

# Q & A

## LISA CASSIDY

HEAVEN  
& HELL



The international soprano, Lisa Cassidy, is based in Norwich. Since graduating from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, she is a regular guest soloist with The Voice Project Choir and is delighted to be performing their new work '... And is this a Dream?' with them at St Mary's Works Norwich on November 30.

Here Lisa talks to Gina Long.

**What is your connection to East Anglia?**

I was born here. In my early childhood, I was raised in the Middle East, in Bahrain. But I came back and settled here because East Anglia is so fabulous.

**What is your East Anglian Heaven ie what do you love most about East Anglia?**

I think the people in East Anglia are very warm and open-minded! I also, of course, love those wild, open skies and the fact that the sea is so near!

**What is your East Anglian Hell ie what you hate most about living here?**

Hell is quite a strong word! I wouldn't say that I hate anything.. but sometimes the cost of a ticket to London causes chagrin!

**What's your favourite East Anglian restaurant?**

It's tough because I love dining out and there are so many fabulous restaurants in East Anglia. In Norwich though, a hot favourite for it's easy-going bohemian atmosphere is The Bicycle Shop.

**What's your favourite way to spend an East Anglian evening?**

Singing in one of our fabulous venues!

**What's your favourite East Anglian landmark?**

That's tricky as, once again, there are so many! But I think I'll have to go for the Norfolk Broads. Nature shows us the way back to ourselves.

**What's the best thing that**

**happens in East Anglia every year?**

Christmas of course...Norwich just sparkles. But also, every day of the year, Norwich Market. So many new food stalls have sprung up (back to food!)

**What your specialist Mastermind subject?**

Well, I'm not sure if this would be one, but for me it would have to be Vocal Technique... I have spent half my life studying it and it never gets boring. Also, as with all art, it is never complete.

**What is always in your fridge?**

Cheese!

**What's your simple philosophy of life?**

I suppose one of the simplest for me is 'Be aware'. Noticing what is going on, inside and out, is the key to living in the present. If I had to give a quote to go with it I might pick, 'The object isn't to make art. It's to be in that wonderful state that makes art inevitable' from Robert Henri.

**What's your favourite film?**

That changes all the time! I recently re-watched 'Jeff who lives at home', which is a rather surprising and remarkable film (I'm a big 're-watcher' ..I love noticing detail. Maybe that's another reason why I enjoy singing so much!) But the Merchant Ivory, 'A Room with a View' and the Coen brothers 'The Big Lebowski' also rank pretty high (I'm always trying to be more 'Dude')!

**What was your first job?**

Washing my mother's car! I was

**RIGHT:**  
Lisa says we are  
lucky to live here in  
East Anglia Picture:  
SARAH MULLENGER





**RIGHT:**  
Lisa's most treasured  
possession? Her  
imagination... Picture:  
ALISTAIR WILLIMONT



too small but most determined!  
Two feet of it became very clean.

**What is your most treasured possession?**  
My imagination.

**Who do you admire most?**  
Barack Obama is pretty up there!  
What a speaker. I love his mixture of honour, humour and strength.

**What is your biggest indulgence?**  
Time. I love having space.

**What do you like about yourself most?**  
My sense of perseverance. Being a singer is not always the easiest path to tread. Every time you perform it's like you're offering a little part of yourself for the possible chop!

**What's your worst character trait?**  
Occasional despair! Link that in with a highly tuned sense of the dramatic and you not infrequently have dark fireworks.

**Where is your favourite holiday destination?**  
I love things both nearby and far away. Locally, I would say that a great joy is hiring a wee canoe at Outney meadow. Throw in a bottle of wine and a packet of Kettle Chips and I'm away! Further afield, I love Italy. Florence and Triora are both so atmospheric and magical, in their different ways.

**Best day of your life?**  
Arrgh—this singling out is hard! I would say that one of my best experiences was the day I sang Poulenc's one woman, tragic opera, 'La voix humaine'. It is acknowledged as one of the hardest pieces you can sing (all in French too!) and is profoundly moving. Leaving the stage after that beauty was definitely a zappy moment!

**What's your favourite breakfast?**  
Bacon and scrambled eggs (organic if possible!!)

**What's your favourite tipple?**  
Easy - Red Wine.

**What's your hidden talent?**  
Dancing - I love it.

**When were you most embarrassed?**

Do you know what...? Coming from a rather flamboyant family (and therefore being trained early on not to get embarrassed) and being a singer, which often involves warming up to animal noises (!) I don't think I get embarrassed. Next time I leave the bathroom with my dress tucked into my knickers I'll let you know!

**What's your earliest memory?**  
Bare feet on tarmac and my dear Granny picking tiny stones out of the soles of my feet with a needle. Not fun.

**What song would you like played at your funeral?**  
'Let's face the music and dance!' ... but ask me next week and it might be the first movement of Ravel's string quartet in f Major. Early days though!

**Tell us something people don't know about you?**  
I admire vegetarians!

**What's the worst thing anyone has ever said to you?**  
After a concert a very friendly chap said, 'What do you do for a living?' ...!

**Tell us why you live here?**  
Because it is beautiful, peaceful, sophisticated and thriving. We are some of the luckiest people in the world.

**What do you want to tell our readers about most?**  
Well, maybe it would be to keep supporting classical music and great projects like The Voice Project - even to join in! Other than that, I might return to a favourite Chinese proverb 'Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are.'

The 140 voices and soloists of Norwich's multi award-winning Voice Project Choir perform '... And is this a Dream?' on Saturday 30 November at 5.30pm, 7.15pm and 9pm at St Mary's Works in Norwich.

For full details of the concerts and tickets along and for information on all the Voice Project's activities visit [www.voiceproject.co.uk](http://www.voiceproject.co.uk)