

NEWS RELEASE



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For immediate release

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Note: Interviews with filmmaker Julia Golonka are available on request. In addition, production photos and other graphic assets can be found [HERE](#).

Documentary *Don't Put Her Down* makes broadcast debut on MPT July 15

Film explores the work and influence of groundbreaking, Baltimore-based bluegrass artist Hazel Dickens

OWINGS MILLS, MD – Maryland Public Television (MPT) will premiere the new documentary *Don't Put Her Down* on MPT-HD and the [MPT livestream](#) at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 15. The 30-minute film will also be available to view on-demand beginning Sunday, July 16 on the [PBS App](#) and [MPT video player](#).

Don't Put Her Down explores the life and legacy of pioneering singer-songwriter Hazel Dickens, as well as her influence on a new generation of bluegrass musicians. A 30-second preview of the film is available at bit.ly/3JAnWGG.

Dickens and her music partner Alice Gerard rose to acclaim in the 1950s as the first women to front a bluegrass band. Dickens' renown broadened as a solo artist with her musical contributions to the Academy Award-winning 1976 documentary *Harlan County, USA*.

Many of Dickens' songs reflect her upbringing in a rural West Virginia coal mining town and her migration to Baltimore as a young woman. Her ethereal voice serves as a poignant counterpoint to her songs' stories of the challenges faced by factory workers and miners, especially the horrors of black lung – a disease caused by regular inhalation of coal dust. It also stands in contrast to the male voices that dominated bluegrass music.



Taking its name from Dickens' song "Don't Put Her Down, You Helped Put Her There," the film credits Dickens with a legacy of trailblazing. *Don't Put Her Down* explores her fight for workers' rights in the factories of Baltimore, the voice she gave to the overlooked struggles of coal miners, and the model of success she created for women in a male-dominated music genre.

Baltimore-based filmmaker [Julia Golonka](#) tells Dickens' story through reflections of longtime collaborators and impressions of up-and-coming musicians, interspersed with clips of interviews with Dickens. Dickens' songs create the soundtrack of the film, through her own recordings and performances by a new generation of bluegrass performers.

Throughout the film, scenes from Dickens' life play out on a crankie, a hand-scrolled panorama featuring cut paper and shadow puppetry, created by award-winning Baltimore artist [Katherine Fahey](#). "Since my film is a story about the past that looks towards the future, I was drawn to using this archaic form of storytelling and presenting it in a digital way," says Golonka.

Julia Golonka's film work has been featured online by music magazines Rolling Stone, Relix, and Bluegrass Today. *Don't Put Her Down* received production support from the [Saul Zaentz Innovation Fund](#) at Johns Hopkins University and from the [Maryland State Arts Council](#).

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About Maryland Public Television

Maryland Public Television (MPT) is a statewide, public-supported TV network and Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) affiliate, offering entertaining, informative, educational, and inspiring content delivered by traditional broadcasting and streaming on TVs, computers, and mobile devices. A state agency, it operates under the auspices of the Maryland Public Broadcasting Commission. MPT creates and distributes local, regional, and national content and is a frequent winner of regional Emmy® Awards. MPT's commitment to educators, parents, caregivers, and learners of all ages is delivered through instructional events and [Thinkport.org](#). MPT's year-round community engagement activities connect viewers with resources on a wide range of topics. For more information visit [mpt.org](#).