

Gospel choir lifts songs of praise with united voice

By Adrienne Butler
■ The State News
Michigan State U.

If you lived near Michigan State U.'s Brody Complex, there's a 99.9 percent chance you would have heard the strong, uplifting voices of the MSU Gospel Choir.

For the past 19 years, the group has been singing the praises of God, winning fans and adding members to its ranks.

One reason the 60-plus member group is so successful is because of its motto: Every voice is important. From a soprano's highest glass-shattering note to the deep, reverberating tone of a bass, every member is treated the same.

"It's a great feeling to be a part of the chorale, and for them to be a part of you," said three-year member La Shawn Ford.

The chemical engineering junior said she joined the chorale one day after

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hearing the group practice. Ford said when she walked into the room she automatically felt welcome, and although she had no previous experience, she was invited to join.

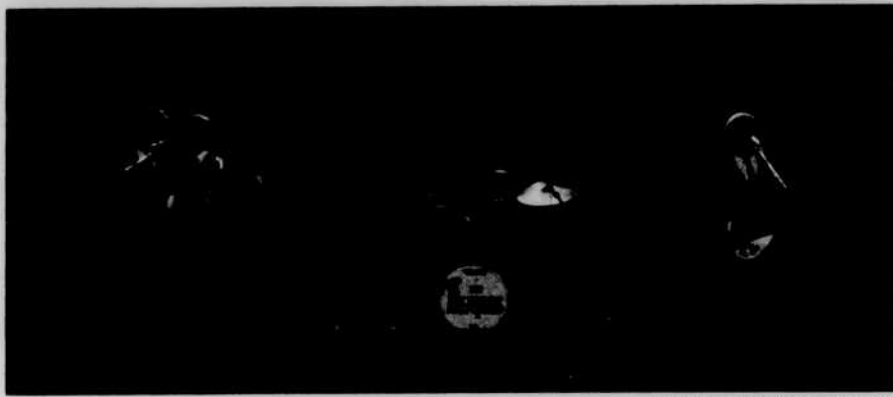
Special education senior Michelle Harper has directed the chorale for three years. She said the only thing needed to join the group is the will to sing God's praises. She said the group is open to all denominations and races.

"We are always accepting new members," she said. "Everyone is welcome."

The chorale's good sounds and deeds are what attract and keep many members, including James Brady, a mechanical engineering senior. Brady said the chorale often visits youth groups and is involved in anti-drug programs.

Wendy Reynolds said she remains in the group because it filled a void in her life. "There's a spirit of God in the chorale and that really drew me," she said. "It helps enhance spiritual growth."

MUSIC



1964: As the Beatles in Concert

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BRYAN WYNN

Holding on to 'Yesterday'

By Stephen Rountree
■ The Breeze
James Madison U.

They were those mop-topped young lads that had taken the world by storm on the front line of the British Invasion, capturing the heart of every young girl in America.

They were, of course, the Fab Four — Mark, Gary, Tom and Terry, from Akron, Ohio.

Wait a minute. It was John, Paul, George and Ringo. And it was Liverpool, England, not Akron, Ohio. And it was 20 years ago today, more or less, that the band refused to play.

Enter Mark Benson, Gary Grimes, Tom Work and Terry Manfredi as John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, respectively. Together they are 1964: As The Beatles in Concert.

"Most of us had been in band after band and grown tired of playing Top 40 music. We wanted to put on more of a show," Benson said. All four grew up in the era when the Beatles were heroes. They knew the excitement — the magic, as some called it.

So the group studied the songs and hours of videotape of the boys from Liverpool. Their equipment, while not the actual pieces, is of the same make and model that the Beatles used.

And in the true spirit of the Beatles, 1964 picks up the music by ear because according to Benson, most written ver-

sions of the songs are filled with musical inaccuracies.

Benson said he's seen other performances that tried to imitate the Beatles but missed the mark either in appearance or the music. 1964 strives for what some might call obsessive perfection.

"Our forte is live performance," said Benson, who has perfected the character of Lennon right down to his spread-legged stance and gum chewing during songs. He said that 1964 fills a void since there are no more Beatles concerts. The real Fab Four stopped touring in 1966 and moved into studio performance until their breakup.

1964 performs the songs the Beatles immortalized during and after those tours. The band has toured coast-to-coast in Canada and North America since premiering at a September 1984 Beatles convention in Pittsburgh, Pa. In May, the group will travel to Berlin to work with a popular television show.

March 31 marked the beginning of a new era for 1964 and the Beatles. At an appearance in Hickory, N.C., they introduced a new show that brings the post-'66 Beatles to the stage, complete with the Western Piedmont Symphony.

As any fan knows, the Beatles' studio years produced music that was impractical if not impossible to transport to the stage. Songs such as "A Day In The Life" require large symphonies if they are to sound like the recordings.

In Hickory, the audience heard what even the Beatles couldn't deliver — a live

performance of songs from all the later albums, employing mostly technology from the years they were produced. To add to the "fantasy," as Benson described it, 1964 carried the show further by "creating what we think the Beatles would be like today, had they not broken up and had Lennon not died," he said.

College students in particular seem to appreciate 1964's performances. Last year, they were voted "Contemporary Music Artists of the Year" by the National Association for Campus Activities.

"Everybody seems to like it. We get a lot of comments like, 'Thanks for making me feel 15 again.'" He said most audiences range in age from senior citizens to young children. "It's wonderful to see. This music really speaks to all generations; grandparents and 7-year-olds are singing the same songs."

Beatles fans may range in age, but the songs must remain the same. "Ten minutes after we're on stage, none of the guitars, Vox amplifiers or Ludwig drums matter. We rely mostly on our ability to sell the characters. We put this show together with the idea that it's a show we'd like to see," Benson said.

Each member of 1964 is committed to portraying the Beatles as accurately as possible. Right-handed Gary Grimes even learned to play left-handed guitar so his Paul McCartney would be more authentic.

"When we're on stage singing

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Music prof fills classroom with tales of Fab Four

By Robert Moran
■ The Daily Trojan
U. of Southern California

With a wild growth of hair hanging past his shoulders, a pair of ragged blue jeans and a tie-dyed shirt, Bill Biersach defies most stereotypes of a university professor.

Biersach, a lecturer at the U. of Southern California's School of Music, traces many of the key innovations in musical recording back to the '60s. In particular, he points to the wide-ranging influence of the Beatles, the subject of one of his classes.

"The Beatles were the first group to catapult rock 'n' roll from a vulgar art form — sub-art form — to a studyable art form," Biersach says. "And after they got their popularity, they used the studio as part of their art form."

Biersach's course offers an in-depth look at the accomplishments and impact of the Fab Four.

About 140 students are enrolled in the course "The Beatles: Their Music and Their Times." Originally launched as an experimental freshman seminar last spring, the idea caught on quickly. Registration filled to capacity in less than 22 minutes.

The dean of the college agreed to a regular course offering. "On the first day, 66 people showed up," Biersach says. "Within three weeks the class size expanded to 143."

Nearly 20 years since the Beatles broke up, the interest in the class attests to the power of the group that made peace and love central themes in its music.

"You can study the Beatles from a historical standpoint, a technical stand-

point and a social standpoint," Biersach says.

The Beatles expert brings a meticulous knowledge of his subject to the course. One class period is devoted entirely to the one-day recording session that resulted in the band's first album, "Please Please Me."

Biersach takes the class through the day, describing how the band — with a young John Lennon suffering from a bad cold and a sore throat — recorded 12 songs in as few as 22 hours.

"They decided to do 'Twist and Shout.' So John goes into the bathroom, tears off his shirt, gargles with a glass of milk — of all things — and smoked a cigarette, then did 'Twist and Shout' in one take," he says.

Such tales are the stuff of legends, and Biersach has a headful. But with the loving reflections come the harsh

realities of the band — the bickering and petty squabbles between the members — and Biersach is not reluctant to attack the magical status that some students have attached to the Beatles.

"I'm a demythologizer by nature," he says. "The nice thing about the Beatles, though, is that you can demythologize the hell out of them and they still come out as landmarks."

One day Biersach brought in "Newlywed Game" host Bob Eubanks to relate his encounters with the Fab Four as a fledgling disc jockey in the '60s.

As a D.J. for Los Angeles station KRLA, Eubanks helped organize local Beatles' shows in 1964, '65 and '66. In front of Biersach's class, the television host added fuel to the debate over which Beatle really controlled the

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