

the Sunday MUSIC



By **ANNA GAULT**

CLASSICAL singer Nicola Cassells' latest project had her digging into the family's history.

The soprano drew inspiration from her grandmother's experiences during WWII when she worked with Scots chart-topper Sandi Thom on song *Somewhere In Time*.

Former X Factor hopeful Nicola, 27, admits the idea might prove strange to some audiences but she loved working with her gran Kathleen Dunsmore.

She says: "A few people have thought it is a bit strange to be mixing my music with a history lesson almost but most get the idea of it."

"I came up with the song first and worked on it with Sandi."

"Then I looked into themes for the video and one of them was long-lost love."

"I tried researching it but then it dawned on me that my own gran lived through WWII and would have an insight."

"I then started bombarding her with a million and one questions and discovered all this information that's so interesting."

Kathleen, 81, was evacuated when she was seven during the Clydebank Blitz in 1941.

'X Factor was a great experience'

Nicola says: "Hearing things like a bomb dropping and destroying the house across the road from her while she ran into an Anderson shelter you just realise how lucky she was, and how lucky I am, she survived – I wouldn't be here otherwise."

"It's not that long ago that it happened and it's important we remember."

Nicola, from Ayr, appeared on the X Factor last year alongside Scots rap twins SHY & DRS – combining acts to form Rhapsody.

While the trio reached bootcamp stage, they failed to impress the judges and were kicked out of the competition.

And Nicola insists she isn't going back for another try to impress judges Simon Cowell and Nicole Scherzinger.

She says: "It was a great experience. I probably wouldn't do it again but I wouldn't take it back either."

"It wasn't planned but I got scouted for it and I thought 'Why not?'"

"The whole thing was just a bit of fun and it was great to get my high five from Simon and fist-

pump from Nicole. It was a learning experience."

The singer, who performed at The Scottish Sun Christmas pop-up shop last year, has been belting out tunes since she was a little girl and her big voice soon got her noticed.

She says: "My gran taught me my first song, *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, when I was five years old but it wasn't

until I was approaching the end of high school that I really started singing and people started taking notice."

"I started getting a few professional gigs and it took off from there."

Nicola knows that choosing to perform classical music isn't a straight road to stardom but she has no regrets.

She adds: "As a 16-year-old I wanted to sing Kelly Clarkson and music like that but my voice just always had a classical tone to it. When I would sing pop songs it would sound like a classical

INSPIRED . . . Nicola with gran Kathleen, right, mentor Sandi, and on X Factor with SHY & DRS



Gran opera for soprano

tells how mentor Sandi, 35 – famous for 2006 No1 *I Wish I Was A Punk Rocker* – keeps her on the right track in the music business.

She says: "I was signed to her label at one point and she is always there if I have any questions."

"She is quite grounded that way and doesn't take things for granted."

"She is happy to give out advice from her mistakes and she does still fight to get over that Punk Rocker thing – but she is grateful at the same time."

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SIOBHAN WILSON

WHERE: Glasgow

FOR FANS OF: Kate Bush, Joni Mitchell, London Grammar

JIM SAYS: Singer-songwriter Siobhan has created something special with her second album *There Are No Saints*.

Born in Arbroath and raised in Elgin, she's now based in Glasgow. She returned to Scotland around five years ago after five years in Paris.

She said: "I took a Eurostar to Paris from London when I was 18 in the hope of experiencing the world and new ways of living."

"There's something very romantic and magical about the city. It was a tough to survive though, because of its size and rent prices. Glasgow is easier to live in if you're a suffering artist."

French culture clearly influenced her music, with two songs on the new record sung in French. She explained: "It feels really relaxed and rolls off the tongue in a different way to other languages."

Her classical upbringing also comes through on *There Are No Saints*. She was a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland. At 16 she won a scholarship to study cello, piano and guitar in Edinburgh. Siobhan said: "I wrote my first song



NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

as a teenager. Playing cello and piano helped give me a grounding in harmony and I was always interested in composing and musical theory."

"My cello and piano teacher were huge inspirations. I like composing loads of different styles of music, but now I'm focused on my singer-songwriter career. That's partly because I signed with Song, By Toad who have motivated me to create."

Matthew Young, founder of the Edinburgh-based label jumped at the chance to release *There Are No Saints*. Her song *Dear God* had previously featured on Song, By Toad's *Insider Festival Split 12in Vol 3* in 2014. It was picked by BBC Radio 6 Music's Lauren Laverne as one of her

Headphones Moments. Matthew said: "Generally, I make sure to listen to things through several times and properly think things over before offering to release a record. On this one, I was about halfway through the first song and I knew we'd want to put it out."

There Are No Saints is a beautiful listen, but with darker undertones. Siobhan explained: "From a place of very deep heartbreak sprang a hundred clichés and ways of repairing a broken heart through writing and singing."

"I was contemplating some bigger questions in life and processing the world around me."

The majority of the album was produced and engineered by Catholic Action's Chris McCrory. Siobhan said: "He has a fantastic mentality towards letting the artist breathe and be natural."

Earlier this month Siobhan won the Green Man Rising competition in Camden. She now opens the main Mountain Stage at August's Green Man festival in Wales. A full UK and Ireland tour for September is set to be announced soon.

MORE: siobhan-wilson.com

● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio Sundays 2-4pm.

amazingradio.com
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Watch video of Siobhan at:
www.thescottishsun.co.uk