

CORONATION SPECIAL

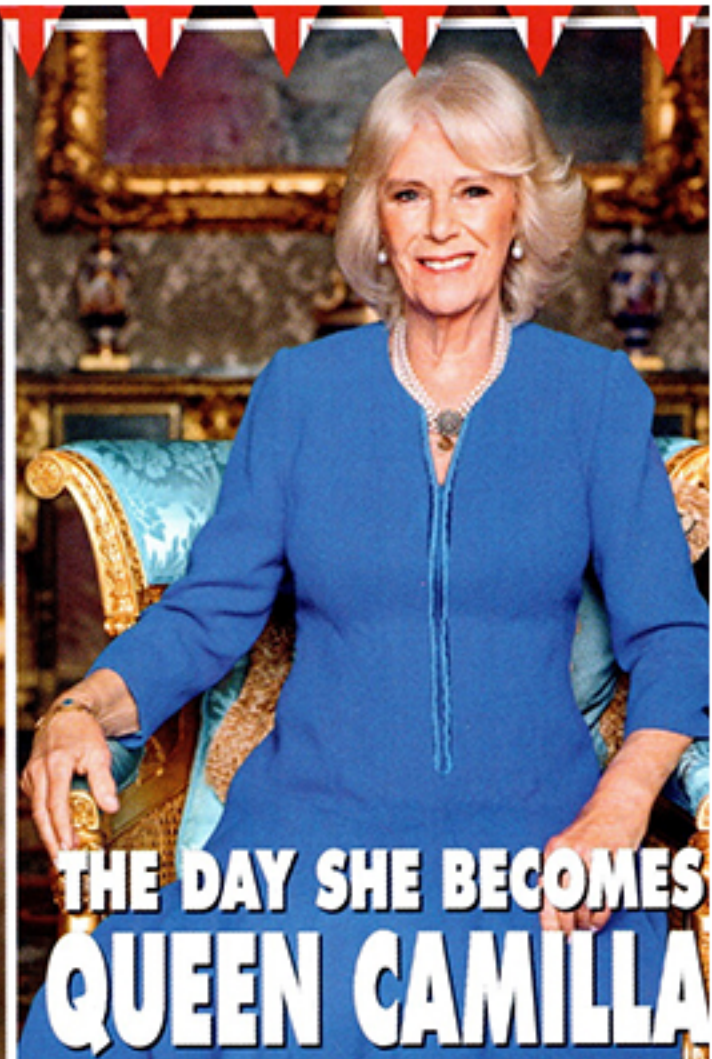
DATE WITH DESTINY

ING CHARLES

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THE DAY SHE BECOMES QUEEN CAMILLA

Cries of 'God Save the King' will fill the air



THE EMMY-NOMINATED COMPOSER SARAH CLASS

ON HER ADMIRATION FOR THE KING AND A SPECIAL COMMISSION FOR HIS CORONATION

Sarah (pictured at the piano, below right) shares a lifelong passion for the environment with the King, who previously asked her to write a piece for the Cop26 Climate Change Conference



It must be every composer's dream to hear their music played at a historic event.

And it's one that has been realised for Sarah Class, a Brit- and Emmy-nominated composer who has been personally invited by the King to write a piece for his coronation on Saturday.

Sarah, 43, who has composed musical scores for Sir David Attenborough's natural world programmes and National Geographic documentaries, shares a passion for conservation and environmental issues with His Majesty, who commissioned her to create one of 12 new works to be performed in Westminster Abbey in front of 2,000 guests and a predicted global audience of 300 million viewers.

The musical programme, which has been designed to showcase a range of talent from the UK and the Commonwealth, has been selected by the monarch. It includes work by, among others, Andrew Lloyd Webber, who has written an anthem; Patrick Doyle, who has created a coronation march; and Paul Mealer, whose composition will be the first Welsh-language performance at a coronation.

SECRET COMMISSION

The initial call from the Palace was "an 'are you sitting down?' kind of moment", Sarah says. "But then I wasn't allowed to say anything for quite a long time. I was staying with my parents at the time and I couldn't even tell them."

She began work on *Sacred Fire*, a four-minute piece written for a full orchestra, more or less immediately, teaming up with lyricist Grahame Davies to create the score, which will be performed by South African opera singer Pretty Yende.

"I wanted to write something as stunning as I could make it, as well as cinematic," says Sarah, whose music has been described as ethereal, rich and haunting. "[It needed] to have the ability to move you. It moves me, so I'm hoping it will move other people."

The text is based on images from the Bible that Sarah has tried to reflect by creating a bridge "between the angelic and human realms", she says, as well as representing the "abundance and beauty of the natural world and, above all, unity and love".



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"When I'm out in nature, or by the sea, I get a spiritual download – I can only put it like that – which comes out in the music and collection of notes. It's thematic and emotive. I feel it when we see that we're losing our biodiversity."

The fact that we have a King who advocates so vocally for the planet is "very significant and symbolic", Sarah believes. "At this time, when we're looking for reassurance and some kind of direction around what's happening, I think it's really important. I feel reassured he's in this position, and hope he'll continue his work with the environment."

It's not their first collaboration. In 2021, after reading about his Terra Carta project, a mandate for moving businesses into a more sustainable future, Sarah wrote a letter to the then Prince of Wales, which was "more of an outpouring", she says.

"I thought it was a brilliant, forward-thinking, groundbreaking and reassuring project. I explained that I was a composer and that I felt that emotion in music could sell conservation."

Sarah sent him some CDs of her work and asked if there was anything she could do to help. Around six weeks later, she received a letter from Charles, asking her to write a song highlighting the message and ethos of the project for the 2021 Cop26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow.

The song, *Rhythm of the Earth*, was: "A dream come true. The meeting of music and nature, and trying to help the planet, is my agenda."

The pair eventually met at the conference. "He thanked me profusely and we had a little laugh together," the composer says. "I felt he was extremely warm and liked him immediately."

NATURE AND NURTURE

Sarah's interest in nature was nurtured during her childhood growing up on the Isle of Wight, where her father, a biologist, ran a nature reserve.

He taught her to play the piano, beginning when she was four years old, but it wasn't until she studied for a music and art degree at Chichester University that she realised composing was "something I could do for a living".

She was even more surprised when she realised that people actually wrote music for nature documentaries. "I thought: 'I'd love to do that.'"

It was while working at the BBC as a production assistant and researcher that she got her first big break – writing music for a programme about whales and dolphins for BBC2. In 2012, she composed and produced music for the series *Africa*, narrated by Sir David Attenborough, for which she won an Emmy nomination in 2014. She'd previously been nominated for *Madagascar*, also narrated by Sir David.

Now living in Bristol with her partner Ben, Sarah has set her sights on working on feature films. "I love variety in what I do and would love to work with someone like Steven Spielberg or Ridley Scott. I'm waiting for the call," she adds, smiling.

For now, she's busy with the final rehearsals for her coronation piece – she doesn't know at what point in the ceremony it will be performed – and preparing for the big event.

"Somebody said to me the other day that I could be asked back again in 30 years' time," she says. "I've never thought of it like that. I'm hoping I make a good impression."



Final rehearsals have been taking place for Sarah's coronation piece. "I wanted to write something as stunning as I could, as well as cinematic," she says

INTERVIEW: ROSALIND POWELL