**New Pop Folk Album Recorded at Local Blueberry Farm**

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**Jonathan Townley**, age 20, an **East Lansing High School graduate** and **Kalamazoo College student**, debuts his first pop folk album, ***It was a privilege to know you when you were shorter***., on **Friday, October 23**. His songwriting has been compared to Bob Dylan, James Taylor, and is influenced by Rainbow Kitten Surprise. **His music speaks to loss, love, and healing in the COVID era.**

“I have been really anxious about coronavirus and mortality. **It seems so uncontrollable and so unpredictable as to what is going to happen to any of us. I still am trying to come to terms with living now as it is my last days**,” Townley said. He missed a lot of high school because of a compromised immune system. So the threat of COVID is personal.

In the spring of 2020, with the COVID pandemic raging around him, Townley, witnessed death. Jonathan Townley’s grandfather, George Fleming, fought cancer for six years before being referred to hospice care. The immediate family moved into his grandfather’s home on a South Haven blueberry farm to care for him during the last week of his life. Fleming was a United Methodist pastor. Some of **his grandfather’s last words to Townley were “your hymns,” which meant “please sing your original songs.”**

From this experience, a river of new songs poured from Townley. He wrote music as a way to process grief and live fully in an era without traditional funeral rituals.  All of the songs on the album were recorded on his grandfather’s blueberry farm.

**Townley’s story and lyrics are rich in content and melody for a nation grieving, sitting with death, and not sure how to heal.**

When Townley attended East Lansing High School, **the trial of Larry Nassar took place**. As the nation turned its attention to Ingham County, several of his high school classmates testified against Nassar in the sexual assault trial**.**

“I didn’t know my high school classmates had been experiencing and suffering horrendous things. I thought we were living parallel lives because we were growing up in the same community. But when I went to college, I realized there were all these women surrounding me who had experienced sexual trauma. But it’s not exclusive to women. So many people feel traumatized by experiences in their youth.” He wrote the song *Ruined Canoe*, to explore how to heal from brokenness. “This song is about finding healing after intense trauma,” he said.

*There’s so many ways they tell us we are different/There’s so many ways that we are just the same/ . . .We feel our suffering/We feel our glee/There is such a thing as buffering /There’s no such thing as purity/On the lake/Water’s still/You reach out/I reach out/It will be me/It will be you/We will be free/In my ruined canoe.*

When a relative died of COVID this summer and family could not physically be with her, he wrote *Sunset Song*: *“When I die, I hope that I can see the sunset one more time . . . But most of all when I die, I know that you’ll be by my side/Even if you’re somehow far away.”*

And in the song *Seven Days,* Townley wrestles with how we feel when we know our time is limited, “I*’m running out of time/I wasted all my time* . . . *Don’t forget you didn’t waste/Every touch and every taste/You’re not too late it doesn’t end today.”*

Friday, October 23, 2020 at 8 pm, there will be an online concert to celebrate the release of *It was a privilege to know you when you were shorter.* The name of his album is a sentence his aunt said to him.Visit [jonathantownleymusic.com](https://jonathantownleymusic.com/), for links to digital streaming, purchase a CD or reserve a ticket for the online album launch concert.

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**Press Kit:**

<https://jonathantownleymusic.com/press-kit>

Dropbox link with **full album**:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vrd5fv64mf8mab9/AABM66NgSSkMlkT1FZKG9o0la?dl=0>