

Nicole C. Mullen Uses Her Music to Touch Lives On Stage and Off

The granddaughter of two Pentecostal ministers says she often is led to share personal messages from the Lord through song

For Dove Award-winner Nicole C. Mullen, nothing beats meeting the audience after a concert. Well known for contemporary Christian hits such as, "Redeemer," "Come Unto Me" and "On My Knees," Mullen often senses the need to deliver personal messages from the Lord to concertgoers, many of whom have stood in line to meet her. Fitting her gift, she sings them.

"This is for you," Mullen told one woman recently and with a hum, sang out, "When you call on Jesus ..." Tears flowed, as they often do. She said she has been having these kinds of ministry encounters since she was 8 years old, and her singing around the world is a fulfillment of a prophecy declared when she was 12.

Both of Mullen's grandfathers are Pentecostal preachers in Cincinnati, Ohio. Mullen's parents, Mary Jane and Napoleon Coleman Jr., branched off and helped start a nondenominational church by hosting it in their home. The pastor and his family even lived with the Colemans for a time.

The ministry grew to a storefront, and now New Life Temple in Madisonville, Ohio, spreads down the block.

"We always had gifts of the Spirit moving," Mullen said. After a church service, she told Charisma, "I would capture a single

mom and say, 'Hey, can I sing you this song the Lord has put on my heart for you?' They would sit and listen to my a cappella version, and sometimes they would start crying. I could see the Lord really working on their hearts."

Still, Mullen wasn't the celebrated singer in the choir or her family's favored child prodigy. She was known as just one of the three little Coleman girls until she privately began to dream bigger after a special message from God was delivered to her.

The last week of confirmation class, the church elders came and laid hands on the children. "Sister Dottie prayed over me and said the Lord had given her a word for me," Mullen recalled. "I remember it clearly to this day: 'Say not in your heart that you are small but that you are great because I live within you.'

"Then she said the Lord had told her how He was going to take me to different places to sing and how He was going to use me." Mullen was excited and told her mother but was cautioned that "the true test of prophecy is that you don't have to make it come about."

In fact, nothing of magnitude seemed to be happening when Mullen started out singing backup vocals after she attended college at Christ for the Nations Institute. One connection led to another, though, and being introduced to Christian singer David Mullen and agreeing to help him with vocals and choreography caused her to step into destiny. And love.

Traveling kept them apart much of their two years of dating—Nicole toured with Amy Grant, while David performed

across the country as a solo artist. When they wed 11 years ago, David decided to concentrate on production and songwriting and encouraged Nicole to perform solo. They work together on everything now, including raising their three children and tending their farm outside Nashville, Tenn.

Mullen continues to reach out to hurting women, and she devotes much of her time to encouraging young girls. In concerts, she sings her African-influenced song "Freedom" in honor of the Trokosi slaves in Ghana. Partnering with International Needs Network, she's trying to help raise funds to free these women, whose parents gave them away as young girls to abusive priests as a sacrifice for their ancestors' sins.

The ministry is purchasing the women's freedom and teaching them the liberating gospel, as well as life skills to help them become self-supporting.

Mullen also reaches out to young girls in her own neighborhood. For years she taught dance classes, and her students have performed with her in concerts. Weekly now, some 40-50 young girls come to her Baby Girls Club. Together they sing Bible verses, share their current "drama" in small groups and pray. After crafts and dance class, there's a talent show.

Mullen reminds them of such rules as, "You have to keep it under 90 seconds because we don't want to hear all four verses of 'I Believe I Can Fly.'" They also know when they come or leave they "gotta give Miss Nicole her hug."

Sister Dottie has passed away, but it seems her prophecy has stood the test. Mullen's fifth release, *Everyday People*,

debuted in September. She has been honored with 20 Grammy and Dove Award nominations. And her worldwide performances include appearing at Carnegie Hall and singing the National Anthem at the 2004 Republican National Convention.

Marsha Gallardo in Nashville, Tenn.