





THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY SINGING HOOSIERS: *Continuing the Legacy*

by Brandon Porter

The clock hits three thirty-five. Gossiping, catching up, and the sound of business being conducted fills the air. Eighty-five college students are making their way to their seats in MA 404. A sophomore psychology major sits in her seat quietly, trying to forget about the difficult day that she has had. A freshman political science major rejoices about having just made a date with his new crush.

The heavy metal door to the rehearsal room squeaks open and in walks the woman of the hour. "Happy Friday, Singing Hoosiers!" her singsong voice rings through the air. With just one glance at her beaming smile, all in the room cannot help but forget about the baggage of their days. In her second year as director of the Indiana University Singing Hoosiers, Ly Wilder carries on the ensemble's sixty-seven years of rich and storied tradition. The Singing Hoosiers will never forget where they have come from, but as they move into a new generation of song they look toward the future and the evolution of popular choral music and the art of show choir.

A Bit of History

The Singing Hoosiers was born in the mind and heart of an associate director of choral music named George Krueger. A giant of a man, Krueger had only been a faculty member at Indiana University for two years when he found himself at a football rally conducting the Men's Concert Choir—one of only three choral groups at what was then a fledgling School of Music. Here was a man whose choral methods had been

honored by some of the greatest musical minds of his day, committing the vibrant spirit of fifty young voices to the purpose at hand. After the cut-off, the announcer, obviously stirred by the rousing performance, shouted over the loud-speaker, "Hey, with a basketball team called the Hurrying Hoosiers, and a football team like the Fighting Hoosiers, we oughta call those guys the Singing Hoosiers!"

That was sixty-seven years ago. Today, the Singing Hoosiers has become one of the most highly respected choral ensembles in the world. The enriched educational experience of nearly four thousand Singing Hoosiers alumni has contributed leaders to every conceivable profession. Excellence, commitment, and the sheer joy of song are just a few of the gifts that have been bestowed upon each and every member that has passed through the doors of MA 404.

Only five men and women have had the pleasure of serving as director of Indiana University's Ambassadors of Song. George Krueger held the baton during the Singing Hoosiers' creation and foundation. In just a decade, he would lead the ensemble

to the forefront of the collegiate choral music stage. Performing America's Popular Music to audiences around the world, he led his students to the thrill of making music on a grander scale than most had ever imagined.

The group's popularity had grown to such an extent that it was time to welcome in Krueger's successor. Robert E. Stoll stepped up on the podium in 1963 and did not climb back down for over three decades. Under Stoll's tutelage, the ensemble grew in size and national respect and was regarded as America's Premiere Collegiate Show Choir. In the three decades under his baton, the group garnered two Grammy nominations alongside the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Erich Kunzel. The Singing Hoosiers had entertained millions in over eighteen states and more than twenty-six countries, including Europe, Australia, the Far East, and the Caribbean. The admiration and gratitude for Stoll's leadership and vision of the ensemble is palpable. Over thirty years of Singing Hoosiers alumni are indebted to this man for his vigor and passion.

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For seventeen years, the ensemble's third director, Dr. Michael L. Schwarzkopf, carried on the Singing Hoosiers tradition. At the turn of the millennium, show choir was beginning to change. The choreography became harder and vocal arrangements more sophisticated, but one thing remained the same—the educational and musical enhancement of the Singing Hoosiers experience continued to equip members with life-long advantages. The ensemble continued to experience excellence as each member of the group strived to meet the standard set by hundreds of exemplary forbearers.

A New Generation of Song

In the fall of 2012, one of the most respected vocal jazz educators, pianists, and arrangers in the country took his place at the helm of the Singing Hoosiers. Dr. Steve Zegree was chosen to carry on the ensemble's sixty years of deep tradition. Zegree was a passionate enthusiast of his art and a supreme motivator of a countless number of students; he moved the ensemble into a new realm of possibility for the future.



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Under his direction, the Singing Hoosiers took on a new look, continued to honor America's Popular Song, and stayed true to the road that had been paved for them for over six decades.

In spring 2015, the unexpected death of Zegree shook the vocal jazz world and the Singing Hoosiers family. With deep sadness but incredible gratitude, the Singing Hoosiers raised their voices to their inspiration and visionary leader. His legacy will never be forgotten, and the Singing Hoosiers continues to carry on the vision that he foresaw for its future.

Continuing the Legacy

Dr. Zegree's successor, Ly Wilder, is a highly acclaimed educator, arranger, and contemporary vocal artist. Having been both a student and colleague of Zegree's, she was the perfect match for the Singing Hoosiers to steadfastly carry on her mentor's legacy. Wilder also brings a wealth of experience working in the show choir and vocal jazz worlds. For over fifteen years, she has served as a clinician at Showchoir Camps of America and co-founded Bloomington Expressive Arts Training, a community



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educational program that specializes in show choir training. Wilder's zest for life and love for those around her is unmatched.

As each year comes and goes, the Singing Hoosiers remains committed to its sixty-seven-year-old traditions. Hem lines may have changed and the vocal arrangements might be edgier, but the love of sharing music with people from all walks of life remains constant. Today, the Singing Hoosiers continues to perform popular contemporary vocal music ranging from The Great American Songbook, jazz, Broadway, to the popular hits of the day; cutting-edge choreography combined with fun, energetic, and entertaining programming continues to appeal to audiences around the world. The Singing Hoosiers legacy is alive and eager for the future, as the ensemble continues to share their inextinguishable light with the world.

Brandon Porter is a senior Music Direction for Musical Theatre major at Indiana University. He serves as the Student Manager and Musical Assistant for the Singing Hoosiers, as well as an assistant director with Bloomington Expressive Arts Training.



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