad in Italy for a month. I decided this would be the perfect opportunity to imitate Ezra's process. On the plane to Bologna, the song practically wrote itself.

When writing this song, I was struggling with the idea of escape. I have never been good at being around the same people or the same things for too long, and after three years of the same people, I was getting restless. So on the journey of the album, I wrote a song about escaping. When we stop being children, we are often hit with many unexpected pains. So we seek an escape from the reality of our situations and from the relationships that drag us down. I myself was looking forward to my trip to Italy so that I could escape the things with which life had hit me that semester.

The primary musical inspirations were "Pretty Shining People" (lyrically) and "Paradise" (musically) - both from Ezra's second album, *Staying at Tamara's*. I had listened to this album on repeat for couple days prior to leaving for the trip. Most of the song was written on the plane from Chicago to Frankfurt - the melody and most of the lyrics. But I hit a wall with the second verse. I spent the next semester avoiding the piece because I didn't feel like I was in the right frame of mind to finish it.

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<sup>27</sup> Orr.

<sup>28</sup> LeDonne.

Ten months later, I found myself sitting in the bed and breakfast where I was staying during my family's spring break trip to Belize, finally starting to feel some bit of information. Although I had intended to finish the lyrics as soon as I got back to the states last summer, no motivation for writing came. But I found traveling to be an amazing motivator. I finished editing the lyrics the week after I got back from Belize.

## Regina Spektor

*"And I have walked these streets so long  
There ain't nothin' right, there ain't nothin' wrong  
But the little wet tears on my baby's shoulder  
Little wet tears on my baby's shoulder."<sup>29</sup>*

Regina Ilyinichna Spektor was born in February of 1980 to a Jewish family in Soviet Russia. Her mother was a professor of music, and her father was an amateur violinist. So naturally, Spektor began taking classical piano lessons at the age of seven. During a short period when families could leave Soviet Russia, her family fled from religious persecution, first to Austria, then Italy, landing in the Bronx when she was nine years old.<sup>30</sup> When her family had to leave Russia, they left behind the piano. While traveling and during the first part of her time in the US, she would continue to practice, thumping her fingers on the wood of the window sill.

Through a connection her father made with a fellow violinist, Spektor took lessons from Sonia Vargas, a professor at the Manhattan School of Music, until she was seventeen.<sup>31</sup> But she did not begin to write music as well as play it until she was about sixteen.<sup>32</sup> After graduating high school, Spektor began studying at the State University of New York at Purchase, where She finished a four-year program in three years.<sup>33</sup> It was during this time she discovered jazz, which heavily influences much of her music.

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<sup>29</sup> Regina Spektor. *Lady*. Sire, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> "Regina Spektor," Biography, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.biography.com/people/regina-spektor>.

<sup>31</sup> Shane Roeschlein, "Regina Spektor: The Red Princess," accessed April 6, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060103170008/http://www.themusicedge.com/moxie/news/featartist/regina-spektor-the-red-pr.shtml>.

<sup>32</sup> Biography.

<sup>33</sup> Rob Thomas, "Versatile Regina Spektor Floats Among Her Song Stories," *Wisconsin State Tribune*, October 12, 2006.

Two years after releasing her first, self-produced album, *11:11*, in 2003, Spektor caught the attention of Gordon Raphael, a producer who worked with The Strokes. After being introduced to the band, she spent the next few months on tour with them. Soon after, she signed a deal with Sire Records.<sup>34</sup> Since then, she has had 3 albums in the top 30 of the *Billboard Top 200*. One album, *What We Saw from the Cheap Seats*, reached #1 on the US top alternative albums chart and #3 on the *Billboard Top 200*.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Biography.

<sup>35</sup> Billboard



## The Process

Spektor's music has been described as anti-folk, though she does not ascribe to the label. When asked about the genre, she called it, "Acoustic music usually but with kind of a I-can-do-whatever-I-want attitude, like a more punk attitude."<sup>36</sup> The unique quality of her music comes from this attitude. She does not confine herself to a genre or style but rather writes whatever comes into her head. For example, many of her songs incorporate foreign languages, such as "Ne me quitte pas," "Apre moi," and "Lacrimosa."

Another reason I chose Spektor for this project was her attitude toward learning. "I think you have to always immerse yourself in learning. You can't just go on the road and party every night and then get home and party every night and expect to call yourself a musician."<sup>37</sup> She spends hours in museums and listening to other music in order to broaden her horizons. I felt this embodied the attitude with which I hoped to approach this project.

Another interesting aspect of Spektor's music is the inspiration for her content. "I relate much more to fiction writers," she says, "I'm not confessional at all."<sup>38</sup> Instead of seeing herself as an autobiographer with her lyrics, she instead chooses to write stories from a first-person point of view. I believe stories are the best way to communicate an idea or emotion. It is a large part of why I am involved in theatre, so this heavily attracted me to her music.

Like "Runnin'," this song really developed during my trip to Italy. Following the overarching theme of the album, I wrote about the way that escape can impact someone *negatively*. It became a story of a man who ran away to Rome, looking for solace in whatever he could find around him. In the context of my own life, Rome is one of my favorite cities on earth. I find it incredibly beautiful, filled with history and culture. But what happens when you lose

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<sup>36</sup> John Schaefer. "Hot Hot Hot". *Soundcheck*. New York Public Radio, October 18, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Roeschlein.

<sup>38</sup> Leonie Cooper, "Regina Spektor: I'm Not a Confessional Writer," NME, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.nme.com/news/music/regina-spektor-6-1281934>.

yourself in something beautiful? In one line I say that the main character "gave them his name." In many cultures and mythologies, a person's name symbolizes everything that they are. In trying to escape, he gives "them" - the beautiful things that he runs after - his very identity.

I started the song after a couple of weeks after starting Italian classes and decided I definitely wanted to use Italian in the lyrics. As with all of my lyrics, it went through revision after revision, finally ending with two lines of Italian text in the chorus, from the point of view of the main character. The chorus translates to "What is that sound / and is it what my spirit needs / it is the music of the city / the music this city bleeds." My favorite landmarks in Rome played a big role in the lyrics, the Ponte Vecchio and the Pantheon inspiring the second verse (my favorite), and the Campo de' Fiori the third. I finished the final draft of the lyrics while standing in the Colosseum in the heart of ancient Rome.

## Billy Joel

*"Now we are forced to recognize our inhumanity  
Our reason coexists with our insanity  
Though we choose between reality and madness  
It's either sadness or euphoria"*<sup>39</sup>

William Joel was born in 1949 to Howard and Rosalind Joel and grew up on Long Island. He began "writing" music as early as he could reach the keys and could play Mozart by ear by the time he was four. Joel's mother, Rosalind, pushed him to begin taking piano lessons. "After four years of little Billy's storm song, my mom... dragged me to Ms. Francis's to take lessons."<sup>40</sup>

In 1956 when he was seven, Howard walked out, leaving the family struggling to make ends meet. "We went hungry a lot," said Joel. Being the only single-parent family in their neighborhood did not help. "There was a lot of insecurity as a kid. It was a drag, and I guess that it gave me the drive not to let it happen again."<sup>41</sup>

Joel did not have the patience to be a concert pianist, but with the rise of rock and roll, he found another outlet for his talent. When he was fifteen, his neighbor pulled him into his rock and roll cover band, the Echoes, and Joel was hooked. "Rock is a religion that says... you have the right to an identity of your own." And after a childhood of insecurity, he needed that identity. Unfortunately, late gigs meant sleeping through school, and his absences kept him from graduating high school. He decided, "If I'm not going to Columbia University, I'm going to Columbia Records and you don't need a high school diploma over there."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Billy Joel. *Summer, Highland Falls*. Columbia Records, 1974.

<sup>40</sup> Hank Bordowitz, *Billy Joel: The Life and Times of an Angry Young Man* (New York: Billboard Books, 2005), 1-6.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 7-8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 16-22.

In 1966, the Echoes (now the Lost Souls) landed an audition for My House, a rock club on Long Island. The club did not want the band, but Irwin Mazur (then manager for a band called the Hassles) wanted Joel. After a failed album, the Hassles broke up. So did Attila the Hun, a duo with Joel and drummer Jon Small. After a series of disappointments and an affair with Small's wife, Elizabeth, Joel had had it. After drinking furniture polish in a half-hearted attempt at suicide, he ended up in the psych ward of Meadowbrook hospital.<sup>43</sup>

On leaving the hospital, Joel decided he was done with music. But Mazur would not give up as easily. He begged Joel for some time to make a deal. Joel gave him thirty days, saying, "Otherwise, I'm going to the midwest. I'll be a bartender, I'll be happy." Just as he ran out of time, Mazur got a call from Artie Ripp with Gulf & Western in California. With Ripp's help, Joel produced *Cold Spring Harbor*. The album was a flop. The production was so bad that Joel smashed the record against the wall after playing it the first time. With no press at all, "Touring made zero economic sense," said Ripp, "but it was the only way we could get people recognizing who Billy Joel was."<sup>44</sup>

The tour went on without success until April 1973. After months on the road, the tour stopped at Mar y Sol, a music festival in Puerto Rico. The rain poured, and the space in front of the outdoor stage was completely empty as everyone found shelter. The band set up, and Joel turned on the energy. Before Mar y Sol, no one knew who Billy Joel was. But before the show was over, thousands of people were screaming encore. Among those people was the *New York Times's* Don Heckman. "The first excitement was generated by Billy Joel's gospel-tinged rock band... [They] brought some life to what had been a generally dispirited environment."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Bordowitz, 23-40.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 41-58.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 59-60.

In spite of the love he got from the press, the tour led into yet another failure, as Gulf & Western did not have funds to distribute the record. So Joel moved himself, his soon-to-be-wife Elizabeth, and her son Sean out to LA where he lived the song "Piano Man," playing at the Executive Lounge as Bill Martin. While Joel was playing for food, Ripp and Mazur were chatting up executives of three different labels. Joel eventually signed with Columbia to produce *Piano Man* in 1973. The album won "Best New Male Vocalist" from *Cashbox*, "Male Artist of the Year" from *Music Retailer*, and "Album of the Year" from *Stereo Review*.<sup>46</sup>

Success was followed by another failure. After releasing the poorly received *Streetlife Serenade* in 1974, Joel decided to move back to New York City where he wrote *Turnstiles*. Joel rejected the first recording of the album because, "He wanted his own band that he was going to tour with to be on the album," according to Jerry Schilling, his road manager. It took Joel another year to get his band, but in 1976, *Turnstiles* finally came out. The album sold less than any other since *Cold Spring Harbor*, but Joel considers it his best collection of songs. After Streisand recorded a cover of "New York State of Mind," Joel thought, "This is one of the greatest woman singers ever, doing... me? Me?" It made him proud for another, more important reason. "I really loved it though, because it finally made me legitimate in this business to my mother."<sup>47</sup>

Joel has released seven other studio albums since recording *Turnstiles*. Four of those peaked at #1 on the US charts. Ten of his songs have been in the Billboard top 10, and of those, three have held the #1 slot.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Bordowitz, 65-70.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 79-84.

<sup>48</sup> "Billy Joel," Billboard, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.billboard.com/music/billy-joel>.

## The Process

Joel is another artist who does the unexpected. "I make my songs for me. I know that may sound self-serving, but I can't second-guess an audience."<sup>49</sup> Part of what makes Joel the unique songwriter is his eclectic nature, avoiding becoming "The Entertainer" he writes so derisively about. "I don't like to stick to one bag, because then you become 'Oh he's the guy who does this...'"<sup>50</sup>

This song was probably the hardest for me to write. Though I found my inspiration quickly, the process by which Joel writes is extremely different from what I'm used to. Joel uses a music-first approach to writing songs,<sup>51</sup> whereas I tend to write lyrics before or at the same time as the music. But as the entire point of this project is to challenge myself, I decided to use the music-first approach. For example, Joel described his process for writing "Zanzibar" in a sort of three-step process. First, he writes the music. Then he works out what the music is supposed to communicate. Finally, he writes the lyrics.<sup>52</sup>

My particular piece of inspiration for this song is "Summer, Highland Falls" from *Turnstiles*. Following the outline of Joel's writing process, I sat down at a piano and tried to channel the emotions I felt when listening to the song without actually copying the song itself. It was difficult for me to latch on to something I wrote which I actually liked. The accompaniment itself took three or four different forms before becoming what it is now, and the melody as originally written was changed dramatically when words started being added.

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<sup>49</sup> Borowitz, 79.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>51</sup> Patrick Doyle, "The Last Word: Billy Joel On Self-Doubt, Trump and Finally Becoming Cool," Rolling Stone, accessed April 6, 2019, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/the-last-word-billy-joel-on-self-doubt-trump-and-finally-becoming-cool-203477/>.

<sup>52</sup> Borowitz, 104-105.

I wanted the song to be a reflection on the album and the process I had followed while writing it. It needed to focus on the central idea (everything is derivative) and on something I personally had struggled with. I had written a song the semester before, called "Copy," for a songwriting class dealing with another insecurity of mine: am I unique? Continuing with this idea, I wrote "Heirs to those before Us." In the lyrics, I wonder if it is best, not to fight for originality that may never come, but rather to embrace those things which influence us to be the people we are.

As I did further research on "Summer, Highland Falls," I found it had a related theme. Joel wrote the song during his last summer in California. Things were going poorly, and he was beginning to feel an extreme depression. In a question and answer session in 1995, Joel stated the song dealt with his manic depression, also the theme of "I Don't Know Why I Go to Extremes." The primary reason for writing the song, as Joel puts it, "was recognizing that I had faults that I needed to correct and I needed to work on."<sup>53</sup> In the same way, I set about searching for a solution to the problem I pose earlier in the album.

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<sup>53</sup> Billy Joel, "New Billy Joel Q&A – Can You Tell Me What Made You Write The Song 'Summer, Highland Falls?'" (lecture, Place, Nuremberg, Germany, June 4, 1995), <https://www.billyjoel.com/news/new-billy-joel-qa-can-you-tell-me-what-made-you-write-song-summer-highland-falls/>.

## Production

Production for this album has taught me a very important, unintended lesson: things never go right the first time. Or the second. Or usually the third. It seemed like every single step was set back by another unexpected week. Whether the cables were missing, the program was messing up, or schedules would not line up, I ended up about four months behind where I wanted to be when I started. Instead of beginning the recording process in November, I started in late February.

Arranging the songs and finishing the lead sheets proved a more tedious task than I expected. I probably had 5 drafts of each lead sheet before finally having them ready for other musicians. There were things I had never considered before, like the size of the notes on the staff or how you communicate the overall feeling of the piece through five words at the top of the page. Very often when writing non-art music, the rhythms you intend to write are difficult to translate to a page. "What Daddy Said" had some particularly frustrating sections.

As a result of the two-month delay in arranging, I began working on the drum tracks for "Runnin'" and "Heirs" in early December. The production software made me cry at least once. So Dr. Johnston and I ended up sitting for a very long session on Friday before school started. One thing hindering the process was our use of the virtual drummer. Unfortunately, the only way to find what you want is through trial and error. After a lot of error, the only simulated drummer which could play what I wanted for the opening few measures of "Runnin'" (a simple four-on-the-floor beat) was very difficult to tailor to the *rest* of the song. After the fact, we realized we could have simply added a second drum track or used a musical instrument digital interface (MIDI keyboard) for the initial beat.

After we finished the drum track, we ran into several technological snags. Most of the studio equipment was not set up. We were missing one cable in particular which set us back by about a month. Another two weeks were lost because the keyboard in the studio was broken.



Once we got those problems fixed, I had hoped it would be smooth sailing. And it was. For two weeks. I got the bass line and the piano recorded with no real problems. When we went to record the guitar track, someone had changed a setting deep within the recording software, which took us forever to find. This cost us another week.

As of the writing of this thesis, the album is still unfinished. The recording process has not been completed, and editing has not begun.

## Appendix 1: The Lyrics

"What Daddy Said"

*[Verse 1]*

Daddy told me, "Don't count sins,  
Because people let those heartaches in  
And they wind up cold  
And they wind up alone.  
Oh you know  
That people never change."  
So many people keeping score  
They all forget what life is for  
So don't forget  
And don't regret  
But I never listen to what daddy said

*[Verse 2]*

But daddy told me, "Be the just  
To those who don't know how to trust.  
Be more than kind  
But don't lose your mind  
Cause you know  
They can steal your very soul."  
People hurt the ones they love  
You see it when push comes to shove  
They'll leave you cold  
And they'll leave you alone  
And I should have listened to what daddy said

*[Verse 3]*

Daddy told me, "Learn to cope  
So you love the lost but don't lose hope  
Be kind and warm  
And don't cause harm  
Cause you know  
You might be their only light."  
Sometimes I wonder what it's for  
Why the pain grows more and more  
Then I make a friend  
Who needs a hand  
And then I think about what daddy said

"Runnin'"

*[Verse 1]*

I've been sittin' still for far too long  
Listening to too many sad love songs  
I need a little distance a little space  
I've gotta get away from this place  
So get me out of here

*[Verse 2]*

Can't seem to find perspective in where I am  
Gotta get away and get out of this jam  
Sunsets in the islands and tall palm trees  
Hoping this scenery will give me peace  
Just get me out of here

*[Chorus]*

Runnin', runnin', runnin' away  
I'll see you on the other side  
Runnin' runnin' day after day  
Breakin' out to sea from the tide  
I'll be leaving all that I know  
But I'll take you with me in my heart  
So let's keep runnin' runnin' away  
And we'll make a brand new start

*[Verse 3]*

I need a little fresh and I need new  
But I still want to be here with you  
So if you want to come along  
We'll write our very own love song  
So let's get out of here

*[Chorus]*

*[Bridge]*

Come with me  
O come with me  
To find our place  
And to see what we see

*[Chorus]*

"Qual è il quello"

*[Verse 1]*

One day he decided that he'd move to Rome  
One day he decided that that'd be his home  
He breathed in the history and the cigarette smoke  
He said this is my home till the day that I choke

*[Chorus]*

Qual è il quello suono  
And is it what my spirit needs  
Questo la musica della città  
Oh the music that this city bleeds

*[Verse 2]*

The gods of the river gave something to feel  
Though he never was sure if those feelings were real  
The gods of the railway gave way to roam free  
At the price of his soul, he said, "That's what I need."

*[Chorus]*

Qual è il quello suono  
And is it what my spirit needs  
Questo la musica della città  
Oh the music that this city bleeds

*[Verse 3]*

The people enthralled him with music and wine  
They told him they'd teach him to see the divine  
They read him his fortune and he gave them his name  
The piper that led him wouldn't leave him the same

*[Chorus]*

Qual è il quello suono  
And is it what my spirit needs  
Questo la musica della città  
Oh the music that this city bleeds

"Heirs to Those Before Us"

*[Verse 1]*

I've been thinking of the times  
When we were young and full of life  
And never closed our eyes  
I would waste my time and ask  
Those questions that I  
Didn't know the answers to  
And no one else would tell

You know that from the day we're born until the day we die,  
We're the sum of all the people in our lives:  
Heirs to those before us

*[Verse 2]*

I never ask those questions now,  
I guess I gave up long ago  
And hoped the answers came  
What's the point of wondering  
When wonder only ceases  
When we find ourselves  
Behind these silent walls

Remembering the memories that shaped the girl I am  
And I wonder if my dreams were all a sham  
Are we just heirs to those before us

*[Verse 3]*

I never ask those questions now,  
I guess I gave up long ago  
And hoped the answers came

Yet I think that all our answers ought to come from where we've been  
From the people who have come through thick and thin  
We are heirs to those before us

## Appendix 2: Musician Credits

### "What Daddy Said"

- Bruce Johnston – Guitar

### "Runnin"

- Andrew Lockhart – Bass
- Bruce Johnston – Guitar

### "Qual è il quello"

- Tyler Sanders – Piano
- C.J. Slatton – Saxophone

### "Heirs to Those Before Us"

- Andrew Lockhart -- Bass
- Mary Chung – Piano
- C.J. Slatton – Saxophone

# What Daddy Said

Folk Indie

*Solo Guitar*

A E

3 D F D A

*Freely*

6 A E

Dad - dy — told — me don't count sins be-cause Peo - ple let those heart - aches in — and they

8 D F#m D

wind up cold and the wind up a - lone Oh you know — that peo - ple ne - ver change

10 A E F#m

— So ma - ny peo - ple keep - in' — score — They all for get what life is for So

13 D F#m D Bm A

don't for - get — and don't re - gret but I ne - ver lis - to what Dad - dy said —

*Rhythmic*

♩ = 75

15 A E

Dad - dy — told — me be the — just to — Those who don't know how to — trust Be

17 D F#m D

more than kind but don't lose your mind cause you know — they can steal your ve - ry soul

## What Daddy Said

19 A E F#m

Peo-ple hurt the ones they love—— you see it when push comes to shove they'll

22 D F#m D Bm

leave you cold and they'll leave you a-lone And I should' a list-ened to what Dad-dy said——

24 A E

Dad-dy—— told—— me Learn to—— cope so you love the lost but don't lose hope Be

26 D F#m D

kind and warm But don't cause harm cause you know—— you might be their on-ly light

28 A E F#m

—— Some times I won-der what it's—— for—— Why the pain grows more and more Then I

31 D F#m D Bm A

make a friend who needs a hand and I—— think a-bout what Dad-dy said——

33 D F#m D Bm A

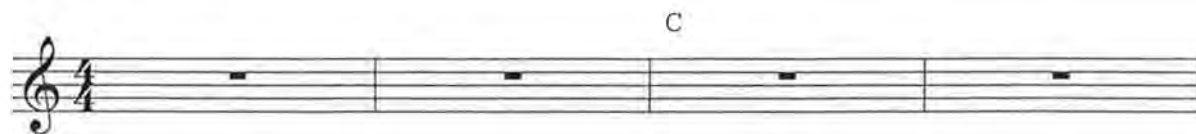
don't for-get—— and don't re-gret but I ne-ver lis-to what Dad-dy said——



## Runnin'

Folk pop

♩=140



## Verse 1

5 C G Am G C

I've been sit-ting still for far \_\_\_ too long Lis-ten-ing to too ma-ny sad \_\_\_ love songs

9 C F G C G F C

Haunt-ed by the ques-tions I can't \_\_\_ con-trol I got-ta find some-where I'm free \_\_\_ to let go So

13 G

get me out of here

## Verse 2

17 C G Am G C

need a lit-tle dis-tance a lit - tle space I've got-ta get a - way from this place

21 C F G C G F C

I can hear it call-ing from far \_\_\_ a way It's some - thing I know I \_\_\_ can't \_\_\_ es-cape just

25 G

get me out of here

Chorus

29 C Am C

Run-ning run-ning run-ning a - way see you on the o - ther side —

33 C Am G C

Run-ning run-ning run-ning a - way break - ing out to sea from the tied —

37 C Em Am F C

I'll be leav-ing all that I know But I'll Take — you with me in my heart So

41 C G F C G C

let's keep run-ning run-ning a - way and we'll make — a — brand new start I

Verse 3

45 C G Am G C

need a lit tle fresh and I — need new I still wan-na be here — with you So

49 C F G C G

if you want to come a - long We'll write our ve - ry own

## Bridge

52 F C G D.S. al Coda

love song So let's get out of here

57 Bridge G F7 C

start Come with me Oh come with me To

62 G F C

find our place And to see what we see

66 C Am C

70 C Am G C

## Chorus

74 C Am C

Run-ning run-ning run-ning a - way see you on the o - ther side

78 C Am G C

Run-ning run-ning run-ning a - way break - ing out to sea from the tied

## Runnin'

82 C Em Am F C

I'll be leav-ing all that I know But I'll Take — you with me in my heart So

86 C G F C G C

let's keep run-ning run-ning a - way and we'll make — a — brand new start

# Qual e il Quello

Tempo di waltz  
(♩. = c. 60)

*Dm (solo piano)* *Gm*

One

*Dm* *Gm*

5 day he — de - ci - ded — that he'd move to Rome One day he — de - ci - ded that

*E♭*

8 that'd be his home He breathed in — the his - tory and the cig - ar - ette smoke he said

*A* *Dm*

11 this is my home till the day — that I choke Qual e il Quel - lo — su -

*A* *Gm* *Dm*

14 o - no And is it — what my spi - rit needs?

*Gm* *(♩=♩)* *Gm* *F* *C* *A* *Dm*

17 Ques - to la mu - si - ca — la ci ta Oh the mu - sic — that this ci - ty — bleeds The

*Dm* *Gm*

21 gods of — the ri - ver — gave some - thing to feel though he ne - ver was sure if those

*E♭*

24 feel - ings — were real The gods of — the sum - way gave way to roam free At the

27 A Dm

price of \_\_\_\_\_ soul he said "That's what I need" Qual e il Quel - lo \_\_\_\_\_ su -

30 A Gm Dm

o - no And is it \_\_\_\_\_ what my spi - rit needs?

33 Gm (♩=♩) Gm F C A Dm

Ques - to la mu - si - ca la ci ta Oh the mu - sic \_\_\_\_\_ that this ci - ty \_\_\_\_\_ bleeds The

37 Dm Gm

peo - ple en - thrall ed him \_\_\_\_\_ with mu - sic and wine The told him they'd teach him to

41 Eb

see the di - vine They read him \_\_\_\_\_ his for - tune and he gave them his name the

43 A Dm

Pip - er that led him would't leave him the same Qual e il Quel - lo \_\_\_\_\_ su -

46 A Gm Dm

o - no And is it \_\_\_\_\_ what my spi - rit needs?

49 Gm (♩=♩) Gm F C A Dm

Ques - to la mu - si - ca la ci ta Oh the mu - sic \_\_\_\_\_ that this ci - ty \_\_\_\_\_ bleeds

53

# Heirs to those before

Hannah Saunders

*(Solo piano)*

5 *F sus2* *B<sup>b</sup> sus2* *D m* *C*

9 *F sus2* *B<sup>b</sup> sus2* *C*

11 *D m* *C*

13 *F sus2* *B<sup>b</sup> sus2* *C*

15 *D m* *C*

17 *A m* *B<sup>b</sup> sus2*

19 *C*

I've been think-ing of the times when we were young and full of life and  
ne-ver closed our eyes  
I could waste my time and ask those ques-tions that I did-n't know the  
an-swers to and no one else would tell You  
know that from the day we're born un-till the day we die we're the  
sum of all the peo-ple in our lives heirs to those be-

21 F<sup>sus2</sup> B<sup>bsus2</sup> D<sub>m</sub> C

fore us

25 A<sub>m</sub> B<sup>bsus2</sup> C

1

29 F<sup>sus2</sup> B<sup>bsus2</sup>

ne - ver ask those ques - tions now I guess I gave up up long a - go and

31 D<sub>m</sub> C

hoped the an - swers came

33 F<sup>sus2</sup> B<sup>bsus2</sup>

what's the point of wan - der ing when won - der on - ly cea - ces when we

35 D<sub>m</sub> C

find ours - selves be - hind these si - lent walls Re -

37 A<sub>m</sub> B<sup>bsus2</sup>

mem - ber - ing those mem - o - ries that shaped the girl I am And I

39 B<sup>b</sup> C

won - er if my dreams were all a scam Are we just heirs to those be -

41 F<sup>sus2</sup> B<sup>bsus2</sup> D<sub>m</sub> C

fore us