



The "Joyful Sounds" Choir, directed by Margaret Carter, in concert.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Carter leads 'Joyful Sounds'

By Kathryn Hall Bogle

When it's music - music! music!
It's likely to be the "Joyful Sounds" you hear. The choir with the great sounds that do melting things to your very soul.

"Joyful Sounds" always sings a cappella as this choir comes of the Church of Christ and no Church of Christ has instrumental music in church. They just sing joyfully with all their hearts.

Joyful Sounds director Margaret Carter, herself a lyric soprano, lifts her chin characteristically, lifts her arms, gives a twist of her wrist and with her slender fingers literally and magically strokes the air and produces shadings of notes from tender whisperings to power-filled crescendos.

With music she is in her element. This Margaret Carter.

And why not? She's been singing in public since she was five years old. Her father was preaching in a little Baptist church near Shreveport, Louisiana. From the pulpit he asked for volunteers from his congregation to join church and to sing. Margaret left her place in the family pew and offered herself.

Margaret believed God wanted her.

Father, surprised and happy, quickly located an apple box for Margaret to stand on and be seen. Margaret gave forth with "A Charge to Keep I Have." It was great.

She's been singing ever since. Well, not quite ever since. There was a period of ten years when she was juggling her family of five children, a faulty marriage, her college education and a paying job. There was hardly time to sing.

In her girlhood days Margaret sang at practically everyone of her school functions. She began piano lessons at age 10. By the time she was 15, she was pianist in a Baptist church - the star pupil of Ophelia Calloway Fisher.

In high school, Margaret and her eight brothers and sisters, all musical, played and sang at every chance.

Margaret was a member of the "Mt. Calvary Singers" in Shreveport, the first Black group to sing on radio and TV in Shreveport.

Arkansas and Texas.

After high school came an enriched two years of music education at Grambling College. She loved it there but Margaret also fell in love, left college and got married. The music "quiet" period began then.

A move to Portland on impulse - five children and no job. A lesser woman may have been shattered. Margaret was dismayed but undaunted. Her philosophy is to pick herself up. She says, feminist that she is, "Women are moving or they are not!"

Carter gives gratitude and credit for help in that cramped situation to Portlander Martha Jordan. "Martha Jordan found a job for me in 1968. She found an opening for me as a teacher aide at King School. That was a beginning for me. My first break. Thank you, Martha Jordan."

Carter went on to work and go to school and to be the one parent to her children. Between 1967 and 1978 Carter earned her degree in Elementary Education at Portland Community College, her Masters degree from Oregon State University, plus she completed some graduate classes at Washington State.

Currently, Margaret Carter is a Career Counselor at PCC. Behavioral Orientation is her strong interest. She has offices at both the Sylvania and Cascade Centers.

And she is singing again. Joyful Sounds was formed in 1978. The Reverend Frank Richardson asked Carter to act as director for the Piedmont Church of Christ at that time. (The Reverend William Hunter, assistant minister at Piedmont is Margaret Carter's brother) Over at Mallory Church of Christ they have a choir that is a part of "Joyful Sounds."

In Seattle, the Southside Church of Christ and the Madison Park Church of Christ decided to place themselves under the direction of Margaret Carter.

Carter now travels to Seattle twice a month to rehearse the Seattle group. Once a month the choirs rehearse together in either city or they may meet halfway for a singing session. At present the augmented choir, called the "Pacific Northwest

Crusaders," numbers 52 members, all devoted persons giving their talents to a singing ministry.

Margaret Carter explains that the group accepts no money for profit. Says she, "It's all ministry and it's all part of doing the community effort - things I believe in." The choir does accept donations, however, to help pay expenses.

Typical member of the augmented choir is: Gloria Broom, a Seattle soprano who joined the choir two months ago through Kenneth McCoy, director of the Seattle Choir. Ms. Broom studied voice at Cornish School of Music.

There is Carolyn Felder, an Alaskan native from Mettakarta, who sings first alto. She comes from a family of musicians where all eight children sing, and play at least one instrument. Her husband, Joseph Felder, sings bass with the group.

George Baldwin, a tenor, started with the Portland group. He hails from Valdesta, Georgia. His wife, Seona, is first soprano. There is Gloria Randolph, soprano, and Fannie Morrison, alto and Jim, Fannie's husband, who sings tenor, and Ann Taylor, a second soprano, who just happens to be sister to Margaret Carter.

The group is proudly disciplined. Carter works them hard. They practice three hours routinely. They must practice correct breathing. She makes them space their meals and sing only after light meals; they meditate; they record; and smoking is frowned upon. Carter's ear is keen and she can hear a sour note at its first utterance and will pull out the singer for an on-the-spot solo to correct the flaw. Choir members privately call Carter "Moses," but they also believe in her talent and the choir's achievement under her direction, and they are truly fond of her.

Carter admits she is a task mistress. "I'm a no compromise director. I do believe in discipline," she says firmly.

The group toured San Francisco and Milwaukee, Wisconsin last year. On Saturday, January 31, this year, the choir will sing in concert at PCC Cascade Center from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. You are invited!

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