

Wendy Colonna grew up in Lake Charles and looks back fondly on those formative years. From the time she was in elementary school, her life revolved around music. At Bishop Noland Episcopal Day School, she sang in the choir and took piano lessons. Around 8th grade, she started playing guitar. In high school, she sang in the Barbe Choir and Show Choir. She played folk music with friends and discovered she liked to write poetry and songs. She attended Louisiana Scholars' College in Natchitoches, where she further developed her musical talent. Her first record deal came during college while she lived in Holland through a study abroad program. In 2000, a year after she graduated, Wendy moved to Austin for the vibrant music scene -- where it's cool to be quirky.

first person

with **Wendy Colonna** *by Angie Kay Dilmore*

Singer, Songwriter, and Soon-To-Be Mom

"I always felt a little too weird for Lake Charles," she says. She has successfully been growing her business as a musician since then. She's recorded seven albums. In 2013, she wrote and recorded a sweet little ditty for a Coca Cola television ad. The following year, she wrote and recorded "My Southwest Louisiana Home," a promotional video for the Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau, which won four Addy awards, including Best of Show. Last year, Wendy was selected to receive a \$17,000 grant from Black Fret, a non-profit charity that supports the Austin music scene. But 2016 was significant for more than winning a grant. Wendy married her long-time friend Ryan Doty, became a step-mom, and discovered she will soon have a baby of her own! I sat down with Wendy recently, over tea and cinnamon scones, where she talked about pourquoi pas, the positive power of music, and her thoughts on pending parenthood.

Tell me about your relationship with music.

I've been trying to break up with music for a long time. I've always loved it. It's always called to me. I witnessed what it has done for me, in terms of healing really dark places. It comforted me in times when I didn't have anywhere else to turn. And I see what music does for other people. It's like medicine. The vibrational experience of a choir, the way a bunch of people who may not get along under any other circumstances, get together and create something so sonically and spiritually and deeply physically resonant that it transcends everything. That is power! It is one of the only things that unites us, as a species, as a people who see things differently. There are few things that speak to our humanity and level of compassion and empathy more than music. So I feel a great responsibility in that. In all my travels, because I'm an ambassador for music, people greet me with open arms. What I do touches people, no matter what their race, religion, creed, gender, age – it's universally touching. I'm committed to the service of music. So, even though we've been trying to break up for a long time, and several times it has tried to kill me, we're on good terms!

Besides a new husband and baby, what are you currently passionate about?

My new record, "No Moment But Now," will be released in April. Everyone's new record is their favorite record. But my new one is really cool. It's more contemporary than my previous work. A lot of my older work has a rootsy throwback vibe to it. I wanted this one to be on level with what other artists are doing. It has a lot of soul to it, like all my music – it has blues scales and roots-based stuff. It doesn't meander so far away that it doesn't sound like me. But I like to think it is edgier, with more mature issues that I never had the confidence to sing about. Songs about not fitting in, losing a loved one, or having to give up love when you find it. It's deeper and darker.

How would you describe your music, in terms of style or genre?

I don't like labels. I don't fit into any label. I've made some records that are folksy. I made records with an R&B flavor. I've done some that are more swampy – definitely paying homage to Louisiana. I'm a songwriter! I don't try to limit myself by genre. I have a love and appreciation for lots of different styles of music.

You're expecting a baby early June. What are your thoughts on pending parenthood?

I'm psyched! I've been playing music professionally for 20 years, have traveled all over the world, and loved it. I've lived so fully all these years, and now I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to become a mother. I feel good about the transition. I've learned so much about slowing down, what's really important, and how to be a lot more flexible with my type-A time-management patterns.

The music industry can be a crazy lifestyle. How do you stay grounded?

I surround myself with a community of sane, honest people. I do yoga. And I live by some basic guidelines, namely not being attached to outcome, doing my absolute best, and trusting my gut.

