

IN MY OPINION**Caroline Porter**

How do you get to Carnegie Hall?

And the answer to that famous question is, "Practice, practice, practice." That's exactly what about 130 local singers have been doing for years, but not expecting to ever stand on the stage of the famed and historic musical theater in New York City. To "play" in Carnegie Hall is considered the pinnacle of one's musical career. Well, for all of us who are leaving on buses early Friday morning, heading for O'Hare Airport, and flying to New York City to sing in the revered Hall, it is more than we ever dreamed.

It all started over a year ago when Knox College music professor Laura Lane was invited to direct the Knox College Choir at Carnegie Hall. She had submitted a CD of the Knox Choir and it impressed the decision-makers. The choir has sung in Carnegie Hall before. But this time, Ms. Lane invited the Galesburg Community Chorus and Carl Sandburg Choir to participate, both directed by Tim Pahel, Carl Sandburg's music director and part-time director at Knox. Talented singers from area high schools were also invited.

All of the choirs have been practicing on

their own, except for Monday night, March 7th, when the whole group practiced together. What a wonderful sound it was. And to think that when we get to Carnegie Hall, we will be accompanied by a symphony orchestra and the soloists will be from the Metropolitan Opera.

It's really almost more than a person can fathom. When we practice, practice, practice in New York City we will be joined by an accomplished high school choir from New Jersey. Obviously, we will all have to temper our various regional speaking accents.

Because this trip is expensive, the choirs have been raising money by all sorts of means so that choir members can be assisted with expenses. Galesburg Community Chorus began by getting the support of businesses and individuals, first asking regular donors to go above and beyond their usual contributions to the chorus. New contributors joined the effort and in-kind contributions were made by the Register-Mail for ads for fundraisers and thanking contributors.

In a great stroke of luck and timing,



Community Chorus was chosen as the recipient of the annual Seminary Street Festival raffle, plus proceeds from the day's sales at Seminary Street stores. This event made our trip a reality.

Carl Sandburg College students held a car wash and a special dinner to raise funds. The Carl Sandburg Foundation contributed towards sending their choir to Carnegie Hall. For two days, members of Community Chorus and Carl Sandburg choir bagged groceries at the Hy-Vee Grocery Store on East Main St. The last fundraising event was the "Great Carnegie Haul," a huge garage sale held at the old Carriage House, with owner John Pritchard allowing us to use the building and heat free of charge.

There are certainly people who do not appreciate or see the importance of classical music. But there are many of us who do. We are ordinary people on the verge of an extraordinary adventure.

Frankly, my personal goal for the Carnegie Hall performance is not to be singing when all else is quiet.

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