

# LUNA ZEGERS

40, SINGER, COMPOSER, LYRICIST  
THE NETHERLANDS

**I grew up in a little village in the south of Holland, surrounded by forests.** I was always climbing trees and playing in the leaves. I am very grateful to have had that kind of childhood because when I was 19, I moved to Amsterdam for university, and have lived in cities ever since.

**First I studied political science.** I thought it could give me the tools to do something special and make the world a better place, but I didn't finish. My mother was ill at the time, and later died, and suddenly I desperately needed more of a personal relation with what I was studying and working towards.

**I can't remember a time when I didn't play music and sing.** In the houses of all my family members, there was a piano. For every birthday, first we would eat cake like normal families do, but at some point we would gather around the piano, playing and singing. It was so much fun, and I didn't realise until I grew up that not every family had such a rich musical environment.

**I heard classical and jazz music throughout my childhood.** My dad, a geography teacher, directed a jazz choir for fun, and both my parents sang in a classical choir. Whilst studying political science, I started to take jazz singing lessons. After some time, my teacher asked me if I had ever thought of auditioning for the Conservatorium van Amsterdam. I auditioned and was accepted. Luckily, I didn't realise how competitive it was or else I might have been more nervous.

**At the conservatory, there was a guy teaching Indian rhythm.** It wasn't singing so much as learning the complexities of the rhythm and how to clap them out. The rhythm is also what I later found interesting in flamenco, so it's all connected.

**By 2006, I was burnt out from all my years of studying and exhausted after the death of my mom, so I took a break.** India seemed like the perfect place to escape to. I was originally going to travel and see what I could learn about music along the way, but the main purpose of my three-month trip quickly switched back to studying music full-time.

**My teacher in Bangalore was very strict.** Most Indian musicians I got to know were like this. The whole mentality behind Indian music is that you have to study like crazy and be able to sing all the rhythms before even touching an instrument. So my teacher said, 'You can come and take lessons on the condition that you come six days a week, three hours a day and study every day'.

**A lot of musicians would gather at open-air bars in Bangalore and play music together.** There was a guy who played Spanish guitar, and one night he put on a flamenco record. My ears immediately perked up. I thought, 'What's that? Where does that sound come from?' When I found out it was European music, I was shocked. But I was also hooked.

**At that moment, flamenco music expressed things that I was feeling.** It has this really raw expression. In my jazz studies, at one point, I felt like something was missing. Most jazz lyrics are about lost love, but I was looking for a way to sing about death, mourning or suffering. With flamenco, it was all there. The happiness of *alegrías*, the festive *bulerías*, the *siguiriyas*, the oldest and deepest form of flamenco, which is very heavy. I could sing about the joys of life, but, on the other hand, no one would question sad lyrics.

**I spent three months at the Fundación Cristina Heeren in Sevilla.** I started by learning how to clap the rhythms, and when I was back at my apartment alone, I would play music over the speakers—a lot of Camarón



de la Isla—read the lyrics, and cry and cry. I felt a real connection to the music. So, after Seville and a spell back in Amsterdam, I found the ESMUC (Escola Superior de Música de Catalunya), which offered both jazz and flamenco singing. I was like, 'Yes!' It was perfect.

**It was 2008 when I first came to study at ESMUC in Barcelona as part of the Erasmus exchange programme.** I did my jazz subjects, but all my extra time and energy was focused on flamenco. I went out with other students to flamenco concerts, danced until six in the morning, and on the last day of term I met a guitar player, Jordi. Because of him I decided to spend the rest of the summer here. I fell in love, and it proved to be the start of a romance that is still going strong.

**I returned to Barcelona in 2010, to audition for the conservatory of ESMUC.** The year I auditioned, they accepted two singing students—me and a Spanish girl. I was the first foreigner to ever be accepted into the programme. I think it was a nice experiment for them. I don't think about it much anymore, but it was a big deal to be the first non-Spanish person to graduate from the programme. Foreigners that get into flamenco usually dance.

**In June of this year, I finished my studies at ESMUC with a repertoire of all my own songs, lyrics and arrangements, which I am now recording as a CD.** I drew inspiration from my life, talking about difficult moments, but all the wonderful things as well. In that sense it felt complete. It's funny, the last couple of months before my graduation concert, I would be doing yoga—Bikram yoga helps me calm all the monkeys swinging around in my head—and after almost every class, an idea would come to me. I would run out, ask the receptionist for pen and paper and scribble it down.

**Getting to this point has been a journey on many levels—literal, personal, musical and spiritual.** In the end, I learned that everyone has two choices in life, no matter what you're going through. You can react in a positive way or a negative way. I have chosen to grow from hardships in my life and after a loss, be grateful for what I still have. **M**

SCOOP

By Ben Rowdon

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