

curtain up



Wayne Sleep and Samantha Barks in Cabaret

# Cabaret

I'd Do Anything's Samantha Barks is feeling nervous ahead of Cabaret's UK tour, writes **Lalayan Baluch**

Samantha Barks is to play Sally Bowles in the UK tour of Cabaret, and for the 17-year-old I'd Do Anything finalist, it is a daunting prospect.

The show – which has won multiple awards including 13 Tonys, eight Oscars and seven Baftas since its 1966 Broadway premiere and 1972 film version with Liza Minnelli – will be Barks' first professional engagement since she came third on the BBC1 talent search.

She told *The Stage*: "A role like Sally Bowles is a dream and I am thrilled to get it because it is so demanding. Acting is a really strong part of this role, which I am really excited about. I think it will help me because I am just starting out – I think it will hopefully improve me.

"I love Sally's feistiness and you can have a lot of fun with her. She is a little bit all over the place and a little bit complex. It is really nice to explore her different layers. It is definitely going to be a challenge – it is an iconic part. It is scary to take on something like this, but it is really exciting

the rewards you get from it."

In preparation, she has been researching the historical context of the show, which is set in Berlin on the eve of the Nazis' rise to power, as well as taking German lessons.

She is also getting accustomed to her racy costume of corset and stockings, and her new short bobbed hairstyle.

"The costumes are lovely. In a role like this where she is so different from me, to wear something like his automatically gets you into the look. I had really long wavy hair and I went to the hairdressers and she just took it in one go, and it was all there on the floor. It's brilliant, I feel more and more like Sally," she said.

Barks gave up her place at London drama school Arts Ed to appear on I'd Do Anything. However, as well as providing her with opportunities that she would not have otherwise had – including meeting and working with Minnelli – she believes the programme was a good way to prepare her for a show like Cabaret.

She explained: "The programme was so strenuous, it was like doing the whole drama school thing. It taught me so much because I had phenomenal coaches, so I really improved. The times when you are getting criticised in front of the nation are so hard, because you've gone out there and given it your best, but it is really good preparation. Now when I get nervous in everyday situations, I think hang on, think of what you've achieved."

*The tour of Cabaret opens on August 29 at Birmingham Repertory Theatre*

## Variety acts to compete for TV wedding gig

Exclusive

by **Matthew Hemley**

Professional variety artists will battle it out for the chance to provide entertainment for a celebrity wedding as part of a new television talent show set to be screened this year.

Called Help! I Need a Wedding Entertainer, the six-part series will see the celebrity couple audition hundreds of variety performers at a London theatre next month to find one that will perform at their celebrations in 2009.

The winning act is expected to feature in coverage of the wedding by *OK! Magazine*.

Artists are being urged to attend the auditions, which will be broadcast as part of

the series on satellite channel Wedding TV, which called it its answer to The X Factor and Britain's Got Talent.

However, executive producer Simon Withington told *The Stage* he was looking for established acts, rather than amateur performers.

Withington, a former ITV producer, said: "We want proper acts on this show – people who have been on the circuit for a long time and who want to showcase their talent. I feel there is no place for these people on television at the moment and what I want to do is create a platform where we can have traditional good old-fashioned entertainment brought back on to TV."

He also said the show would not seek to intimidate acts or

embarrass those who take part and described the series as a "nice, traditional entertainment show".

Withington revealed that the couple getting married are former Big Brother contestants Grace Adams-Short and Mikey Dalton. The pair will preside over the auditions on September 22-23, which will be held at a London theatre, details to be confirmed.

Withington said the show was part of a commitment the channel – established in 2006 by former Radio Luxembourg DJ Tony Prince – has to providing original programming based on the themes of relationships and romance.

Further details about how to take part can be found at [www.weddingtv.com](http://www.weddingtv.com).

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