

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Angelic choir takes wing after revival

There were only three members of the Livonia Youth Choir singing, but their voices sounded like a choir of angels.

The mini-performance of "Anani Utupe," an African song, followed an interview with choir members Rachel Bhagwat, and Sarah and Emma Stitt and their moms. They'll sing the entire program Sunday, April 16, at Newburg United Methodist Church. Churchill High School Choralation, a show choir under the direction of Pat Hutchison, will perform.

"It's an innocence and joy that you hear in their voices," said Haika Gay, Rachel's mother. "It's a bunch of kids who want to be there. Rachel loves to sing and she's found a place where she can sing in a secular situation. It gives her this broad experience. It's a cooperative effort to sing together as a unit."

If it hadn't been for Hutchison, though, Rachel would still be looking for a children's choir with which she could hone her singing skills. Until January when Hutchison resurrected the Livonia Youth Choir, local children could sing as a group only if they joined a church choir.

"It was a friendly atmosphere at the audition," said Bhagwat, a 9-year-old student at Webster Elementary. "I like singing together with different harmonies. And I like that we don't just stick to American music but have songs from different places."

Hutchison revived the choir because of children like Rachel, Sarah and Emma. Her own son sang in the Livonia Youth Choir 16 years ago. Shortly after, the group was disbanded.

"He made some lifelong friends," said Hutchison, chairman of the music department at Churchill High School in Livonia. "Even though today he's a builder and no longer involved with music, it was a good experience socially and musically. I believe the arts are so important. The kids are sitting in front of computers all day, and the choir gives them the opportunity to get out and participate. It fosters teamwork like athletics does. I encourage people to support it."

Hutchison had another reason for reviving the choir in addition to "encouraging children to develop social and musical skills. When instrumental instruction was restored in Livonia elementary schools last September, fifth- and sixth-grade vocal music classes were eliminated."

"When the Livonia Public Schools changed the program by offering a little less vocal and more instrumental for elementary students, we wanted to supplement by giving them another opportunity to sing," said Hutchison. "It's a good feeder program for high schools."

Auditions for the choir were held in January. A \$3,000 grant from the Livonia Arts Commission got the project off the ground by providing funding for sheet music, rehearsal space, and director Leigh Emmett, a graduate of Churchill High School and former Livonia Youth Choir accompanist. Students rehearse 4:30-6 p.m. Sundays. The cost for 12 weeks.

Please see **EXPRESSIONS**, C2



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HUNLEY

Solemn sounds: Dave Wagner leads the Madonna University Chorale in a rehearsal of Duruflé's "Requiem."



Holy Week tradition: Chorale members Ellen Oliver Smith of Canton (left), Larry Banas, Howell and Ted Grabarczyk, Farmington Hills prepare for their annual performance with the Livonia Symphony Orchestra.

MUSICIANS REFLECT ON LIFE & DEATH

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN

What's A Palm Sunday concert by the Livonia Symphony Orchestra, Madonna University Chorale and organist Dave Wagner.

When: 3 p.m. Sunday, April 16

Where: St. Edith Church, 15089 Newburg, south of Five Mile, Livonia

Tickets: \$15, \$10 students/children. Call (248) 645-6666 or (734) 464-2741

So it's fitting that this Palm Sunday, the Livonia Symphony Orchestra conductor will keep the day sacred by playing Maurice Duruflé's "Requiem" at St. Edith Church in Livonia. A French composer who lived from 1902 to 1986, Duruflé wrote the music to celebrate the repose of souls of the dead. Scheslik and the orchestra join together with the Madonna University Chorale and conductor/organist David Wagner to present the work.

"It's very nice music written shortly after the Second World War in 1947," said Scheslik, a City resident who immigrated to the U.S. in 1991. "It's not an easy piece of music. As compared to Mozart, it's a Gregorian chant, but everything is a little softer but very emotional."

In 1998 and 1999 the orchestra and chorale joined the St. Genevieve Interdenominational Choir to perform Requiem by Rutter and Fure on Good Friday. St. Genevieve choir director Laverne Lieberknecht initially came up with the idea for a joint concert with the Livonia Symphony Orchestra during Holy Week. Due to illness, Lieberknecht and her choir will be unable to perform this year.

The chorale and Wagner, now in his second season as conductor, began working on the "Requiem" in January.

"It's one of the great masterpieces of 20th century choral music," said Wagner. "Throughout the ages, composers have set these texts for the Mass of the Dead or Mass of Resurrection. It has ancient chant melodies with impressionistic sort of harmony. I don't want to people to be scared off because it's 20th century music. This is very accessible, a beautiful, lush work."

An accomplished organist, Wagner leads off the program as soloist for the Handel concerto. Wagner won Best Classical Recording of a solo artist at the 1998 Motor City Music Awards for his CD "Bright and Clear." Previous to becoming a full-time music professor at Madonna University two years ago, he was program director of classical music station WQRS for 18 years before it switched formats.

"The concerto Handel wrote was to be performed as intermission music for one of his oratorios," Wagner said. "During Lenten season, opera and theater performances

Please see **LIFE, C2**

University Musical Society resurrects Bach masterwork

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@ee.homecomm.net

Conductor Thomas Sheets believes that if not for Felix Mendelssohn, the University Musical Society Choral Union might not be performing Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" on Palm Sunday.

By the time Mendelssohn rediscovered the masterwork a little more than 100 years after it was written, the Passion and its composer had fallen out of favor and nearly been forgotten. Mendelssohn revived the large-scale oratorio in 1829. In so doing, the young conductor initiated the modern era of Bach scholarship and helped bring his music into the mainstream of performance repertoire.

Soloists

Sheets and the Choral Union together with the Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and Ann Arbor Youth Chorale will perform Bach's masterwork with soloists on Sunday, April 16. Thanks to the generosity of Carl and Isabelle Brauer, the University Musical Society was able to engage soloists with international reputations to sing the elaborate and lengthy production requiring an adult attention span. Joining them will be Russell Braun, a baritone regularly appearing with the Metropolitan Opera, singing the role of Jesus; soprano Maya Boog, alto Susan Platts, tenor Steven Sharp, and bass-baritone Clayton Brainerd with Edward Parmentier on harpsichord/organ. Tenor Hans Peter Blochwitz is the Evangelist, a narrative character complemented by arias, choruses and chorales.

"Mendelssohn at the tender age of 19 came across the score of this work and was fascinated," said Sheets. "He single-handedly wrote out the parts and

Please see **BACH C2**



Thomas Sheets

"St. Matthew Passion"

What: University Musical Society Choral Union, Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra and Ann Arbor Youth Chorale perform Bach's masterwork.

When: 4 p.m. Sunday, April 16

Where: Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University, Ann Arbor

Tickets: \$10-\$22, call (734) 764-2538 or (800) 221-1229

Please see **CONCERT, C2**

CONCERT

Pianist spices concert with Latin American fare

Pianist: Dimas Caraballo rehearses for his "Music Through the Ages" concert.



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HURDZAK

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
lchomin@ee.homecomm.net

While Latin American music is all the rage right now little is known about classical works written by composers from Argentina and Spain. Dimas Caraballo thinks that's a shame. The Cuban-born pianist plans to change that by giving two concerts at the Plymouth Community Arts Council on Saturday, April 15.

"The 'Music Through the Ages' program features works ranging from baroque to contemporary with a little Latin thrown in for spice."

"Classical is the foundation of all music," said Caraballo. "It's master music that's 200 years old. Some people think you put it on and fall asleep. It has some life, vitality. It's not boring."

"In Spanish culture European music is just part of the culture, part of education," continued Caraballo.

"The program has my Spanish roots. I wanted to give people a flavor of Latin American music and how it was influenced by classical music but retains folk themes."

Caraballo began playing piano shortly after coming to the U.S. in 1987. His mother instilled a love of music in him early. She was his first piano teacher when he was 6. Caraballo's talent and hard work won him full scholarships to the University of Michigan School of Music in 1986. Now the award-winning pianist is sharing them in a high-energy program of music by Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, Enrique Granados, Louis Gottschalk, Ernesto Lecuona, and Alberto Ginastera. Caraballo is playing the same recital at the University of Miami in August.

"The Granados has a flavor of Spanish dancers with, castanets and Gottschalk was influenced by Latin."

Please see **CONCERT, C2**