



Awakening to a grey cool Sunday morning with the haunting voice of Betty Soo still echoing in my mind. Last night the 290 Texas series in Johnson City featured Betty Soo and Will Sexton, and a small group of dedicated listeners got to experience her voice, her songs, her presence. I first heard Betty Soo at the Kerrville Folk Festival as a New Folk winner. As I listened to her May 14 at the Walnut Springs Preserve, I found myself breathing with her on each song, as the words and melodies captured my imagination. She told us that playing the songs of other people gave her a chance to share some little heard songs, to introduce new songs to people, and to give her own rendition voice. As I listened to her sing “If I Were A Bluebird,” by Butch Hancock, I heard new nuances in her creative rendition.



Her sensitive and thoughtful website gives listeners a chance to sample the music and hear the story of her life. I read the bio after I listened to her perform last night. Interesting how the “facts” of her life supported the way I was left feeling after just hearing her songs. To me, that speaks to a performer who weaves her own personal story into each song. I did hear the sound of Judy Collins in her voice, and I asked her about it. “Funny,” she responded. “Someone else told me that just a few weeks ago.

A clip from her webpage describes what I was hearing and feeling last night:

“As an insomniac and someone who understands depression from her own

life-long struggle, maybe she was exactly where she and her friends needed her to be: in the thick of it, reminded of how fragile the balancing act can be for people like herself whose mental health isn’t solid as a rock. And perhaps she did exactly what she needed to do: she wrote dozens of songs – capturing those seemingly endless moments of grief, loneliness, and loss, and those fleeting moments of joy and love – and she recorded twelve of those songs on her new album *When We’re Gone*.”

She often performs with longtime friend, Will Sexton. His guitar supported, enhanced, and sometime led the performance of the song. Will and his brother Charlie have added to the culture of Texas guitarists. I last heard Charlie, who tours with Bob Dylan, at a concert in Granada, Spain, last July on my retreat to Spain. Sitting in the room with Will last night created in me the urge to see these brothers perform together. And they do sometime.



The new album, “when we’re gone,” tells a story just in the titles: “listen,” “100 different way of being alone,” “last night,” “the things she left town with,” “hold tight,” “love is real,” “when we’re gone,” “nothing heals a broken heart,” “lullaby.” Hope you give it a listen. And then hold tight. *Ils sont partis*