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Church Sisters return to performing

Posted on October 10, 2022 (<https://bluegrasstoday.com/church-sisters-return-to-performing/>) By John Lawless (<https://bluegrasstoday.com/Author/John/>)



For the past decade or so, the bluegrass, gospel, and traditional country world has been enamored of **The Church Sisters** (<https://www.facebook.com/churchsisters/>), fraternal twins Savannah and Sarah Church from southwestern Virginia, whose duet singing turned heads wherever they performed. Carl Jackson was a big backer of the girls during their teen years, and he brought them to perform on *Larry's Country Diner* before they were old enough to drive.

He also gave them a spot on the *Orthophonic Joy* project he produced between 2013-2015, celebrating the songs recorded at The Bristol Sessions in 1927, which allowed the world to first hear future legends like Jimmie Rodgers, The Carter Family, and many others. The Churches contributed a lovely version of *Never Grow Old*.

Everything seemed set for the girls to make it big in the music business as they finished school. Their sincere faith and down home delivery was obvious in all their endeavors, until a big label got involved and the pressures not only jaded these two young entertainers, but eventually broke up the act. Of course it is always tough for family groups to make the switch from cute kids to grown up entertainers, but a recent conversation with Savannah Church has revealed that not only is there no animosity between the sisters, but that they are back together singing again in the style that originally brought so much attention their way.

Let's have Savannah catch us up...

"In late 2019, Sarah wanted to take a break from music. That was a tough situation... she had just gotten remarried. I decided to try and do some solo artist stuff, but that was right at the start of the pandemic, so that went south real quick.

I talked to my producer, who urged me to try *American Idol* again as a solo artist. Sarah came with me to the celebrity edition audition for moral support, but I only made it to the second week in Hollywood. There was no big blowup between us, though we had our differences from time to time. There was just a lot of pressure after everything with Big Machine, and we both knew that it wouldn't be forever. We figured out what we really wanted to do during the break, and we really do love singing together.

Family is one of the most precious gifts you can have, and getting to sing together is wonderful."

In retrospect, it seems that their decision to go the Nashville route wasn't the best move for two small town Christian ladies who were both a bit green as to the ways of the world of big money, and uncertain how to proceed. They found a top producer in Julian Raymond, and were tremendously excited to sign with Big Machine Records in 2015, who at the time was the label of crossover superstar Taylor Swift. But in one of those seemingly foolish moves that so often occur when music and art aren't at the root of entertainment decisions, the label wanted the sisters to abandon the image that brought them to the dance, and instead adopt the attitude of typical Nashville icons, with a change in dress and demeanor that didn't suit them at all.

Here at *Bluegrass Today* we knew that things were heading for trouble when label publicists contacted us demanding that we change several of the stories we had previously reported on The Church Sisters, as they didn't want anything in the Google universe conflicting with what they were putting forward. We responded collegially, as we didn't want to hurt their chances at major success, but weren't willing to

change long published articles, especially regarding their marital status. Label folks apparently believed that if people knew that Savannah and Sarah were both happily married, that would be seen as a negative.

Savannah was circumspect in discussing that time.

“We are really super grateful to Julian, our producer, who really believed in us and worked so hard on our record for Big Machine. A lot of decisions in that situation aren’t made by the artists, and it was a new experience, and a time of learning who we are and we aren’t. We are very grateful for the opportunity, but it wasn’t us. They want their artists to have a certain image, and we didn’t want to go that way.

It felt like they wanted us to be something we weren’t.

There are no hard feelings towards Big Machine. They gave us a great opportunity and we are very thankful for it. It just wasn’t a good fit for us at that time.”

She tells us that even after the twins stopped performing together, not much changed between them, and once their commitment to Big Machine had passed, the lure of singing together was irresistible.

“Our family life didn’t change much, other than living a bit further apart. Once COVID had passed we started talking about singing again, on a less rigorous schedule. She missed it, and I missed it, and we both knew it. I was starting to get calls about doing reunion shows.

So we're going to get back together and do some things, and see how it goes. No pressure like when we were signed artists. We'll just do what we like.

It will be a mixed bag of bluegrass, gospel, country, roots – the music that we love.”

Savannah has a young child, so she isn't interested in a rigorous touring schedule in any event. Her husband is Zachary Alvis, mandolinist and vocalist with Chosen Road, a busy touring group on the bluegrass Gospel scene. Sarah's husband is not involved in the music business.

For now, The Church Sisters have booked a Christmas show at the Lincoln Theater in Marion, VA on December 4, and they are getting the old band back together. Josh Pickett will be back on guitar, with Jacob Eller on bass, and Jason Malone on drums. Their brother, Seth Church, will play guitar with them at The Lincoln as well.

They are being represented by the **Mosaic Artist Agency** (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063581528722>), who also handle booking for Chosen Road.

Here's a video they shot at home just recently with Zach on guitar, a version of Lady Antelelum's 2009 hit, *I Run To You*.

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Savannah shared a few other tidbits...

“**Brandy Miller** (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063581528722>) is handling representation and management.

We are heading into the studio this week to work on a couple of singles, songs that I've written. One is a Christmas song which we hope to have out in time for the holidays."

With no burdens from labels or management, Savannah and Sarah are returning to sing together for the pure love of it. And there are no big plans going forward.

"I'm a mom now, and my son is my main priority. So we are taking it slow and see how it goes."

This is wonderful news for people who love pure, unaffected singing in the traditional music realm. Best of luck to the reunited Church Sisters!

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About the Author



John Lawless

John had served as primary author and editor for The Bluegrass Blog from its launch in 2006 until being folded into Bluegrass Today in September of 2011. He continues in that capacity here, managing a strong team of columnists and correspondents.

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