

Sea Shanties Celebrate Women

March 12, 2013 9:32am | By [Nicholas Rizzi](#), DNAinfo Reporter



(YouTube/nealharbor)

LIVINGSTON — A concert of sea shanties will celebrate the first woman sailor to retire to Staten Island's [Snug Harbor](#).

The event on March 23 will be part of Woman's History Month and mark the life of Julie Mindler. It will feature an all-female a cappella group, along with local group [Bob Wright and Harbortown](#). They will sing traditional sea shanties, which were work songs for sailors.

The a cappella group was the brainchild of artist Sasha Wortzel, an artist in residency at Snug Harbor, who recently uncovered the history of Mindler. The concert will be the debut of Wright's original sea shanty about Mindler, "Woman of the Harbor."

Mindler was the first woman to take residency at Snug Harbor, which she moved to in 1965 when it was a retirement community for sailors.

"This is another installment of our Island Sounds: 500 Year Music Mash-Up series which highlights noted Staten Island performers and artists," said Snug Harbor CEO Lynn Kelly in a statement.

"This program is unique in that it showcases wonderful Staten Island artists and is inspired in part by the life of the first woman sailor to live at Sailors' Snug Harbor."

Aside from highlighting Mindler, "Woman in the Harbor" may be the first shanty written solely about a woman sailor, said Patrick Grenier, director of visual arts for Snug Harbor.

"The artist doesn't believe there are any other female sea shanty songs, other than women in the harbor waiting for their sailors out to sea," Grenier said.

The a cappella group made up of Esy Casey, Sarah Alden, Kate Ryan and Cassie Wagler will form just for the concert. For half the concert, they will sing traditional sea shanties, and accompany Bob Wright and Harbortown for the other half, Grenier said.

The museum planned to host a night of sea shanties this year, but moved the date up when Wortzel discovered the records about Mindler's admittance to the community in 1965 while doing research for an exhibit.

Snug Harbor used to be a retirement community for sailors until the 1970s. When Midler applied to retire there in 1965, Snug Harbor's numbers were far lower than their average 1,000 sailors living there, and the retirement community embraced woman sailors as a way to boost their numbers, Grenier said.

"It was something that they really did want to do," Grenier said. "At the time they were getting more and more appeals from female sailors applying. Three hundred in 1965 was a small group, so they really wanted to try to boost the population, so opening up to woman was a big step for them."

Wortzel created audio and video about Mindler and that time in history at Snug Harbor, which are on display as part of her exhibit which ends on March 31.

The sea shanty concert will be on Saturday, March 23, at 6:30 p.m. Admission is free, and donations will be accepted for Hurricane Sandy relief funds. For more information, visit [Snug Harbor's website](#).

By [Nicholas Rizzi](#), DNAinfo.com  [Follow Nicholas on Twitter @nickr15](#)

<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20130312/livingston/sea-shanties-celebrate-women-on-staten-island>