

# Crooning youths open season on right note

By Barbara Ann Homick  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — If it's true that singing is the highest form of prayer, then youths in the Cathedral Choir School have racked up a wealth of graces.

During the school's recent choir camp, conducted by Jura Litchfield at St. Thomas Episcopal Church from Aug. 26-29, the choristers spent many hours warming up their vocal chords in preparation for a season of singing.

Litchfield, who is beginning her sixth season of instruction at the choir school, said the camp serves as a valuable gauge for what she can expect from the youths for the rest of the year. This year, to use an expression common to coaches, will be a rebuilding one for the choir director.

"We lost five kids to graduation last spring so we are in a rebuilding mode for long-term singers," said the 43-year-old Litchfield, who has an ensemble of 24 youths this year. "The camp is helpful to assess the group and see what we can accomplish."

The youths, ages 8 to 14, have achieved many accomplishments since the program began in 1986, Litchfield said. The director noted that she founded the school because she saw a need to provide an outlet for young singers.

"Our singers tend to be talented youths who have no outlet for their musical and vocal abilities," said Litchfield, director of music at St. Paul's Church in Webster. "Either they have conflicts in scheduling choral activities at school, or their school situation does not challenge them musical-



Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

Members of the Cathedral Choir School warm up Aug. 29 for their first concert of the season. The concert took place later that day at Colgate Rochester Divinity School.

ly. Some have no significant musical opportunities in their local churches."

The independent, ecumenical ensemble is modeled after British cathedral and collegiate choirs. During the past five years, the choir has sung in churches of many denominations. According to Litchfield, the choir is dedicated to singing great choral works written for worship. The choir has performed the works of such composers as Stanford, Mozart, Britten, Vivaldi and Howells.

Litchfield, who has a bachelor's and master's degree in music from Columbia University, has previously taught music at public schools in Webster and Greece. She has also worked in the music department at St. Bernard's Institute.

The director said she loves working with

young people because they have so much energy.

"They are very well motivated kids and they generally aim to please," she said.

Although last week's heat wave sapped some of the youths' energy, Litchfield was confident that their first public performance would be successful. On Aug. 29 the choir presented "Music To Begin the School Year" to their parents as well as the faculty and students at Colgate Rochester Divinity School.

Before the performance, Litchfield went over a few last instructions. "Sing with energy, sit tall, drop your jaw, make a big space in your throat," she said.

Litchfield added, "I know you are sweating bullets, but I love you for it."

Christiane Moughan sat in the audience as her three children — Kelly, 15; Thomas, 13; and Patrick, 10 — sang pieces from Andrew Lloyd Webber and Aaron Copeland. Moughan said all of her children are musically inclined and singing is something the whole family enjoys.

"As a family this has brought us closer together because we now have something in common," said Moughan, who sings with her husband, Thomas, at Blessed Sacrament Church.

Music is also a family affair for 10-year-old Gabriel Kahane. The fifth-grade student at the Harley School is following in his parents' footsteps.

Kahane's father, Jeffrey, is a pianist who teaches at the Eastman School of Music. His mother, Martha, once taught music.

"My mom and I fool around a lot with singing," noted Kahane, who touts Bach and Mozart as his favorite composers.

The third-year chorister, who appeared in the Eastman School/Opera Theater of Rochester's production of *La Boheme* last

October and the Eastman School of Music's presentation of *Street Scene* last April, said singing serves as a great way for him to release energy.

But the young Kahane also enjoys chess and devotes a great deal of time to his favorite sport — baseball.

In fact, Kahane said that someday he would like to be a professional baseball player. He also wants to be a musician — in the off-season, of course.

"I think I would be a conductor instead of a pianist, though, just in case I injured my fingers playing baseball," he noted.

Like Kahane, Sarah Haggett is also a veteran chorister. In her second year at the Cathedral Choir School, 9-year-old Haggett said singing has broadened her horizons.

"I get to meet new friends and I get to learn Latin from the songs we sing," noted Haggett, a fourth-grader from Fairport.

The choir members will get to learn several new songs as they gear up for a busy year. Their 1991-1992 season includes performances at the Taize weekend at Nazareth College on Oct. 18-19; the Christ Church Choir Festival on Nov. 3; Advent Lessons in Carols at St. Mary's Church downtown on Dec. 8; the dedication of an organ at St. Catherine's in Mendon in late January; and a program with Mitzie Collins at St. Louis Church in Pittsford next spring.

Although the youths will have to fit one day of practice into their already cramped schedules in order to prepare for the busy season, most said the benefits are well worth the effort.

Kahane said, "I almost was thinking of quitting because my life was so packed, but I couldn't because the choir is a big part of my life."



Jura Litchfield, now in her sixth season of conducting the choir school, also serves as director of music at St. Paul's Church in Webster.



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