

# 2 SYMPHONY ORCHESTRAS, YOUTH BANDS, CHORAL GROUP ACTIVE ON LOCAL SCENE

(Editor's note: This is the third in a series of articles on what Torrance has to offer culturally.)

By RALPH R. GOMPERTZ

Culture, said Matthew Arnold, is "to know the best that has been said and thought in the world."

Culture, he said again elsewhere, has one great passion—the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater, the passion for making them PREVAIL.

Arnold's thoughts pretty well explain the reason why any community—such as Torrance—needs cultural activities and why there are individuals in that community dedicated to bringing this about.

Prominent on the cultural scene are the musical activities which are offered here.

They include two symphony orchestras, a choral group, a youth band and a youth concert orchestra, an annual concert series at which internationally renowned artists appear, and even a movement which is now under way for the establishment of a Pacific Bowl—the counterpart of the Hollywood Bowl.

Two of these groups are, strictly speaking, Torrance products. One is Los Cancioneros, a choral group started in Hollywood Riviera, and the other is the Torrance Area Youth Bands.

### Making Community Music-Minded

James Van Dyck, director of the bands, is a man as dedicated to music as any musician can be. While he can look at the world through the eyes of a musician, he can also see the community through the eyes of the layman.

That can be seen in his common-sense approach to the problem of gradually "selling" the community on culture through music.

Van Dyck steers clear of any theoretical discussion of music, emphasizing instead the importance of having a well-rounded community.

Van Dyck compares a community to an individual. An individual with a one-track mind develops a lop-sided personality, and a community which ignores cultural activities does the same thing.

That is why he thinks music has a definite place in Torrance, as well as any community.

"A city should have many, many things," Van Dyck said. "Music should be one of them."

### Started Band in 1946

Van Dyck organized the youth bands in 1946, sponsored at that time by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The band, known as the VFW Boys Club band, became the Torrance Area Youth Bands one year later when Van Dyck formed it into a non-profit organization.

The VFW donated its instruments to the bands. The youth band had a tough time making a go of it, and after two years, was ready to fold up, Van Dyck said.

"If it weren't for the fact that the city came to our aid, we wouldn't be here," he indicated.

The Torrance Area Youth Bands consisted of three bands—one for youngsters 9-11 years old; a concert band; and a cadet band. It now consists only of the concert band and cadet band.

"It was just too much handling three bands," Van Dyck said, "and besides, the schools are doing so much more now for youngsters interested in music, that we can rely on them."

Van Dyck had a definite reason for starting youth bands rather than an adult group.

"The best adult musical groups are the outgrowth of good youth programs," he explained. "This way we will eventually have a good adult group."

Torrance, he indicated, is the only city in California outside of Santa Barbara which has such a community group.

The Torrance Area Youth Bands recently came under the direct sponsorship of the city of Torrance and is now sponsored jointly by the city (under the Recreation Department) and the parents' organization, W. E. Bowen, president.

The concert band has about 60 members and the cadet



### THERE'S MUSIC IN THE AIR

Youngsters in the Torrance Area Youth Band, directed by James Van Dyck, take their music seriously. Van Dyck hopes that as they become adults, they will take leading roles in the musical development of the community.

band has about 40 members, Van Dyck said. The group owns about \$15,000 in musical instruments and equipment.

The Torrance Area Youth Bands sponsors one major musical project a year—the Youth Band-Artists Concerts Series.

### Noted Musicians

This event, now in its third year, has brought such outstanding, world-renowned musicians to Torrance as Leonard Pennario, pianist; Joseph Schuster, cellist; Claramae Turner, contralto; Gary Graffman, pianist; Leontyne Price, soprano; Camilla Wicks, violinist.

This season has seen Lorenzo Alvary, bass-baritone, and will still see Jean Casadesus, pianist, January 28, 1957; Adele Gebr, coloratura-soprano, March 9; and Julian Olevsky, violinist, April 7.

The artists perform during one-half of the program and the Torrance Area Youth Band (concert) plays the other half of the program.

The final event features the winners of the student scholarships which the band offers annually, as one of its main projects for encouraging young musicians.

The four scholarships are valued at \$100 cash each, and are awarded in the fields of piano, voice, strings and wind instruments.

One other event which has gained considerable recognition and which is sponsored by the Youth Band is the annual "Miss Torrance" beauty contest.

One winner, Sandra Lee Constance, went on to compete in the "Miss Universe" pageant as "Miss California" three years ago and is now under contract to Howard Hughes.

Van Dyck firmly believes that music definitely has a place in Torrance and that the chances for organized community support are getting better with the growth and development of the area.

Appreciation of music is governed by knowledge of music, he maintains. One way of learning to appreciate music is to be exposed to good music. Therefore, Van Dyck believes in providing nothing but the best for local music lovers and musicians alike.

(Next week: Cultural Discussion Groups)

## South Bay Symphony Noted For Local Musical Events

Torrance has a major interest in one of the leading symphonies in Los Angeles county. The South Bay Civic Symphony, Elyse Aehle, conductor, is a member of the Symphony League which is composed of the 10 leading orchestras of this county.

This Civic Symphony was founded 11 years ago. Torrance has always been well represented on the sponsoring board and among the personnel of the symphony. The name South Bay Civic Symphony was chosen to represent the large area of which Torrance is a major part.

Last November the symphony gave an impressive concert at Torrance High school auditorium with John Barnett, considered by some critics to be the most outstanding young American conductor, as guest conductor.

Last August this orchestra gave the first Promenade "Pop" concert ever held in this city, with Arthur Lange, noted composer, as guest conductor. These are only two of the many concerts the symphony has performed in Torrance.

The Civic Symphony has played for churches, civic groups, lodges and Parent Teacher associations in addition to the regular symphony concerts. It has given benefit concerts and collected money for hospitals, PTA, PBA, and others. It is always ready to serve any worthy cause.

The symphony has advertised Torrance on the radio, at state fairs, at Navy and Army bases and on television.

It has originated and sponsored (Continued on Page 20)

## Plan Huge Pacific Bowl In Area

Dreams have a way of becoming realities, and, if that is so, a Pacific Bowl—local counterpart of the Hollywood Bowl—will be built at the very doorstep of Torrance.

A beautiful site has been chosen near Western and Palos Verdes drive, easily accessible from all parts of southern Los Angeles county.

It is warm and protected from the wind, and yet has a magnificent view, free from fog.

Here is planned a cultural center which may well become world famous.

On the gently sloping hillside is visualized a "Bowl" to accommodate 3000, perhaps to be enlarged later for 5000 people.

Nearby, surrounded by a lovely formal park and exhibition grounds, is planned a Greek theatre to seat an indoor audience of 1000 and museums for art and history.

Close to all this are parking areas large enough for thousands of cars.

Surrounding the lower hillside (Continued on Page 20)

## Cancioneros Prominent Choral Group

In July of 1949 a small group of Hollywood Riviera neighbors began singing together for fun, and from that small beginning came Los Cancioneros, one of the most active musical organizations in the Torrance-South Bay area.

The aim of the chorus was to perform fine music well and to promote the appreciation of the best in choral music in these communities. The name, Los Cancioneros, translated The Singers, was chosen in keeping with the Spanish street and place names in the vicinity.

Before its second birthday the local mixed choral group had gained prominence in its field by walking off with the major awards in a county-wide contest, held in Venice, and sponsored by the Los Angeles Bureau of Music. In competition with 30 choruses, Los Cancioneros captured first prize in the mixed voices division and the sweepstakes award, and Barbara Mabin, the group's director, was judged the outstanding conductor of the event.

In 1952 The Singers again won the sweepstakes award in the same contest.

### Annual Event

Each fall Los Cancioneros presents its annual "Sing for Your Supper" event, an evening of food and fun which serves as a preview of the season's musical fare, and culminates in the same contest.

(Continued on Page 20)

## SPEBSCSA INVADES SOUTH BAY

The harmonious voices of the men of the Centinela Valley Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America will invade this area today, November 29, when they move into their new location at Mira Costa high school in Manhattan Beach.

Harmony fests are held every Thursday in the music room at Mira Costa high school on Gould lane (extension of 174th street and Redondo Beach boulevard) east of Pacific Coast highway every Thursday night at 8 p.m. All that's required to join in this fun is the ability to carry a tune.

## Films, Slides From Hawaii

"A Night in Hawaii," featuring colored motion pictures and slides, will be presented in Administration 8 of El Camino College tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. The public is invited to attend.

The pictures will stress the social and cultural customs of the many races that make up the island population as well as the spectacular scenery.

## Beach Cities Symphony To Play Here December 7

The Beach Cities Symphony Orchestra, directed by Louis Palange, and with a personnel of 65 players, has opened its sixth season with a September concert in Redondo Beach, and will be heard in Torrance on Friday, December 7.

Guest soloist will be Dale Reubart, a Torrance resident and teacher of piano here. He will play the famed Grieg A Minor Piano Concerto.

Organized in February, 1951, the Beach Cities Symphony started with a nucleus of 20 musicians who were members of another local orchestra, and who believed in the possibility of creating a fine professionally-directed symphony orchestra in this area.

Their faith proved well-founded, as one player after another joined up, and today the Beach Cities Symphony is a well-balanced organization of excellent musicians, some of them professional, and all of them having devoted years in the study of their instruments.

Rod Norris, vice-president of the organization, stated, "They come from all parts of the sur-

rounding countryside to rehearse in the music building of Manhattan Beach's Mira Costa High school from Torrance, Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach, El Segundo, Lomita, Wilmington, Hawthorne, Inglewood, and even Los Angeles and Hollywood.

Musical Director Louis Palange is a young man well known in Hollywood as a composer, director and bassoonist of high caliber. His compositions are published by three of the leading music houses, i.e. Theo. Presser, Boosey-Hawkes, and Edwin Fischer. Stationed in San Diego and Washington during the war, his film scores are a permanent record in the Navy.

His personality is warm, un- (Continued on Page 20)

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