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The Twins – Reflected Glory



I am currently basking in the reflected glory of 'the twins' - two lovely young ladies who have achieved sudden fame through Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's competition to find an act to represent us in this year's Eurovision Song Contest.

Last weekend the girls, Francine and Nicola (who live a few doors away from us) were voted second - bringing, along with the natural disappointment we all feel, a great pride within our local community. Having been their honorary 'musical director' for the past year (which means they tell me what they want to sing - and I play it!) I've followed each step of their journey with more than my usual level of interest in things Eurovision. I've 'met' Andrew Lloyd Webber, and have even been spotted on the telly by a few eagle-eyed viewers... so fame has come at last.

To begin with the twins were actually school friends of my elder son, David. They are a couple of years younger than he and, for a while in their early teens, they'd turn up at the house regularly as part of the regular group of kids hanging out together. We thought no more of it than that until, one

day when I was playing something on the piano, Dave said; "You should hear the twins sing. They're really good..." He told us he was going to a gig at a nearby club where the girls, then aged about fifteen or sixteen, were due to sing with a well-known local band. Having nothing else to do, and wanting to show our support for Dave and his friends, we went along... "Wow!" is about all I can say. The twins were quite stunning - and their performance brought the audience to its feet.

Life goes on and we kept seeing Fran and Nic - and hearing news of their developing musical careers - but David, being a couple of years older, left school and developed a new circle of friends. The twins did the same and, apart from the usual "hello's" when passing in the street we pretty much lost touch. The next we heard, Fran and Nic had been signed by an agency and were performing as the support act for well-known pop singers like James Blunt, McFly etc. etc. I looked them up on the Internet and was, again, astonished by the quality of the productions they were involved with.

Each year I produce a small charity concert here in Dronfield (Nr. Sheffield). It isn't the usual 'keyboard society' show as many of the audience have no particular connection with the keyboard world - and the well known and popular keyboard player Chiho Sunamoto has often been a guest, as much for her vocal talents as for her wonderful keyboard skills.

Unfortunately Chiho had to pull out of our 2007 concert and, with only a month to go for rehearsals, I was desperate to find a vocalist to take her place. Cath suggested that I ask the twins (who had decided against renewing their contract with the agency to enrol at University and continue their education). I did - and it became one of the most rewarding things I have done in recent years. The arrangements I worked on for Francine and Nicola were the first I'd done for some time and I enjoyed the experience thoroughly. The show was a great success for us - and the partnership was confirmed when the girls asked me to accompany them at a series of charity events they'd been asked to perform.



It was during this time that I arranged the Corrs wonderful song 'No Frontiers' which was to become their audition piece at the BBC. The girls hadn't done a great deal of harmony work and I encouraged them to explore this - which they did with great enthusiasm and an astonishing natural ability! This, more than anything else, is what Andrew Lloyd Webber picked up on when they sang for him at the audition. Together they are very special and, in harmony, they are quite

magical (but then I'm just a little biased).

I'd invited Fran and Nic to sing with me at our Yamaha Club Weekend in December 2008 - by which time they already knew they'd been selected to appear in the live shows of 'Your Country Needs You'. We'd had to put together an arrangement of an Andrew Lloyd Webber song for the second audition and you can imagine how they felt, singing 'Whistle Down The Wind' - yet being unable to tell anyone that, only a week before, they'd sung the same song to Sir Andrew himself. Better than that - they'd heard from his own lips that they had made a good job of it!!

On January 3rd the girls were taken to London - where they would stay in a 'secret location' until the end of the show. Cath and I went down to join their mum, dad and boyfriends at the BBC studio for the first televised show. Bless them, the twins had got us tickets for the first show - in case they got knocked out straight away and we never had the chance to see them in full flight... I can tell you my heart never beat so fast. It felt as though I was up there with them - yet they appeared as un-phased by the experience as if they were singing in our local village hall. Our evening at the BBC is one I shan't forget quickly - with plenty of razzamatazz and excitement - but the experience of coming home and watching these 'little girls' on the TV screen, holding the audience spellbound was simply fascinating.

There weren't enough tickets for us to go every week - and I'm not sure my nerves could have stood it - but we enjoyed the whole event with 'Euro Voting Parties'

(where we raised money for our local Rotary Club and voted at the same time) each Saturday leading up to the final.

When 'The Song' was finally unveiled, Francine and Nicola gave a stunning performance and I truly believed their time had finally come. In my opinion they brought everything to that performance - and you only had to look at the beaming smile on the face of 'The Lord' to know that he thought so too. Unfortunately the public vote went in favour of pop diva Jade, and I have to confess to feeling a huge lump in my throat as our girls made their dignified exit.

We had a small home-coming party on the Sunday and although naturally disappointed, the two young ladies were very up-beat about the future. We are so proud of them - and I can't help thinking that being on Andrew Lloyd Webber's radar will do their careers no harm at all...

Although they were constantly portrayed by the BBC as dippy supermarket checkout girls it isn't at the supermarket where you'll find them today. They are back at the University library - putting finishing touches to the projects they've managed to continue all through the media circus surrounding the TV show.

Congratulations to Jade, hugs to the twins - and here's to their future, whatever it brings!!!

Glyn Madden, February 2009
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