

Sounds of Middle Ages performed By Jonathan D. Jones, Times Staff Writer Monday, February 23, 2004

Band members sang songs in the old languages of Europe.

They played old-fashioned instruments such as a hurdy-gurdy, a fiddle, and a lute.

The sounds of Western civilization's Middle Ages came to life on the Winters Mill High School stage Sunday, all in the name of cultural exchange. Rondellus, an Estonian band, performed traditional European music from the 12th through the 16th centuries as part of Westminster's ongoing sister-city program with Paide, Estonia.

Rondellus - dressed in robes reminiscent of the age from which their music came - sang in Latin, Italian, English and French. They explained the history behind the instruments they played. Robert Staak, one of the group's founding members, said they were using replicas of the types of instruments that would've been played in the Middle Ages. Surviving relics of the era are mostly in museums and private historical collections, he said.

But they used the replicas to create sounds that were close to what would've been heard in the Middle Ages. Staak said it's difficult to know exactly how some of the instruments would have sounded.

The concert was a benefit for the Westminster/Paide Partner City Fund and the Children's Chorus of Carroll County, said Audrey Cimino, executive director of the Community Foundation of Carroll County. The community foundation oversees the partner city fund.

Half of the proceeds from the concert went to Voce Viaggio, the traveling portion of the Children's Chorus and is scheduled to head to Estonia, Sweden and Finland next summer, said Diane Jones, the group's director.

The children's chorus also performed during the Sunday concert.

"The money will help reduce their expenses," said Shawn Siders, a Westminster city planner who helped organize the event.

The performance was the last for Rondellus before returning to Europe from the group's first-ever tour of America.

"We've been [made to feel] extremely welcome from every person that we have met," Staak said of their trip.

The concert was the second in the cultural exchange program. Last year the Estonian Television Girls Choir came to Carroll County to perform. Cimino said she was glad Rondellus was able to stop in Westminster before heading to Paris today.

"We're just lucky to get them," Cimino said.

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