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Musical Talent Thrives In Westfield Choral Groups

By SUSAN M. DYCKMAN
Specially Written for This Is Westfield



Westfield enjoys a rich history of community-based choral groups whose members transcend the boundaries of age, culture and denomination in their mutual love of making music. Members ages span decades, from children as young as 6 to young-at-heart seniors age 80 or more.

The Westfield Glee Club, whose origins date back to 1928, is preparing to celebrate its diamond anniversary. Special artists and arrangements will commemorate the club's 75 years of singing. Thirty active singers perform four major concerts during the year, two in December and two in April.

The gentlemen of this group share a camaraderie that extends beyond music to social events such as coffee house gatherings, socials, dinners and fair weather cook-outs.

Each year, the Glee Club invites senior students from area high schools to apply for its annual \$1,500 scholarship. Auditions are held in March, and the winner is invited to appear as a guest artist in the club's spring concert.

Thomas Booth is beginning his fourth year as conductor of the club, which is accompanied by George Lachenauer, Director of Music and Organist of the Presbyterian Church of Roselle. The Glee Club meets Monday evenings at The Presbyterian Church in Westfield, located on Mountain Avenue.

The club accepts invitations to perform sing-outs (shortened versions of the concert score) before community organizations. Information is available from Dan Juntilla, Chairman of the Music Committee, at (908) 232-0673.

The Barbershoppers, formally known as The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc., a national organization, are doing their part to "Keep the Whole World Singing," by preserving and sharing the distinctly American music popularized during the "Tin Pan Alley" years of 1890-1920. The music is four-part, a cappella and sung in close harmony.

The local chapter of the Barbershoppers includes 80 members — all men — who meet weekly for rehearsals and fellowship. In addition to producing their annual show, which draws quartets from around the country, the group sponsors contests, and is actively involved in promoting young people's interest in music and supporting charitable organizations.

Quartets perform locally at nursing homes, hospitals, church socials, seasonal events and private parties. This year, the Barbershoppers even delivered 100 singing Valentine messages, complete with a rose and candy, to area homes and businesses.



RAISING THEIR VOICES...The Intergenerational Girl Scout Chorus, which was founded in 1993 by Eleanor "Skip" Adams of Westfield, continues to raise their voices in sweet harmony.

Additional information about membership or booking a quartet for an event is available from Robert A. Stalknecht at (908) 754-3717.

The Chansonettes, a three- and four-part harmony women's choral group, was founded in 1948. Bonded by a shared love of singing, the 25 members of the non-denominational group rehearse weekly at The Presbyterian Church. Their Director is Jean Schork.

Members include single women, young mothers and grandmothers. They traditionally perform for local groups, church organizations, nursing homes, senior citizens homes and women's and college groups. The Chansonettes perform through two concert seasons in December and late April/May.

For information about hiring the singers, please call Vice President Louise Loffredo at (908) 232-8213.

Another chorus, The Choral Art Society of New Jersey, Inc., also makes its home in Westfield. The Society features 90 singers, all of whom share a love of music and are dedicated to the study and performance of great choral works.

They perform under the direction of Kathleen Healy-Wedsworth, and meet Tuesday nights, 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., at The Presbyterian Church.

The group is accompanied by the Choral Art Society Orchestra during its annual performances in January and May. The public is traditionally invited to join in the Society's Messiah Community Sing each December at the First Baptist Church on Elm Street.

For information on membership, sponsorship and tickets, please call Katherine Ciurczak at (908) 481-8360. Members of all ages are welcome.

The Oratorio Singers enjoy a reputation that reaches beyond Westfield to include the entire metropolitan area. Now in its 19th year, the community chorus includes 80 to 100 singers of all voice parts.

Under the direction of Trent Johnson, Director of Music and Arts at the First United Methodist Church of Westfield, the singers perform selected choral masterpieces from a rich assortment of composers. These include Giuseppe Verdi, Leonard Bernstein, Franz Joseph Haydn and George Frederick Handel.

Adult and youth soprano, alto, tenor and bass singers from Westfield and the neighboring communities are welcome to join the Oratorio Singers.

Workshops and part rehearsals are scheduled to allow members time to learn the music and perfect their performances.

Additional information about membership is available from Mr. Johnson at (908) 233-4211.

The Westfield Chorale performs annually in December under the direction of William R. Mathews, Minister of Music at the First Baptist Church. For "Carols in the Round," the chorale brings together the youthful voices of present and former members of area high school choirs to present some of the season's most beloved hymns and Christmas carols.

The chorale gives two performances of its holiday program one weekend a year, the proceeds of

which are donated to various local charities.

Since its inception in 1987, there have been 272 members of the chorale, representing 15 churches and synagogues from Fanwood, Plainfield, Scotch Plains and Westfield. The concert takes place in the sanctuary of the Baptist Church.

The Intergenerational Girl Scout Chorus was founded in 1993 by Eleanor "Skip" Adams of Westfield, who continues to direct the a cappella group with two- and three-part harmony.

Founded to restore Girl Scout songs to the scouting experience, the chorus includes Brownie, Junior and Cadette scouts as well as adult members. It has always been the director's hope that members will take what they learn and bring the songs back to their respective communities.

Through the years, the chorus has included 100 members, with some mother/daughter and even grandmother/granddaughter pairs of singers with a wide range of abilities.

The chorus brings its music to places like Children's Specialized Hospital, the Westfield Day Care Center, the Lyons Veterans Hospital and area nursing homes.

One of its finest performances occurred when the Intergenerational Chorus performed at the "biggest sing-along of all" on the Mall in Washington, D.C. during the 1997 national celebration of the 85th anniversary of Girl Scouting.

For more information, please call Mrs. Adams at (908) 233-3716.

Performing members of The Musical Club of Westfield sing for each other at weekly gatherings of the club at the First Baptist Church. Guests are welcome. Most performing members are current or former professional singers, while associate members participate simply to enjoy the music and assist with the club's

varied activities.

Every other year, the club holds a concert to raise money for its scholarship program. During the 1998-1999 season, 11 scholarships will be given to students from Westfield and the surrounding communities who plan to study music in college. Scholarship information is available from Helene Frieland at (908) 232-7414 or Sondra Tammam at (908) 233-6667.

The club also sponsors a Junior Musical Club, members of which are area high school musicians. The junior club performs an open ensemble concert in March and holds a senior high school student recital in May.

For additional information, please call Jane Stoner at (908) 654-5752.



How to Get Involved

Westfield Glee Club (908) 232-7349
gleecub@westfieldnj.com

Barbershoppers (908) 276-5811
haigrds@aol.com

Choral Art Society (908) 203-9118
cas@westfieldnj.com

Chansonettes (908) 654-5130

Oratorio Singers (908) 233-4211
www.westfieldnj.com/oratorio

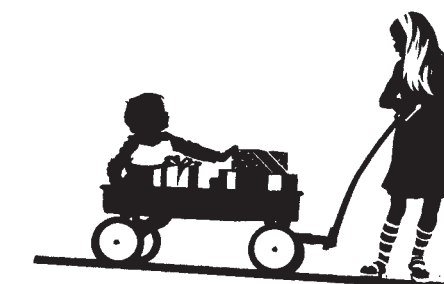
Intergenerational Girl Scout Chorus
(908) 233-3716

Please See Musical Club of Westfield Story on page 24



HARMONIZING TALENTS...The local chapter of Barbershoppers includes 80 members. The all-male singing group draws quartets from across the country. The chapter sponsors contests, performs at local nursing homes, churches, private parties and even delivers Valentine messages.

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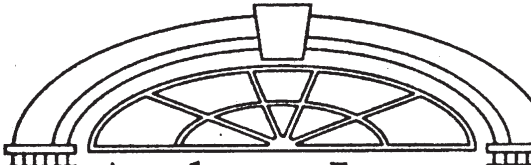


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