

Written by Mike Schulz
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In the beloved Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland films of the 1930s, staging a full-length musical production seemed ridiculously easy: A bunch of talented youths would simply unite with the rallying cry “Let’s put on a show!”

Yet according to Lori Potts, director of the area vocal-jazz ensemble the Quad City Singers, her group’s inception came about just as simply – although the rallying cry, in that case, was more along the lines of “Let’s put on a concert!”

“It was really just kind of casual,” says Potts of the Quad City Singers’ 1994 beginnings. “Just friends getting together and deciding, ‘You know, we like to sing, so let’s form a group and see what happens.’”

In the 17 years since that original inspiration, what’s happened has included the group morphing from a small collective of friends (“10 or 12 people,” says Potts) singing occasional gigs to a 20-voice, not-for-profit ensemble that, this month, has performed as visiting artists at Rock Island’s 15th Avenue Christian Church and Washington, Iowa’s United Methodist Church.

On April 29, the Quad City Singers will deliver their annual, full-length springtime concert with “Swing-Time at Tanglewood,” taking place at Bettendorf’s Tanglewood Hills Pavilion. Performing with instrumental accompaniment, the group will present renditions of such enduring swing and jazz hits as “Moon River,” “Come Fly with Me,” and “Moonglow,” as well as several sacred selections, and songs with complicated six-part presentations instead of traditional four-part arrangements.

The event will also showcase the vocal talents of the numerous Quad City Music Guild veterans within its ranks, among them Nathan Bates, Sheri Brown, Chris Castle, J. Adam and Sarah Lounsberry, Kevin Pieper, Jennifer Sondgeroth, Joe Urbaitis, and Jenny Winn.

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“Our trademark style is vocal jazz,” says Winn of the Quad City Singers, with whom she has performed for 11 years, “but we’re really trying to expand beyond what we feel *comfortable* doing.”

Although Potts – a director for numerous choirs at Eldridge’s North Scott High School – left the group shortly after its 1994 origin to pursue her teaching career, she returned as the Quad City Singers’ director in 2005, and believes it’s the diversity of the musical selections that separates her ensemble from other vocal groups of its kind.

“We do quite a bit of vocal jazz,” she says, “which you don’t hear a lot in the Quad Cities. But we’ve also kind of opened up so that we do some Renaissance music, some classic choral numbers, gospel. For the spring concert, we’re also doing a little bit of a ’40s dance party, with ‘Smoke Gets in Your Eyes’ and popular dance tunes.”

Plus, she adds, “we’re also doing a fun Stevie Wonder piece – ‘Don’t You Worry About a Thing’ – which is done completely *a cappella*.”

“We have such a variety in this concert,” says Winn. “We’re doing some of our favorites – ‘Cry Me a River’ and ‘Hit Me with a Hot Note’ and ‘Beyond the Sea.’ Some of those great, classic vocal-jazz types of things. But we’re also singing another really cool piece that Lori introduced us to called ‘Jamaican Marketplace,’ and an arrangement of ‘Down to the River to Pray’ from *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

... . A lot of things that are more challenging for us – numbers where you really have to *listen* to each other.

“That’s something I was missing, definitely, after singing with the Augie Choir,” adds the 1995 Augustana College graduate, “and so it’s great to be with a group that really wants to *do that*.”

She also appreciates the opportunity to perform occasional programs for and with area students, such as April 10’s Quad City Singers engagement with the members of the Rock Island High School Chamber Choir.

... And All That (Vocal) Jazz: The Quad City Singers Perform Their Annual Spring Concert, April 29 at the T

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“That was awesome,” says Winn of the concert that showcased both ensembles. “Getting to show kids, ‘You know, this ensemble singing that you really love doing right now, you can actually *continue* to do that. Even if you’re not necessarily a musician, and it’s not your career path, you can still do it even when you’re out of school.”

The Quad City Singers’ “Swing-Time at Tanglewood” concert will be performed at the Tanglewood Hills Pavilion (4250 Middle Road in Bettendorf) at 7 p.m. on Friday, April 29. Tickets are \$20, and are available by calling Ken Hill at (309)794-0106.

For more information on the group, visit the [Quad City Singers’ Facebook page](#) , or contact director Lori Potts at lori.potts@north-scott.k12.ia.us