

EMILY MERRELL BIO

Emily Merrell's "thesaurus pop" anchors somewhere between art pop and cinematic jazz fusion (Kate Bush meets Janelle Monae), weaving playful and evocative lyrics through colorful harmonies and energetic grooves. Inspired by her fascination with our human tendency to pose, posture, and conceal, Emily's most recent work explores themes of disguise and disclosure: "Masks can be calculated or unconscious; liberating or constricting; subversive, strategic, coquettish, coercive, and everything is layered."

Currently based near Salt Lake City, Utah, Emily performs with her original band, and is also the lead vocalist and producer/booking agent for the International Musicians League affiliate, Diamond Empire Band with bookings all around the Intermountain West. Emily owns and operates EM Vocal Studio in Lehi, UT, and takes great pride in building creative confidence and developing marketable skills with artists of all ages. Additionally, Emily finds a labor of love in her original podcast, "Artifice," wherein she interviews professional artists about the origins and development of their creativity, the logistics of life as an "artpreneur," and their strategies for blending vulnerability with veneer as they cultivate creative resilience. Emily loves collaborating with other artists, and is particularly honored to have been featured on pianist and composer Dan Tate's gorgeous debut album, "Maybe Love" in 2019.

Having completed a Master of Music in Jazz Performance from the world-renown University of North Texas, Emily is a well-rounded and confident vocalist, composer, arranger, and educator with extensive skills in theory, improvisation, research, pedagogy, and vocal physiology. From 2015-2019, Emily was honored to direct Brigham Young University's premier vocal jazz ensemble, BYU Syncopation (formerly BYU Jazz Voices), featuring 10-12 vocalists and four-piece rhythm section. During her time at BYU, Emily directed and produced BYU Syncopation's debut album, "Bright Lights" (2018), and worked as adjunct faculty in the commercial music department, teaching private voice and composition lessons. Currently, Emily serves as State Conference Manager, and Jazz Repertoire Chair for the Utah chapter of the American Choral Directors Association.

As a teacher, Emily specializes in beginning to advanced vocal technique and styling (Jazz, Pop, Broadway, Indie, Rock), beginning to intermediate piano (Traditional or Chord-based), beginning to advanced songwriting and composition (Jazz, Pop, Folk), beginning to advanced arranging (small group, vocal ensemble, larger instrumental jazz ensemble), and all ages/skill levels in sight-singing, music theory, improvisation/ad lib, ear training, systematic repertoire development, concepts in character development for the musical actor, and more.

Emily's debut album "Embark" (2012) is a beautifully crafted collection of all original music delivered with sincerity and a polished yet strikingly natural tone—captivating in its elegant modernity and tender familiarity, alike. In the spring of 2013, Emily received a prestigious international Downbeat award in the Original Composition category for her piece, "Ondine's Dance." Emily was also selected as a winner of the International Jazz Education Network Composition Showcase in 2012 and had the immense pleasure of performing her original composition "Secret," at the JEN conference in Louisville, Kentucky, accompanied by several members of the outstanding Alan Baylock Jazz Orchestra. In 2010, Emily received a Downbeat Student Music Award in Jazz Arranging for her arrangement of the Lionel Bart original "Where Is Love?" Emily is honored to have been a featured soloist in the award-winning UNT Jazz Singers I for three years—performing live under the direction of vocal jazz legend, Paris Rutherford as special guests at numerous festivals and venues including the Midwest Conference in Chicago (Dec. 2008), and participating in the recording of a full album entitled "The Cost of Living" (May 2009). Emily's Latin Vocal Sextet, Payawarú, was the recipient of an Outstanding Performance recognition in the 2013 Downbeat Awards, and won first place in the American Sabor Youth Contest (Latino Battle of the Bands) in 2012. During her time at UNT, Emily served as the director of UNT Jazz Singers ensembles II and IV, and taught private voice lessons, and a sight-singing class for which she developed her own original curriculum.

Emily lives with her husband Andrew and their greyhound Bear in the home of their dreams, where she loves to challenge her creativity with cooking, interior design, and water coloring. Emily is known for her extraordinary time management skills, candid professionalism, and immovable desire to empower everyone she meets.