

## becoming jane



After years of struggling with self-doubt, isolation and cancer, **Jane Claudio** returns to Lynchburg to open for **Tori Kelly**

By Casey Gillis  
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“What a wild story this is,” musician and poet Jane Claudio writes in the opening line of her poem, “White Stag.”

“That cancer that came to destroy me/But instead has gifted me with something/Irreplaceable, Irreversible/I should have been shattered/So why do I feel myself becoming invincible?”

Claudio, who performed here under her maiden name, Jane Marczewski, while a student at Liberty University from 2009 to 2013, was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2017.

Her diagnosis, and eventual recovery, became part of a larger journey she began in Lynchburg, where she’ll return Saturday to open for Tori Kelly at the Vines Center, performing under her new stage name, Nightbirde.

“I think that through all the experiences Jane has gone through, she’s emerged with an authentic confidence, intentionality and freedom,” said friend Regan Miller. “Not only in her writing, but in her living.”

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Claudio grew up in Ohio in what she describes as a “logical family.”

“Head-forward, not heart-forward,” she said in an interview last week from Nashville, where she’s lived since 2015. “I had always played music and enjoyed music but it never felt like a realistic path. I never felt the freedom or the permission to dream that big.”

That changed when she started her freshman year at Liberty in 2009.

“I felt like I was constantly challenged with the question, if you could do anything in the world and you knew it wouldn’t fail, what would be that one thing? ... And for me, the answer to that question was always to play music.”

After auditioning and failing to make any of Liberty’s traveling music teams — “I was almost good enough, and I would almost make the cut every time,” she says — Claudio began writing her own music.

In 2011, she recorded three original songs and uploaded them online, then played her first show, at the loft apartment above The White Hart Café on Main Street.

By 2013, she’d released her debut EP and had become what she describes, in a post on her blog, as a “small-town celebrity,” playing gigs around town and even landing on the cover of local magazine Lynchburg Living.

Erin Diaz Cleveland, LU’s assistant director of student activities, remembers that time well.

SEE JANE | D3

### TRAVEL VIRGINIA

## DC offers cherry blossoms and more

By Christina Barron  
The Washington Post

Spring in Washington, D.C., long has been connected to two words: cherry blossoms.

The trees, about 3,800 of which ring the Tidal Basin and East Potomac Park in downtown Washington, were a gift from the Japanese government in 1912.

The pink-and-white flowers aren’t in full bloom, but festivities kicked off over the weekend and continue through April 14. We have cherry-picked (ha!) a half-dozen free events we think you might enjoy.

If you want to see the trees in all their glory, the National Park Service estimates peak bloom will be April 3-6. But like predicting the weather well in advance, the blossom forecast is tricky.

For updates and details on other related events, visit [nationalcherryblossomfestival.org](http://nationalcherryblossomfestival.org).

### Petalpalooza

» **What:** Music on several stages, treats for pets, art-work and fireworks.

» **Where:** The Wharf, 1100 Maine Avenue, Southwest Washington.

» **When:** April 6, noon to 9:30 p.m.

### Student art show

» **What:** Cherry blossom artwork from D.C. students.

» **Where:** Pepco Edison Place Gallery, 702 8th St., Northwest Washington.

» **When:** Until April 12. Tuesday to Friday, noon to 4 p.m.; April 6, noon to 4 p.m.; April 7, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; April 8, noon to 4 p.m.

### Stone Lantern Lighting

» **What:** The lantern, a gift from Japan in 1954, dates from 1651. It’s lighted once a year in an event that includes traditional Japanese music.

» **Where:** Tidal Basin, Independence Avenue and 17th Street, Southwest Washington.

» **When:** April 7, 3 to 4:30 p.m.

### Cherry Blossom Festival Parade

» **What:** Floats, giant balloons, singers, dancers and marching bands will parade through the heart of Washington.

» **Where:** Constitution Avenue, between 7th and 17th streets, Northwest Washington.

» **When:** April 13, 10 a.m. to noon.

### Sakura Sunday

» **What:** Japanese-inspired music, dance and martial arts demonstrations along with Japanese food for sale.

» **Where:** National Harbor, 165 Waterfront St., National Harbor, Maryland.

» **When:** April 14, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

» **Details:** Visit [national-harbor.com/event/sakura-sunday](http://national-harbor.com/event/sakura-sunday).