



VOCES CALLING

**DONNA WALKER DRAWN TO SING WITH
SOPHISTICATED ANGELORUM CHOIR**

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

“It was very important to me that I could still be a musician even if I didn’t make my living doing it,” says singer Donna Walker. “It doesn’t mean that you are not still an artist.” ■ For Walker, singing is a part of her identity regardless of the positions she has held over the years. Currently, she serves as the Assistant Supervisor at Lawrence–Gregory Community Center at Dade Street where she also teaches pottery classes. ■ Walker is also in her third season with Voces Angelorum, which will present their holiday choral concert at the Goodwood Museum and Gardens on Tuesday, Dec. 17. She compares the rigor it takes to train and be a good musician to her creative process with clay.



Walker

See WALKER, Page 4C

**Voces Angelorum will be singing Tuesday, Dec. 17, at Goodwood Museum,
where this photo was taken during a recent Christmas season. COLIN HACKLEY**

Walker

Continued from Page 1C

"I wanted to do bowls immediately but my bowls were terrible," says Walker. "Then I spoke to my teacher and she asked if I had done the preliminary work making cylinders. It's all about not skipping stages in development or drills because those give you the tools you need to be expressive."

Music enticed Walker from a young age. At 5 years old, her parents discovered her musical voice when they caught her singing along to a "Fantasia" record. From that point on, her father would make a Saturday morning ritual out of teaching Walker new songs, his baritone accompanying her young voice on the guitar.

Walker also caught the ears of her second grade teachers when she sang an old Irish song, "Say A Little Prayer," and cemented her place in school choirs. Her New York City neighbors were mentors and musicians as well — renowned harpist with the Met Orchestra Reinhardt Elster and music teacher Nancy Elster. Both encouraged her training and even offered to help her rehearse for a high school production.

"I can remember laughing in rehearsal with [Reinhardt] because he was so wonderful," says Walker. "It was like pulling a wagon. Wherever you were [vocally] that's where he was, too."

Though she didn't major in music, Walker studied at Queens College where she sang with the opera workshop class. Her main stage roles included Emily Dickinson one-act chamber opera "A Letter to Emily," and Papageno in Mozart's "The Magic Flute." After graduation she joined the Canticum Novum Singers, an elite chamber choir that performs in many of New York City's major concert halls and abroad.

The Canticum Novum Singers allowed her to improve her sight-reading as Walker continued to study voice. Walker was given the opportunity to sing for music theorist Carl Schachter and still reels from his compliment on her "natural understanding of harmony." Her second brush with fame was when Broadway star Gregory Hines judged a talent show at a community center where she was working in therapeutic recreation.

"I sang 'Cry Me A River' and he came up to me afterward and said, 'Lady, you can sing,'" laughs Walker.

With Voces Angelorum, Walker says



Music Director Scott Leaman leads Voces Angelorum as they perform at the Goodwood Museum and Gardens.

JOE RONDONE/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT FILES

If you go

What: Voces Angelorum Holiday Concert

When: 7-9 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 17

Where: Goodwood Museum and Gardens, 1600 Miccosukee Road

Cost: \$25

Contact: For more information, call 850-510-5908 or visit <http://www.vocestally.org/>.

that keeping her vocal cords healthy has been a top priority. Once a soprano, she is now embracing her parts as an alto in the chorus and feels that experience has made her a better singer. She believes that every piece is a chance to step into someone else's shoes and embody the lyrics fully to express the emotional range of the music.

"When you're singing you have a lyric that will inform your musical sense of line, color and texture," says Walker. "It is kind of like method acting and always an immersion."

Walker first entered the Tallahassee music scene in 2000. She joined the Tallahassee Community Chorus and at-



Voces Angelorum will perform on Tuesday. TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT FILES

tended a Voces concert shortly afterward. She was immediately impressed by the group's artistry and asked to join. Walker says she enjoys the intimate atmosphere where she feels challenged by the intricate music and sophistication of the repertoire, and especially enjoys the ability to work closely with her colleagues and conductor, Scott Leaman.

"You have to be on your toes," says Walker. "Your artistry matters and you are giving a greater portion to the product."

Walker has been rehearsing with Voces every week since the beginning of September for the upcoming Holiday Concert. Attendees will be invited to

stroll around the Goodwood Museum grounds and main house starting at 5:30 p.m. Voces Angelorum's performance will then begin in the Carriage House at 7 p.m. The ticket price includes a complimentary wine bar and light snacks.

Walker is most looking forward to singing a composition by Andrea Ramsey, "Jesu," which is based on a short, Latin poem. Sun in two parts with light piano, she says the simplicity of the piece is what makes it a "gem." The group will also perform choruses from Handel's "Messiah" and many Christmas carols from around the world. Walker's love for complex music scores motivates her to transcend all previous performances and she feels ready to share her joy of music with audiences this season.

"Your friends are there and they see a different side of you," says Walker. "I have some people coming to the concerts that don't know me in this way and don't know what I can do. It is always fun when you can surprise people and it makes you proud to be able to pull it off."

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).