

# The Beat

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▼ **PERSONA**, PG. 28

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# Sarah Jane McMahon

Renowned vocalist gives applause on Mother's Day

By Ashley McLellan

**NEW ORLEANS NATIVE** Sarah Jane McMahon has garnered international acclaim as a stellar soprano. She has performed opera alongside renowned tenor Placido Domingo, as well as Christmas concerts with the San Fran-

cisco Symphony and the Shreveport Symphony. She has dedicated an album of sacred music to Katrina survivors, created her own unique take on old standards in a new album, and most recently starred in the New Orleans

## ▼ AT A GLANCE

**Profession:** Multi-talented vocalist; **Born/raised:** New Orleans; **Family:** Husband Brandon, three-year-old daughter Caroline, one-year-old son Charles; **Education:** St. Mary's Dominican High School, Bachelor's degree from Loyola University, Master of Music from Yale University; **Recently read:** *The Adventures of Fancy Nancy* ("to my daughter!"); **Favorite TV show:** *Steppin' Out*; **Favorite food:** PJ's Decaf Mocha Velvet Ice; **Favorite restaurant:** Ye Olde College Inn; **Hobby:** Cooking.

Opera production of *Faust*. Her next stage appearance will be the lead female role in the world premiere of the opera *Everest* at the Dallas Opera in May.

But with all of her vocal and performance acclaim, it is perhaps her role as "mom" to her two young children that has created the most challenge and reward.

**Q: What is a typical day like for you as a working mom?** I'm fortunate to have the best of both worlds. When I'm home [in New Orleans], I get to spend a lot of time with my children. We start our days early and have family time. Three or four days a week, when I am in town, I sing at funerals, so I may go and perform, which is both rewarding and difficult. In the afternoon, I spend time with my vocal coach and practicing for upcoming roles. In the evening, my husband and I make a point of doing an activity with the children, whether it's going to the park or just

going for a walk in the neighborhood.

**Q: How do you connect with your kids while balancing travel and work?**

When I am travelling, we do a lot of Facetime. I have been fortunate to have lots of help from my parents and my in-laws, so I do not have to worry so much about their care. I know they are in the best hands. I could not have this career without their help. When I am home, I am lucky to have a flexible schedule, so when my three-year-old asks for playtime, I can say yes.

**Q: What has surprised you most about being a mom?**

I have been really surprised at how much fun it's been, and how much I love spending time with them. Both of my children make me laugh so much. It has been such a joy to listen to what they say and see how they develop.

**Q: As a working mom, how do you find "you time?"**

I don't always find time, honestly. I am so impressed by other working moms and all they are able to get done. But then, when I think about it, the days pass so quickly, and I see how fast they are growing up, I just try and enjoy each moment that I have with them. Their daily successes are a great reward.

**Q: How do your children describe your "job?"** My daughter doesn't really understand it completely yet; she mainly sees me perform on television when I am singing at the Cathedral. She asks me when I am leaving for work if I am going to 'sing in church' today. I have

even caught her pretending to be me, and announcing that she is getting ready to go sing at a funeral. I don't think they have any friends at school whose parent sings or is a performer, but to them it's normal.

**Q: What music do you listen to with your children?**

Unfortunately, I don't know a lot of music other than classical, so they love it when we have a dance party and my husband is the deejay. We listen to everything from show tunes to country to classic; it's very well rounded. I'm learning about different music with them!

**Q: How do you celebrate Mother's Day?**

I couldn't be a mother without the love and support of my mother (and mother-in-law), so we spend Mother's Day celebrating and honoring them for all they do and have done for us! That usually means I'll sing my mother's favorite hymns at Mass at St. Louis Cathedral, and then we gather for an extended family celebration. ■

**▼ TRUE CONFESSION**

*My father didn't know if my music career was going to pan out, so, being a good father, he had me plan for a back up career. If Placido Domingo had not called and given my career a kick-start, I was fully prepared to attend dental school. If things had not worked out, I would be singing to my patients.*

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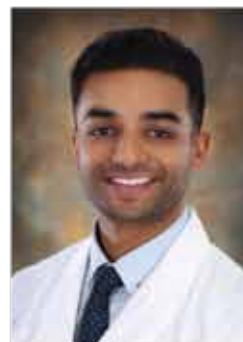
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