

Prescott Singing Coach Trains Two for Bloomington Center Production



Prescott singing coach, Melyssa Rice, trained two Prescott adults, Milo and Cynthia Schield, for their singing debuts in the Alive and Kickin' ensemble which opened in the Bloomington Center for the Arts this past weekend.

Alive and Kickin' is a Senior Rock Ensemble that combines personal stories with related music and video-clips: a reality chorus. It is created, produced and directed by Michael Mathew Ferrell – a two-time Ivey award-winner. This year's production is **Making History**. It covers 24 of the key historical events of the past 90 years. Their website is www.aliveandkickinmn.com

Each ensemble member tells a personal story related to one of these events. Events include a live-tape recording from a forward firebase in Vietnam to being in the household test group for the first microwave oven, from a Jewish family's last-minute escape from Austria before WWII to one sibling sharing with another their being gay at a time when being gay was not readily accepted.

Two of the cast members in Alive & Kickin' are from Prescott. Milo and Cynthia Schield live at Eagles Point. This was the first time singing serious solos before large crowds.



Cynthia story involved 1938. The top song of that year was "Somewhere over the Rainbow" – the bane of many sopranos with its one octave leap on the first two notes and a full one and half octaves in all. Cynthia (age 73) had been to numerous voice coaches over the years – with very little improvement. She started voice lessons with Melyssa last October.

Cynthia said, "I never believed I could improve so much. I've always been pleased with my lower voice, but I could never count on my upper voice – and the transitions were not nice. I open the show at the Bloomington Center. There's tremendous stress standing alone on the stage before 200 people and knowing they will hear every weakness or break in your voice.

"Melyssa knew exactly what I needed to do to cross smoothly over my passaggio. She gave me a much richer upper-voice. And she gave me the confidence to give a credible performance. Her vocal training was most valuable I've received in 50 years of singing.

Milo's story involved the first AIDs clinical trial in San Francisco. So he was assigned to sing Mariah Carey's "One Sweet Day". Milo said, "I had never heard the song – or the singer. But once I checked these out on YouTube, I nearly died! Mariah Carey is known world-wide as an extremely accomplished singer. That song was the #1 single for 16 weeks in 1995."

"I'm an OK choir member. I can read music, count time and have good pitch. I can sing cute songs; I can be a ham. But I've never sung a straight, serious song in my life. A colleague told me I really needed to work on my breath control if I was going to give a decent performance. I watched Cynthia work with Melyssa. I saw how much my wife improved. It was absolutely incredible."

"So I found himself signing up for voice lessons at age 74. In six lessons, Melyssa added five notes to the top end of my range, improved my breathing considerably, and, most importantly, improved my confidence. I gave three performances this past weekend. People said they loved my singing; they didn't know I could sing so well. Well neither did I! It was money well spent."

Melyssa and her daughter, Elsie, attended the Saturday night show. Melyssa Rice is a trained opera singer. Her web site is www.melyssarice.com.