Singer/songwriter Jeanne Mackey Offers Drop the Knife: A Memoir-in-Song

On Saturday, April 21, 7:30 p.m., singer/songwriter Jeanne Mackey and friends will perform "Drop the Knife: A Memoir-in-Song" at the College Theatre, Crane Liberal Arts Building, Washtenaw Community College (WCC) 4800 E. Huron River Drive, Ann Arbor. Tickets are $15 ($10 students/seniors), available at the door and at BrownPaperTickets.com.

In "Drop the Knife," Jeanne Mackey offers a disarmingly honest and wryly funny musical chronicle of her search for personal and ancestral healing, from the high desert of the Eastern Sierras to the verdant Irish countryside. Drawing on a lifetime of activism and spiritual seeking, she explores the meaning of magic, homeland, curses, and death. "I turned 60 in 2010," says Mackey. "That's a big threshold, and I needed the medicine of these stories and songs to usher me through! Illusions fall away at this stage of life, and we discover what's left. It's a great time to lay down our grudges, forgive ourselves and others--to drop the knife."

Mackey accompanies her story-songs on guitar and accordion, joined by seasoned musicians Laszlo Slomovits (mandolin, guitar, panpipes, flute, vocals), Lori Fithian (drums, vocals), Eric Fithian (bass, vocals), with guest vocalists Mary Wilson and WCC faculty members Dale Petty and Layla Ananda.

The show’s title comes from 14th century Persian mystic Hafiz, who was asked, “What is the sign of someone who knows God?” According to legend, he replied, “Dear, they have dropped the knife. They have dropped the cruel knife most so often use upon their tender self and others.” (Daniel Ladinsky, The Subject Tonight is Love)

Jeanne Mackey rocked the 1970s East Coast topical music circuit as a young musician advocating feminist values and social justice. Throughout the 1980s, she performed with Lifeline, a four-woman rock band that played at conferences, demonstrations, women's music festivals, and labor union events in the Washington, D.C. area and nationwide. An instructional designer at the University of Michigan and former psychotherapist, she has directed the multi-ethnic choral group Sacred Song and produced various benefits, including Howard Zinn's "Voices of People's History of the United States."

"Drop the Knife" premiered in Ann Arbor in November 2010, sponsored by University of Michigan Women's Studies. Mackey and her band have taken the show to Oxford, Ohio (her hometown) and Takoma Park, Maryland. Audience members have responded enthusiastically:

- "I cried, laughed, sang, reflected and connected -- thank you for sharing your deep life journey with us all!"
- "Never have I seen such a creative mix of storytelling and gorgeous music, all mixed up in one."
- "The quality of your music is superb, and your use of your ensemble and their expertise was quite wonderful. And you're a born storyteller."
- "What a range of searchings and emotions and profound pieces of life-work, addressed so courageously and generously."