

## St. Patrick's Day means *amore* to Gates singer

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

GATES — March 17, 1965, started out like any other St. Patrick's Day for Loretta Cisterna.

"Being the good Italian that I am, I didn't do too much on St. Patrick's Day," the Italian-American recalled in her dining room in her home on Lettington Avenue.

But an Irish immigrant secretary she had befriended at Rochester's St. Mary's Hospital, where Cisterna worked in the public relations office, told her to go home after work and put her dancing shoes on.

"We have to go out," she recalled her fellow employee as saying on the Irish patron saint's holiday.

When Cisterna went to meet her co-worker after work at the woman's apartment, she also met the woman's brother, Andrew Doyle. To this day Andrew remembers being smitten by his sister Ellen's friend. Although Cisterna said it took about a year to warm up to him, the Irish immigrant and the Italian-American woman were married in 1968, and have been together ever since.

"A lot of people can't say they've found the consummate human being, but I've found that in my Andrew," she said. "He's my man for all seasons."

Loretta Cisterna Doyle will celebrate her find in Andrew by singing a Mass in honor of St. Patrick on Sunday, March 15, at 11 a.m., in St. Mary's Hospital Chapel. Doyle, cantor and soloist at St. Thomas More Church in Brighton, will perform such Irish favorites as "Danny Boy" in the prelude to the Mass. She added that during the service, Andrew will recite the Lord's Prayer in Gaelic.

"I like the haunting refrains of Irish music," she said. "Somehow or other, there's always a sadness involved in Irish music, a sadness but also an ultimate joy."

Doyle, a soprano, has been singing at the Mass since the early 1980s. She said this year's service will take on special poignancy — she is grateful Andrew is doing well after his recent mild heart attack.

Doyle said she remembered singing as a child growing up in the 1940s in St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Rochester. Her late parents, Rose and Alfonse Cisterna, inspired her love of song, she said.



Loretta Doyle sings at her Gates home while daughter Elizabeth, 22, plays the piano March 5.

Greg Francis/Staff photographer

"My father loved music," Doyle said about her Italian immigrant father. "He used to teach me folk tunes from Italy."

Her mother also encouraged her talent, Doyle said.

"She couldn't sing at all, but she had an appreciation for music," Doyle said. "I dedicate all my programs to her."

"I'm old enough now to realize now that her example was important to me. She was a peacemaker and she was open to everyone. I never saw my mother prejudiced in any way or narrow-minded."

Doyle herself is a mother with four children — Bridget, 28, Douglas, 24, and her twin daughters, Georgette and Elizabeth, who turned 22 on March 4, the day Doyle spoke to the *Catholic Courier*.

Doyle began learning about music by singing Gregorian chants at St. Francis of Assisi as a child, she said. She later majored in music in high school, and continued private voice lessons as an adult, she said.

Over the years, Doyle has performed with the Rochester Oratorio Society and the Rochester Bach Choir, and has sung in musicals, and at civic events and benefits.

She also regularly performs at weddings, funerals and political events, as well as at senior citizens' residences and nursing

homes with her partner Denise Bent. Bent plays piano, guitar and accordion and specializes in country music, polkas and ragtime; Doyle focuses on Broadway show tunes and classical music.

Doyle has also recorded four cassettes since the early 1980s, including her latest, "Concert Favorites Live." She sells her tapes out of her home, and at Logos Bookstore and Irish Imports, both in Greece, as well as Irish & Celtic Imports in Fairport.

Doyle's first tape, "Loretta Doyle Sings Favorites" was recorded in 1984, and was engineered by Ray Buonemani, secretary of the board of directors of the Problem Pregnancy Help Center, Inc., in Rochester. Supported by a number of Catholic parishes, the independent, not-for-profit center provides spiritual and material support to women facing unplanned pregnancies. Buonemani noted that the center served more than 800 clients in 1997.

Doyle has sung at six benefits for the center since 1990, Buonemani said. Her concerts have grossed an average of \$3,400, he added. The center, which operates on an annual budget of \$43,000, welcomes Doyle's support, Buonemani said.

"As long as Loretta is willing to do that, it certainly is a benefit to us because we

could always use a few thousand more dollars," he said.

Doyle's last benefit concert for the center took place last November at St. Helen's Church, 310 Hinchey Road. She was accompanied by the William Watson Singers as well as Teryle Watson, music minister at St. Augustine's and Immaculate Conception churches in Rochester, who also directs the vocal program and senior choir at the School of the Arts in Rochester.

Doyle said she has sung for the pregnancy center because of its work.

"I think that the Problem Pregnancy Help Center is a haven," she said. "It's fulfilling a real need."

Doyle also sang at a church in New Ross, Ireland, her husband's hometown, in September. The soprano had gone to Ireland to sing at Dublin's Mercy International Centre to help raise funds for the restoration of an organ there. The concert was organized by Sister Nancy Whitley, RSM, formerly of Rochester, who is working with the Mercy sisters in Ireland.

Doyle said it was one of the greatest thrills of her life to sing in Ireland, adding that her concerts were reviewed by *New Ross Standard*, the local paper.

"I never dreamed of doing a concert in Dublin," she said with a smile.

Doyle has favorites among the songs she performs, but because of her devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, she has a particularly soft spot for Schubert's "Ave Maria."

"It's a signature piece of mine, I think, because the stress is on our lady," she said. "When I sing that 'Ave Maria,' when I sing that 'Hail Mary,' I mean it."

Doyle said she hopes to sing both professionally and for charity for a long time.

"I guess, early on, the fact that I had a voice was apparent," she said. "I think that's a gift from God."

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