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## Singers to debut at New York festival

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Published: March 22, 2009 12:01AM



loncharicm

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Since its inception just a few months ago, the new Young People's Chorus of Erie is making great strides. About 50 choristers are eager and ready for their debut in the Big Apple Saturday.

Penn State Behrend's Jason Bishop, Ph.D., is taking a bus load of the young singers to New York City for the weekend. They will stay with New York host families.

From what I've been told, Jamie Bernstein Thomas, daughter of the late composer/conductor Leonard Bernstein, will work with Erie's middle and high school choruses when they attend the Young People's Chorus of New York City's Honor Chorus Festival. She's the composer-in-residence for the festival.

The youths will spend Saturday rehearsing at Beacon High School on West 61st Street in Manhattan for their performance that evening at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, at 60th Street and Columbus

Avenue.

"Dr. Thomas will work with the choristers for a portion of the day on a composition she has written for the honor chorus participants to perform that evening," Bishop said.

"She will be involved for both the rehearsal and performance portions of the day, so the choristers will have the opportunity to meet her, work with her, and hear her speak briefly about the special composition she's written for them," Bishop said. He will be the guest conductor of the Young Men's Honor Chorus.

Barbara Baker, Ph.D., the other guest conductor for the festival, will work with the Treble Honor Chorus. One of the pieces that Baker has programmed is her own arrangement of an

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African-American spiritual, "The Storm is Passing Over."

Erie high school choristers have been working on this piece as part of its repertoire. Treble voices -- all sopranos and altos -- will have the opportunity to work on a piece they know and love with the actual composer conducting.

Biographies and more festival information is available on the Web site: [www.ypc.org](http://www.ypc.org)

In other Young People's Chorus news, Erie will host "Thank You for the Music," a gala dinner-performance-auction on June 27, at Penn State Behrend's stunning new Research and Economic Development Center.

Tickets are available through the college's Office of Development and Alumni Relations. Call 898-6159.

Turn-of-a-decade surprise

Denise Illig Robison was treated to a wonderful surprise on March 7. Two days before her actual birthday, her husband, Robbie, and their five children gave her a surprise 70th birthday party at the Kahkwa Club.

Lured by a "family dinner" at Kahkwa, Denise arrived to a roomful of about 50 enthusiastic guests.

On hand were Wally and Gloria Knox, Bob and Maureen "Mo" Dwyer, Inara Renkis, Brady and Renie Louis, William P. Garvey, Charla Leemis, Dave and Barb Zurn, Tom and Mary Alice Doolin, Bill and Ann Pysh, Bob and Gloria Walker, Ed and Lynn Askey, Audree Parr, Tony and Betty Amatangelo, Susie Wressell, Dan and Barb Collins, the Honorable Michael and Roberta Palmisano, Randy and Charee Lackowski and Jim and Adrian Marnen.

Also, John and Sally Rouch, Mary SchAAF and Bill Bliel, Craige Pepper Victor, Arnie Bergquist, Mike and Judy Coughlin, Peter and Amy Lund, Betsy Miller, Sister Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB, Sister Mary Miller, OSB, Sister Maureen Tobin, OSB, Betsy Deimel, Frank and Linda Scalise and Craig and Loretta Schaal.

Just minutes after being greeted by her friends, sons Matthew, of Fort Collins, Colo., and Russell, of Erie, and daughters Denise Murphy, of Lake Forest, Ill., and Pamela McCormick, with husband, Matt, of Erie, led Denise and Robbie and the crowd to view a DVD of collective photos of Denise's life.

Denise's oldest daughter, Mary Arden Robison, was not able to make it in from Deerfield, Ill.

Everyone enjoyed the display which covered early school days with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart to honeymoon photos to the joys of grandchildren.

Beyond the DVD, the tap room of the club was transformed into a wonderful display of Denise's life -- so far. Pictures covering the past 70 years were hung on the walls and displayed around tables and shelves.

Stargazer lilies, Denise's favorite flower, perfumed the air. The guests were treated to hors d'oeuvres, prime rib and a pasta bar featuring a Gorgonzola and mushroom-filled ravioli.

Grandchildren Andrea, Mary Therese, Matthew and Helen Ann McCormick, as well as William, Isabel and Caroline Murphy enjoyed being part of their grandmother's big night. A wonderful time was had by all, especially the birthday girl.

Among the surprise guests was longtime friend Jane Ryan, who came from Connecticut especially for the occasion. She was a roommate from Denise's days of working in Washington, D.C., as press secretary to Sen. Edward "Ted" Kennedy in the early '60s.

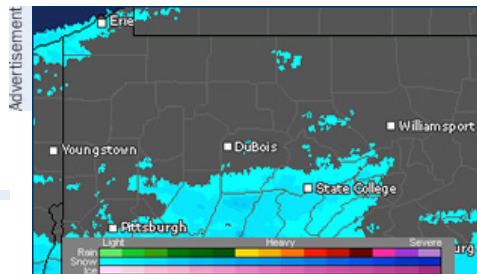
Later, during former Gov. Tom Ridge's administration, Denise served as Pennsylvania's deputy secretary of aging. She also holds the distinction of being the first woman elected to Erie City Council.

Suffice to say, she's led a full and interesting life.

Now you know

Congratulations to Ed Brown, Mary Daly, J. Timothy Healy, Pam McArAW, Larry J. Nazarian and

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Thomas Unger, newly inducted Knights and Ladies of St. Patrick. They were honored Saturday at a liturgy for Passion Sunday at St. Patrick Catholic Church.

A dinner at Cauley Center followed. Inductees received emerald green sashes emblazoned with a gold shamrock, and engraved plaques.

The organization, founded in 1978, recognizes lay persons who have dedicated their lives to the contribution of service to their church, their community and their families.

Through their understanding of St. Patrick, members strive to reveal the presence of God through service to others. Current President Michele Wheaton, assistant vice president of academic services at Mercyhurst College, was inducted in 1996.

It's a small world

Floyd and Judy Lawrence are singing the praises of their winter vacation to the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. In addition to sunning at Vieques' beautiful, unspoiled beaches and dining in many fine restaurants, the couple attended a Valentine's Day Ball.

Vieques Bella was a fundraiser put on by the town of Isabel to buy musical instruments for local school children. The guests included Doug and Diane Elliott, native Pennsylvanians who have spent the past 10 years living on a 38-foot sailboat cruising the Caribbean.

The Lawrences hope to meet up with them again on their return visit in 2010. Floyd has covered cinema, theater, food and travel for the Erie Times-News for years. Judy is vice president of major and planned gifts at United Way of Erie County.

Erie Phil food drive

The Erie Philharmonic will participate in Orchestras Feeding America, the first national food drive by America's symphony orchestras.

Philharmonic Executive Director Eric Borenstein said the Erie Phil will offer discounted tickets to the March 28 pops concert to patrons who donate a nonperishable food item. The concert, "Swing City," features the vocal jazz group Monday Off.

Food donations can be dropped off at the Erie Phil box office, 609 Walnut St., or at Nautilus Fitness Center, 2312 W. 15th St., before the Saturday concert. A 20-percent discount on the price of admission will be given to those who donate.

Donations will also be accepted at the Warner Theatre the night of the concert. The food collected in Erie will be donated to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest Pennsylvania.

POSTSCRIPT: Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want. -- Anonymous.

MEG LONCHARIC's column appears in the Sunday Living section. You can call her at 454-8000; send e-mail to [newsmeg@aol.com](mailto:newsmeg@aol.com); or write to her in care of the Erie Times-News, 205 W. 12th St., Erie, PA 16534. Please include a daytime phone number.

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