



Client Profile: Benissimo Music Productions
Ruth Moreland, Founder & Executive Director – Painting With Sound



As a young girl growing up in Central Illinois, music was always part of Ruth Moreland’s life. “One of my earliest memories is of singing,” Moreland said. “I had a large extended family, and everyone would sit around the table and sing.”

Moreland’s passion for music has never faded, it just moved from the kitchen table to the living room. In 2003, Moreland was composing a piece for women’s voices and oboe. She hand-picked 12 women from various groups and students with whom she had worked to form the tapestry of voices for her creation. During the initial rehearsal in her living room, she realized she had much more than one performance. From that serendipitous beginning, the non-profit organization [Benissimo! Music Productions](#) was born. The ensemble – called “Voci di Sorelle” (Italian for “Voices of Sisters”) – held its first concert in December 2003, performing for 150 people at Sacred Heart Chapel at Our Lady of the Lake University.

[Voci di Sorelle](#) is now in its 8th season in San Antonio, with four concerts a year. “There are a lot of musical groups in San Antonio, but not a lot of small vocal groups,” Moreland said. “I’ve always had an affinity for a cappella music. Benissimo! Music Productions is about bringing the human voice to its fullest potential.” Voci di Sorelle has released two CD’s of its music, with a third to be recorded soon.

From that initial group of 12, five of the original singers remain part of the Voci di Sorelle. The backgrounds of its members are as varied as their music, with singers ranging in age from 21 to early-60’s, and including music teachers, a police officer, a landscape designer, stay-at-home moms and other professions. In describing how she chooses the members of her ensemble, Moreland explains, “It’s about painting with sound, choosing the right vocal colors and producing excellent art, excellent musical art.”

Moreland believes the secret to their success is the vocal versatility and passion for excellence that Voci di Sorelle brings to its repertoire. From world music performed in authentic language and styles, to Renaissance compositions, to hymns, spirituals and camp meeting songs, the wide array of musical experience resonates with listeners, and surprises them. “Yes, we can fit into the ‘classical music scene,’ but our unique sound and creative programming covers a much broader spectrum. Voci di Sorelle brings to our audience more than a concert – it’s an experience!” Moreland said. Adding to their organization’s bold programming is a strategy for aggressive marketing, one which has helped Benissimo! Music Productions blossom in a year in which other arts programs have suffered. The arts community is taking notice of Moreland’s leadership; recently, she was named Artist of the Month for San Antonio’s Office of Cultural Affairs.

Voci di Sorelle’s December concert [Jubilate: Music of Christmastide](#) will showcase that passion for creative programming. With performances December 5 at The Union Church Building in Kerrville, and another December 12 at the Mother House Chapel of the Incarnate Word, the selections will include early music, traditional Christmas carols and Spanish *villancicos*. As in years past, the concert will be recorded to be included as part of classical radio KPAC’s holiday programming.

Also part of the holiday concert will be [The Copperleaf Quintet](#), a second ensemble developed by Moreland, who serves as Artistic Director and Soprano of the Quintet. Like Voci di Sorelle, The Copperleaf Quintet is a result of her passion for broadening the scope of a cappella performance groups in Texas. The quintet of mixed voices performs in smaller, more intimate venues. Now in its inaugural season, Copperleaf will present concerts at San Antonio Museum of Art, The McNay, and Southwest School of Art. Moreland describes the performances as a “feast for the senses.” Taking into account the art that surrounds the audience, Moreland chooses musical selections that tie the music into the artwork, making it like a multi-media experience for the listener.

Moreland is optimistic about the future. Currently, there is no administrative staff, in the traditional sense, though Benissimo! Music Productions is a triumph of volunteers who do everything from help with concerts to assist with administrative work. For more information on becoming a volunteer, or learning how you can lend your talents to this dynamic arts organization, contact Ruth Moreland Ruth Moreland, 210-912-9555 or email her at ruth@benissimomusic.org.