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## Singer digs deep to create Patsy Cline

### Ardent fan portrays country legend in musical play

Emma Downs | August 12, 2011

Ashley [Rose] is a big Patsy Cline fan. "Huge, really," she says, which may sound unusual for a person born and raised in small-town New Jersey.

Nevertheless, [Rose] was drawn to Cline's twangy, lonesome voice and heartbreaking lyrics from an early age. It doesn't matter whether you're from Tennessee or Connecticut; Cline breaks all the boundaries, [Rose] says.

"It's the sound of her voice," she says. "The richness of it, the lows. You can tell who she was just by listening to the lyrics. Love, cheating, heartbreak. Everyone can relate to that."

This month, [Rose] will take on the role of the iconic country singer in "Always... Patsy Cline" at Wagon Wheel Theatre in Warsaw. The play, which runs Wednesday to Aug. 27, is based on the true story of Cline's friendship with a fan, Louise Seger, and the relationship the two formed as pen pals from 1961 to 1963.

Cline died in a plane crash in 1963 at age 30.

"It was an unusual relationship," [Rose] says. "If someone went up to Britney Spears today, told her they were a huge fan and said, 'Come home with me! Be my friend!' they'd be considered a creepy stalker."

"But Patsy was a trusting person, a giving person. She made an immediate connection with this woman, realized how much this woman loved her, and wanted to give something back to her."

The play features more than 20 of Cline's hits, including "I Fall to Pieces", "Walking After Midnight" and "Crazy". [Rose] wasn't familiar with the play or any of the biographical movies about Cline, such as the 1985 Jessica Lange film "Sweet Dreams" but she already knew most of the songs.

"'Crazy' is one of my all-time favorite songs," she says. "But I didn't want to watch (Jessica Lange's) performance. I wanted to develop my own interpretation of who (Cline) was."

Landing the role of one of country music's biggest stars was slightly daunting for [Rose], especially when it came to learning to imitate Cline's vocals, phrasing and performance style.

"She wasn't a spectacle performer," [Rose] says. "She used her voice. So I listened to music and watched live performances on YouTube. I was driving my friends and family crazy trying to get her twang into my voice."

But the greatest tool available to [Rose] was Cline's lyrics, she says. Listening to her songs provided a wealth of information about Cline's emotional life.

"The lyrics tell a huge story," [Rose] says. "You listen to them and you can imagine what her life was like in the 1950's and 60's. What it was like to be a woman, a mother, a wife, an artist. I can experience her life as a singer. But I can also experience her heartbreak through her music. We all can."