



#### ARTISTS & AUTHORS

## Danielle Gasparro: An Artist's Path

By Brian Pompa

**D**anielle Gasparro was called to the arts as a child and passionately pursued many disciplines across her youth. She took dance lessons, wrote poems, sang in chorus, performed in plays and musicals, and played the French horn. She took these talents to Florida State University (FSU), where she majored in dance. During her second year, Danielle took a jazz vocal class and "realized dancing was not the life path for me."

She changed her major to English, but her ongoing vocal study was so powerful that she "left the halls of academia for the heat of New York City bandstands." Danielle started singing jazz standards, working with world-class musicians to hone her voice and refine her musical sensibilities. "What emerged from that period," she notes, "was a deep artistic calling, a fiery pull that merged my love of language and music: writing songs." She continued to build her repertoire until she felt ready to focus on what would end up being a long-term career as a performing songwriter.

In 2011, 20 years after leaving, Danielle returned to FSU to complete her B.A. in English/Creative Writing. In 2021, she earned her MFA in Poetry from New England College, producing a manuscript with her thesis mentor, Chen Chen, an award-winning Chinese-American poet and author.

# East Fishkill

Living

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## MUSIC AND POETRY

When asked which art form stands out as her truest calling, Danielle insists “poetry is my jam.” Among her many poems, she has two favorites: “Sawdust,” which she wrote after her father’s death, and “The Steps,” which reflects on her late mother’s battle with alcoholism. Both combine grief and conflict while paying tribute to her parents.

But her music is what has paid off, in the literal sense. “I made money,” she acknowledges of her two decades of mic checks. “But I don’t think of having earned income through my musical ventures in the traditional sense as a career. I still view it as my artist path.”

One of Danielle’s songs, “Thank You for Breaking My Heart,” combines elements of jazz with slow grooves and the raw tones of her emotional voice. “Whenever I performed it live, Danielle notes, “both men and women would comment on how much they loved it—but mostly men.” This pattern surprised and touched Danielle, as it reflected the universal healing power of a breakup song, defying the cultural narrative that its target audience is primarily feminine listeners.



## ART IS EVERYWHERE

Danielle is also a self-proclaimed “shutterbug” who believes that “art is everywhere.” Still, her creative passions are not confined to the making of art, as she also loves to teach. Having enjoyed great success with a poetry workshop tour of the Hudson Valley in the spring of 2022, which included the East Fishkill Community Library, Danielle is researching grants to turn her program into a national initiative, partnering with libraries across the country to help adults of all ages and experience levels interpret and engage with poetry.

Currently, Danielle balances her work as a writer and freelance teaching artist, splitting time between Hopewell Junction and Brooklyn, where she teaches recurring classes as a member of the Brooklyn Poets faculty. Her plans include composing a memoir that fuses poetry, non-fiction and photography. Learn more at [daniellegasparro.com](http://daniellegasparro.com). ♦