

Tahoe Choir losing director, gaining singer



Linda Mitchell is stepping down after 21 years as director of the Tahoe Choir. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

A voice that has been missing from the Tahoe Choir for the last 21 years will soon be returning. But it also means the choir will have a new director after Sunday's concert.

This is the last season Linda Mitchell will be the choir's director.

"The reason I'm leaving now is I feel like it is time. I feel like you need blood, new ideas, new music, new thoughts. So, I said I'm going to be stepping down," Mitchell told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I'm really looking forward to being able to sing in the choir."

It was in 1971 that Linda Madden Hughes started the choir. It's a community choir – made up of about 50 men and women of all ages who like to sing. Most are from the South Shore, with some members from the Carson Valley and North Shore. They put on two performances a year – one in December, one in May.

The ability to sing, and the time to rehearse and perform are the requirements to join.

The community choir is tied to Lake Tahoe Community College's choir. The two come together for the concerts. It's possible to get college credit while singing. Those taking the fall class are part of this month's concert, and those in the winter-spring classes perform in May.

Mitchell, 71, has been the instructor at LTCC as well; another job she is giving up at the end of this calendar year.

"Linda is not only a beautiful singer, but an inspiration to all of us as an excellent teacher – one who imparts to the Tahoe Choir a love of music and a desire to make beautiful sound. Her passion for music is obvious to all of us and she has taught us all so much," Julie Frame, Tahoe Choir board member, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A board runs the choir, but mostly it is the director who does the work.

"I come up with the idea for the program and I then run it by the board," Mitchell said. "Sometimes people might look at me and say, 'Are you sure?' One board member looked at me when I wanted to do Disney cartoon music. Then I explained Disney movies. She understood then. That was one of our most popular ones."

The Dec. 7 – as is tradition with all the December concerts – is more focused on Christmas music. There will be the sing-along type songs, as well as more serious pieces. Mitchell picked "Lord Nelson Mass" by Joseph Haydn because it was written for four-part harmony.

"A choir is made up of different voice parts – soprano, alto, tenor and bass – so you have melody and harmony," Mitchell explained. "Some pieces can be just the song, but it might not lend itself being written out for four different parts."

She found that to be true when the choir did music of the 1960's. It was hard to come up with music to harmonize. Other than the Beatles, the choices were limited.

Mitchell tries to find music that lends itself to solos, duets and ensembles.

"I've grown into a singer and a better person under Linda's direction. She's a lion tamer and a fabulous teacher in front of the choir," Catherine Schoen, Tahoe Choir board member, told *Lake Tahoe News*.

While the singers are performing for free, there is a cost associated with putting on the performances. All of the rights to the music must be bought. This covers copyright issues. Through the years it has gotten more expensive.

"We have saved enough money to buy music risers to perform on. They were several thousand dollars," Mitchell said.

The choir also pays the accompanist. The Tahoe Choir gives Mitchell a small stipend, while the college pays her to teach.

While the choir has a vast music library, something new is always desirable.

Mitchell said last spring's concert featuring music from Cole Porter and George Gershwin was one of the best-attended performances because people were so familiar with the songs.

"I tend to love whatever I'm working on at the particular moment because I've invested so much into it," Mitchell said.

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Notes:

- Tahoe Choir and Lake Tahoe Community College Chorus' winter concert is Dec. 7 at 3pm at St. Theresa Catholic Church, 1041 Lyons Ave., South Lake Tahoe.

- Cost: \$10 for adults, \$8 for students and seniors, and free for children under 5.
- For more info, call 530.541.2635.
- A replacement for Mitchell has not been named.