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## **SINGING THROUGH THE YEARS TWIN CITY CHORISTERS PLAN 50TH-ANNIVERSARY CONCERT**

Back in the 1950s, a local dentist with a musical bent dreamed of establishing an all-male chorus. The dream became a reality when the dentist, A.L. Cromwell, persuaded Permillia Flack Dunston to found and direct the *Twin City Choristers*.

Well, 50 years have passed, and get this: The Choristers are still singing strong, and two of the group's original members are still participating.

Many other members have put in 20 years or more. They meet for 90 minutes every Tuesday evening to prepare eclectic concerts that might include music of Handel and Brahms, in addition to spirituals and more modern gospel fare. They'll present their 50th-anniversary concert next Sunday at the Arts Council Theatre.

Fred Tanner, once a professor at Winston-Salem State University, will conduct. Proceeds from ticket sales will fund a scholarship that the Choristers have established to benefit a male student interested in choral singing at any accredited college or university in the United States. The future of the scholarship depends on funding.

John Young, a retired employee of Wachovia, joined the Choristers 22 years ago. He said he looks forward to rehearsals.

"It gives me a good feeling," he said. "You don't always feel like it. Once you get in there and start singing, you just feel better. It's uplifting."

Garland Wallace Sr., 72, is one of the Choristers' two founding members. He said he has "no idea" why Cromwell approached Dunston about starting a chorus. But he's sure glad it happened. And he's grateful that Dunston recruited him into the group, saying "a love of singing" and the camaraderie of "a nice group of guys" keeps him coming back week after week.

Member Jakay Ervin expressed similar sentiments.

"Everyone's just like family," he said.

The other founding member is Rudy Anderson Sr., who is 81. He sings along with his son, Rudy Jr., who is 55.

"It (the chorus) has always been a part of my life," said Anderson Jr., who works in the office of marketing and communications at Winston-Salem State University. "Being able to do something with my dad that we both enjoy doing - that's a blessing."

Another "blessing" has been the various performing opportunities the group has enjoyed. Members spoke with pride about singing with the Winston-Salem Symphony; touring the Northeast, where they performed in churches; and making recordings. The group has helped celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday, and its Christmas concert has become a highlight of the holiday season. But members say that event might not happen this year; they're considering taking a break after next Sunday's concert.

"We only rehearse once a week," Tanner said. "That's not very much. They do an excellent job with the amount of time we spend."

The most pressing problem for the Choristers is replenishing the group with younger singers. (Many members are retired or are pushing retirement age.)

"It's a bunch of old fellows," Wallace said. "God's still giving us a strong voice."

Tanner and others said the group hasn't had much success in recruiting, because prospective members are unable or unwilling to make the commitment to rehearsals and concerts.

Wallace said that new singers would join "if they'd understand what it does for us." He's encouraged that his grandsons, 8 and 10, have heard the group and say they want to join when they're older.

"I hope I live to see it," Wallace said.

- Under Fred Tanner's direction, the *Twin City Choristers* will perform at 4 p.m. next Sunday in the Arts Council Theatre. Tickets are \$20. They're available at the Sawtooth Building from the Arts Council of Winston-Salem, now one of the chorus' underwriters, and at the Delta Arts Center, 2611 New Walkertown Road, and Chelsea's Coffee Shop and More, 533 N. Trade Street. For more information, call Shonta Moore at 336-682-1841.

**Illustration:** Photos

**Type:** Color

**Caption:** Jakay Ervin Sr. (top) and Garland Wallace of the *Twin City Choristers*.