

STEPPIN' OUT

The Hour



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The Mendelssohn Choir of Connecticut will perform Saturday at Carnegie Hall as part of a Distinguished Concerts Orchestras International concert.

Mendelssohn Choir to perform at Carnegie Hall

BY HARRIET HILLER
Hour Correspondent

Under the artistic direction and baton of Carole Ann Maxwell, the Mendelssohn Choir of Connecticut, recognized as one of the most prestigious choir ensembles in the state, will participate this Saturday evening in a performance of Carl Orff's modern day choral and orchestral masterpiece, "Carmina Burana."

It is a singular honor to have been chosen as the only American chorus to add their 100 voices to an

international chorus of 200 singers. Everyone involved with the Mendelssohn Choir recognizes this and admits to being thrilled at the opportunity to perform in one of the best concert halls in the world.

"This is the apex for us and something we did not plan on," Maxwell said in a recent telephone interview. "We performed 'Carmina Burana' with the Greater Bridgeport Symphony a few months ago. Right after that, I got a call from the organization who is putting together this Carnegie Hall concert,

Distinguished Concerts Orchestras International. They had heard about our performance, immediately called and asked if we would be interested in doing this concert.

"Of course I said yes. You know the old saying, 'How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice. Practice. Practice.' Well, we have done that and now we are going there," she added.

Well known and much honored for her musical achievements as a conductor, Maxwell has prepared and led choruses throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

"Conducting is my passion, she said. "This Carnegie Hall concert is a truly wonderful opportunity for our singers to perform in this monumental work. And working with singers from Iceland gives this concert a truly global aspect."

This performance at the historic venue will be the artistic icing on this season's cake that began with a concert at Maxwell's home in September and went on to include "Haydn for The Holidays with Festival Orchestra," "The Messiah" with the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra, "Carmina Burana" with

the Greater Bridgeport Symphony Orchestra and concluded with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Norwalk Symphony Orchestra in May.

The Carnegie Hall concert is a gratifying professional benchmark for the unique organization, which was formed in 1984 because students of Maxwell, the director of choral and liturgical music for Fairfield University since 1980, wanted to keep up their musical association with her even after

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their graduation.

Kristen Record, a soprano who loves to sing, earns her living teaching physics at Bunnell High School in Stratford. She continued to keep up her musical relationship with Maxwell that first began in 1995 when Record was a student at Fairfield University.

"I wanted to continue singing with Dr. Maxwell; she is a fantastic teacher and a fantastic conductor. I like her spirit and the passion she brings. She helps each singer reach new levels every season.

"And the hallmark of the Mendelssohn Choir," she continues, "is the great camaraderie each member feels for the other. We enjoy singing and being together."

Lorna Sura, another member of the Mendelssohn Choir, who, for purposes of disclosure works at *The Hour* as executive assistant to the publisher, joined the group after hearing a concert in December of 2005 and auditioned immediately. Coming from a musical family, Lorna said she always loved to sing and learned to play flute, piccolo and oboe in school but went on to major in accounting with a minor in music.

To balance out her musi-

cal cravings with her life, in 1992, she began singing with the Stratford Sister-Cities Choir, an international musical exchange program, until she was accepted into the Mendelssohn Choir.

And, she says, she loves being part of this group.

"It may take 100 voices to make up the Mendelssohn Choir but it takes one absolutely amazing Maestra to pull everything together," she said. "We are always in awe of Carole Ann's talent and ability."

When asked about her reaction to singing in Carnegie Hall, Sura said, "It's breathtaking. Exhilarating. Saturday is going to be one mouth-gaping experience. This is history making for us. It's awe-inspiring."

"Carmina Burana" by Carl Orff, Gardar Cortes and Timothy Michael Powell, conductors, with participating choruses and Timothy Michael Powers, Mass in C Major, No. 1 ("Wedding Mass") presented by Distinguished Concert International New York, takes place at 8 p.m. Saturday, June 14 in the Stern Auditorium, Carnegie Hall, 57th and 7th Avenue, New York. Tickets from \$20-\$100. For information and tickets, call Carnegie Charge, (212)247-7800 or visit www.carnegiehall.org.