

# Marsh a true flower of Scotland

By **JOSHUA OSTROFF**  
Ottawa Sun

Sometimes life is like a fairy tale, filled with mournful tragedy and yet still having a happy ending.

Such is the life of local singer/songwriter Michaela Foster Marsh.

"I've kind of kept a fairly low profile here. I was very tentative about coming out with my music and whether the public would take me seriously," says the slightly self-conscious Marsh, 31, her voice still a tag of a childhood spent in Glasgow, Scotland.

Marsh's CD release party — for her debut album *Fairy Tales & the Death of Innocence* — at Barrymore's tonight will be only her second performance since the album came out in June.

Despite writing songs and playing piano since she was a child, Marsh's music career is very recent, emerging only after her

brother's death four years ago.

"I'd written a song for Frankie and wanted to record it for my family. I tried to make a home recording, which didn't go very well, so I booked some studio time. I recorded it very quickly and Steve the engineer said: 'Why don't use your time and record some more of your songs?'"

"The studio called me back and said: 'We can't believe you're not in music.' I said I never thought anyone would take me seriously. I just sit at home and write songs."

Realizing people just might take her seriously, Marsh got over her apprehension and started working on some demo recordings. Before she knew it, she had won a couple of songwriting competitions and received funding for a full-length album.

But, as in a dark fairy tale, tragedy struck once again.

"The album took a lot longer than we expected because in the

middle of it my father died and I had to go back to Scotland," says Marsh, in the matter-of-fact tone of someone who has recently emerged from grief.

The timing of her father's death — a Church of Scotland minister who contracted hepatitis C from infected blood during open heart surgery — was particularly poignant as Marsh had included two of his songs on the album.

"I think he knew time was short so he sent me some (songs). I decided it would be really nice to put it on the album as a tribute to him. I was in Toronto and said: 'Can we quickly produce these songs because he was not very well?' But we had no idea how sick he was."

So she recorded the songs and was getting ready to mail them to Scotland when her producer suggested she first listen to the tape.

As fate would have it, a harsh snow storm left Marsh struggling to get back to Ottawa and she for-

got the cassette in her pocket.

"I got home and Gerry (her husband) said to me I got a call that my dad might not make it through the night, that I had to go home.

"I got on a plane as soon as I could and when I arrived I still had the tape in my pocket. He lasted 'til I got home and he was able to hear the song — he wasn't able to respond — but we know that he heard the song."

Marsh returned to Ottawa after the funeral and eventually completed her album — a collection of melancholy yet uplifting songs addressing issues of spirituality, mortality and the role of fairy tales.

For tonight's performance, Marsh will be joined by a string quartet and her cheering mother (who flew in from Scotland for the occasion). Her opening acts will be local songwriter Michael Geraghty and Christine Graves.