

A PAIR of Scots sisters hope to make classical music cool after super-producer Mark Ronson sang their praises.

Sarah and Laura Ayoub have played violin and cello together since they were tots and dream of following in the footsteps of pal Nicola Benedetti.

But the girls, who perform as The Ayoub Sisters, had a change of plan earlier this year after uploading a cover of Ronson's smash hit Uptown Funk on YouTube.

He was so impressed he flew them down to London to record their version at Abbey Road.

Sarah, 25, says "It was the first pop tune we attempted to play because we are trained classical musicians."

"We met him again at Glasgow Airport of all places, and had a chat with him. We shared the new version of the cover on the album, which he liked."

"Hopefully we can work together again soon."

The sisters, from Milngavie, Dunbartonshire, are launching their self-titled debut album on Friday.

'We want to bridge the gap between genres'

Incredibly, most of it was recorded in **ONE** day.

Laura, 21, explains: "In a way, every album is made through each hour spent practising or writing or training as an instrumentalist leading up to this moment, so it was actually 20 years in the making."

"But the time allocated to write and record was only three months, which was a bit ambitious and an incredibly intensive period of time to get ready."

"We recorded the bulk of the album in one day, but it was a bit of a marathon to get everything written down and ready."

Sarah admits that having a friend like violinist Benedetti helps them massively.

The Scots superstar is always on the end of the phone.

Sarah says: "Nicola has become a family friend and it's good to know someone in the same industry for some advice. We are quite different in the repertoire we play and we enjoy doing popular music as well as traditional Scottish and Arabic music."

"The plan now is to get the album out there to as many people as possible after so many years of hard work." The girls'

By COLAN LAMONT

father is facial reconstruction surgeon Professor Ashraf Ayoub and mum Hannan is a lecturer.

The couple moved from Egypt to Glasgow 26 years ago.

And the sisters, who can both speak Arabic, were turned on to classical music after their mum tried it out first.

But Sarah was soon outshining mum and little sister Laura was eager to follow in her footsteps.

Sarah says: "Our mum enrolled in music training when we were young and we were obviously curious. She said I was showing much more potential than her."

"When big sister stars at something, little sister wants to be a copycat, so Laura started and enrolled too."

The pair were given a shot at the big time after winning a Classic FM competition last April to perform at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Their 10-minute performance was broadcast live and nabbed them an audition with record label Decca, who signed them on the spot.

Laura says: "I guess we have always been playing together from the beginning but it only took a serious turn two years ago, through a competition with

Classic FM. "I play violin and Sarah plays cello, so we usually accompany each other in normal auditions. The idea was to apply with two videos or one video as duo."

"But everyone always said we were much stronger when playing together so that was the first active step of taking the Ayoub Sisters out there."

"We won that competition and were signed shortly afterwards."

The girls describe their music as "crossover", with influences from their Egyptian heritage and Scottish upbringing.

Sarah adds: "We want to bridge the gap between the genres and show you don't have to be a lover of classical music. The aim is to appeal to everyone."

Sister sweet symphony



SIIGHTS

WHO: Mia Fitz (vocals/guitar/bass/keys/drums), Toni Etherson (vocals/guitar/percussion)

WHERE: Glasgow/Dublin

FOR FANS OF: Chvrches, Haim, The Chainsmokers
JIM SAYS: Toni Etherson forwarded SIIGHTS' debut track Dance towards the end of last year. I was blown away by their take on electro-pop.

I'd known Toni for a while as a singer-songwriter, so the new direction was a pleasant surprise. She had previously lent her voice to dance tracks, including collaborating on a couple of tunes with renowned DJ and producer Jack Eye Jones on his album Summer Nights.

Glasgow lass Toni is joined in SIIGHTS by Irish multi-instrumentalist and producer Mia Fitz.

She has spent the past couple of years touring the world with Hozier's band.

The duo came together in Los Angeles and split most of their time between Dublin and LA.

Toni said: "Mia had a few days off from the Hozier tour in LA and was using that to write and collaborate. I was out there doing the same thing."

"We were introduced and initially started working together writing tracks for other people. After some amazing feedback on the records we were



NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

making, we decided to start a band." Unleashing the video for Dance online, it was an instant hit.

Toni added: "Dance hit 18.5million views on Facebook. The influx of new fans from that alone was incredible. We really write from the heart and do everything ourselves in the studio, so everything you're hearing is directly from us."

Dance was followed this year by the first two official SIIGHTS singles, Lights Out and Nobody Like U. Mia said: "The response has been crazy."

"One of our tracks became the second-most Shazamed song in Ireland in the first few weeks of its release." Much of the initial buzz has come in Ireland, where they've just completed a radio

tour, performing live sessions at some of the country's key stations.

Thanks to the airplay, Nobody Like U hit the Breaking Irish Music Top 10. They were the only unsigned act in the list and their independence puts them in a strong position going forward, setting them apart from the pop production line.

Toni said: "Our sound stands out. Right now we do everything on our own, from writing and playing all the instruments to the production."

"We're hands-on with all the graphics and visual elements too, and direct our own videos. With every release people will see another side to us."

Mia added: "Our plan is to get our music out there to as many people as possible. We're also really looking forward to touring and getting to show people our live performance. We've been in rehearsals and it's going to be a lot of fun!"

Mia and Toni have just returned to the States to work on a secret project. Toni said: "We're over in LA at the moment shooting something special and we can't wait to share it with everyone."

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

amazingradio.com
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▶ Watch a video of the band playing at: www.thescottishsun.co.uk