



Cherub Choir

They can't read music—or even words—yet no artist can capture the magic of these children heralding the new-born Saviour

By FRANK M. LANE

THIS CHRISTMAS is the day of days for 21 tiny "celebrities." After seeing the wonders of Santa's bag, they went into God's house and, with tonsils blazing, sang at the birthday of our Saviour.

This is the big event for the Cherub Choir of First United Presbyterian Church at Council Bluffs, Iowa. The tots and their attractive black-haired director have appeared on radio and television and have sung in the huge Union Station at Omaha, Neb. Thousands have heard them.

"But when it's time to sing for their parents and other church members, they bubble with enthusiasm," says Mrs. Albert H. Voss, Jr., choir director. "All our other activities, you might say, are a tune up for the Christmas program."

The Cherubs are a big hit wherever they sing. Take the Union Station. At Christmas time it's a mad scramble of humanity as people rush home for the holidays. The Cherubs were hardly noticed until they started to sing.

As their voices rose in volume, the turbulent station calmed. "How can they read music?" a skeptical sailor asked, nudging his companion. "I'll bet most of them can't read at all."

The sailor was nearly right. Most of the choir members are 6 years old; some 7 and 8; a few 9. "They don't really need to read," explains

Mrs. Voss. "They are little actors and actresses."

Any observant person could tell that. One of the youngsters in the front row was holding his music folder sideways—studying it as if he were "boning up" for a college examination.

"In most cases the folders are just for atmosphere," Mrs. Voss says.

The choir was organized in 1957 by Mrs. Voss. "I love children," she explains, "and I felt a need for a choir of youngsters."

The tots have at least one radio program during the holiday season and also appear in convalescent homes. The rest of the year the Cherubs sing in church—usually once a month.

To be eligible for the choir, a child must be in the first, second, or third grade of Sunday school. This rule created a sad moment at the Vosses this year. Son Al, who loves to sing, was in the choir, but in September he was graduated from third grade. That meant leaving the Cherubs.

"Why didn't you have them fail me?" he cried to his mother. "I want to sing in the Cherubs."

It's this deep "wanting" to sing God's praises that makes the Cherub Choir so popular, Mrs. Voss believes. "If you could see their faces on Christmas, you'd know what I mean," she says. "Why, they're in heaven—heaven on earth."

With the serious dedication of artists, the Cherubs have learned to sing together in perfect harmony—loving every minute of it.



Rehearsal time begins with a signal from Mrs. Albert H. Voss, Jr., who is the director of the Cherub Choir.



Even accomplished singers have trouble tying on bows. Mrs. Voss lends one Cherub a hand as the others wait.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY RUSS MELCHER



Judging from their expressions, our tired little tykes are making the most of a well-earned doughnut break.