

YOUTH FEATURE

'Sister Act' plays on in King Ferry

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

KING FERRY — When first asked, Kelly Mahaney wasn't quite sure how long she has served as organist at Our Lady of the Lake Church.

"I don't really remember going to church without playing the organ," she said with a laugh.

At the age of 18, Mahaney has already logged a substantial amount of musical experience. She has been the primary organist at Our Lady of the Lake, located in Cayuga County, since at least her junior-high school days.

Although Kelly will leave for Binghamton University this fall following her recent graduation from Southern Cayuga High School, the church-organ bench will most likely be occupied by another Mahaney — her 16-year-old sister, Katie.

Training for the Mahaneys' musical roles got underway back in the first grade, when both began taking piano lessons. Kelly has since become firmly established at Our Lady of the Lake, to the point that she gets paid for her weekly services. She has even performed at a couple of weddings.

Katie began her involvement last summer, serving as substitute organist while Kelly was out of town. Although she said she enjoys playing, Katie admits to still having an occasional bout with nerves.

"I'm very nervous when I play in front of people. (Kelly) still gets nervous, too, but she hides it better," Katie noted.

While it hasn't been formally discussed, Katie concedes that she'll probably inherit Kelly's duties of performing at the church's 11 a.m. Sunday Mass.

Welcome to the latest sequel of *Sister Act*.

"I kind of figured that once she went



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

The sister combination of Katie (left) and Kelly Mahaney has provided some valuable musical assistance for Our Lady of the Lake Church in King Ferry, Cayuga County.

away, I'd do it. I know how hard it is when there's no organist," remarked Katie, who recently completed her junior year at Southern Cayuga.

Both sisters remember humorous incidents that have occurred along the way.

"Once, I started played the wrong song," said Kelly. "I didn't know what to do, so I just kept going."

A playful jab from Father Paul J. Ryan — who serves as pastor of St. Mary of the Lake as well as three other churches in the Cayuga Team Ministry Cluster — stands out in Katie's mind.

"Before the closing announcements, Father Ryan said, 'Katie, you've done such a wonderful job — so don't screw up during the last song,'" Katie recalled.

The girls' mother, Kathy, noted that when Kelly makes visits home from college next year, "she'll be able to sit in a

pew for the first time" while Katie handles the organ chores.

"She'll be laughing at me, instead of me laughing at her," added Katie.

Actually, their mother pointed out that both Kelly and Katie are so polished that miscues are kept to a minimum — and usually they are the only two to even notice.

"We make eye contact if one of us makes a mistake," Kelly said.

Kelly plans on continuing her musical endeavors at Binghamton next year

as she pursues a possible career in communications.

"I hope to keep playing the piano. I'd like to take lessons, or maybe even give lessons or get into a band," she said.

In little more than a year, Katie will begin college as well. Who will fill the role of organist then?

Well, their 8-year-old sister, Mary Beth, has already started piano lessons.

But "I don't think she'll be ready in a year," their mother said with a laugh.

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