

Breathe Press Release

Singer and mandolin player Laura-Beth Salter, best known as one sixth of the all-female folk band The Shee, has recently produced her debut solo album, 'Breathe.' This collection of self-penned songs and instrumentals illustrates a unique range of influences including Scottish folk, Old-time and American Bluegrass. Much of the album's content developed from her New Voices Commission for Celtic Connections 2012. This commission was a landmark opportunity for Laura-Beth to showcase her song-writing and resulted in a nomination for Composer of the year at the 2012 Scots Trad Music Awards.

The music of 'Breathe' provides an insight into some of Laura-Beth's most influential life experiences to date, from childhood in rural Lincolnshire through to early adulthood in the North of England and Urban Scotland.

There are dark elements to this story, even chilling moments, but these are counter-balanced by Laura-Beth's optimism which is delivered even after the most difficult of subject matter. The influences of a childhood immersed in Bluegrass and Old-time music and a young adult life heavily involved in the Scottish folk music scene paint an identifiable musical backdrop to this heart-warming collection of original songs.

Recorded with Barry Reid in a live setting, the album features duo partner Jenn Butterworth on guitar and vocals, Breabach's James Lindsay on the double bass, Session A9's Adam Sutherland on the fiddle and acclaimed dobro player, Nathon Jones.

Track information

You can find all of the lyrics for the album at www.laurabethsalter.com

1 – **Carry Me**. Opening an album with the first line ‘When I die’ may be seen as a little morbid, but Carry Me is actually an honest description of Laura-Beth’s belief that we shouldn’t take for granted the beauty that we are surrounded by every day and the idea that we could be giving something back. This idea is what inspired both the album title, and the cover design (by fellow Shee band-mate, Lillias Kinsman-Blake). With a driving accompaniment provided by Jenn Butterworth and James Lindsay, and energetic fiddle parts from Adam Sutherland, this track is a short, sharp ‘scene-setter’ for the rest of the album. And it is positive, honest!

2 – **Big River**. A reflective song about accepting mistakes, admitting them and learning to move on. This track is written in a swaying, waltz time with its own instrumental which adds to its up-lifting nature.

3 – **Watching the Hive**. Laura-Beth lives by Glasgow’s Student Union, ‘The Hive’, and this tune is dedicated to the hoards of revellers that are so entertaining to watch from her kitchen window.

4 – **Our Bottle/The Waiting Waltz**. This song was originally written for Laura-Beth’s New Voices Commission and has also been arranged and recorded by The Shee. Purposefully sparse with only Dobro as backing, this track really changes the mood of the album and aims to create feelings of solace and peaceful reflection. The song is about finding love in the wrong place and learning to let it go.

5 – **The Devil & I/Flatlands**. With the mood set by the previous track, this song delves into the darker element of Laura-Beth’s song writing. A sparse and uncomfortable instrumentation swells throughout to reach a peak representing the main character’s liberation from a manipulator. This then enters into ‘Flatlands,’ an instrumental written for her home-county, Lincolnshire.

6 – **Brother Wind**. Laura-Beth first heard Tim O’Brien sing this song when she was attending his class at ‘Sorefingers,’ a summer school in the south of England that provides Bluegrass tuition. Performed here with her duo partner, Jenn Butterworth.

7 – **Shine**. A heavily Bluegrass influenced live instrumental, this track is one of the most energetic on the album and features both Double Bass and Dobro solos.

8 – **Teacher/The Bankside Girl**. A simple yet evoking and honest description of dealing with loss as a child, followed by a tune written by Laura-Beth’s Step-Father, who was a great influence in her learning to play music.

9 – **Yadda/Calm Before The Storm**. Based on the feeling of a city full of people in the throws of celebration during the lead-up to Christmas, the quiet streets, pubs packed to bursting and the feeling that sometimes the desire to have fun can be so intense that it results in something quite sinister.

10- **Meet me in the Morning**. A Bob Dylan song which Laura-Beth has sung with friends since she first started singing in sessions. It has travelled through a few different bands, but this version is an echo of the fun she has with friends playing in the Flying Duck session in Glasgow on Sunday (Funday).

Sue Wilson's Preview

A lot of the music from 'Breathe' was written for my 2012 New Voices commission for Celtic Connections, and below is the preview which Sue Wilson wrote for the Sunday Herald.

New Voices, old styles as Laura-Beth Salter brings bluegrass to Celtic Connections.

The young English Americana-lover is ready to pick up her mandolin

and Breathe. by Sue Wilson

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With Celtic Connections 2012 presenting the 15th series of New Voices, bringing the total number of commissions to an impressive 45, you'd think that the scope for firsts within these projects – beyond, of course, the salient fact that every show is a world première – might be getting somewhat limited by now.

However, the second of this year's musicians chosen to unveil their creation, Laura-Beth Salter – a member of the all-female cross-Border band The Shee – is both the first mandolinist and the first Americana specialist to feature in the programme, even if her native Lincolnshire doesn't seem the most obvious birthplace for a bluegrass devotee.

"Specialist", admittedly, may be stretching the point somewhat, given the versatility Salter has displayed in her relatively short career to date. Besides playing and singing with The Shee, whose repertoire also takes in Scottish, Irish, English, Gaelic and original material, she's carved out a successful niche as both a session musician and a touring stand-in for unavailable members of other bands, ranging from Finnish fiddle band Frigg to Scotland's own "acid croft" maestros Shooglenifty. But bluegrass, along with blues, vintage jazz and old-time sounds were and remain her first love, these being the staple fare at the regular Friday-night session her parents ran in their local pub when she was growing up.

"I don't really know how that came about," she says of this seeming geographic/cultural anomaly. "It does seem quite a bizarre thing to

find in that part of the world, but at that time there wasn't much happening in the way of local folk music, and I guess there just happened to be a little pocket of people in the area, like my parents, who were into American stuff."

Having started out, aged seven or eight, singing and playing whistle in the family bluegrass band, Salter arrived at her eventual choice of instrument via recordings of Béla Fleck's collaborations with mandolin greats like Sam Bush, Jimmy Gaudreau and Mike Marshall. "I got to the point where I could sing all the mandolin solos off by heart," she recalls, "and nagged my mum relentlessly for about a year to get me one, which she did when I was 14."

With mandolin lessons being distinctly thin on the ground in rural Lincolnshire, Salter taught herself for the first few years, attaining a standard that secured her a place on Newcastle University's Folk and Traditional Music degree – this being where she met her fellow members of The Shee. Upon graduating in 2006, with the band then in formation, she moved to Glasgow, where she's still based. Her sojourns in both cities have seen her in the thick of their respectively thriving session scenes, broadening her musical palette to take in an array of British and Celtic styles.

It's this musical journey that she originally intended as the basis for her New Voices composition, a song-based sequence entitled Breathe, featuring Salter with a five-piece line-up of fiddle, accordion, guitar, bass, percussion and additional vocals, but the project has ended up taking her in a rather more personal and even philosophical direction – and one aptly in keeping with the commissions' eponymous spirit.

"The way the songs have come out, they're all about aspects of where I

am and things I've learned in life so far," she says. "Some of them deal with really tiny particular incidents, some of them look at how we relate overall to the rest of the world and other people. But having worked mainly in different bands, this is the first time I've really stood up front and put my name to something. It'll also be the first time I've ever sung my own songs in public, so it's really been about me finding my own style and voice – which is really scary, but really exciting at the same time."