

# The Music of Doris Day: Edinburgh singer to entertain at The Big Burns Supper

It's before 9am on a cold January morning and **Sarah Laing** has just arrived at **Dance Base** in the Grassmarket to rehearse her one-woman show. Off come the thick coat and winter boots, on go the wrap-around floral skirt and strappy shoes.

It may be early by some people's standards but before long Sarah is taking us straight back to 1945 with ***Sentimental Journey***, the homecoming anthem for the troops at the end of the war. Sarah, who will be taking **The Music of Doris Day** to **The Big Burns Supper 2015** in **Dumfries** this week, believes in practice, practice, practice.

Every evening and every weekend is devoted to rehearsal, whether at home or in the studio – she learns her lyrics on the bus. It's a work ethic that clearly pays off; even at this time of day she never misses a beat as her beautiful, flowing voice fills the room with song, and her engaging style takes us effortlessly from romance to the upbeat tempo of ***The Deadwood Stage***, and back to ***Que Sera Sera***. It's hard to believe that this accomplished performer only graduated a year ago.

✘ It was Sarah's Granny who first introduced her to the musicals; the two of them lapped up old favourites like ***Summer Holiday*** and ***Calamity Jane***, and before long Sarah was hooked. At **Boroughmuir High School** she was further inspired by her 'wonderful' teacher **Mr Clayson**, taking Advanced Higher Music while sitting LAMDA exams in her own time, and entering the school's **Top of the Pops** shows with her interpretations of songs by **Avril Lavigne** and **Stevie Nicks**. Nicks, of Fleetwood

Mac fame, remains one of her heroines.

Sarah's Mum may not share her enthusiasm for the fifties but she still loves to sing; childhood car journeys were enlivened with renditions of the *Angel of Music* (Phantom of the Opera), and for a while mother and daughter were members of **Cockenzie Drama Group** and the **Artistic Concert Experience**, a 150-member choir with which Sarah sang solos at the Clyde Auditorium.



After an HND in Musical Theatre at **Motherwell College** (now New College Lanarkshire), Sarah decided to take a break, and spent three years as a trainee manager in the retail sector. In the end though, the pull of performance was too great and with the much-appreciated support of her parents she returned to education, this time a degree at the **University of West Scotland**; since completing her studies last year, Sarah has come back to live in **Morningside** – and her life has never been busier.

She's now working part-time in a city centre store whilst developing several shows, Doris Day being just one of them; after her stint at The Big Burns Supper she'll be moving on to the songs of **Burt Bacharach**. She's performed at **The Shed** and **Wild Cabaret** in Glasgow, and here in Edinburgh at the **Voodoo Rooms**. Edinburgh, Sarah says, is a fabulous city crying out for more music venues; she is not surprisingly strongly opposed to the plans to turn the Lothian Road Picture House into a Wetherspoons' superpub.

Sarah's work with the elderly and dementia patients is something she finds particularly rewarding; she performs regularly in care homes, sometimes with remarkable results – when she sang *The Black Hills of Dakota*, a resident who hardly ever spoke joined in.

It's a learning experience, says Sarah, who carries out her

own research into how best to engage Alzheimer's sufferers. She also runs her programme past her Granny first, and makes a special effort to include people's personal favourites; **Dolly Parton** goes down surprisingly well. Sarah gets great feedback from these visits; the staff at **Cluny Lodge** call her '**Ms Golden Tonsils**'. Another side of Sarah – one that care homes may not see – is her alter ego, **Miss Molly Peaches**, who recently appeared at **Wild Cabaret's Kitsch Kabaret**. Having studied burlesque at Dance Base, Sarah developed the character as her own version of Dolly. She's a girl who's come a long way from Tennessee.



Sarah's advice to anyone contemplating a career in musical theatre is this: never give up, just keep trying. And practice of course; Sarah rehearses for at least 20 hours a week and takes good care of her voice. In February she'll be back at The Shed with another show, **Singing Divas of the Sixties**, featuring **Dusty Springfield, Cilla Black, Lulu and The Crystals**.

Is she daunted by Springfield's reputation as the White Lady of Soul? No – after **Sheridan Smith's** award-winning television performance, she's far more nervous about Cilla. Smith is one of Sarah's idols – 'I aspire to be her' – although she'd also quite like to end up as an amalgam of Dolly, Doris and Stevie Nicks, two of whom she has seen perform 'And I sadly doubt I'm going to get the chance to see Doris'. She's hoping to bring **The Music of Doris Day** to the **Edinburgh Fringe** this summer; it will go down a storm.

So if you see a girl talking to herself on the No 16 bus, don't move seats – get her autograph. Sarah Laing is going much further than Morningside, and she's going there much faster than the No 16.

**The Big Burns Supper 2015** is on now in venues across Dumfries:

Sarah Laing will perform **The Music of Doris Day** at 12 noon on Thursday 29th, Friday 30th and Saturday 31st January at the **Cairndale Hotel**, English Street: tickets cost £8/£6 and can be booked [online](#) or by calling the Box Office on 01387 271820. Sarah will also be at **The Shed**, Shawlands, Glasgow at 3pm on 14th and 15th February with her show **Singing Divas of the Sixties**, and she can be booked to sing at functions, parties, care homes and corporate events.

See [www.sarahlaingsings.co.uk](http://www.sarahlaingsings.co.uk) for more information.