



## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Use**

**Subject: Auditions for Joplin Birthday Ragtime Concert**

Contact: Patrick Tuttle, 417-850-3526

The Joplin Celebrations Commission has announced auditions will be held to cast the role of vocalist Dolly Connolly in "A Ragtime Salute to Percy Wenrich". This will be one of the premiere events of Joplin's upcoming sesquicentennial celebration. Auditions will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 9, and Saturday, July 16 at the First United Methodist Church Family Life Center (501 W 4th St, Joplin).

Connolly, perhaps the most famous of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century ragtime singers, married Percy Wenrich of Joplin in 1906. Percy began to write music for her, including her 1911 hit "Red Rose Rag," which became one of Dolly's signature songs.

"Dolly had a contralto voice which allowed her to go down for some rather low notes while still having considerable power and she also possessed a wide vocal range," according to Dr. David Soren, an expert on the history of vaudeville, theater, and cinema at the University of Arizona. "She could sing melodies precisely and exactly on pitch which was essential for vocal versions of rags. She didn't impose too much emotion in her songs and never did scat singing or even simple deviations from the melody but preferred to sing the music as written, especially when written by her husband who was writing for her range and vocal character.

"She also was stunningly beautiful and always dressed in the latest, most elaborate fashions of the time, similar to a Ziegfeld star such as Lillian Lorraine and was not above posing in a saucy manner smoking a cigarette and hiking up her skirt to show off a little leg," Soren said. "After her marriage to Wenrich she continued her career and expanded it as her fame grew and she and her husband became a major vaudeville attraction as either he or she or both put out hit after hit. In 1912 Wenrich and lyricist Edward Madden put out *Moonlight Bay*, which was an enormous hit and made the Connolly-Wenrich team an even bigger attraction in vaudeville."

Joplin ragtime performer Steve Spracklen is organizing the Wenrich tribute concert, which will be held in April 2023. A performance stipend or travel expenses for the person selected will be negotiated with the Joplin Celebrations Commission.

Those auditioning for the part of Connolly on July 9 or July 16 should be prepared to sing "Red Rose Rag" and/or "Moonlight Bay." The sheet music and MP3 audio files of both pieces can be found at <https://celebratejoplin.com/media>.

To schedule a specific audition time with Mr. Spracklen, please contact him at [stespr555@aol.com](mailto:stespr555@aol.com).