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## **RETIRED TEACHER FINDS HER VOICE IN JAZZ, BLUES NO LONGER AFRAID TO SING, JOYCE RANDOLPH RELEASES SECOND CD**

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Page: 3

Article Text:

Sometime, somewhere, someone told Joyce Randolph she couldn't sing.

"Early in my life, I took this lie to heart, and it beat me down," said Randolph, in a honeyed voice that hints at the sweet richness of her song.

And so the Stanford University alumna became an English teacher, which she loved, before retiring this year from Santa Teresa High School in San Jose.

Though Randolph sang along the way -- family gatherings, students' birthdays and graduations, on KPFA-FM radio -- it took a personal invitation to sing onstage and half a lifetime to heal her wound of insecurity.

"Now," she said, "my voice has come into its own." At 56, this lady sings the blues with confidence and joy. With her second CD, "Just a Little Blue," and performances at the San Jose Jazz Festival with guitarist Calvin Keyes, hers is no longer a dream deferred.

It was Keyes, she said, who sparked "the definitive moment when I first knew I was a jazz singer." In 2001, he called Randolph to the stage to sing with him at a San Jose concert. "It opened the door for me. And I went from singing in my church choir to singing in the jazz festival," Randolph recalled.

"Joyce combines the best of blues and jazz," said Steve Saperstein of the San Jose Jazz Society. "She has a wonderful stage presence, warm and friendly. She's lived; she sings the truth." Her jazz album, produced at Berkeley's Fantasy Records by Randolph and KPFA's Doug Edwards, features a selection of classics, such as "What a Difference a Day Makes," along with her own composition, "Just a Little Blue."

She recently celebrated the CD release at a sold-out concert at the Hyatt Sainte Claire Hotel in downtown San Jose, garnering a standing ovation with Bill Bell on piano, Jeff Chambers on bass, Omar Clay on drums and Oscar Williams -- award-winning photographer and writer for Smithsonian Magazine -- on trumpet.

"Oh, it was a delicious experience," Randolph said days later at her Cambrian-area home, adorned with her teacup collection and a baby grand piano.

"Music pours out of this house and wafts out into the neighborhood. People walk by and stop to listen," said Randolph, playing a few notes of Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" and later singing a few lines of Billie Holiday's "Don't Explain."

Classically trained in piano and violin, she is a composer, lyricist and private teacher, running the Randolph School of Music from her home.

Piano student Pierce Stanley said Randolph "brings her whole self to each lesson, putting her heart into each song. Greeting each student with a large bear hug and a kiss, Mrs. Randolph makes every student feel welcome."

Randolph, who grew up in Stockton, long ago welcomed her ailing parents -- mother Mable Hurdle, 88, and late father Daniel Hurdle -- into her home. It was an act of compassion admired by her husband, Barney Randolph, 65.

"This sweet man gives me everything I want," said Randolph, who met him 17 years ago when he answered her singles ad. "He's the anchor; I'm the kite."

Joyce Randolph -- then-divorced with daughter Taryn and son Tadd -- recalled, "I was content by myself, but I put in an ad: 'Good cook, witty and kind of sexy, ultimate goal is marriage.' The letters started coming. One said: 'I don't have money but I have love.' That went in the trash." She and Barney -- a widower with a daughter, Julie -- found they shared a birthday on Sept. 17. Months after they met, she sang for him at their Valentine's Day wedding.

They joined the Antioch Baptist Church gospel choir in downtown San Jose. "It's joyful music," she said. "Envision 'Sister Act 2.' " Her confidence grew, until that moment when she sang onstage with Keyes.

Randolph now says, "This shows how harshly spoken words can paralyze you. It took me almost 30 years to come out from under that belittling comment. I never raised my voice to students. When you yell at someone, you lose your power and their respect."

She doesn't regret spending the first half of her life in the classroom. "I loved teaching, and my students loved me back. I turned students into readers. I told them, 'I'm teaching you English, but I hope I'm teaching you Life.' "

She sings a few lines of "My Funny Valentine," which she dedicated to her husband at her downtown concert.

"Her songs tell a story -- a true jazz singer sings from experience," said Barney Randolph. "I always loved the music of women who sang the blues and jazz," Joyce Randolph said. "Now I know the delight of singing the songs of my heart. It's all very refreshing and new. A rebirth at fiftysomething."

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