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The Hallelujah Singers

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by p rese rving, perfo rm ing, and
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heritage:
Island Gullah culture. Organized as a vocal ensemble by Marlena
Smalls in 1990 and based in Beaufort, the group promotes Gullah
culture through song, story, dance, and dramatic performance.

The Hallelujah Singers present many of the unique customs and
rituals that are an integral part of Gullah life. Drawing on extensive
research, including interviews with seniors in the community,
Smalls and the group have developed programs that combine story-
telling and Gullah music—a music form steeped in a rich African
American spiritual tradition. They have three professional record-
ings: Gullah: Songs of Hope, Faith, and Freedom (1997); Joy: A Gul-
ah Christmas (1998); and Gullah: Carry Me Home (1999). The
Hallelujah Singers also travel extensively throughout the United
States, presenting their “Fa Da Chillun” outreach program to stu-
dents and adults. Movie audiences became familiar with the group
from their appearance in the motion picture Forrest Gump, with
Marlena Smalls appearing in the role of "Bubba’s Mama." The Hal-
ellelujah Singers have also appeared in several national media outlets
and continue to broaden their audience base.

Marlena Smalls and the Hallelujah Singers have been recognized
for their commitment to the presentation and advocacy of Gullah
culture. As a part of its bicentennial celebration, the Library of Con-
gress designated the Hallelujah Singers a “Local Legacy of South
Carolina.” Other awards include the Jean Laney Harris Folk Her-
itage Award, the Alpha Kappa Community Service Award, and
selection as the South Carolina Ambassadors of the Year for 1998.

SADDLER TAYLOR

Hallelujah Singers, The. Hallelujah Singers are a nationally rec-
ognized performance troupe offering unique cultural programming
by preserving, performing, and celebrating the rich heritage of Sea