RapAround RapAround RapAround

Nazareth — a Singing School

By JOAN M. SMITH

"As the bird is in flight so is the song in your heart," reads one of Nazareth Academy's musical performance programs. It describes the musical spirit of the girls who make up the school's three voice groups — Freshman Chorus, Chorale Belles and the Perosians.

According to Sister Donna Marie Cucci, who trains and directs the voices of all three, this year has seen the largest turnout ever for the Freshman Chorus. Other years the average has been 65 members while this year 75 voices will be participating in performances such as the Christmas programs at school, nursing homes and Sisters of St. Joseph's Infirmary.

The Perosians, consisting of sophs, juniors, seniors, number 50. "Just enough for the robes we have," laughed sister. Twelve members of this chorus make up the Chorale Belles which sister describes "as our public performers."

The Belles perform yearly on the Eddie Meath and Matt Rinaldi shows and their Christmas concert is a tradition over at Rochester Products where the people according to sister, "Treat us royally."

Auditions for the Chorale Belles is stiff. Sister looks for solo voices and especially for singers who have private training background. Tryouts for the Freshman Chorus begin in September and sister puts the vocalists through their paces, singly or in groups — trying to determine range of pitch.

Sister arranges the music herself and likes to give all her singers a challenge. "I try to lay the ground at the beginning of the year by giving them music that's a challenge." She did just that last year by handing the Perosians Handel's "Messiah".

With the frosh singers she generally picks two or three pieces that challenge their voices such as the "Regina Coeli" in Latin and the Perosians have tackled Gregorian Chant.

Not only does sister give her students performing experience but also introduces them to the enjoyment of attending professional performances like "La Boheme" and "Messiah". "Their level of appreciation has been raised," explained sister about the combination of doing and listening.

In the concert department, planning musical presentations poses a difficult task. "You have to be careful in planning a program," sister warned. "You have to try and get a mixture, pieces that everyone is interested in."

But whether it's program planning, musical arrangement or training voices, sister is a whiz at what she does. She loves music and is proud to work with Nazareth's singing groups. Sister, a mezzo soprano as well as a pianist, started music training at age six. She has been at Nazareth four years, has her BS in music from Nazareth College and received her Master in Music degree from the Eastman School of Music. She admits to dabbling with many forms of music but prefers the classical. Her enthusiasm for music carries over to her singers and she emphasized that if they see you love music they'll develop an interest and respond to it.

In talking with a few of the freshmen who were testing for the chorus, it seemed as if sister's theory was fact. Though nervous, the young singers, under sister's capable direction, diligently explored their voice capabilities. "I'll sing anything," laughed Liza Lanzillo which seemed to be the consensus of them all.

Photo by Joan Smith

Freshman voices being tested by Sister Donna Marie (at piano) are from left, Kim St. George, Lisa Lanzillo, Mary Jo Pascucci and Nancy Magoffin.

Juniors Debbie Donnelly and China Jones, members of the Perosians, put their voices through some musical paces.

Active Mooney Red Cross

The Cardinal Mooney Red Cross membership, directed by Mrs. Florence Selmeyer, is going strong. The involved students are going to the Grandville Home for Adults a day every month to host a bingo party for the residents. Members Anne Marie Cason, Jim Fleig, Erik Hemdal and Eileen Pierce will also be assisting the Greece Recreation Department with its bowling program for handicapped persons at Maiden Lane.

According to Anne Marie, "It sounds like a fun thing" to help these people.

In addition, old "pro" members from last year like juniors Kathy Stout and Karen Kuhn are looking forward to another busy but satisfying year in the organization.

Winners Circle

RapAround weekly will run a photo of a group of students taken somewhere in the diocese. One person will be circled and if that person brings the clipping to the school office before noon of the Tuesday following our publication date, he or she will receive $5. This week's photo was taken at Notre Dame High School during lunch. The person circled above should bring the clipping to the school office to be forwarded to Joan M. Smith, Courier-Journal, by noon, Tuesday, Oct 24 to receive $5.

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