

Mercyaires celebrate Mr. Teevens 35-year opus



Mercyaires lift up their voices in song. In foreground, (from left) Flor Garcia and Lea Frost, both juniors, will join over 200 past and present Mercyaires in concert May 5.

By MARY RODRIQUE
STAFF WRITER

When Larry Teevens steps up to the stage Sunday May 5 at Mercy High School, it will be like a live version of "This Is Your Life."

To help celebrate his 35th year as choral director at the Farmington Hills private girls high school, at least 200 women now spread out from coast to coast will return to sing as they once did as part of the Mercyaires, a select singing group of choral students founded 35 years ago.

Each season, the girls involved in the after school activity added their own personality to the Mercyaires. To date, 426 young women have had the distinction of being Mercyaires. More than half of them will be at the school next Sunday to pay tribute to Teevens and the alma mater.

"It started as a small group formed to go out and perform in the community," said Teevens. "The original group was very prim and proper and sang sedately. That lasted two years. Then some of the girls asked if they could

dance. Then we went into needing rhythm instruments for accompaniment."

"It's still an evolving program. Each year it's what talents they bring in."

The Mercyaires are a self-supporting group. Each year, the 40 or so performances are a balance of benefits — for the likes of Focus Hope, senior citizen centers, and Goodfellows — and paying jobs for trade shows, banquets or conventions. Mercyaires have even sung backup for Rosemary Clooney on more than one occasion. Last year the group performed with Martha Reeves.

"Many of the girls stay in the performance arts, some as avocation, some professionally," Teevens said.

Returning Mercyaires range from a corporate vice president of Pepsi to school in a very formative time for a girl."

Born in Detroit, Teevens sang

as a child on local radio programs. As a teenager, he performed on the Wayne King Show on NBC-TV in Chicago. He earned a bachelor of fine arts degree from the University of Detroit and served in the U.S. Army in Korea during the mid 1950s. In 1961, he earned a master's degree in music education from Wayne State University. That same year he married Yvonne Mercier, whose name was the inspiration for the Mercyaires.

The Sunday concert has been almost a year in the making. Vivaldi's "Gloria," a madrigal from "Les Miserables" and "Ave Maria," a trademark at Mercyaire weddings, are featured. There will be several mother and daughter Mercyaires on stage together.

The Matt Michaels Trio and the Myron Walsh Trio are also scheduled to perform. The concert takes place at 2 p.m. in the school auditorium at 11 Mile and Middlebelt Roads. Tickets are \$8 for adults; \$4 for children.

Following the concert, a strolling supper will be held. Tickets are \$18 per person. A cash bar will be available. Call 810-476-8922 for ticket information.



Larry Teevens conducts a rehearsal for the current Mercyaires choral group.

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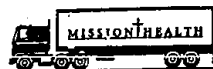
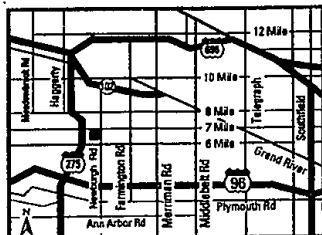
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