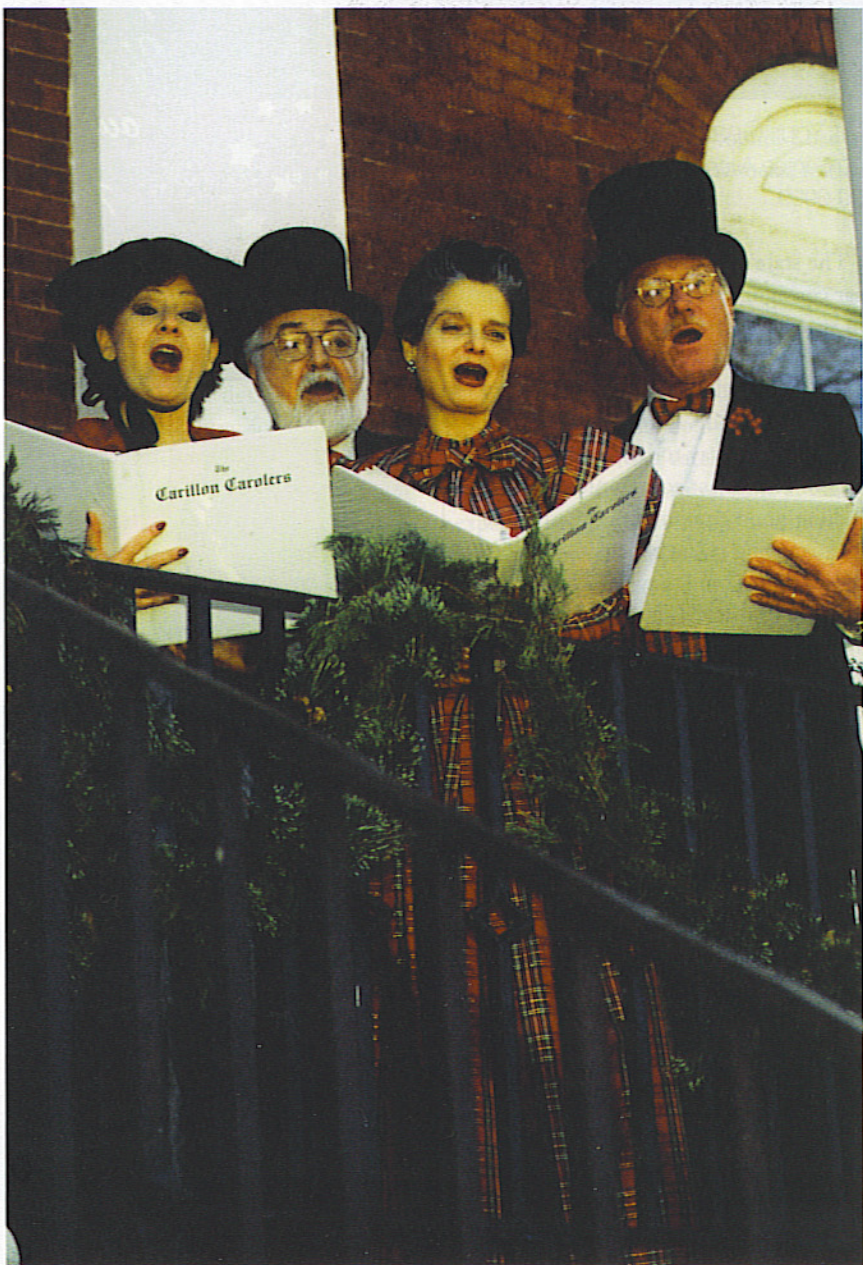


Vintage voices

BY TOM POLAND

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE CARILLON CAROLERS

Stroll through Columbiana Centre this holiday season and you might hear carolers. Not just any carolers, but the esteemed Carillon Carolers. Follow the sound to the quartet dressed as if they'd just stepped from a Currier & Ives Christmas scene of a snowy village, gas lamps and horse-drawn sleighs.



Gery Lynn Hall



Bob Carroll

"We're an SATB (soprano-alto-tenor-bass/baritone) Victorian caroling quartet, and we sing a repertoire of 50 carols a cappella, some our own arrangements," says Rosanne McDowell, the group's founder and manager. "Since we don't need instruments, we can sing almost anywhere: a lobby, by a door or Christmas tree, table to table, or onstage."

Now celebrating 20 years of

performing throughout the Midlands, the group has its roots in McDowell's New York City background. She spent 11 years there, performing in musicals, operas and films. She appeared in Broadway's *Stop the World! I Want to Get Off!* and toured with Arte Johnson. "I still wear the 18K-gold bracelet he gave every female in the cast as an end-of-run gift," McDowell says. But more importantly, she brought back to Columbia fond memories of Victorian

Far left: Carolers, from left, Dana Fore, Dave Sennema, Roseanne McDowell and Robert Neese perform at Robert Mills House. Left: From left, Dave Sennema, Dana Fore, Roseanne McDowell and Marc Rattray at the Elmwood Park home tour.

carolers performing at Macy's in Manhattan.

Why not bring that kind of entertainment here, she thought. When she approached the management at the former Richland Mall with a proposal to perform Victorian-era caroling for holiday shoppers, the group was off and singing.

While only four singers perform at a time, many more comprise the Carillon Carolers. They include Dana Fore, Mary Teal, Chan Shealy, Dave Sennema, Hal McIntosh, Marc Rattray and Robert Neese. All are professional musicians. Some are music directors; some have sung opera on European stages.

Today, the Carillon Carolers are a year-round business, performing in weddings and seasonal events.

"During our 20 years of caroling, we have sung for holiday venues such as Columbiana Centre, the Governor's Mansion Open House, the Carolina Carillon Parade and uncounted private parties," says McDowell.

"The rest of the year, we sing an a cappella program of old love songs such as *Let Me Call You Sweetheart*. The joy of singing to the praise and glory of God is the most important thing we do."

Look for the Carillon Carolers in the May 2008 issue of *Southern Living* magazine. Contact Rosanne McDowell at (803) 765-1764.