



FSU singers join with audience members in a sing-along performance of Handel's "Messiah" at Faith Presbyterian Church. The annual event is sponsored by the Tallahassee Music Guild. PHIL SEARS/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT FILES

'Christmas is complete'

Sing-Along Messiah ushers in joy of the season

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

Soprano Doris Pollock lifts up her voice in joy and praise. As a former education and training officer with the U.S. Air Force, her voice has never wavered. She traveled to Libya, Turkey, Greece, Pakistan and Tehran with volunteer military choirs, allowing music to be a constant source of comfort and companionship in her life.

"I wanted to travel and see the world," says Pollock, who took part in traditional circle dances in Turkey and enjoyed hearing new instruments in each country.

When she's not in the mix of her local and church choirs, she's providing space for music and organizing events. Pollock served as president of the Tallahassee Symphony Society for two years and joined the Tallahassee Music Guild in the early 2000s.

She's been involved with organizing TMG's "Sing-Along Messiah" for 12 years as publicity chair and is looking forward to the upcoming event on Tuesday, Dec. 3.

Composer George Frideric Handel created the "Messiah" oratorio in 1741. Originally performed during Easter, it has become a staple of the Christmas season. It is divided into three parts, with its most iconic section being the "Hallelujah" chorus, which Pollock enjoys hearing sung by attendees.

"The singing of the 'Hallelujah' Chorus tells of the coming of the Lord, which in present day to me means bringing the hope, peace, and joy of Christmas," says Pollock. "After hearing that chorus sung, I feel as though my Christmas is complete."



Audience participants follow along in the songbook during a sing-along performance of Handel's "Messiah." PHIL

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‘Messiah’

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Pollock secures the venue — which has been the Faith Presbyterian Church for 31 years — and selects the director each year. This year’s music director Lisa M. Foltz will conduct the “Sing-Along Messiah.” Soloists include organists Nathaniel Brown and Adam Ravain, pianists Joanna Sobkowska-Parsons and Olivia Ahyoung, trumpeter Longineu Parsons, and singers Alexandra Halchak, Sean Landeta, and Ed Lyon.

Pollock is excited that Foltz will have two organists and pianists this year as they are the leaders for the evening and she believes they will add new dimension to the performance. In addition to Handel, Pollock’s favorite composers are Beethoven and Chopin, though she is equally a fan of country greats Johnny Cash and Dolly Parton.

“Country music can be just as spiritual as Handel’s music,” says Pollock. “It is based on the bible so that makes it very special.”

Pollock’s family made their own music recordings growing up. She recalls hearing her mother and uncle singing folk favorites like “Shrimp Boats Are A-Coming.” Though as a youngster she would have rather played baseball than practice piano, Pollock loved choir and was performing alongside adults by age 12.

She credits her elementary school music program in Portland, Oregon, for encouraging her love of vocal music. She attended college for elementary education and taught for a short time before joining the Air Force. In Tallahassee, she returned to teaching at Kate Sullivan and Sealey elementary schools and joined the Tallahassee Community Chorus.

“It’s just fun because when you sit down you might not know anybody, but before the practice is over you know your



Scholarship winners from the 2018 Sing-Along Messiah. GINNY DENSMORE



Doris Pollock, third from left in front row, and singers at the 2018 Sing-Along Messiah held at Faith Presbyterian Church. LISA FOLTZ

If you go

What: Tallahassee Music Guild’s Sing-Along Messiah Concert

When: 7-9:30 p.m., Tuesday, Dec. 3

Where: Faith Presbyterian Church, 2200 N. Meridian Rd

Cost: Suggested donation \$10 for adults, \$5 for children

Contact: For more information please call 850-893-5274 or visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/1327142577440751/>.

neighbors and you’re singing songs you’ve never sung before,” says Pollock. “It’s a very social art form to be in musical groups.”

A skilled sight-reader, Pollock compares choir singing to being an actor that always holds their script in front of them. While vocalists can memorize their parts, she prefers to hold her music close, a number of scores filling her choir book. She continues to take part in her local church choir every Sunday as well.

“In our church choir if the congregation really likes our singing they clap,” says Pollock. “You feel like you’re on stage all

the time. It’s nice too to know that they really appreciate the songs and when you see the joy on everyone’s face, you can tell they’ve been lifted up.”

As a music event organizer, she feels a similar camaraderie with her fellow volunteers, and has spearheaded everything from fashion show fundraisers to white elephant sales to benefit music programs in the city. All proceeds from TMG’s “Sing-Along Messiah” provide scholarships to FSU and FAMU music students and for the Tallahassee Youth Orchestras. Pollock says this year they will provide 18

scholarships.

In addition to purchasing tickets for “Messiah,” attendees are encouraged to rent a \$10 music score to contribute to this fund. Singing participants are divided into sections based on soprano, tenor, alto, or baritone, and will be conducted by Foltz.

A reception follows the main event, where Pollock hopes attendees will join TMG for drinks, food and spontaneous Christmas caroling around the piano. This continued fellowship gives Pollock a great sense of fulfillment as a musician.

“You have a sense of belonging and providing something for someone’s soul,” says Pollock. “It can be very emotional depending on your state of mind while you’re listening. It might remind them of their family, their mother or father, a happy time or a sad time. You never know who you might inspire or help by singing certain songs.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area’s umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

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