

Helen Welch, Performer

Helen Welch is a critically-acclaimed vocalist whose live stage performances explore a diverse range of musical compositions, starting with the 1930s up through present-day. Whether she's singing Ella Fitzgerald, Peggy Lee and Sarah Vaughan, or Elton John, Sting and Randy Newman, Helen's sophisticated vocals and humor leave audiences breezily enchanted. The "Helen Welch experience" is perhaps best described by a fan who wrote on her Amazon page, "If you have a chance to see Helen perform, do it! You are in for a special treat."

A native of England, Helen is well-known throughout the United Kingdom for her musical theatre roles and 1-woman shows. Helen is a consummate musician as well as vocalist. Upon moving to the U.S. in 2003, she began appearing in venues throughout the North East. Her unique talents for choosing songs that stand the test of time and making them her own, and her ability to intimately engage her audience, quickly earned her a large and devoted following.

Helen is equally at home performing in intimate spaces for small groups as in outdoor amphitheatres in front of thousands. She appears in the region's most celebrated entertainment establishments including Severance Hall, Cleveland's Playhouse Square Center, the Akron Civic Theatre, Blossom Music Center, the Chautauqua Institute and many more. She frequently guest-stars or headlines with world-class musical organizations such as The Cleveland Orchestra, The Columbus Jazz Orchestra, The Cleveland Pops Orchestra and The Akron Symphony to name just a few.

Early Years

Helen Welch was born and raised in Norwich, England. She made her television debut at age 3 on the popular children's program Romper Room ("I see Helen!"). Helen began studying the flute at age 11 and soon displayed abundant musical aptitude. While still in high school, she earned a teaching diploma at the London College of Music and began teaching flute at the same school she attended.

Feeling that a more traditional career was expected of her, Helen left teaching to pursue a business career. After several years in the trenches, she realized that singing was her true passion. She has pursued it professionally ever since.

Broadway

Helen's stage career got off to fast-start. She landed starring roles in a string of popular musicals including Hello Dolly!, Barnum, 42nd Street, Oliver Twist, Calamity Jane, Show Boat, and Carousel. She also made her pantomime debut as 'Maid Marion' in Robin Hood, a traditional English Christmas show. (Renowned English actor and a former "Dr. Who", Colin Baker, played Helen's wicked uncle.)

During this time, Helen met her late song-writing partner Tim Freebairn, and there began a magical, musical partnership. The pair enjoyed immediate success when they represented Britain in the Irish International Song contest and won Best Song and Best Female Vocalist. Afterwards, Helen and Tim developed a 1-woman cabaret show entitled First Ladies of Song-- a celebration of the world's legendary vocal divas. First

Ladies ignited a connection among audiences and went on to be performed throughout England.

A short time later, Helen decided on a whim to enter a singing competition--- the grand prize of which was a role in the smash-hit Lieber and Stoller musical *Smokey Joe's Café* on Broadway. Eight-hundred girls vied for the opportunity, but it was Helen who most impressed the judges and won. She rehearsed briefly with the London cast before jetting to New York to join the Broadway production. A BBC camera crew accompanied Helen and captured the entire experience on film, which was made into a television documentary for the BBC.

London Calls

After Helen's Broadway contract ended, she was presented with a number of opportunities, one of which was to work with some of the UK's finest big bands including Opus One, Glen Miller Europe and the BBC Big Band. Unable to bypass this invaluable experience, she moved to London, and soon performed regularly in some of the West End's most popular performance spaces, including The Savoy, The Ritz and The Grosvenor House Great Room.

Helen also became a regular in London's major recording studios. Her voice can be heard in many commercial jingles, films and television productions, and also the background on recordings of well-known international artists. She was tapped to record a 'house' track for the German pop market. When the producers of the James Bond movie franchise were exploring a new theme song, they asked Helen to record the demo.

Helen was thrilled and honored when the directors of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra (NYJO) asked her work with its student members, who are considered to be the cream of Britain's upcoming musical crop. At one point, the NYJO was scheduled to perform with Cleo Laine and Johnny Dankworth at London's prestigious Royal Albert Hall. During rehearsal, Dankworth, doubling as concert director, asked Helen to stand in for Cleo!

Helen Welch, Producer

In addition to being a consummate stage performer, Helen Welch is also president of Big Wow Productions. The company has developed a diverse selection of shows from the hugely popular 'Bring in the Divas!' celebrating the music of the First Ladies of Song to 'All You Need is Love' in which Helen has taken many great Beatles songs and made them her own. She performs with her quartet through to a 16 piece big band and full symphony orchestra.

Helen released her first compact disc collection *One Dream* in 2006. *One Dream*, which also features The Cleveland Jazz Orchestra and her quartet, is an eclectic compilation of Broadway hits; classic pop tunes; and compositions co-written by Helen. It also features Helen's version of Zing! Went the Strings of My Heart, arranged by Nelson Riddle. Helen received personal permission from Riddle's daughter to use the

original arrangement of Zing! on her recording. Besides Judy Garland, Helen is the only other person to have recorded this arrangement.

In 2010 Helen's much awaited follow up CD 'Forever for Now' was released to rave reviews. This CD is much more contemporary in style and song choice and it may surprise fans to hear songs by Lennon/McCartney, Sting and Cyndi Lauper alongside Harry Connick Jr, Paul Williams and Henry Mancini. Helen calls it 'an eclectic fusion of jazz and popular song' and says that 'the CD is an illustration of the diverse range of music that I have fallen in love with over the years – it's a chocolate box of songs!'

Personal Life

Embracing the philosophy, "all work and no play make Jack a dull boy" (or in this case, "Jill a dull girl"), Helen tries to combine work and play whenever possible. On one such occasion, she took a job the French Alps, where she could satisfy her passions for both singing and skiing. On her way to the slopes, she encountered 2 Americans in the hotel. They exchanged greetings, but nothing more.

The following year, Helen returned to the same hotel, and happened upon the same pair of Americans in the exact location where they first met! Startled at the coincidence, the gentlemen invited her to join them for dinner. Sparks immediately flew between Helen and Douglas, a native of Cleveland, Ohio. When the vacation concluded, Helen flew home to London thinking she would never see Doug again. Ten weeks and many phone calls later, Doug arrived in London. After a whirlwind courtship involving several more international round-trip flights, Helen accepted Doug's marriage proposal. In April of 2003, Helen moved to the U.S. The couple currently resides in Northeast Ohio.

Although he prefers to avoid the spotlight, Doug is often the subject of Helen's humorous anecdotes both onstage and in her fan newsletter. Doug, being the consummate gentleman, genially takes it all in stride.

As a gesture of gratitude for the overwhelming reception she has received in her new home, Helen became a United States citizen in June of 2009 and followed this by singing the National Anthem at the Cleveland Indians baseball field; 'a moment I shall never forget' she smiles.

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