



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL DRESLER

Kicking up their heels: Maria Kruse and Steve Flessa rehearse a dance routine recently for the debut of the Farmington Community Chorus' annual holiday concert, *Once Upon A December*, this weekend.

Holiday notes

Farmington Community Chorus performs its annual concert

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
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It may not be snowing in time for a good old-fashioned holiday season, but the Farmington Community Chorus will certainly put you in the mood with traditional and contemporary music.

The 30-member chorus will present the annual holiday concert — *Once Upon A December* — at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Dec. 18-19, at the Mercy Auditorium, 11 Mile and Middlebelt.

"It's a change of venue this time," said member Jeff Zorn. "We usually have the concerts at the (public) schools, but with the holiday season, it's hard to book. Mercy is actually larger and acoustically better."

The two-hour concert — with a 15-minute intermission — will feature traditional holiday fare, as well as small ensembles, solos and music by Perfect Blend, which highlights 12 voices.

"We usually have several numbers that are rarely heard," Zorn said. "It's not all your standard basics."

Tickets are now on sale. In advance, they are \$8, \$6 for seniors and students, and \$10 at the door. Tickets are available at the Farmington Hills Special Services Department, as well as from any chorus member, or Harry and Dixie Doerr at (248) 783-5322.

"The concert usually sells out," Zorn said, adding that the audience is filled with music-lovers from throughout suburban Detroit, including surrounding communities of Livonia, Northville, Southfield and Novi.

The chorus will again be directed by 10-year veteran Steve SeGraves, with accompanist Susan

Garr, who has been with the chorus since its inception 19 years ago.

The chorus is also getting ready to hold auditions for new voices at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 5 and 12, at the Farmington Hills Activities Center. "We will provide the music and a practice tape," Zorn said. The chorus is open to anyone 18 years and older. Members do not have to live in the Farmington area.

"This is a true community chorus of this whole area," Zorn said.

Members hail from Livonia, Northville, Clarkston, Brighton, Detroit, Royal Oak, West Bloomfield, Wixom, Troy, Westland and Mount Clemens.

The chorus also recently started a Friends orga-

nizations dedicated to helping Melissa Garr, daughter of accompanist Susan, who was injured when a tree fell on her more than a year ago. A scholarship was dedicated in her name and is awarded to students in the Schoolcraft Community College music program; SeGraves is the director.

"We are always looking for Friends of the Chorus," Zorn added.

The chorus also produced a CD and tape of last year's holiday concert. It will be on sale during the concert next weekend with all proceeds going to the chorus. CDs are \$15 and the tapes \$10.

"This is such a good group," Zorn said of the chorus. "And it's a great social group."



Lineup: Megan Nestor is one of two young soloists to sing *Once Upon A December* during the upcoming annual concert. The evening will feature traditional and not-so-traditional holiday fare.

Charges dismissed against Hills teen involved in crash

BY DARRELL CLEM
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A Wayne County judge Dec. 11 dismissed criminal charges against a Farmington Hills teen who was accused in the Westland traffic death of an 18-year-old pregnant woman whose baby survived.

Circuit Judge George Crockett III's ruling means that Joseph Norman Novell — Clarenceville High School's 1998 valedictorian — can continue his education without fear of going to jail.

Crockett dismissed negligent homicide charges against Novell after defense attorney Stephen Boak filed a motion claiming a lack of evidence against the teenager.

Novell could have faced a possible two-year jail term if he had been convicted in the Aug. 1 death of Julia Margaret Serda of Inkster.

"He is obviously greatly relieved," Boak said late Friday afternoon. "He is attempting to get through his college career. Obviously he feels badly about the fact that there was a death, but he believed from the beginning that this was not his doing."

"He is just going to try to move on with his life at this juncture," Boak said.

Novell is a Wayne State University freshman studying chemistry on a full scholarship, his

attorney said.

Serda's family couldn't be reached for comment after Crockett issued his ruling Friday.

Novell's future had seemed in doubt following an accident that occurred shortly before 6 p.m. Aug. 1 in the intersection of Middlebelt Road and Ann Arbor Trail.

Serda died from injuries she suffered in her seventh month of pregnancy, but doctors performed an emergency Caesarean section and saved her baby girl's life. Serda's family members are caring for the child.

The accident occurred when Novell, driving a 1990 Chevrolet Beretta east on Ann Arbor Trail, turned left onto Middlebelt in front of a westbound Ford Tempo driven by one of Serda's friends.

Westland police have said both Novell and Serda's friend, 19-year-old Margaret Louise Bargowski, entered the intersection as a green light turned yellow. At issue was which driver should have yielded.

Novell was going to a concert with 21-year-old Jonathan Wood of Westland. Serda and Bargowski were taking backseat passenger Joshua Daniel Krause to his Livonia residence before going to work at the Ford-Tel theater in Dearborn Heights, police have said.

Krause testified during an

October court hearing that Bargowski seemed to speed up as she approached the intersection. Krause said Bargowski didn't hit her brakes.

Boak had argued during the Oct. 8 hearing in Westland District Court that Novell shouldn't stand trial for negligent homicide because he was merely trying to complete his left turn when Bargowski ignored the traffic light.

Boak and assistant Wayne County prosecutor Wade McCann differed on whether Bargowski had enough time to stop her car before the traffic light changed. They also differed on which driver should have yielded.

Crockett's ruling indicated support for Boak's claim that Novell shouldn't be held accountable for Serda's death.

Police said both Novell and Bargowski had perfect driving records. The accident occurred on a clear summer day.

On Friday, Boak said Novell didn't immediately appear to understand Crockett's ruling until the judge asked him if he wanted to go home.

Novell had been free on a \$50,000 personal bond.

It wasn't immediately known whether the Wayne County prosecutor's office will consider appealing Crockett's decision.

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