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May 2, 2001

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*Oh, say can you see...*

## **IWU Music Fraternity to sing at Chicago's Wrigley Field**

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--The men of the Alpha Lambda chapter of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, a music fraternity at Illinois Wesleyan University, will join the ranks of a select few musicians who have performed before a crowd of thousands of cheering fans.

The fraternity received word after a nearly yearlong process they have been selected to sing the National Anthem at a Chicago Cubs home baseball game at Wrigley Field on Tuesday, May 15th when the Cubs play the Houston Astros. The National Anthem will be sung directly before the first pitch, which is scheduled for 7:05 p.m. The game will be televised on WCIU-TV, Channel 26 in the Chicago area.

"We're very excited," said Gene Reich, a junior public accounting and computer science double-major from Deerfield, Ill., who is also the chapter's president. "The opportunity to share our musical talents before this type of crowd is something very few musicians get."

The selection process for singing at a professional sports stadium is a long and toilsome one. Tom Magarian, a sophomore political science and music double major from Des Plaines, Ill., and an avid Cubs fan, came up with the original idea. "We sang the National Anthem at various sporting events on campus, and I thought that singing the Star Spangled Banner at Wrigley Field was well within our abilities." Magarian contacted a representative from the Cubs organization, and was told that the fraternity should record themselves singing and send in the tape for selection. If selected, the fraternity would be contacted.

Matt Schneider, a junior music-education major from Peoria, Ill., and the chapter's choir director held weekly rehearsals leading up to the recording in Evelyn Chapel, a building known for its first class acoustics. "We chose an arrangement of the Star Spangled Banner from our fraternity's songbook and rehearsed each week on Sunday evenings before our weekly chapter meeting," said Schneider. "Once we got back to school from winter break we asked the school's recording studio if they would record us singing. After a few takes I was happy with the sound, and we sent it in hoping to hear back from them."

Justin Lee, a junior music-education major from Hardin, Ill., is the person who answered the phone when the Cub organization called. "I couldn't believe it," he said. "It took a few minutes before it sank in. As soon as I was off the phone I went through the chapter house telling everyone."

**What's Next**

Schneider says that even though the school year is winding down, all 31 members of the fraternity are staying focused on this event. "We're still going to rehearse every Sunday evening, even in the wake of final exams. We have to sound our absolute best to represent our fraternity and our school."

The trip isn't going to be cheap, however. Reich says that the total cost of the trip will be approximately \$1,000.00. "We're real busy right now trying to get through final exams, but we're going to make some attempts at a couple fund-raisers to get the money."

What makes the experience even more meaningful to the fraternity members is the fact that they are following in the footsteps of one of their alumni. Wayne Messmer, class of 1972, graduated with a bachelors of music-education degree, and is the Senior Vice President of the Chicago Wolves Professional Hockey Team. He also is the Chicago Cubs public address announcer and sings the National Anthem at Wrigley Field on a regular basis.

### **About Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia**

Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia is a national music fraternity. The fraternity was founded in 1898 at Boston's New England Conservatory. There are 208 chapters across the country. Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia's goals are to increase public awareness of music's important role in the enrichment of the human spirit, as well as promote advances in musical research, education, and performance.

The Alpha Lambda chapter of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia was founded at IWU in 1924. The chapter also sponsors the commission of a composition for the IWU Wind Ensemble, which is scheduled to debut in the winter of 2002. The chapter provides numerous musicals and other music-related events throughout the school year. Most recently the chapter produced their third annual Christmas CD entitled, "A Musician's Christmas." The chapter raised over \$2,600.00 for the Pantagraph Good Fellow Fund and the Peoria Journal Star Stocking Fund.

Members of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia include Samuel Barber, Duke Ellington, Andy Griffith, Luciano Pavarotti, Fred Rogers, Doc Severinson, and John Phillip Sousa.

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