



Chorale members Marle Cook of Detroit (left) and Kathy Frederick of Birmingham share a laugh during a practice break.

Madrigal Chorale: Music that brings people together

By Alice Collins
staff writer

They come from many walks of life.

While most live in south Oakland County, there are members from as far north as Flint, as far west as Howell, as far east as Mt. Clemens and as far south as Westland.

They come together to sing with the eclectic Madrigal Chorale of Southfield — a non-profit, volunteer group with a history in the Detroit area that goes back to 1914.

The 55-member chorale, currently in the midst of its 1991-92 season, is preparing for a 10-day performance tour of England, Wales and Scotland in July.

"Joy" is the word used most frequently by members to describe what singing with the chorale means to them.

"We share the interest in music for the joy of it and the satisfaction of group accomplishment," said artistic director Robert Martin, who's "day job" is vocal music instructor and choir director at Southfield-Lathrup High School.

SOME MEMBERS were interviewed by The Southfield Eccentric last week while the chorale was practicing for its Feb. 14 benefit performance at Macomb Performing Arts Center.

"It's such a joy. I leave there feeling so happy," said soprano Terri Waraniak, a West Bloomfield resident who describes herself as "a full time mom right now." She and her husband have two sons, one a new baby.

"It's also my night out with a dedicated group of people who have the same interest," she added. "Everyone cares about what we're doing and everyone works to improve."

Waraniak isn't a professional musician, but she sang in high school and continues to take voice lessons. "Lately, I'm being used for the highest notes we can get out of us," she said.

George and Patricia Densing of Bloomfield Township have joined with the chorale for 14 years. George, an engineer, earns his living "designing dairy and food processing plants." His wife has a master's degree in voice and music education from Northwestern University and is a private voice teacher.

"It's fun and therapy," he continued. "It's very helpful to come here and sing when you've had a stressful day."

MASAKO SARAKIMOTO came to the United States from Japan with her husband who is a researcher at Wayne State University. When they moved to Southfield last year, Sarakimoto, who studied singing in Japan, read about the chorale in a Southfield Parks and Recreation pamphlet.

"I love singing so I called and auditioned last May. I was lucky they let me join."

On top of giving her an opportunity to pursue singing, the madrigal chorale means more to Sarakimoto. "I'm not working so I rarely have an opportunity to talk with Americans. I want to get to know people and learn about them. This gives me a chance to do that," she said.

The Feb. 14 concert, "From Broadway With Love," is being held to raise funds to help finance the chorale's concert tour of Great Britain in July. In addition to the chorale, it will feature Lewis Dahl Von Schlanbusch, a baritone soloist who

performs with major symphonies including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The chorale receives no regular outside funding. Our total annual budget is about \$28,000," said Peter Marsh of Rochester Hills, president of the group's board of directors. Marsh and the chorale's assistant director, Betsy O'Grady, were recently married.

The chorale's budget comes from membership dues, concert proceeds and fund-raising. "The profits from the benefit concert will be divided among those going on the concert tour to help defray the cost to our members," said Marsh.

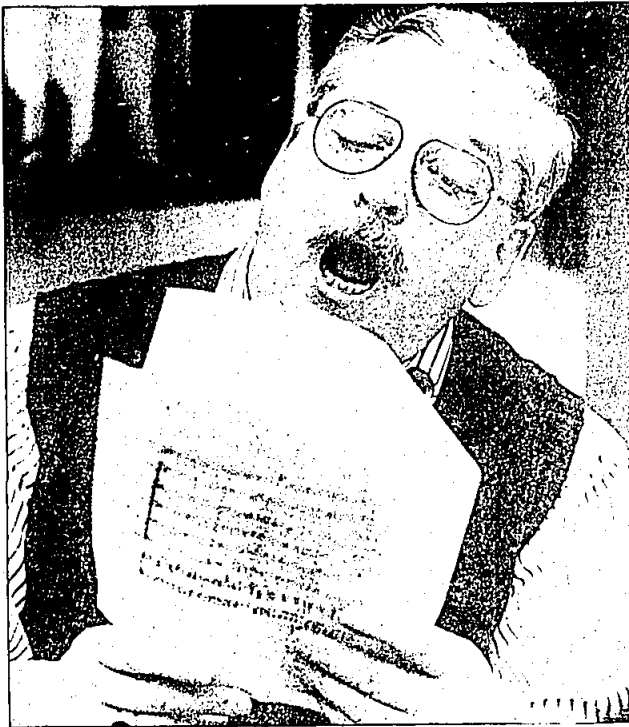
So far, the group has plans to perform at St. Margaret's Parish for the House of Commons in London, at York Minster, the cathedral in Bath and at the Ebbw Vale Garden Festival, an annual event attended by a million people.

Arrangements for other appearances are still being made.

REMAINING AREA performances this season in addition to the benefit, are vocal scholarship competition March 3 at Marygrove College in Detroit, a pops concert March 28 at St. Ives Church in Southfield, a spring concert on May 3 at Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills and a farewell performance at New St. Paul Church in Detroit.

The chorale originated in 1914 as the all-women Madrigal Club of Detroit, the counterpart to the all-male Orpheus Club. In 1948 a new choir was formed from the two, combining male and female voices.

It maintains the classic tradition of its predecessors, yet has broadened its repertoire to include more 20th Century music, popular music, jazz and spirituals, according to Martin.



Brian Callaghan (above) of Lathrup Village concentrates as he practices his part for the upcoming Madrigal Chorale concert. Artistic director Robert Martin (below) goes through the new music step-by-step with the chorale. The group practices every Tuesday evening at Southfield-Lathrup High School where Martin is vocal music instructor.



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Robert Martin, artistic director of the Madrigal Chorale of Southfield, directs a practice session as the multi-community group prepares for a Feb. 14 benefit concert. Chorale accompanist Margaret Bonlan of West Bloomfield is at the piano.

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