



Mollie O'Brien - *Music and Fine Arts*

Her name is well known in her hometown and by music fans around the world: Grammy Award winner and singer Mollie O'Brien is a West Virginia celebrity. Hailed as a folk, Americana, bluegrass, and R&B singer, she currently makes her home in Denver, Colorado. Her latest release, "Daughters," is a collaboration with her husband, Rich Moore, and their two daughters, Brigid and Lucy Moore.

Making her 18th appearance on West Virginia Public Broadcasting's Mountain Stage in December 2013, O'Brien was described by host Larry Groce as one of the most talented artists to appear on the show's stage — ever. "Of the nearly 2,000 guests who have appeared on the show, O'Brien is perhaps the best singer we've ever had," he said. She also was a regular on the nationally syndicated radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," from 2001 through 2005.

The fourth of five children of attorney Frank and Amy O'Brien, she was born in 1952 and grew up in Wheeling. Mollie graduated from Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy and studied at West Virginia University and Bethany College. Many local residents recall her performances at church, coffeehouses, concerts, and other Wheeling venues as a teenager with her younger brother Tim, also a Hall of Fame member. Together they won a trophy at the Oglebay Institute Folk Festival in 1969.

She moved to New York City in 1972 with the dream of making it big, and four years later she returned to Wheeling before finally settling in Colorado in 1980, where she met her husband and married in 1983. She continued to record and perform while raising her two daughters.

In 1987, she released her debut solo LP, "I Never Move Too Soon," and later "Everynight In The Week," in 1990. In 1988 she and her brother Tim recorded their debut duet album "Take Me Back," which was dubbed a masterpiece. Mollie and Tim then began performing together again as an Americana duo, eventually releasing two more albums.

Mollie received a Grammy Award for Best Bluegrass Album in 1997 for her contribution to "True Life Blues: The Songs Of Bill Monroe." Her 1998 solo album "Big Red Sun," showcased classic Americana takes on songs by artists such as Memphis Minnie, Randy Newman, and Chuck Berry. Rolling Stone wrote she "steers clear of corn in stories about gambling men, love, loss and sexual politics in the rustic South. There's a heartfelt intelligence in this roots-without-whine music and it's unselfconsciously sophisticated." Her 2000 LP "Things I Gave Away" was in a similar vein to her previous Americana releases.

In 2006 she and her husband Rich began performing as a duo. They released a live CD "900 Baseline" in June 2007 and in 2010 their first studio album, "Saints and Sinners." 2012 saw the release of "Reincarnation" (a collaboration with her own family, brother Tim and his sons), followed by "Love Runner" in 2013 and "Daughters" in 2016.

She's performed at major music festivals and venues in the United States, Europe, and South America. She's also taken part in the Celtic Connections festival in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2010 and 2011 and toured with the first Transatlantic Sessions UK tour in 2010.

A true artist, O'Brien has primarily focused her efforts on the fading art of interpretation, and the end result is a singer at the very top of her game who is not afraid to take risks both vocally and in the material she chooses. In consideration of her decades of performance and excellence in the field of American music, and in recognition for her national and international fame that she's brought to her hometown, Mollie O'Brien is a perfect addition to the Wheeling Hall of Fame in the category of Music and Fine Arts.