

STILL IN TUNE:

NOVA SINGERS

CHOIR CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

BY KEREN MOROS

IN 1976, ABOUT A DOZEN PEOPLE MET IN THE LIVING room of former Stranahan High School choir director Peggy Barber's house and decided to form a community choir.

"None of us really knew what we were getting into," said Rick Robb, a student of Barber's, who had graduated six years earlier. "But we did know that we wanted to keep singing, and we wanted Peggy to be our director."

The choir, now called the Nova Singers, will celebrate its 40th year in 2016, but is starting its yearlong celebration in September 2015. "It's noteworthy that probably a half dozen other choruses have come and gone in the time that we've been in South Florida," said Robb, a news editor at the *Palm*

wherever it goes. "We're musical ambassadors for NSU, and we're singing all over town," said List, who joined the choir in 1979.

The choir has sung throughout the country—from the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, to the Washington National Cathedral. The Nova Singers have even performed at Carnegie Hall, twice. The group has also gone abroad. Its first trip was to Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. In 2006, the singers participated in an afternoon Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, Italy.

The group's repertoire ranges from Broadway to modern composers' original works. Chuck Stanley, a founding

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— Rick Robb

Beach Post. "That we've stayed viable for 40 years is a real testament to the strength of the group."

Part of that strength comes from Nova Southeastern University. After forming the group, Barber approached NSU, (which was then called Nova University) to see if it would affiliate itself with a community choir. NSU, which had its 50th anniversary in 2014, was just celebrating its 10th year at the time. According to John List, the choir's marketing director, Abraham S. Fischler, Ed.D., NSU's president at the time, and now President Emeritus, embraced the idea. The choir also received support from Mary McCahill, who was then a member of NSU's board of trustees.

The choir is self-funded through an endowed fund established at the university. NSU's Division of Advancement and Community Relations lends administrative support to the all-volunteer choir and allows it to store more than 700 titles of music at the east campus in downtown Fort Lauderdale. NSU also delivers the choral risers and other equipment to concert venues and is working on upgrading the choir's website. In turn, the choir represents the university

member who succeeded Barber as artistic director in 2010, hopes to commission work from new composers in the future. "I try to pick out music that I think audiences will like and that will be challenging for the choir," said Stanley, who is also director of traditional worship at Christ Church in Fort Lauderdale.

The choir continues Barber's vision of being family to each other. To Stanley, this camaraderie is one of the choir's strengths and part of its DNA. When one of the members died last year, the choir sang at the funeral. "It's always been kind of a family—very close knit," Robb said. "It's a lot more than getting together once a week and singing."

The Nova Singers group is planning a gala in June at the Rose and Alfred Miniaci Performing Arts Center on NSU's main campus. To celebrate its 40th year, the choir also plans to sing at concerts in Prague, Budapest, and Vienna. After that, there are no plans to slow down.

"I still get fired up for performances, and I hope that never stops," Robb said. "As long as we have dedicated people who work so hard, I think we're here for a long time to come." 🎵