

Aminah Hughes – Full Biography

“Trying to pin down what this singer can do with her voice is hard because she can do some amazing things. She can belt out a roof-raising blues tune just as readily as she can deliver a folk tune sweet enough to make you cry.”

~ Nadia Mitsopoulos, ABC Radio Perth

When Aminah Hughes steps on stage she does more than fill the room with her honeyed voice. She draws her audience into nostalgia, calling us to remember the beauty and rebelliousness of an analogue world. “Inspiring” and “strong” are words that are often passed around at her performances as she embodies the empowerment we are all aching to feel. “An intelligent and vocal woman of extraordinary musical talent - a powerful musical force” (*Robert James, GANGgajang/Yothu Yindi*), Aminah is unafraid to touch the rawness, giving voice to pain, laying it bare, and finding the light in its grace. As Irish journalist Kate Winter describes it:

“There was no distance at all between musicians and audience, with Aminah’s warm charisma drawing us all into a fantastical storyland of songs and poetry. This lady can SING. But she also tells wonderfully vivid tales with every lyric, every word. Tales of love and rebellion, campfires and warriors, the earth and the moon, injustice and freedom...I was transfixed, and the energy in the room was truly uplifting. I don’t think I’ve ever been to a gig before which rejuvenated my spirits quite so much. I felt hope. I felt immense pleasure and warmth in the core of me. And I felt an air of romance and possibility that hasn’t been awoken in me in a long time.”

Though she has since been proclaimed “a strong, soulful singer” (*All About Jazz*) and “celestial” (*Shane Howard*), when Aminah first picked up a guitar and stumbled onto the stage, encouraged by a teacher from her university poetry class, she had no intention of becoming a singer. She had trained in classical flute, performing in the Sydney Opera House at the age of sixteen, and spent seven years appearing on Perth’s RTR.FM, working her way up to become a programme presenter and a DJ spinning breakbeat vinyl. But through writing she learnt how to connect with her deepest emotions and, as she puts it, “write them out” of her in a way that she found powerfully healing - and she was told that sharing her self-exploration could be healing for others too.

“The archetype of a strong woman, as reflected in an Avalon goddess, becomes her mantle and creed, almost as if she is searching for her best self. And we, as audience, renew our search in turn.” - AVALON Magazine (USA)

Aminah went on to perform around Australia, sharing stages with Jimmy Little, GANGgajang and the Sydney Youth Orchestra, supporting Canada’s The Wailin Jennys and touring with Robert James. She was published on two national compilation albums of Australian spoken word artists, and featured on Triple J Radio’s *Artery* programme, before making her way to Ireland, one of the lands of her ancestors and a source of musical and mythical inspiration.

Over several years in Ireland, Aminah collaborated with celebrated Irish traditional and blues legend, Seamie O’Dowd, performing in Australia, Ireland and the UK, and touring with Californian songwriter Thom Moore (Mary Black). She continued to enchant audiences with her honesty and her voice, even inspiring folk legend Christy Moore, who sang some of her lyrics during a performance at The Button Factory in Dublin. She made her debut television appearance singing on Irish TV, appeared on RTÉ Radio 1 and BBC Radio Ulster, and has sung at the Tipperary International Peace Convention, and with the Sligo Baroque Orchestra and the Sligo Sinfonietta Orchestra. She has shared stages with a number of Irish artists

including Declan O'Rourke, Maria Doyle Kennedy, KILA and Máirtín O'Connor Band. Following a guest appearance with Tommy Emmanuel at the Waterfront Hall in Belfast, she appeared alongside O'Dowd and Emmanuel on the albums *Going Places* and *Wood and Iron*.

Having appeared on ten albums in Australia and Europe, including albums by Australia's Shane Howard, Ireland's Máirtín O'Connor Band, and European folk-fusion outfit No Crows, Aminah produced her debut studio album, *Blue Wooden Boat*, recording in Ireland, USA, Australia and Germany. The album features a host of internationally renowned musicians, including special guest Tommy Emmanuel, Waterboys fiddler Steve Wickham and Nashville gospel singers The McCrary Sisters. Mixed in Nashville by Tim Carter and mastered in Memphis by Brad Blackwood, both GRAMMY® Award winners, the album was released in November 2018. Album track "Tell Me It's Over" placed as a finalist in the International Songwriting Competition, hailed as "*the* songwriting competition to take note of" by the New York Times, and the album is already receiving airplay in Australia, Ireland, UK and USA.

"Nothing short of spectacular...a song cycle that will have enduring appeal" - Around the Sound

"A hint of Eva Cassidy's vocal versatility and interpretive powers...(Aminah's) own songs of nature and self-examination enchant..." - The Weekend Australian

"A wonderful ability to invoke realms of magic and beauty." - Scenestr

"The stunning new talent that has got music journos excited." - BMW's Marquee Magazine

As a vocalist Aminah has lent her voice to various productions including Australia's *Who Do You Think You Are?* (singing in Scots Gaelic) and the highly anticipated game, *Battlestar Galactica: Deadlock* (singing in Classical Sanskrit), based on the popular NBCUniversal Television Series.

Aminah's writing manifests in many forms. A prolific songwriter and published poet, she presented a paper at Oxford University in relation to a novel she is writing, and in 2018 was the winner of the ScreenCraft Short Screenplay Contest (LA). She has worked in film, television and theatre as an Assistant Director and published projects in Australia and Ireland as a photographer. Her photographs appear on the sleeve of four albums in Ireland and the UK, and in 2015 she combined her passions of music and photography to shoot the Musicians of Sligo Calendar, featuring Sligo based musicians from across a multitude of genres. She also dabbles in painting and printmaking and created the artwork for her album cover - but ask her what she wants to be when she grows up and she'll tell you, "It's all storytelling."

After such a winding journey, how does Aminah see her debut solo album? First and foremost a poet, she sees it as "an offering - a songbird cupped in the hands, ready to fly."

Or perhaps, a boat, ready to launch.

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Winner: ScreenCraft Short Screenplay Contest 2018

Finalist: International Songwriting Competition 2016

Finalist: Recording Festival International Song Competition 2015

Semi-finalist: International Vocalist Competition 2015

2nd Place: Social/Political section, Unisong International Songwriting Contest 2005