

Groups Sing at White House

BY LEONARD J. GRIMALDI

WHEN she became music director of Greenwich Academy's top choral group, the Madrigal Singers, last September, Deborah B. Eickstaedt knew she was taking over a choir with a wealth of talent. But she did not know it had a reputation that would reach the White House.

"Can you imagine," Miss Eickstaedt said, "I had two weeks on the job and I got a call from the White House for the group to perform there. We've been rehearsing for the show since."

The Madrigal Singers — 16 students from grades 10 through 12 — will sing Renaissance songs tomorrow night at a Christmas party for Secret Service officials in the Grand Foyer of the White House. The concert will take place from 6 to 8 P.M.

The group will have a pre-White House performance today at 1 P.M. at Greenwich Academy, 200 North Maple Avenue. The one-hour concert is free and open to the public.

Another musical group from the state performed at the White House yesterday. The Yale-V.A. (Veterans

Administration) South Connecticut Musical Group, whose members are affiliated with several Connecticut hospitals, performed in the Grand Foyer for White House military personnel.

The group was formed about a year ago by Dr. Victor S. Wahby, an assistant clinical professor at the Yale School of Medicine and a physician at the Veterans Administration Hospital in West Haven. Dr. Wahby said he formed the group, which plays a variety of Christmas music, "as an outlet" for medical personnel to perform during the holiday season.

The group's members consist of a wide variety of hospital employees, including doctors, nurses, technicians and office workers. The group has 40 singers and 35 instrumentalists. Last week it made appearances at Foran High School in Milford, the Shubert Theater in New Haven and at the Veterans Administration Hospital auditorium.

"Patients in wheelchairs, some of them amputees and others with cancer, came to watch their doctors perform in concert," said Dr. Wahby. "I can't explain how moving it was. Our group is like one big family."

The Madrigal Singers, who per-

form dozens of shows a year throughout lower Fairfield County, were heard in concert at the National Cathedral in Washington three years ago by a White House staff member who scheduled entertainment, Miss Eickstaedt said. The White House had kept the Madrigal Singers in its files and then called to invite them.

"I'm really ecstatic," said Christine Sabbia, one of the group's members. "We're all so nervous. The White House is a big step."

Big steps and long journeys are not unfamiliar to the Madrigal Singers. Last March they made a 17-day tour of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, appearing 17 times at halls, libraries and cathedrals.

The group was formed in 1958 and now sings in three languages: French, German and Latin, as well as English.

The Madrigal Singers can perform more than 60 songs during a two-hour concert, blending Renaissance music with contemporary material. Students at Greenwich Academy — the oldest all-girl school in the state — are eligible to audition for the group at the end of their freshman year and must re-audition each year. ■

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