

# Come On Baby, Light My Fire: INDHE, The Story So Far

Bridget Walsh 17 November 2016



*Photo by Liz Smalls, Brooklyn 2016*

## Summary

*Everybody consumes art and music in some form every single day. Working artists and musicians the world over are hustling to create, often in between low-paying jobs unrelated to their craft and talents, occasionally finding*

*opportunities to share their art with the world, while existing in a social and financial precariat. On the strength of a successful Kickstarter campaign, INDHE is a social enterprise with the global arts community as our number one priority, reaching artists and champions so far in the USA, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, England, Wales, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and Canada, and ready for growth. INDHE's objective is to create a trusted space to unite artists around the globe, simply for the sake of helping bring people together in real life, to make more art.*

Everybody consumes art and music in some form every single day. How we express ourselves, and find meaning and connection through the creative expression of others, is intrinsic to the human experience. Technology to support arts and creativity continues to evolve, but there is still a seemingly un-crossable chasm for the working artists in today's pop-culture age, where so much of the proverbial career pie remains in the hands of a very small segment of the mainstream industry.

Artists and musicians the world over are hustling to create, often in between low-paying jobs unrelated to their craft and talents, occasionally finding opportunities to share their art with the world, while existing in a social and financial precariat. Either that or their passions and talents have been relegated to "hobby" status, alongside a "real job" or a "grown-up career." And as technology continues to render more and more jobs literally redundant, while

society screams for a more authentic and joyful shared experience, and the world's problems yearn for more creative and progressive solutions, the "surplus" of potential human energy continues to increase. It's very rare that being an "artist" is considered a respectable or responsible career choice, but the time has come for INDHE to help flip the script. For artists, by artists, INDHE is where we come to find and be found.

When you're 11 years old and struggling to figure out how your scraggly hair and freckles fit into the world, performing the Pocahontas classic "Colors of the Wind" in front of your school assembly on a weekly basis isn't exactly a recipe for popularity. It's that cruel and crucial time of human development where you work out that being really good at something that isn't considered "cool" is generally not how you make friends. At all. Not even a little bit.

Being a "singer when I grow up" is all I've ever dreamed to be. Through a delicate combination of questionable sleeping patterns, living out of a suitcase, regular assurance to my grandmother that music is a REAL career, and the reality of 'ye olde marriage and mortgage' being far from my likely trajectory, I seem to have somehow reached a point where this dream is almost a reality.

Mostly.

Well, I mean, pretty often.

Amongst teaching yoga, managing bands, hosting radio shows, making coffee (a lot of coffee) and mentoring kids, I've manifested it somehow, and am now bringing everything together to build INDHE as well. This is the story (well, the CliffsNotes) of how I got here.



*Photo by Liz Smalls, Brooklyn 2015*

Pocahontas was enough to get me shoulder-tapped to apply for a singing scholarship at a local public high school. I didn't get said scholarship, but I did get accepted into a choir that would go on to win gold in the national competitions every year I was a member (any doubt that on personality tests I align with the peacock over the owl

or dove?), that would take me to perform in Hawaii and Vancouver all before my 16th birthday, and that would form the vocal foundation to shape me as a musician for the rest of my life (shout-outs to Elise Bradley). I had also been playing piano from the age of 5 (shout-outs to Adrienne Jennings), but those lessons were dropped once I got whiff of being a “classically trained” musician of any sort. I wanted to make music because it screamed out of my soul, not because I had any interest whatsoever of practicing scales on a daily basis (sorry, Adrienne), or finding my mezzo-soprano sea-legs, thank you kindly.

Let me interject here and say, some of the finest musicians and humans I know have had extensive formal and classical training, and continue to strive for absolute, unequivocal brilliance. They blow my damn mind on a regular basis. But, as demonstrated by my introduction on my first day of high school—“My name is Bridget and I like attention”—performing has always my real superpower, capturing people’s interest is what fuels my fire, and music is simply the vehicle that has chosen me to help make these things happen. Namaste.

Despite being offered a nomination for Head Girl in my final year of high school, I chose instead to leave a year early and try my hand at university at the age of 16 (read: over-achiever). I took papers in music, film, media studies, women’s studies, anthropology and children’s literature, before being asked to audition for the university’s Popular Music program. Yes. It’s true. I have a degree in Pop

Music. That's a thing, and I have it. Shout-outs to Stephen Small.

Straight out of university I landed a dream job in commercial radio, where one of my first mentors, the inimitable James Daniels, took a punt on this charmingly ambitious / annoying / enthusiastic / relentless music-nerd. I began my "career" journey at age 20, gathering extensive knowledge and experience within the media in an incredible broadcasting business. We held 51% of the national market share, and catered to all key listener demographics with our eight, strong radio brands, two of which I was a significant part of: FLAVA ("Your home for hip-hop and RnB") and ZM ("Today's hit music").

I loved my job. I loved my colleagues. I loved my brands. I loved my team. I loved my industry. But at year three, as the Promotions Manager for one of the biggest markets in the country at age 22, I realized that perhaps I had found myself climbing the "wrong" ladder. I hadn't played a show in months, perhaps years, and while my roles involved working with amazing brands and key media stakeholders on a local and national level, they no longer reeeeeeally involved any actual music. I was in a position that 100, nay 1000, young and hungry go-getters would have drawn blood for and, despite really, REALLY loving it, I knew it was time to step away.

I began post-graduate study to become a teacher, and moved to the UK the next year. I started singing in bands

again. I started teaching piano in London. I started working in schools with kids who had behavioral and learning challenges, and saying yes to any musical opportunities that came my way. My partner, at the time, is one of the most incredible musicians I know and he kicked my ass onto the stage and into the studio in the very best way. We had zero financial security, and were 110% on the grind in one of the world's most expensive cities, but we were making music and we were happy. I trained as a yoga teacher, I ran events at a local craft brewery, I worked the counter at a progressive and sustainable grocery store (shout-outs to Catherine Conway) and he made some of the finest coffee in England. And we were musicians. Obviously.

In 2013 I was contacted by a school friend who was based in the UK and doing really well as a musician herself. The other frontwoman in her band had decided to leave and the band were at a crossroads. The Electric Swing Circus, an electro-swing power-house from Birmingham, were on the up in a big way. Tour dates and full-time jobs were getting harder to manage, but their hearts and souls were truly invested, and finding a second front-woman on short notice was integral in their ability to keep moving forward. Within 3 months, I had relocated to Birmingham and reprogrammed my hustle in their direction. It was the single most important opportunity for me professionally as a performer, and it was then that I really, truly realized that this is 100% what I am supposed to be doing.



*Miss Bridget Walsh on stage with the Electric Swing Circus, Cornwall, 2015*

We toured hard. Everyone quit their full time jobs within 6 months of me moving, and we were a self-managed machine that was growing in leaps and bounds. I loved that band like family; I still do. But in 2015, for a series of complicated personal reasons that I couldn't pretend weren't happening, it was time for us to part ways.

I was at the top of my game, professionally. I had played some of the best shows of my life, and was, somehow, earning a very modest, but nonetheless stable, salary as a real-life working, performing singer. I was integral in the booking, management and promotion of our team of seven, and I was hitting my stride in ALL the ways. But at

this crucial turning point in my life, my personal circumstances seemed to mean that, apparently, I was going to have to step away from this role and, what? Get an office job? Re-train? Retreat back to New Zealand with my tail between my legs?

I am incredibly fortunate and eternally grateful that, in the years leading up to this point, my life and career(s) had connected me with many, MANY clever, creative humans around the world. At one of my last shows with the Electric Swing Circus, on tour in New Zealand, I was literally shoulder-tapped, again by another of the most talented musicians, composers and producers I know, Sxip Shirey. He had seen me on stage and told me that I needed to get myself to New York. It was a timely intervention and, rather than fading away into a tunnel of self-pity and failed dreams, I picked myself up and decided to find a way to make some magic happen.

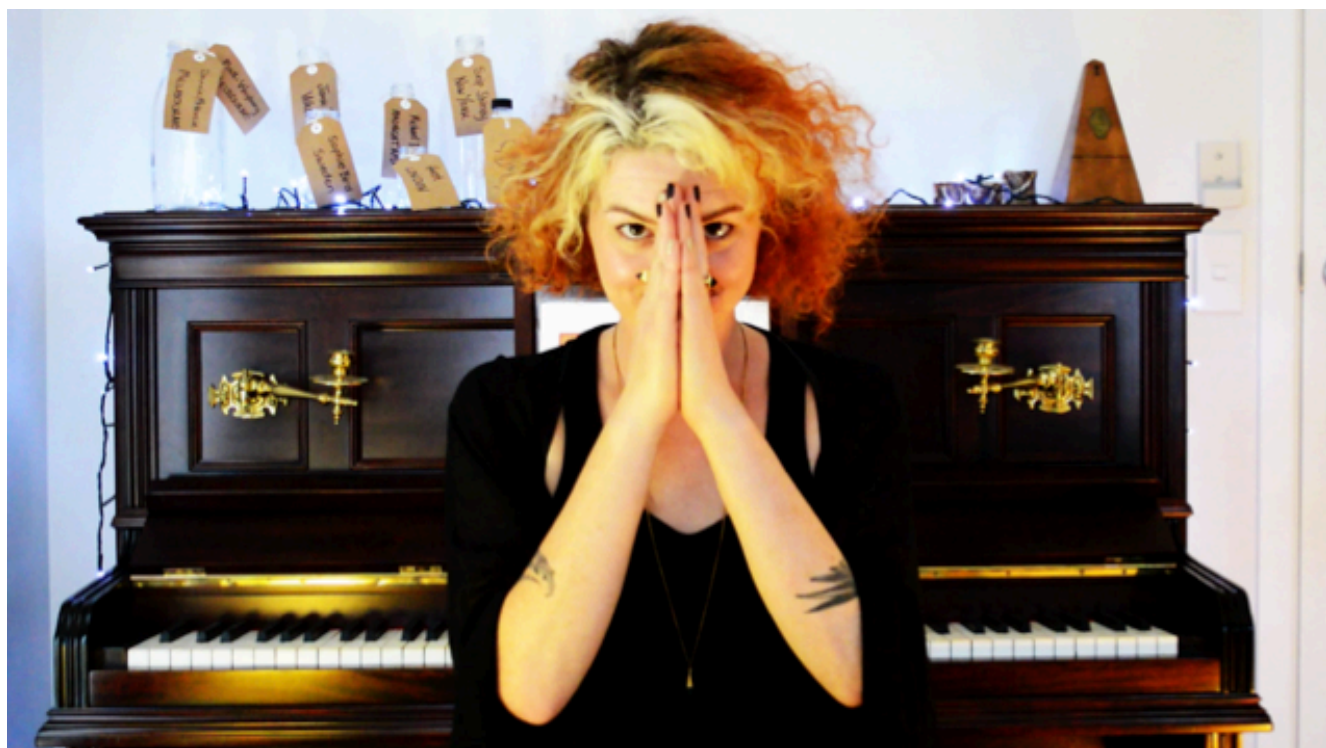
It was at this time that I fully realized that no real resource exists that I could go to, to seek out new artists to connect and create with. No collective starting point for creative-problem-solving, or structure for plotting our creative road-maps. No big network that joins together all the smaller networks of artistic hustlers around the world, that we can tap into when we need each other. We rely on word-of-mouth, social media, little paper flyers, open-mics, pay-to-display, online noticeboards, blogs and vlogs and agencies that we have to pay money to in order to validate our work and ourselves. Or, of course, the

monstrosity of reality television, or the holy grail of just plain "being discovered." But no real, trusted space exists to unite artists simply for the sake of helping bring people together in real life, to make more art.

So, I made the decision to not only find these artists and make music with them, but to find a way to connect these communities myself. I had no idea HOW I was going to do it, but I decided, quite simply, that it was going to happen, and that I was going to make it so. After one of THE MOST ALMIGHTY team efforts from all facets of my life, we successfully funded the Kickstarter, "Miss Bridget Walsh & All The Things" in April 2015. (Shout-outs to my incredible family, my patient and supportive friends, and my beautiful little community of fans and supporters the world over. You guys are literally the reason I haul my hustling little booty out of bed in the morning.)

Within a month of the Kickstarter ending, INDHE had found its name, and thus its voice and personality. INDHE is a Sanskrit word and Sanskrit is the language of yoga, which is all about union and connection. As my sister and I Googled and thesaurus-ed words in many languages, trying to seek out what this creature wanted to be called, we found "indhe", while sitting on the spare bed of my mum's house in New Zealand. It is a conjugation of the verb to ignite, set on fire, kindle or light up. As a metaphor for the magic that happens when energies meet and creativities spark, as well as a word that happens to sound like a pop-culture term for independent art, film and

music, INDHE was completely, undeniably and wholly the name we had been waiting for.



*Still from the Kickstarter campaign video for "Miss Bridget Walsh & All The Things", 2015*

The Kickstarter whirlwind ended in May 2015, 4 high-pressure weeks after it began. I had had no idea what I was getting myself into, but somehow we came out the other side with a success under our belts. After a 1-week trip back to Birmingham to get my "affairs in order," I was in New York. I only knew my new mentor, Sxip, and he was very busy and touring a lot. But he connected me with friends who I could stay with for the summer while I got this bad boy off the ground in the city that never sleeps. If INDHE could make it there, it could make it anywhere, as it were. The plan was fluid but firm: connect with people, follow the cookie crumbs and allow INDHE to take shape

while learning as much as I can in a city full of artists and opportunity. I made friends, found mentors and started working on new music. It was a hugely formative time for me and for INDHE and placed us both in incredible stead for the year that has followed.

So far I have taken the INDHE mission to artists and champions in the USA, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, England, Wales, Italy, Sweden and Canada. I now have an incredible right-hand man, James Wyatt, who is the Robin to my Batman, the Eagle to my Peacock. We have a team of bad-ass lawyers, an accountant, tech advisors and developers who are working either pro-bono or for a reduced rate because they believe in what we are doing. We have a marketing page online to capture people who are ready to team up, and we are building a humble but loyal following across social media, and in pre-launch sign-ups. We are ready to move into the next phase of INDHE's journey, and are now actively seeking the partners with whom to do it.



*Miss Bridget Walsh and the Jenova Collective, Victorious Festival, Portsmouth, UK, 2016. Photo by Thisandmatt*

Musically, I am currently touring with another epic band, the Jenova Collective, from the UK. We have played across the UK, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, with more dates in the coming months (if anyone wants to book us for some US dates, let me know!). I have an EP coming out over the winter with some incredible producers from Wales, and a number of collaborations in the works to support the INDHE release. I have a live-work studio in an art, design and community-space in Birmingham where most of my mail goes to, but I am moving around every couple of months, in response to show dates, art opportunities and the requirements of INDHE's development, mostly between the London, Birmingham, New York, Melbourne and Auckland. It's

fundamental to both my own sanity AND the core of INDHE, that I continue to be a working artist – the Chief Executive Artist, in fact. I am a musician (and a Green, vegan nerd who wants to save the world) and that's what makes INDHE so special - we are a community made for artists, BY artists.

Our business model is disrupting the model of business models. INDHE is a social enterprise with the global arts community as our number one priority. INDHE will always be free for artists to join and access; it is imperative that artists are able to find each other and work together to meet objectives, regardless of their financial position at any given time. There are enough obstacles out there for the precise alchemy of creative magic to take place, and we want to make sure that money isn't one of them.

The first phase is to bring everyone together, and the next tier of activity is almost infinite. We have holistic monetizing options for the medium to long-term, and they must always be of genuine interest and benefit to artists, first and foremost. We have plans to re-invest in education, community outreach, mental health, mentoring, performance opportunities, enrichment programs and more. Art and music transcend all sorts of boundaries and barriers for so many people the world over, and INDHE is going to use these creative outputs to help improve and empower the human experience on a global scale, for artists and consumers alike.

Where INDHE goes from here is responsive to the evolving needs of our primary stakeholders, the global artist community, as well as the resources and support we continue to gather from patrons, from supporters, from champions and from the crowd. It is imperative that INDHE aligns with partners and backers who believe in bringing artists together for the sake of art, for the sake of the wider community, and for the sake of enriching the world, as opposed to investors whose primary objective is a substantial financial return in the short-term. That is not what INDHE is for. INDHE is here to provide a substantial creative, cultural, social, artistic and human return, for the artists of the world and our much treasured consumers of art and music, which really encapsulates everyone. We all consume art and music in some form, every moment of the day. Creativity is the color within the lines. It's the color outside of the lines. It's the decision that the lines no longer meet the requirements of the task at hand, which then leads to new and exciting lines in different and unexpected directions.



*Snapshots of some of the artists involved in INDHE's first collaborative project, "The Little Messenger", 2015*

As the world continues to face new challenges and address the negative repercussions of our questionable decision-making, as technology renders more and more jobs redundant, and as out-of-date education and social systems run their course completely and make way for a broader world-view and culture of learning and sharing to evolve, we are simply going to need more artists. More empowered and confident people in tune with their superpowers, their elements, their talents and skillsets. More fulfilled people, motivated to inspire others to reach for their potential. More creative solutions to the world's

problems, and more nourished, enriched and balanced humans to push us through the challenges that await us now, and in the future. I truly believe that INDHE is going to be instrumental in this next phase of creative and human revolution, and it is incredibly humbling to have the honor of being the person ushering this resource into existence.

Mediocrity is boring, demoralizing and destructive, and when we find our elements, our inherent talents, our superpowers, we are ALL capable of so much magic. INDHE is here to help artists find the sparks they need to set the world alight. So, come on baby, light my fire. Join INDHE. Tell your friends about INDHE. Post about it on Facebook. Ask me for an INDHE sticker for your laptop. And if your superpower is to be a generous and combustible visionary, and you want to help us bring INDHE to life, then please reach out and let us know how you can add some fuel to the INDHE fire. The revolution will not be televised, but it WILL be created, and who better to help make it happen than a united and inspired global creative community. For artists, by artists. INDHE is where we come to find and be found.



*Miss Bridget Walsh, on stage with the Electric Swing Circus at CubaDupa Festival, Wellington, NZ, 2015. Photo by Amandala Photography*

**Author bio ([@missbdwalsh](https://www.instagram.com/missbdwalsh))**

**Former front-woman of the Electric Swing Circus (UK) and founder of INDHE, Miss Bridget Walsh is a touring musician, vegan nerd and global ambassador for positive change. Originally from New Zealand, Bridget has been based out of Europe since 2009, and when she's not on tour, she divides her time between Birmingham (UK), New York City and Auckland, New Zealand. She works with musicians and producers**

**around the world, performing and recording on a global scale, whilst also leading on the development and evolution of INDHE. She is currently touring as front-woman of the Jenova Collective (UK), working on new pop-soul-electronic project, Cocoa Pilot (UK), and proud to be endorsed by Audix Microphones USA.**

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