

The language of music

By Stephen Snyder, Times Staff Writer
CHRIS AMMANN/STAFF PHOTO

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Joyce Bloor, left, and Sandy Cushen sing during a rehearsal with the Carroll Festival Chorus at McDaniel College in Westminster. The chorus will be traveling to Newfoundland, Canada, to participate in an international singing festival.

Next week, choir singing in Carroll will get an international flavor.

On Thursday, the Paide Girls Choir, Sirjelind, from Estonia, performs with Voce Viaggio, the traveling choir of the Children's Chorus of Carroll County, and the Carroll Festival Chorus at Winters Mill High School.

Two days later, the Carroll Festival Chorus - featuring members of the McDaniel College Choir and Masterworks Chorale of Carroll County - will fly to Newfoundland, Canada, to participate in an international singing festival.

According to Diane Jones, director of the Children's Chorus, which is hosting the girls from Paide, the two events happening so close to one another was purely coincidental.

"It just so happens that they leave the day before we go," said Jones, who is also a member of the Carroll Festival Chorus.

When the chorus performs with the Paide Girls Choir on Thursday, it will sing many pieces planned for the international festival, which features nearly 40 groups from Canada and the United States as well as Venezuela, Algeria, China, Japan, Mexico, Australia, Cuba and Argentina.

"It's kind of our dress rehearsal," said Audrey Cimino, a member of the Carroll Festival Chorus, about the Thursday night concert.

Margaret Boudreaux, director of the McDaniel College Choir and Masterworks Chorale, assembled the 30-member Carroll Festival Chorus specifically for the festival. Boudreaux had received mailings about the event - called Festival 500 "Sharing the Voices" - but hadn't entered an audition tape before last year.

Given the stiff competition, Boudreaux was surprised when the festival accepted her submission package. Not only will the chorus perform in five concerts in Newfoundland throughout the week, it also will open a concert featuring Maria Guinand, a famous Venezuelan composer and choral director. For Boudreaux, who has chosen works by Guinand for the college choir in the past, the chance to perform on the same stage with her is both thrilling and nerve-racking.

"I didn't know whether to laugh or cry," Boudreaux said. "We're very excited but very intimidated at the same time."

The Carroll Festival Chorus trip follows a week's worth of activities for the Paide Girls Choir. The group arrives in Westminster tonight and then performs at the Baltimore Estonian House, St. John Roman Catholic Church in Westminster and a Bowie Baysox game before traveling to Washington, D.C., Ocean City, Annapolis and Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

The visit is an outgrowth of the cultural exchange between Westminster and the city of Paide, Estonia. Viaggio traveled to Estonia last year. Other exchanges have included performances in Westminster by the Estonian Television Girls Choir and medieval music group Rondellus.

On July 2, members of the Carroll Festival Chorus catch a plane early to St. Johns, Newfoundland, where they'll stay at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

"It's going to be a long day of travel," said Phil Sayre, president of the board of directors for Masterworks Chorale. "I think we ought to take over the plane and start singing."

Boudreaux stressed that the festival is not a choir competition, but a chance for the chorus to experience music from other countries and cultures.

"Music is such a wonderful medium for bringing people together," Boudreaux said.

For Boudreaux, the trip is particularly special. While on sabbatical from the college, Boudreaux visited three international festivals: one in Athens, Greece, another in Cork, Ireland, and a third in Marktobendorf, Germany. Since then, she's had dreams of bringing one of her choirs to an international festival.

"I've always wanted to do something like this myself," Boudreaux said. "This is really exciting for me."

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If you go

The Paide Girls Choir, Sirjelind, along with the Children's Chorus of Carroll County's traveling choir Voce Viaggio and the Carroll Festival Chorus, will perform in concert at 7 p.m. Thursday at Winters Mill High School, 560 Gorsuch Road, Westminster.

The three choirs will be featured individually and in combination.

Sirjelind, directed by Tiina Kivimae, will perform traditional works from Estonia as well as classical works from all nations and eras, including works by Estonian composers of this century. The choir, which consists of 25 singers ages 13 to 23, recently distinguished itself at the International Festival in Parnu and Estonian Song Festival in Tallinn.

The concert is sponsored by the Mayor and Common Council of Westminster, Community Foundation of Carroll County and Children's Chorus of Carroll County. Proceeds will benefit the Westminster-Paide City Fund, which supports exchange programs between the cities and other ongoing exchange activities.

Tickets are \$15 for adults at the door and \$12 in advance. Children's tickets are \$5 and available at the door only.

Tickets can be purchased at Stu's Music Shop, Hickory Stick, Dutterer's Flower Shop, Westminster City Hall and Community Foundation of Carroll County in Westminster; Alexandra's Attic in Sykesville; and Dirty Billy's Hats in Gettysburg, Pa.