

Play, banquet on 'Madrigal Feaste' menu

By MANDY ZAJAC
TRIBUNE

When Mesa couple Matthew and Betty Frable were sitting on their couch a few years ago, dreaming up all the smashing things a new Southeast Valley music and drama group could do, a madrigal performance was on their short list.

Now, that show — not to mention their 4-year-old arts organization, San Tan Community Performing Arts — is a reality.

The group will present its "Madrigal Feaste" on Saturday and Jan. 17 at Mesa's Crescent Run Ballroom. The show is both a play and a five-course banquet set in the 15th century — roughly the same era celebrated in next month's annual Arizona Renaissance Festival.

"If you compare it with the Renaissance Festival's Pleasure Feast, there are a few differences," says Betty Frable, co-founder of the non-profit group. "The entertainment is nonstop, and it's full group entertainment all the time, not a couple of people standing up doing comedy. There's singing, and the Town Crier and Jester characters lay the groundwork for the evening, and when the main course is served, it's all about the play. It's not bawdy or off-color; we aren't going there."

The three-hour show begins with wassail bowls — or cups of warm, spiced cider — and appetizers in the ballroom's lobby, where costumed actors and musicians will provide entertainment. Then guests are led into the banquet hall to a booming number by the 65-singer-strong San Tan Chorale — the group's singing arm.

"It's incredible, the volume they put out. It's an enormous sound, the kind that sends shivers up your back," says Betty Frable.

Inside, she says, guests will sit at tables of 10 while costumed servers bring out soup in bread bowls, salads, roasted Cornish hens with apricot glaze, speared roasted vegeta-



SAN TAN COMMUNITY PERFORMING ARTS

HERE'S TO THE PAST: The singers and actors of San Tan Community Performing Arts don Camelot-style attire for "Madrigal Feaste," a lavish banquet, play and concert slated for Saturday in Mesa. The show's play tells the comical story of a 15th-century king forced to tell the truth.

'Madrigal Feaste'

What: The 15th century comes to life in this comical dinner-banquet performance by the San Tan Community Performing Arts Group.

When: 6 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. Jan. 17

Where: Crescent Run Ballroom, 8500 E. Southern Ave., Mesa

Cost: \$40, includes food, drink and show; tickets are available online through midnight today at <http://santancommunityperformingarts.org/feaste2.html>; click on the yellow "buy now" button at the bottom left of the page.

Information: (480) 297-7552 or www.stcpa.org

bles, rice, and flaming gingerbread trifles. All the while, the chorale will step in with farcicle tunes, and the San Tan Players, a 15-member drama troupe, will act out the play.

"It's a farce that centers around a crotchety, crabby king who has to tell the truth because of a magical ring. Of course, the ring gets passed around the royal table and causes all the trouble," says Frable.

She and her husband, Matthew

— transplants from the Midwest — founded San Tan Community Performing Arts, which also comprises an orchestra. The community-based group is made up of everyday people who like to sing, play music or act. Matthew, its director, is also head of the Fountain Hills Community Choir, principle musician at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fountain Hills, and Fine Arts Department Chair at Seton Catholic High School in Chandler.

The group, which has 150 members, gives orchestra and chorale concerts at churches and other venues across the East Valley. Its fledgling San Tan Players plan to offer more drama stagings soon.

Tickets to the "Madrigal Feaste" are \$40 and are available online through Sunday at <http://santancommunityperformingarts.org/feaste2.html>.

The show is recommended for guests age 13 or older. Vegetarian meals are available upon request, and costumes are welcome but not required.

CONTACT WRITER: (480) 898-6818
or azajac@evtrib.com