

A JOYFUL NOISE

Holiday Music Equals Magic

The Charlotte Symphony's
"Magic Of Christmas" comes to Belk Theater.

Thu., Dec. 5, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Dec. 6, 8 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 7, 2:30 and 8 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 8, 2:30 p.m.

Handel's "Messiah"
will be performed Dec. 18 at 7:30 p.m.

o you have an activity in your life that makes you happy? Perhaps dancing, knitting or gardening fills you with joy. Me? I enjoy music.

I joined the Oratorio Singers of Charlotte in 1996 just so I could sing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Learning new pieces of music gives me a sense of accomplishment, especially when they are complex. The more difficult the music, the greater the sense of accomplishment. Lucky for me, Oratorio sings many difficult pieces throughout the year.

But December is different. In December, we dust off the simpler songs that most people know and love. We polish them, sing from our hearts and create a kinship with the audience bound by the warmth of tradition.

The Charlotte Symphony's "Magic Of Christmas" concert showcases peace, beauty and love, mixed with Santa and a sleigh full of fun. I can barely breathe when the Charlotte Children's Choir sings. I get misty-eyed hearing their pure clear tones, sweet enough to make the angels smile. When the symphony plays "Sleigh Ride," there is a horse whinny so fine that I always look for the horse. So far, one hasn't turned up! The show sparkles with excitement, and I leave the stage feeling wonder at the beauty of the season.

During my first year in Oratorio, I was eager for "Messiah" rehearsals to begin. I had sung a few movements from it, but never the

majority of the work. Most of the chorus members were well versed in the piece, so just a couple of rehearsals were scheduled.

Stepping on a fast-moving train is not something I had dreamed of doing, but that's what it felt like that first year of "Messiah" rehearsals. I spent many hours at home listening to the recording, with my eyes glued to the score. I was determined to learn it. After years of singing it, Handel's masterpiece is now an old friend.

These days, I'm a retiree and feeling my age. One day, when I'm too achy to keep up this busy rehearsal schedule, I'll have to give up singing with Oratorio. That will be a tremendous loss in my life. Until then, I'll cherish every Christmas season singing music that inspires hope and fills me with happiness and sheer joy.

This year, when I go to the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in my black concert dress and Christmas earrings, it will be my 17th time singing the "Magic of Christmas," and I will delight in the joy of being among performers who love music as much as I do. We are all ages — from 22-year-olds to retirees — but age differences fade as we blend our individual voices to make something larger than ourselves. We'll strive for that glistening sound that takes us to another level. We'll find the magic.
[TCW]

TO LEARN MORE
Visit Oratoriosingers.org.