

= Wonderland (Faryl Smith album) =

Wonderland is the second studio album by teenage mezzo @-@ soprano Faryl Smith , released by Decca Records on 30 November 2009 . Smith became famous after her participation in Britain 's Got Talent in 2008 , and subsequently , aged 13 , signed with Universal Classics and Jazz , releasing her debut album , Faryl . Released only a few months afterwards , Wonderland contains a mix of classical and non @-@ classical songs , which were chosen by both Smith and her record label . A concept album , it is based on Alice in Wonderland , and features a digitally produced " duet " with Luciano Pavarotti , who died in 2007 , as well as a song set to " Winter " , from Vivaldi 's Four Seasons . As with Faryl , Wonderland was produced by Jon Cohen .

Smith promoted the album with appearances on television and radio . For the most part , critics responded positively to the album , with praise for Smith 's vocals , the song choice and the musical arrangement , but criticism for " the lack of emotional weight " . Further , critics observed that Smith 's voice had improved since her appearance on Britain 's Got Talent . Despite this , Wonderland appeared in the UK Albums Chart for only one week , peaking at 54 , proving less successful than Faryl . Smith later rerecorded " The Prayer " , her cover of which was originally released on Wonderland , with 22 other classical artists , with proceeds going to charity .

= = Background = =

Smith , aged 13 at the time , signed a record @-@ breaking multi @-@ album deal with Universal Classics and Jazz in December 2008 , six months after finishing outside the top three in the Britain 's Got Talent series two final . Her debut album , Faryl , was released in March 2009 . Smith later described the album as " an introduction to me and an introduction for me to recording " , and said that she " wanted to follow up [Faryl] as quickly as possible with another record , something richer and varied " . In July , it was announced that work had begun on her second album , with hopes to release it later in the year . Smith said in an interview that " We 're starting to look at what songs will be on the second album ... I 'm not really choosing the songs myself , I 'm leaving that up to the people at the record label . I 'm really happy that they want me to do another album so soon ? I didn 't think I would be working on one so quickly after the first one was released ... I 'm just excited to get under way with it . "

= = Recording and release = =

Wonderland was revealed as the album 's name in September , and a preliminary release date of 30 November was forwarded . Recording took place at Sarm Studios in Notting Hill , London , and completed in early October . Smith recorded her vocals during her school holidays . Initially , Smith was asked by her label for a track listing , but said that she " didn 't know what songs would be wrong or right for an album " . Instead , she and Decca both created their own lists , and the final track list was compiled from the two . The result included a variety of songs ; Smith said she was pleased with the mix , citing " classical numbers " like " The Prayer " , in contrast to " a more unexpected song " , " Close to You " . The track " O Holy Night " features a " duet " with Luciano Pavarotti , who died in 2007 ; Pavarotti 's vocals were digitally added to Smith 's recording to produce the song , resulting in the pair sounding " as if they 're really there together " . The title track , " Wonderland " , is set to " Winter " , from Vivaldi 's Four Seasons , and the lead track , " Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence (Somewhere Far Away) " is an adaptation of a piece by Ryuichi Sakamoto , originally from Merry Christmas , Mr. Lawrence . Smith 's favourite tracks on the album are " O Holy Night " and " The Prayer " .

The album was produced by Jon Cohen , who also produced Faryl and has previously worked with artists including the Opera Babes and Vanessa @-@ Mae . Cohen said that Smith has " matured as an artist since the first album " and that he had " no doubt that once again , people will be astonished and moved by her performances " . Smith 's father , Tony , said that the bosses at universal were hoping for the album to be more commercially successful than Faryl , but noted that

the market around Christmas time is tough , due to the high volume of releases . Brian Roberts , writing for the Daily Mirror , claimed that Wonderland was " tipped to go head to head " for the number one classical album position with releases from Il Divo and Rhydian Roberts .

Wonderland is a concept album loosely based on Lewis Carroll 's Alice in Wonderland . The album took the title from the book , and was created with the intention of taking listeners on a journey , as well as showcasing Smith 's voice . She said that " that 's something I like to hear in music . Whether I listen to Beyonce [sic] or Vivaldi , music is supposed to transport you away , escape from the everyday . " Smith said that she sometimes felt like Alice chasing White Rabbit , and , for this reason , " Wonderland " was a suitable title track for the album .

= = Promotion = =

Wonderland was released for the Christmas market , and was labelled as a potential Christmas number one . Smith embarked on a promotional tour , beginning at the end of October , with magazine , television and radio appearances . Appearances included Ready Steady Cook , Blue Peter , the BBC News Channel , Sky News Sunrise , The Alan Titchmarsh Show and The Paul O 'Grady Show . Speaking about the album 's promotion , Smith said " [i] t is always a struggle when a second album comes out because you never know how it is going to do but fingers crossed people will enjoy it . I am very proud of it I am excited about going on all the shows too ? especially Ready Steady Cook because I can 't cook and I think it will be fun . "

= = Reception and performance = =

Critics responded positively to the album . Paul Callan , reviewing the album for the Daily Express , described Wonderland as " a joy " ; he compared it to other Christmas albums , saying that " [t] oo many are tired , much @-@ repeated carol selections . " He described Smith 's " control , tone and warmth " as " very moving " . Overall , he gave the album 4 out of 5 . A reviewer writing for The Sun described the album as a " lush collection " of songs , and said that Smith 's " voice is now stronger , richer and even more musical " . Andy Gill , reviewing Wonderland for The Independent , gave a more mixed review . He said that the influence of Alice in Wonderland was often hard to perceive , and said that Cohen and Smith had " sweetened the classical elements " . He praised the arrangements of " Adiemus " , " Barcarolle " , " Merry Christmas , Mr Lawrence " and " Blow the Wind Southerly " , but noted that " on " Close to You " and other tracks , " the lack of emotional weight is telling . " Overall , Gill gave Wonderland 3 out of 5 .

Local paper the Northamptonshire Evening Telegraph reported that Wonderland was selling well ; on Amazon.co.uk 's charts , it appeared at number one on the symphonies chart , 13 on easy listening and 95 overall . A spokesman for the local HMV store was quoted as saying " Sales of the new Faryl album have got off to a storming start ? she is proving hugely popular at HMV We 're actually selling as many copies of Faryl 's new album as we are Susan Boyle right now . " However , the album entered the top 75 of the UK Albums Chart for only one week , peaking at 54 . It appeared on the Arts & Book Review (Independent Print) classical albums chart for two weeks , peaking at number 6 . The album proved less successful than Smith 's debut , and , subsequent to its release , Smith 's contract with Universal ended .

Having originally released her version of " The Prayer " on Wonderland , Smith and 22 other classical musicians from the UK recorded a version of the song for charity in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake . The proceeds of the single , which was released on 14 March 2010 , went to the Disasters Emergency Committee . Smith said " It 's a real honour to be a part of something that is being done for the first time , and I hope that all music lovers get involved and help raise money for the campaign . I really hope that we can make a difference together to help the horrible situation that Haiti is in at the moment . " The group , dubbed " Classical Band Aid " , recorded the track at Metropolis Studios and were backed by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra . Each vocalist in the group performed their own solo lines , and the entire group came together for the finale . " The Prayer " was the first ever classical charity single ; Smith noted that " Pop singers do things like this

a lot but it 's unusual for classical singers to get involved so I 've been really excited . "

= = Credits = =

= = = Music = = =

= = = Administration and production = = =

= = Track listing = =

= = Charts = =