

# Conductor leads the action for 'Music in Motion'

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COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Conductor, musician, and vocalist Lisa McDaniel Foltz will never forget the first time she conducted the Big Bend Community Orchestra. After leading Sibelius' "Finlandia," one member brought a smile to her face as she shared just how exciting the performance had been for her. Another moment came after one of BBCO's unique offerings where during a concert piece attendees aged twelve and younger could come up and sit with the musicians.

Foltz fondly recalls a conversation with a grandmother who told her how her grandson was inspired to take piano lessons after sitting by the piano soloist on stage. Now as the BBCO's Associate Conductor, Foltz works hard to continue introducing exciting programs during the annual season alongside Conductor Dr. Shelby Chipman. Aligning herself with the orchestra's mission to serve the Tallahassee community, she strongly believes in music's power to reach out to any willing ear.

"You can often say things through music that are often difficult or impossible to put into words," states Foltz. "I also think you can touch people's hearts in ways that you can't always do in words alone. It also brings people together who wouldn't necessarily come together for any other reason either in performing the music or listening to the music."

The Big Bend Community Orchestra presents its "Music in Motion" concert at 3:30 p.m. Nov. 6 at Lee Hall at Florida A&M University.

Kicking off BBCO's 2016-2017 season, Foltz found the theme for its upcoming performance after programming many of the selections. Sanders' "Saturday Night: A Barn Dance" and Gould's "Latin American Sym-



Lisa Foltz conducts the Big Bend Community Orchestra.



Foltz

phonette" relate to motion in the dance sense, whereas the Weber and Beethoven works were seminal in moving forward a whole genre of sound.

Foltz had always been surrounded by music in her childhood home. She took part in church plays and choirs from toddlerhood, and her mother, an organist for their church, kept a piano in the house. Foltz taught herself basic piano techniques by sight reading, or playing new material without prior practice. Around age 14, she played duets with her mother in church, and was employed as a part-time pianist and organist from that point forwards.

Her experiences singing in church choirs came to the forefront as she chose to double major in political science and music with concentrations in organ and voice at Jacksonville University. She felt especially fortunate to learn under the tutelage of Dr. John O. Carlson, whose influential rehearsal skills and singing techniques pushed her to become a more accomplished vocalist and performer.

"Performing is the cherry on top of what you've been putting all the hard work in for," says Foltz. "It's a wonderful opportunity to share with others the thing that you love and something



## If you go

**What:** Big Bend Community Orchestra presents "Music in Motion"

**When:** 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 6

**Where:** Lee Hall, Florida A&M University, 1601 MLK, Jr. Blvd S.

**Cost:** Free Admission

**Contact:** For more information, visit [www.BBCOorch.org](http://www.BBCOorch.org) or [www.facebook.com/BigBendCommunityOrchestra](http://www.facebook.com/BigBendCommunityOrchestra). All inquiries on getting involved with BBCO may be emailed to [info@BBCOorch.org](mailto:info@BBCOorch.org)

they may not be familiar with or have ever heard before. It can be opening up a whole new world for people and that's a joy and privilege to get to do that."

Though it wasn't her primary source of income, Foltz maintained positions as a part-time organist and traveled nationally and internationally as a vocalist with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus and Chamber Chorus for 14 seasons.

Over a decade later of dividing her time between the business world and music, she felt it was time to pursue her graduate education and return to Tallahassee. Foltz developed a love for conducting through singing choral master works with an orchestra, and so with the guidance of her

mentor at FSU, Dr. Andre Thomas, she began her Master of Music in Choral Conducting.

Just last year she spent four weeks in Romania conducting for both the Orchestral and Choral Masterworks Institutes on four concerts.

"I like to get in as much playing experience as I can," states Foltz as the instrumental experience aids her in conducting certain sections. "My professor also suggested I take a dance class as it helps with the fluidity of motion, timing, and expression. You can also glean quite a bit from observing orchestral rehearsals, which helps with hearing the different colors and how things go together when you're setting the scores, as well as repertoire, gesture, and podium speak."

Foltz has stayed active in the Tallahassee community as an educator at four elementary schools, adjudicator and presenter, and continued performing with organizations such as the Thursday Night Music Club, the Tallahassee Community Chorus, and the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra. She sees many transfers between her experiences as a singer and conductor, such as breath, musical meaning, emotion, and feeling the phrasing or pulse of a piece.

Conducting with Big Bend Community Orchestra for three seasons, Foltz loves working with a variety of musicians from every conceivable age, ability, and background — students from TCC, FAMU, FSU, retired and current teachers, professors, lawyers, administrators — and is always looking for new members. Meeting with them once a week, she employs a variety of rehearsal techniques isolating sections, asking members to sing their parts, and sometimes working backward by starting at the end of a musical work.

"I love all of the dif-

ferent colors and combinations of sounds with the orchestra," says Foltz. "The musicians are there because they want to be there and they enjoy playing, and that's ultimately why I'm there. I enjoy making us the best we can be and believe strongly in challenging people to do more than they think they can do."

Curious and analytical in selecting repertoire, she questions what old pieces of music would be fresh and new to audiences, and also which pieces would challenge the orchestra and push them to become better musicians. She and Dr. Chipman also solicit suggestions from members. Such is the case for the Albinoni work, suggested by principal trumpet player, Dr. Charles Baker, which will be performed in their Nov. 6

concert, "Music in Motion."

While the orchestra looks forward to playing once more, Foltz hopes attendees who might know the BBCO members in a different setting, will get to know the whole person through their music.

"It's really important to see the potential in people," says Foltz. "I always value everybody because you need a lot of the vibrancy and energy you get from the younger players and you also need the wisdom, support, and steadfastness of the older generation. I like to look for the possibilities, and try to pass that on to others in the way of leadership and encouragement, working alongside colleagues to make something bigger and better together."



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