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THE TRIBUNE



Veterans

Members of Community Chorus who have participated 20-25 years are Van Dillon, Nellie Ruth Irwin, Ruth Waring, Caroline Dillon, Fran Greene, Phyllis Qualheim, Sarah Campbell, Richard Culberson, Kitty Brendle and Kitty Cranford.

★ Chorus readies 25th concert

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dance was down. The offering was small, and the expenses for renting an organ and printing programs left the chorus in the red.

The chorus committee, which had been organized in 1962, decided to move the concerts back to the churches, alternating years at each church. A group of patrons provided financial backing to get the chorus out of the red, and Christmas anthems were added to the program.

In 1966, Greene and Irwin led the chorus in five Christmas anthems, and Patti and Lee Webb, minister of music and organist at First Baptist, led the "Messiah" portion of the program.

Since the chorus moved back to the churches, it has performed for a large audience each year. Financial problems, however, continued to plague the group through the 1970s.

From 1966-77, the chorus struggled on its own by scrimping on purchases of new music, keeping honorariums low and running off programs at First Baptist Church. Local artists often designed program fronts. (This year's program is designed by Linda Griffin.)

In 1977, the hat had to be passed among chorus members, with each contributing.

"I can remember collecting money to buy music, pay the director and organist," Kitty Cranford says. Area merchants also helped the cause with donations that year.

Though Greene says she was discouraged by lack of money and few singers, she didn't give up.

"There were several years in the early seventies when we were running 50 to 60 singers, when I said 'Is it time for us to stop?'" Greene says. "But we always maintained a full

house . . . When we had a difficult time getting singers, the community support kept us alive."

In 1978, the Foothills Arts Council donated \$200 to the chorus. The arts council again helped with \$100 in 1979. The offering of \$300 was unusually large that year, enabling the chorus to function on its own the following year.

In 1981, the chorus became an associate member of the Foothills Arts Council, and by 1984 had a budget of \$775, \$500 of which was provided by the arts council.

In 1981, under the direction of Joe Dell Rust, minister of music at First Baptist Church, the largest chorus ever performed with 91 singers and 34 bell ringers. Members of 25 churches participated.

This year's program includes "Antiphonal Gloria," "The Little Newborn Jesus Child," "Now We Sing," "Today Christ Is Born," "Gloria," and "Love Came Down At Christmas." From the "Messiah," "And the Glory of the Lord," "O Thou That Tellest," "For Unto Us A Child Is Born," and "Hallelujah!" will be sung. In addition, congregational hymns will be sung. The chorus will be accompanied by Williams and a 10-member band directed by Larry Irwin.

Jane Hazelman will interpret for the deaf.

The concert begins at 7:30 p.m.



Upbeat

Director Fran Greene once again directs Community Chorus in its 25th anniversary concert. She has directed 22 of the 25 concerts.

'Christmas begins with chorus'

By DEBORAH BAKER
Lifestyles Editor

Hallelujahs will fill First Baptist Church in Elkin Sunday night as the Community Chorus presents its 25th anniversary concert, featuring the uplifting music of Handel's "Messiah" and other Christmas favorites.

The chorus began in the fall of 1961, when Fran Greene, then minister of music at First Baptist, was searching for a more challenging Christmas program for her choir.

The Christmas portion of the "Messiah" had not been done in Elkin for many years. Greene and Nellie Ruth Irwin, organist and music director at First United Methodist Church in Elkin, combined their choirs for the program, with Natalie Williams serving as organist.

The program, with 69 chorus members, was presented at First Baptist on Dec. 17. The next year, the chorus was opened to all community members, and its size increased to 79.

Greene, who has directed or shared in the directing for 22 years, says she had no idea the chorus would exist for 25 years.

"I see nothing but marvel that it has existed this long," especially considering that musicians volunteer their time to practice during the busy holiday season, she says.

In celebration of the 25th anniversary, this year's program

will also be held at First Baptist, with Greene directing and Williams as organist. Irwin is a member of the chorus.

Six of the chorus members—Kitty Brendle, Caroline Dillon, Van Dillon, Greene, Phyllis Qualheim and Ruth Waring—have participated all 25 years, and four—Sarah Campbell, Richard Culberson, Kitty Cranford and Irwin—have participated for 20 or more years.

"The program makes me feel happy," Waring says. "I feel like Christmas begins after that program."

Community Chorus has given her an opportunity to meet and know more people who share a love of music, she says. This year, the 77 chorus members are drawn from 20 area churches.

The continuation of the chorus is a "real tribute" to Greene, Waring says.

"She is just a lovely person. There are not many people who could draw from so many different sources. She is careful not to favor one over the other," she says.

Though recent years have brought large crowds to hear performances, times were not always easy for the chorus.

From 1963-65, the programs were held in Elkin's new Dixon Auditorium. The 1964 crowd was small, but 1965 was a "disaster," Greene says.

The program was held on a cold, rainy day, and the atten-

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