

# Suburban Life

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## A gathering of people who like to sing

By Lorraine McClellan  
staff writer

**T**HE 90 SINGERS that make up Farmington Community Chorus are on the countdown now to their spring concert, "Spotlight on Broadway."

Throughout the past 10 years each of the concerts have been a little more ambitious, a little more creative, a little more progressive with innovations, has a little more pizzazz than the one before.

"Our winter concert was sold out — that was the first time that happened — and we got our first standing ovation," said Jeff Zorn, speaking for the chorus. "For the spring concert all 90 of us will be in costume for a medley from 'Les Misérables,' our biggest production number in the show, and that will be a first, so we keep growing, keep moving with new ideas, new duets, new groups, new acts."

Showtime for "Spotlight on Broadway" is at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 11-12, in Harrison High School, 29995 12 Mile Road. Tickets may be purchased at the door for \$4, or \$3 for seniors and students. Children under 10 are admitted free.

It's just possible area residents could get a sneak preview of the show about 9:30 or 10 p.m. on any Tuesday night in Ground Round on Orchard Lake Road and 13 Mile Road.

"A lot of us meet over there after rehearsal and it's not at all unusual for us to break out in song — any song we happen to be rehearsing," Zorn said.

adults who have completed their high school education, or perform in Founders Festival.

"It's a lot of work, but we're people who like to sing," Zorn said. "There is one rehearsal every week and each of us get a tape for home work. If you are a member of the Farmingtons (an ensemble of 16 select voices), or a soloist, in a duet, in one of the specialty acts, it's a lot more work."

"We always have a couple funny pieces, and this year we have an extremely humorous version — written by one of our members — of 'You'll Never Walk Alone.'"

Not only do the chorus members like to sing, they are willing to pay to do so.

Their \$25 per year dues make them self-sustaining, though they are underwritten by Farmington Hills Department of Special Services.

A chorus committee decides on the music they will sing. The music library is bought with their own funds, and so is the salary of their director, Donald Stromberg, and accompanist, Susan Garr, paid with their own funds.

"We have a high quality backstage technical crew — all of the technicians are volunteer — that all goes towards making a high quality production," Zorn said.

AS THE CHORUS grows more creative on stage, so is it expanding on several other fronts.

A something new is the patron list

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Farmington Community Chorus director Donald Stromberg (above) puts 90 singers through their paces every Tuesday night to prepare for two concerts a year. At left in foreground, Dixie MacMillan and Don McLeod rehearse for their part in the medley of songs from "Les Misérables," the big production number in the spring concert. All of the chorus members put together their own costumes for the show.



Staff photos by Sharon LeMieux

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— Jeff Zorn  
Farmington Community Chorus

## New problems

### Churches in the Soviet bloc move from survival to expansion

By Louise Okrutsky  
special writer

Churches in Soviet bloc countries face new problems in the face of tri-

umph. Mellowing of official government attitudes toward religion leaves churches struggling with the transition from survival tactics to expansion strategies.



GJula Cseri

*"Schools are important in Eastern Europe to church activities. In the West some leaders don't have the task to help schools, but in Eastern Europe where the state school system is paralyzed, there's a 400 year tradition of church schools."*

— GJula Cseri

"Most churches in the Soviet Union — Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria — were absolutely loyal to the Communist Party. They'd lost their identity and autonomy," says the Rev. GJula Cseri.

He's lecturing now in the metropolitan area on the future of churches in Eastern Europe. Before he escaped to West Germany, he was a pastor in the Hungarian Reformed Church. A pastor in the Evangelical Church of West Germany, he's active in aiding Eastern European churches adjust to their new status. Cseri is a lecturer in ethics at the Jülich Leibniz University in Gießen, West Germany and a professor of ethical and technical sociology at the Technical University of Gießen. His trip is arranged by the Rev. Harold Ellens of Farmington Hills.

UNDER THE old regime, religious organizations became ad hoc government groups promoting and supporting the party line, Cseri says.

While a comparatively fleshy Catholic Church in Poland resisted outright use as part of an instrument of government foreign and domestic policy goals, others didn't fare as well.

"In Hungary, the churches have to deal with the heritage of Communist rule," Cseri says. "Church leadership was compromised by collaborating with the state."

When the old Communist governments fell, it left church organizations stratified. Religious leaders who had been tied to the old government found themselves at odds with local congregations, he said.

"There's a tension between the membership and the compromised leadership. The membership is trying to hold the leadership accountable. It remains to be seen how the tension will be resolved," Cseri said.

"That doesn't mean everyone in a leadership position is necessarily tainted, he said. "Young people influ-

enced by the democracy movement. They must take over leadership," he said.

FINANCIALLY strapped churches in Eastern European countries are faced with a new opportunity to expand but lack capital and sometimes the most basic materials, such as theological texts. While Cseri would like church leaders in the United States help their Eastern bloc counterparts to rebuild, he says there's a thin line between granting aid and directing the entire effort.

"There is a 40-year lag in publishing theological books. Sometimes they are publishing books not helpful to this situation. We should discuss what would be important. Discussion is the first step," he said.

Since churches in different Eastern bloc countries face different problems, the type of aid would need to be tailored to the situation. Money and materials are needed

to repair long neglected church buildings. Religious education and schools suffered in most countries during the last regime. "Schools are important in Eastern Europe to church activities. In the West some leaders don't have the task to help schools but in Eastern Europe where the state school system is paralyzed, there's a 400-year tradition of church schools. It'd be wise to support Christian schools."

In Hungary, the government nationalized church schools during the 1950s. Now, the new government has returned some of the old buildings to the churches. "In Budapest, the state gave back the Hungarian Reformed Church's high school building. It's in such a desolate condition that the church needs millions to repair and start the school," Cseri said.

Unlike other Eastern bloc countries in which materials are scarce even for buyers with American dollars, Hungary has building supplies available.