

10/24/06

**“A Song in My Heart”
by
Tom Holbrook**

Summer is officially gone and Fall has reared its cool, colorful head and everyone is eagerly awaiting another annual happening... the return of that non-winged elusive and effusive fowl... the Snowbird. Restaurants everywhere are gearing up by hiring more staff, teaching them to smile and rehearse their lines – “There’ll be a 20 minute wait, please put your name on the list.” If you really consider all angles of this phenomenon it’s probably healthier for you to eat an early breakfast and then schedule your dinner meal at 3:30 pm. Not only are you semi-assured of being seated immediately, your food has several hours more to begin its digestive journey prior to retiring for the evening. Enough of that.

Using the huge crowd at the Church On The Square last night as a gauge, it is obvious many of you took my advice to attend the Fall Concert of the Village Voices Choral Group, I know the two Bobsy twins were outside and said they saw it in the paper. All 140 voices were excited as they sat and watched the expressions of appreciation on your face and heard the applause you graciously awarded them. Dr. Sandra Willets, our Maestro Extraordinaire has truly invigorated the group to strive to the highest level of professionalism and “in-tune-ness” with expert knowledge of her craft and her “witty wiles of wangling which weaves us waughing.” Those sitting in the wings of the auditorium said they enjoyed her facial expressions and body gyrations almost as much as the music itself. Thanks for another fantastic performance Sandra.

With the retirement last year of our very accomplished accompanist Joanne Wimmer it was unsure who would fill that critical void. Not to worry... those who were at the concert witnessed the superb talent and abilities of our new accompanist Bill Allen who comes to the Villages from Purdue University and points north including North Lake Presby where he is the current music director. With an extensive history of choral conducting and teaching, his personality is just as sparkling as his talent and his quick wit more than matches that of Sandra’s. Thanks again Bill for being there for us, hope you hang around awhile. Isn’t it great to live in a community with so many multi-talented citizens to call upon? Speaking of talent... how about Linda Cooper and Sallie Matteson who accompanied the Voices on their flutes? Beautifully done ladies. Many thanks to all of you 700+ individuals who waited patiently for over an hour to get in the doors... we love your faithfulness in attending.

The Church on the Square is a magnificent edifice and its beautiful auditorium has been the venue for many great productions since its construction. For those of you who have stood in line, or

as you Village Brits would say, queued up, for many events only to be turned away it is apparent to many that it is becoming impractical and almost impossible to present a major musical production within the Church's walls. The Village Voices has been a growing organization but if we wished to add additional members it would be impossible to fit them on the stage. Those in charge of the Church are fantastic to work with and do everything they can to accommodate performers, but they just can't expand the walls beyond their present boundaries.

Monday night I attended the first meeting of a group that has been quietly working under the radar for the last couple of years putting together a steering committee of like minded individuals who have seen the need for a more professional facility. The Villagers Performing Arts Alliance (VPAA) is on the ground and running now, and if the response evidenced by over 250 in attendance at Monday's meeting is an indication (fittingly SRO,) there are hundreds, probably thousands, more living in our beautiful hometown who will want to be a part of its mission.

Space will not allow me to give all the details but suffice it to say the VPAA is beginning a drive to raise adequate funds to develop a Villages located, golf cart accessible, professional facility that will not only have a large 1,200+ auditorium, but two more intimate theatres with seating of 350 and/or 150 respectively. It would have capabilities of accommodating productions of the largest musical organizations in The Villages and, also, the smallest, more intimate drama or musical venues desired.

This is a large undertaking and will need the participation of all those who wish to display your talent on a professionally designed stage, or to attend a professional production, of any size, and be provided comfortable, handicap accessible, seating with a sound system guaranteeing every customer will be able not only to see the production but hear it as well. Volunteers are needed and to found how you can become involved in this great project please contact the VPAA at: E-mail: contact@villagerspaa.org; or, PO Box 2201, Lady Lake, FL 32158-2201. Paperwork is underway to incorporate as a (501 © 3) Not For Profit Organization which means your cash contributions will be tax-deductible to you and will allow anyone to participate at any dollar level.

This is an organization that is "With the Villagers, Of the Villagers and For the Villagers" and they want you to be a part of it. Help make it happen.

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