

= Faryl Smith =

Faryl Smith (born 23 July 1995) is a British mezzo @-@ soprano who rose to fame after appearing on the second series of the ITV television talent show Britain 's Got Talent in 2008 . She received praise throughout the competition , and although the favourite to win after the second round , she finished outside the top three in the live final on 31 May . During the competition , she was tutored by singing coach Yvie Burnett and received offers from various record labels . After the show , she , unlike other finalists , did not sign with Simon Cowell 's Syco , although she did appear on fellow finalist Andrew Johnston 's debut album , One Voice .

Smith signed a contract with Universal Classics and Jazz for a £ 2 @.@ 3 million advance in December 2008 , the largest ever granted to a schoolgirl . Her debut album , Faryl , was recorded from December 2008 to January 2009 and released in March 2009 . Faryl became the fastest @-@ selling solo classical album in British chart history , selling 29 @,@ 200 copies in the first week . It debuted at number six and rose to number four the following week , making Smith the third Britain 's Got Talent contestant to have a top ten album . In 2010 , on account of Faryl , Smith was nominated for two Classical BRIT Awards and became the youngest artist ever to receive a double nomination .

Smith 's second album , Wonderland , was released in November 2009 . A concept album based on Alice in Wonderland , the album was well received by critics , but was not successful in the charts . After the release of Wonderland , Smith 's contract with Universal ended . In addition to releasing her albums , she featured on a charity cover of " The Prayer " , released in March 2010 , provided vocals for the 2012 album The Magic of a Thousand Strings by the International Harp Ensemble , and has performed at numerous events , including the 2009 Royal Variety Performance . Smith currently attends the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London , where she is studying music .

= = History = =

= = = Britain 's Got Talent = = =

Before her appearance on television , Smith had performed competitively in the Kettering , Northamptonshire Eisteddfod , the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod , the Pontins Junior Starquest competition and Festival 4 Stars . She auditioned for the second series of the ITV reality show Britain 's Got Talent , giving what Jon O 'Brien , of Allmusic , called a " mature " performance of " Ave Maria " , and was put through to the live shows . Simon Cowell described her audition as " the best audition I 've heard in years " . Before performing live , she and Andrew Johnston were favourites to win . She won her semi @-@ final by the public vote , performing a cover of Sarah McLachlan 's " Angel " . This placed her in the final , and left her as the favourite to win . During her first live show , Cowell described her as " literally one in a million " . She then performed in the live final , where she was described by Cowell as one of the five acts (along with George Sampson , Johnston , Signature and Kate and Gin) who had a chance of winning . She again performed " Ave Maria " , but finished outside the top three . Sampson eventually won the show as a result of the phone @-@ in , with Signature second , and Johnston third . As a result of her final performance of " Ave Maria " , Smith was invited to be a guest singer at a songwriting awards ceremony in London . She then went on to perform in the Britain 's Got Talent Live Tour with other contestants , where she first performed a duet of " Walking in the Air " with Johnston .

While Smith was competing in Britain 's Got Talent , Cowell arranged for her to receive free singing lessons from leading vocal coach Yvie Burnett , who had previously coached 2007 Britains Got Talent winner Paul Potts and 2006 The X Factor winner Leona Lewis . The story was broken by The Sunday Mirror ; writing for the paper , Lara Gould characterised the lessons as " secret " , while writers for The Daily Mail claimed that the lessons were " likely to upset fellow contestants " , and were evidence that Smith was " already being groomed for stardom " . During her participation in the

competition , Smith was offered record deals , but she and her family turned them down . Her father , Tony Smith , said " We have had offers from people interested in Faryl . But when Simon Cowell , the big man , says your daughter is special , you listen . " Cowell described Smith 's potential career during the show , saying " I know she says Katherine [Jenkins] is her idol but she is far better than her . She is by far the most talented youngster I 've ever heard . When she opens her mouth her voice is just incredible . "

= = = Record deal = = =

The day after the Britain 's Got Talent finals , Max Clifford , speaking for Simon Cowell , said that it was " quite possible " that Cowell would be signing some of the finalists , including Smith . Though she did not sign with Syco , Cowell 's record label , she did record a duet of " Walking in the Air " with Johnston , which appeared on his debut album , One Voice , and was tipped as a potential Christmas number @-@ one . Before the release of One Voice , it was revealed that Smith and her father , Tony Smith , were finalising the details of her record deal . In November , it was announced that Smith would be performing on stage in Kettering with Sylvia Berryman , a vocal tutor who had worked with Smith prior to her appearance on Britain 's Got Talent . Smith said that she was " really looking forward to singing locally again " , and it was again reported that Smith hoped to soon sign her own record deal .

In December 2008 the Daily Mail reported that Smith had signed a £ 2 @. @ 3 million , multi @-@ album deal with Universal Music Group that was the " most lucrative recording contract ever handed to a schoolgirl " . Smith said " I 'm honoured to be joining such a fantastic record company , especially since it 's where [Jenkins] started . " Dickon Stainer , speaking on behalf of Universal , said " as soon as we saw Faryl , it became an ambition to sign her . " Universal claimed it intended to market Smith as a pop star . Smith signed the contract at the Royal Albert Hall , following which she performed with Katherine Jenkins . Neil Fisher , writing for The Times , described Smith as " heir apparent " to Jenkins ; the pair had first met when Smith won a competition at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod . By 2009 , Jenkins was acting as a mentor to Smith .

In January 2009 plans were released for Smith to perform with Plácido Domingo , an idea originally suggested by him . In an interview with the Metro , Smith talked about her future plans , insisting that she did not wish to be dubbed as the next Charlotte Church . She later said that " In the papers , it sounded like I was snobby when I said ' I don 't want to be like Charlotte Church ' , but I didn 't mean it like that . " She has also spoken of her desire to appear in films on top of her musical career . She said " Films and movies are something I 'd really like to do . I 've always wanted to act so doing a film would be amazing . "

= = = Faryl = = =

Smith 's first album , Faryl , was recorded at Air Studios , London , in December 2008 , during Smith 's Christmas holiday ; it was completed on 3 January 2009 and features a 60 @-@ piece orchestra . Smith described the song " River of Light " by saying that The Blue Danube " music now has words put to it . I like it because it 's different . Everyone knows the tune and everybody has got high hopes for it . " Smith said that her favourite song on the album was her version of the Welsh hymn , " Calon Lân " . Other songs include Smith 's version of " Amazing Grace " , a cover of John Denver 's " Annie 's Song " , and a version of " The Way Old Friends Do " , rewritten for Smith by Björn Ulvaeus . Smith spoke about the song , saying " It was about divorce ... They didn 't think it was appropriate for me to sing about that , so Björn changed the lyrics so it 's about friendship . " The album was produced by Jon Cohen , who had previously worked with artists including the Operababes and Vanessa Mae .

Promotion began in January , with performances at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel and appearances at the debut of 2009 London revival of Oliver ! . A television advert and music video for " River of Light " were recorded to further publicise the release , and Smith appeared on the cover of April 's Classic FM Magazine . More promotional appearances in the weeks leading up to the release of

Faryl included Loose Women , The Paul O 'Grady Show , BBC Radio 4 , Radio Five Live and BBC Breakfast . She also appeared at the Children 's Champion Awards and met Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street . On the day of the release , there was an album signing in Smith 's hometown of Kettering , at the HMV branch . Smith said " I definitely want to be at home for the launch . I want to be surrounded by my friends and family because obviously , it 's a big deal for me . "

Pete Paphides , writing for The Times , said that the songs were performed " with power and restraint " and that the " arrangements by Jon Cohen suggest some kind of aesthetic endeavour beyond the basic thing for which they exist " . He compared it favourably to three other Mothering Sunday releases : Lionel Richie 's Just Go , Ronan Keating 's Songs for My Mother and Barry Manilow 's The Greatest Songs of the Eighties . He awarded Faryl 3 out of a possible 5 , the highest rating of the four . Retailers in the United Kingdom ordered more than 80 @,@ 000 copies of the album in the week before release , which Simon Cable , writing for the Daily Mail , noted was more copies than U2 's recent No Line on the Horizon . It also topped the Amazon.co.uk presale chart . On the day of the release the album was at the number one spot on the UK Albums Chart , based on presales alone . The album became the fastest @-@ selling classical solo album in British history , selling 20 @,@ 000 copies in the first four days . The previous record holder had been Hayley Westenra 's Pure . The first week resulted in sales of 29 @,@ 200 copies , which is higher than any other debut album of a classical singer . Faryl officially entered the charts at number six and rose to fourth place the next week . The success of the album left Smith the third Britain 's Got Talent contestant to achieve a top ten album , after Potts (with One Chance) and Johnston (with One Voice) .

In April 2009 Smith travelled to Los Angeles to begin her promotion of Faryl in the United States . She appeared on The Ellen DeGeneres Show in early May as part of her promotional tour . Faryl was released in the US on 5 May . Smith said before the release that she did not expect it to sell as well as it did in the UK . She said that " in the US it 's a lot harder because I 'm not as well @-@ known . " Smith travelled back to the UK in early May , and , on 23 May , Faryl peaked at 31st place on Top Heatseekers Albums chart and at sixth place on the Classical Albums chart , remaining in the charts for one and 17 weeks respectively . Smith opened the 2009 Classical BRIT Awards , where , according to Elisa Roche of the Daily Express , she " captivated the best names in classical music " . She is the youngest performer ever to sing at the Classical BRITs . On 30 May , Smith became the youngest person to sing the United Kingdom national anthem , " God Save The Queen " , at an FA Cup final when she performed during the opening ceremony at the 2009 final , held in the Wembley Stadium . In June , Smith performed a duet with José Carreras at the Hampton Court Palace Festival , and in July , she attended the O2 Silver Clef Awards , winning the Classical Award .

In February 2010 , after the release of Smith 's second album , Faryl was nominated for a Classical BRIT Award in the album category . The category is voted for by the public , and the shortlist comprises the ten best @-@ selling classical albums of the previous year . Faryl lost to Only Men Aloud 's Band of Brothers . Smith also lost in the young British classical performer category to Jack Liebeck , a violinist . Smith became the youngest artist ever to receive a double nomination . In November , Smith was awarded the best classical award at the 2009 Variety Club awards , the youngest ever recipient in the awards ' 57 @-@ year history .

= = = Wonderland = = =

In July 2009 it was announced that Smith was hoping to release her second album later in the year . In an interview , she expressed surprise and pleasure that the label wanted her to do another album so soon after the first . In September , further details about the album were released , including its name , Wonderland , and planned release date , 30 November . Smith claimed that Faryl " was an introduction to me and an introduction for me to recording " , while Cohen , producer of both Faryl and Wonderland , said Smith had " matured as an artist since the first album and I have no doubt that once again , people will be astonished and moved by her performances " . The album , which was recorded at Sarm Studios in Notting Hill , London , was completed in early

October , and is loosely based on Lewis Carroll 's Alice in Wonderland . Wonderland was released on 30 November . To publicise the album , Smith appeared on numerous radio shows , as well as television appearances including Ready Steady Cook , Blue Peter , the BBC News Channel , The Alan Titchmarsh Show and Sky News Sunrise .

Wonderland was well received by critics ; Paul Callan , reviewing the album for the Daily Express , described it 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 " . Andy Gill , reviewing Wonderland for The Independent , gave a less positive review . He said that the influence of Alice in Wonderland was often hard to perceive and that Cohen and Smith had " sweetened the classical elements " . However , he praised the arrangements of " Adiemus " , " Barcarolle " , " Merry Christmas , Mr Lawrence " and " Blow The Wind Southerly " , but noted that on tracks including " Close To You " , " the lack of emotional weight is telling . " Overall , Gill gave Wonderland 3 out of 5 . However , the album failed to perform as well as Faryl ; it entered the British album charts at number 56 for the week ending 12 December before dropping to number 92 the following week and then out of the top 100 . After Wonderland , Smith 's contract with Universal ended , and she subsequently received less attention from the press . Smith described the break with the label as mainly her decision , as she needed to focus on her A levels , which would allow her to get to university , explaining in an interview that " It wasn 't like it ended horribly . "

Smith performed at the 2009 Royal Variety Performance in front of Queen Elizabeth II , where she sang " God Save the Queen " with The Soldiers . She later said that the experience , including subsequently meeting the Queen , as the highlight of her year . Smith also performed elsewhere with The Soldiers , including at St Paul 's Cathedral and Great Ormond Street Children 's Hospital .

= = = " The Prayer " and The Magic of a Thousand Strings = = =

In the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake , Smith and 22 other classical musicians from the UK recorded a cover version of " The Prayer " , which was released for download on 14 March . The proceeds of the single 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 . "

In the summer of 2010 Smith performed at various festivals and events . Her father stated that " because she is still so young , we don 't want her doing complete shows on her own and we don 't want her doing too much . " Appearances included the Mercedes @-@ Benz World Summer Concert in Weybridge on 4 July , That Glorious Noise charity concert in aid of muscular dystrophy in Cleethorpes on 17 July and the Last Night of the Kenwood Proms on 21 August , as well as the wedding of Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langford . Smith also opened the Serenata festival . Angela Young , reviewing the festival for the Bournemouth Daily Echo , said " Faryl Smith was my personal highlight of the Thursday night line @-@ up , her bizarrely powerful voice (considering her diminutive size and age) taking my breath away and it contrasted so well with her naivete as she said ' at least it 's not raining ' ? just as the heavens opened . "

In October Smith performed for the first time in Ireland , at the National Concert Hall , Dublin . She continued to perform publicly throughout 2011 . In May , she performed at a Help for Heroes charity concert , which raised £ 2 @,@ 000 , and in both June and October , she performed at concerts to celebrate the 90th year of the Royal British Legion . She again appeared at the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod in July , where she sang with Russell Watson . Smith 's father described the appearance as " like a homecoming " , due to her previous appearance at the

competition . In further charitable events later in the year , she raised £ 2 @, @ 700 for a hospice in Cransley , and performed in aid of the Salvation Army in Portsmouth . During the Christmas period , Smith performed for the Great Ormond Street Hospital Children 's Charity in their annual Christmas carol concert , and at the North Wales Choral Festival at Llandudno . She also appeared as a guest on Rhydian Roberts 's talent show on S4C in December . In 2012 , she performed with the Mousehole Male Voice Choir in Penzance , and in 2013 , she continued to perform locally in Kettering .

From 2012 ? 3 , Smith performed several times with the International Harp Ensemble , a Surrey @-@ based group of harpists who produce a variety of different styles of harp music , including appearing with the group on a September episode of Songs of Praise . She also guest @-@ featured on the group 's 2012 album The Magic of a Thousand Strings , singing on five tracks . Further shows with the International Harp Ensemble were planned into 2014 . While working with the International Harp Ensemble , Smith began training with vocal coach Joy Mammen , who also teaches Lesley Garrett , as well as learning German and Italian , with the intention of moving from classical crossover towards opera . She continued to perform publicly in 2015 , singing at Wembley again in August .

= = Personal life = =

Smith was born in Kettering , Northamptonshire , England , on 23 July 1995 . She originally attended Henry Gotch Primary School in Kettering and then became a student at Southfield School for Girls , although she received private tutoring while working . She completed her GCSEs in 2011 , and she studied for her A levels , with the intention of going to university afterwards . In 2015 , aged 20 , she started to study music at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London .

While at school , Smith enjoyed playing football ; she played for the Kettering Generals Under @-@ 11s girls ' team when they reached the Weetabix League cup final , as well as for the club 's Under @-@ 13 girls . She attended a theatre club , played the guitar and piano and sang in two choirs , including the Masquerade Youth Choir . Smith 's father , Tony , is a health and safety inspector , and for a time worked full @-@ time overseeing Smith 's activities . Her mother , Linda , is a hairdresser , and she has an older brother , Shea .

= = Discography = =

= = = Studio albums = = =