



SPORTS

Tommy Harper still
haunted by time with
Red Sox



METRO

Steve Wynn takes
conciliatory tone



METRO

In Maine, cli
change is tak

Antonia Bennett follows her famous father's example

By **Jeremy D. Goodwin** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 25, 2014

Show-business success comes with plenty of perks. For Antonia Bennett, one of them was that her family had a special arrangement with Santa Claus.

“We would always open our presents on Christmas Eve, because Santa Claus understood that dad was an entertainer and had to sleep in on Christmas morning, so he came to our house first,” she says, recalling the story her parents told her when she was little. “It made a lot of sense to me, because people did things out of the ordinary for my dad all the time,” she adds.



PETER HURLY

“As a musician she sings the right songs, in tune and with feeling . . . When I perform with her, I love the audience reaction,” says Tony Bennett of his daughter Antonia.

CONTINUE READING BELOW ▼

Her dad, as the astute reader may have guessed, is the inimitable singer Tony Bennett.

Antonia has sung in front of audiences for as long she can remember, called out onstage as a small child to chime in, for special occasions, on fare like “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town” — though not necessarily with any new lyrics about Santa’s very considerate schedule adjustments.

But Bennett, 40, has been a professional songstress in her own right her whole adult life, since bolstering her musicianship at Berklee College of Music after a childhood full of priceless apprenticeship.

, With Tony Bennett

Scullers Jazz Club,
<http://www.scullersjazz.com>

Date of concert: Thursday

Ticket price: \$30

She's been a regular opening act (and mid-set guest) for her father over the past 10 years or so, and more recently has struck out on her own as a solo recording artist. Following a 2010 EP and an album-length, digital-only release two years later, she's now released her first full-fledged LP: "Embrace Me," an album of American Songbook standards.

"As a musician she sings the right songs, in tune and with feeling," Tony Bennett says of his daughter in an e-mail. "She also knows how to phrase. When I perform with her, I love the audience reaction. They get a big kick out of it, and I love it."

Antonia marks the release of the album ("Embrace Me") with a show at Scullers Jazz Club on Thursday, supported by pianist Christian Jacob, bassist Marshall Wood, and drummer Marcello Pellitteri. Then she'll join her father in her accustomed support role when he headlines Tanglewood on Aug. 31.

"Embrace Me," on which she's backed by the Jon Davis Trio, displays Bennett's taste for the songs and performance approach of yesteryear. A memorable 2002 review in The New York Times, of a Steve Tyrell show in which she made a two-song guest spot, said she "conjures echoes of Billie Holiday and Rickie Lee Jones (with a hint of Betty Boop)."

"She has a nostalgic tone and style that harkens back to the '40s," says the songwriter and producer Holly Knight, who has worked with Bennett on her recent studio projects. "She has the kind of voice you want to listen to while you curl up with a cup of hot cocoa and a kitten in your lap, if that makes sense. She has her own sound and it isn't anything like her father."

These standards are among the songs she grew up singing, surrounded from her earliest days by great entertainers. She remembers holiday parties with Mel Tormé and Frank Sinatra among the guests, and visits to the homes of family friends such as Dean Martin. There were annual Christmas Day visits (once everybody was awake and ready to go) to Ella Fitzgerald's house. Crucially, she also had those opportunities to join her father

Tweet

Share

WhatsApp

o serious duets

and extended guest spots.

“I kind of learned how to do things backward. I did a concert before I really knew what I was doing. And I got addicted to the instant gratification of the audience,” she says in a telephone interview. “It was not so strange for me” to start performing as a professional, she says, “because I had been on those stages, or standing back behind them, my whole life. And the process was gradual.”

Mr. Bennett has long welcomed his daughter's enthusiasm.

“She loved every minute of it, so I always encouraged her,” he says.

Antonia says she continues to learn from her father whenever they work together. Often the lessons come just by following his example. She remembers joining him onstage at Tanglewood as a teenager. It was the largest audience she'd ever performed for, and she was nervous. At a key moment, the cord to her microphone got wedged under the piano. As she remembers it, her father stepped in to yank the cord loose, but in the process sent the microphone flying out of her hands and across the stage.

“I was so embarrassed — he was calm, cool, and collected,” she says with a hearty laugh. “But it was such a great learning experience, because I realized that when you make a human mistake like that onstage, the audience is always rooting for you. They love you even more.”

With the advent of cordless microphones, she doesn't anticipate having that particular problem again. But whatever new challenges this business throws at her, you could say she's learned from the best.

Jeremy D. Goodwin can be reached at jeremy@jeremydgoodwin.com.

SHOW 1 COMMENT

