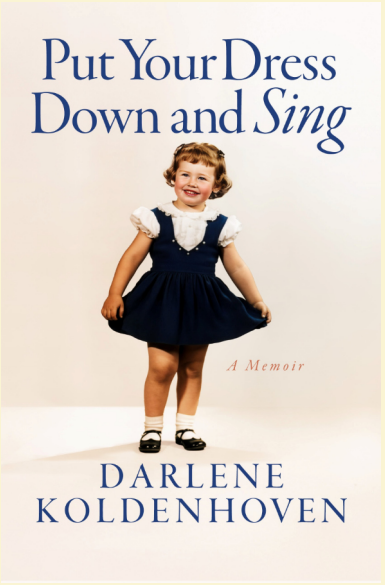
PUT YOUR DRESS DOWN AND SING

Darlene Koldenhoven



People often ask me, “How did you come up with that title for your book: *Put Your Dress Down and Sing*?” My answer is, from the 7 little words my mother spoke to me when I was 3.5. Little did I realize that those words would become the motto for my whole life.

It happened on Easter Sunday morning when I got onto the platform in church to sing my first public solo, “Low, in the Grave he Lay.” Now singing this song in tune with its big range, mood changes, and a high-note finish was no problem for me. Indeed, Mom and her father trained me well, and I could even hold my own part in a 3-part round like Row, Row, Row Your Boat. But when I got up there and saw over 200 people looking at me, my shyness kicked in, and I hoisted my dress high over my head so I couldn’t see them. But they certainly could see me, standing there in all my glory. Mom rushed from the front pew to the platform with a harsh whisper, “Darlene, put your dress down and SING!” I slowly slid my dress down and looked over at the organist, who had already played the introduction, and said, “I’m ready now.” She began again, and away we went. It was so much fun. From then on, I overcame my shyness of singing in front of people, and I was hooked on singing. Plus, I learned to keep my dress down when I sing in public.

The real lesson here is that, to change your feelings, to overcome an obstacle, to shut off the negative self-talk in your head, one must take ACTION. It is a psychological reality, and it works; even if it is baby-steps. There have been more than enough opportunities to react to a bad mood or ongoing obstacles in my life. When it gets to that point, I say to myself, “Darlene, put your dress down and sing,” no matter what it is. That motto has helped me through some mighty tough times, some scary times, and some overwhelming times.

Have you ever been stuck? Try it. Can’t figure out that you always have choices? Try it. I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised by how your brain and body will react. Instead of saying to yourself, “Oh, I can’t do that or Oh, I did that wrong,” try asking out loud, “How can I get this? What do I need to know?” Go ahead, do it right now, out loud, and feel that shift that takes place. That freedom to open your mind and be aware of what the universe has to offer to help you. You will subconsciously or consciously see all the things you need to achieve your goals. Your



brain will be looking for ways to help you. When you ask or say the wrong question or statement, you unknowingly have asked your brain to show you all the ways NOT to do something correctly or not to achieve the goal. Then just put your dress down and sing. Take action. Just do it.

When I began writing my memoir in January of 2024, I had no idea how to write a book or what good it would do. Yet, I applied the correct questions and my mother's motto, and four months later, I had researched and written 195,506 words. That's like 750 pages. Yikes! I had to peel it all back to a modest, readable sum. I did and made it easy to read, too. Now the question changed to, what are the most important stories that would move a reader? What would entertain, inspire, motivate, and encourage folks to find their gifts and make their contributions to society? Each one of us has at least one gift, and it is up to us to find that gift, no matter how small or large, and do something with it. We, as a society, need your gifts: identify, develop, and share them.



I didn't realize I was resilient. I never thought about it until reviewers started reading my book, and that one word started popping up in almost every review. Seems like that was the thing that really stood out to them. Some said, "Any one of those things that happened to you would have destroyed a person, and yet, you just kept on going and managed to have a fulfilled and successful life. How did you do it?" My secret? I would just put my dress down and SING, and laugh about it. Now let's go get 'em! Who's with me?

Darlene Koldenhoven is a **GRAMMY® Award Winner** with 3 GRAMMY® nominations. She is a vocalist, keyboardist/pianist, composer, songwriter, arranger, lyricist, producer, author, actor, credentialed voice teacher, and certified sonic therapist.

Darlene is known worldwide as the featured soprano soloist singing "Aria" in the PBS TV Special and Video, ***Yanni, Live at the Acropolis*** seen by over 1.5 billion television viewers and millions more now on YouTube, and most notably, as the tambourine-waving choir nun with **Whoopi Goldberg** in both ***Sister Act*** films where off-camera she was the production vocal coach and vocal contractor, music director and rehearsal pianist during their choreography rehearsals.

The Los Angeles Chapter of The Grammys presented Darlene with an **MVP Best Session Singer** for singing on over 1,000 recordings in films, television, records, commercials, and charitable causes internationally. She releases her solo piano album, "A Grand Memoir" of 10 original songs as a companion to her memoir, "Put Your Dress Down and Sing," on 8/7/26. Find out more at DarleneKoldenhoven.com.