

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 for more information.