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TOP STORY

Gibson Wright: From Mozart to Merle and everything in between

Ben Mackin
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Just looking at him, it would surprise no one to know that Gibson Wright is a country singer.

From the broken-in cowboy hat, jeans and button down black shirt, full beard and long hair. He looks the part.

When you engage him in conversation and he flashes a goodnatured smile, coupled with his baritone voice and central Kentucky drawl, the image of a country troubadour is complete and you haven't even heard him sing yet.

On Friday night, local residents and visitors will get a chance to do just that as the Franklin County native gives a free concert in front of the Old Capitol starting at 7 p.m.

Wright plans to debut some of his original songs that he recently recorded in Nashville that will be released in the coming months.

As easy as it is to imagine Wright singing country standards like "I Walk the Line" or "Tennessee Whiskey", that is just one facet to his music prowess.

For as well as he knows and loves country music, Wright is just as well versed in performing 18th century operas in Italian, French or German.

To some those two might seem juxtaposed, but for him, it just seems to fit. His journey into those respective genres started right here in Central Kentucky.

Wright's earliest musical influences are family connected. He is the son of singer/songwriter Mark Wright and the grandson of a church organist.



Wright noted some of his earliest memories from his childhood are sitting in the pews of Beechridge Baptist Church in Bagdad and listening to his dad sing and his grandmother play.

"I have done a lot of studying in music and I understand cognitively you develop a brain for it at a young age," he said. "Whether or not you can actually match pitch and do all that stuff. Before you can conceptualize what is happening, you innately learn how to match pitch and get into it. For me that is where it started."

Outside of church, Wright remembers watching his father play shows all over central

Kentucky while he was growing up.

"He played all over Frankfort, Lexington and Louisville for the majority of my childhood," Wright stated. "I remember that whole path. How much he had to work and travel ... and the ride. I got to see it from the backseat as a little kid not really understanding what was going on, but it was always fascinating to me."

When Wright started attending Elkhorn Middle School, puberty hit early in the form of a deep voice which caught the ear of the school's choir director, the late Damon Greene.

"He was so cool," Wright said of Greene with a smile. "Anyone that knew him, you were just drawn to him. He was the first one that made me feel like I could do this, other than my mom."

With that encouragement, Wright excelled in choir. He found himself singing solos at state choir competitions. The more he sang, the more challenging his pieces became. In high school he was accepted to prestigious programs like the Governor's School for the Arts.

While he was primarily focused on choir, Wright said that he participated in several extracurricular activities in middle school and high school.

After graduating from Franklin County High School, Wright found his way down to Western Kentucky University.

During his time in Bowling Green, Wright continued to make a name for himself in vocal performance, taking part in competitions and shows all over the country.

In 2017, Wright graduated from WKU with high honors.

"I had kind of gotten tired of doing opera," Wright remembers. "To be honest, I was just burnt-out at that point."

After deciding on a new direction he earned a masters in business administration from the University of Kentucky and worked as a project manager for some big name firms in the defense industry.

Even while he was pursuing success in corporate America, he knew he wanted to get back to music eventually.

"I missed it, but I wanted to do it my way," he said of his art form. "I knew I wanted to do something with music but I never thought it was going to be opera."

He began writing and recording country songs and was able to catch the attention of a Nashville talent agency, New Vision Artist Management. They told Wright that they liked his sound.

Just as he was about to get some serious recording time, COVID-19 hit and the world came to a grinding halt.

Not being able to record or play shows, the agency pressed pause on working with new artists.

"I felt like I lost my chance," Wright stated matter of factly. "I wasn't resentful because of some virus that nobody could control. But to my surprise when things started calming down, they called me back."

Over the last several months Wright has been traveling between Nashville and his home in Louisville, recording and getting the next phase of his career off the ground.

Going forward his goals are simple. Ideally he would like to earn his living as a country musician. Secondly, he wants his music to make people happy.

"Success for me is if something that I do can help somebody," he said. "Would I like to be on the charts and make tons of money and tour the world? Of course. But if that don't happen, so be it. If something I play puts a smile on somebody's face, I am going to bed that night with a smile on my face."

For more information on Gibson Wright's upcoming album and future live shows, go to his website, www.gibsonwright.com.

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Reporter