

Donna Tucker:

Right as Rain

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~photography by Darren Decker

Just like the title of her new CD, Donna Tucker is "Right as Rain." For this international star, music has always been a huge part of her life.



"When I was growing up my family would get together in the music room and sing while Mom did the dishes," she says. At age three, they sat her on the piano and asked her to sing. She leaned over and informed the accompanist, "I'll do Jesus Loves Me and I think it's in C."

Donna is truly a musician's musician. Not only is she proficient with classical piano and jazz vocals, she's an accomplished lyricist, oboist and clarinet player. At age 13 she began playing the pipe organ at the Methodist church to raise money during the summer and on through high school. "I'd been playing the piano since I was four, so I basically taught myself to play the organ," she says.

After college, Donna decided she needed a steady job, so she became a flight attendant for Frontier Airlines in Dallas, Texas. Her first flight after training had 50 passengers and she was the only attendant. Lightning struck the plane, shearing off the top of the tail. "It was a tough job," she says. After two years of flying, she decided it was time to return to Kansas. Going out with friends the night before her scheduled departure she met Bob Tucker. She called her parents and told them she'd be staying one more day.

It turned out to be a 20-year lay over resulting in marriage, a new singing career, and two sons. "The boys thought it was cool that their mom went to work in evening gowns," Donna says. But not all of her performances were glamorous in the traditional sense. When she finished as opening act for Donny & Marie at the Fairmont Hotel, she came face-to-face with an enormous bull at the service entrance. It was one of four and there were six men trying to maneuver it around what turned out to be a bull semen auction.

"As long as the phone rings, I'll keep performing," she says.

"But you need to leave before someone asks you to." When Donna left Texas, she said, "I'm a Kansan, and it's time to come home."

Her sons are now grown, with careers and families of their own. "Both boys were gifted in music and mathematics," she says, "but Jordan is the only one that performs." Chris is in banking and has two children, ages five and three. "I used to wear Valentino and now my granddaughter uses it for dress-up." She feels truly blessed, the greatest gift being her two boys and her grandchildren. "My mom inspired me," Donna says. "She showed me that children always come first."

This vivacious artist now works as a substitute teacher and plays at Terradyne's Palomino Grill regularly to keep her "edge." Since 1999, Donna has performed at the Westin Tokyo penthouse club, Compass Rose, for three months out of each year. She is scheduled to perform in Wichita on December 8th at the Art Museum with the Air Capital Big Band and December 14th at the Orpheum Theater with the Orpheum Jazz Orchestra, "Jazzin' Jingle All The Way." Tickets are available through Select-A-Seat. [•](#)

~B.D. THARP

