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Children's chorus set to wow audience today**17 boys now part children's chorus**BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer**S**inging in a growing children's chorus is starting to attract more boys.

The Upper Canada Children's Chorus began five years ago as a girls-only choir but, today, 17 boys are part of the 88-member choir.

"We've had a trend towards more boys auditioning," musical director Brian Rawlins said.

The chorus introduced a boys-only choir for the first time this year.

But more significant than this trend is the fact a high-quality choir finally exists in York Region, Mr. Rawlins said, pointing out areas near York Region, such as Oakville, Toronto and Scarborough, all have high-quality

children's choirs.

Choir members range from six to 17 and are mostly from York Region. The chorus has shown its talent locally and abroad.

For example, a group from the chorus travelled to Chicago two years ago to perform.

This past spring, some of the children sang the national anthem at Fenway Park in Boston in a game between the Toronto Blue Jays and Red Sox.

About 20 of the top singers, who comprise the chamber chorus, went to Italy this past summer and sang at a mass at the Vatican.

The success of the choir is largely due to Mr. Rawlins' direction, said Sandra Stassen, a chorus administrator whose daughter is in the chorus.

"He sets a high level and they (the children) go for that," she said.

The choir is also a good chance for children to socialize outside of school, she added.

They have a snack break during practice and there are social events, as well as a retreat at the beginning of each season.

But the chorus also aims for higher purpose.

"Ultimately, our goal is not just to educate the singers with whom we work, but to expose York Region to the beauty and benefits of the arts, singing and choral music," Ms Stassen wrote in an e-mail.

The chorus' second annual fundraising gala is tonight at Angus Glen Golf & Country Club in Unionville.

Tickets are \$65, which includes dinner, silent auction and a special performance by renowned Canadian singer Robert Pilon, who played the lead in Phantom of the Opera.

Tickets can be purchased by calling the Upper Canada Chorus at 416-733-0615 or by e-mail at uppercanadachorus@rogers.com. For more information, visit www.uppercanadachorus.com

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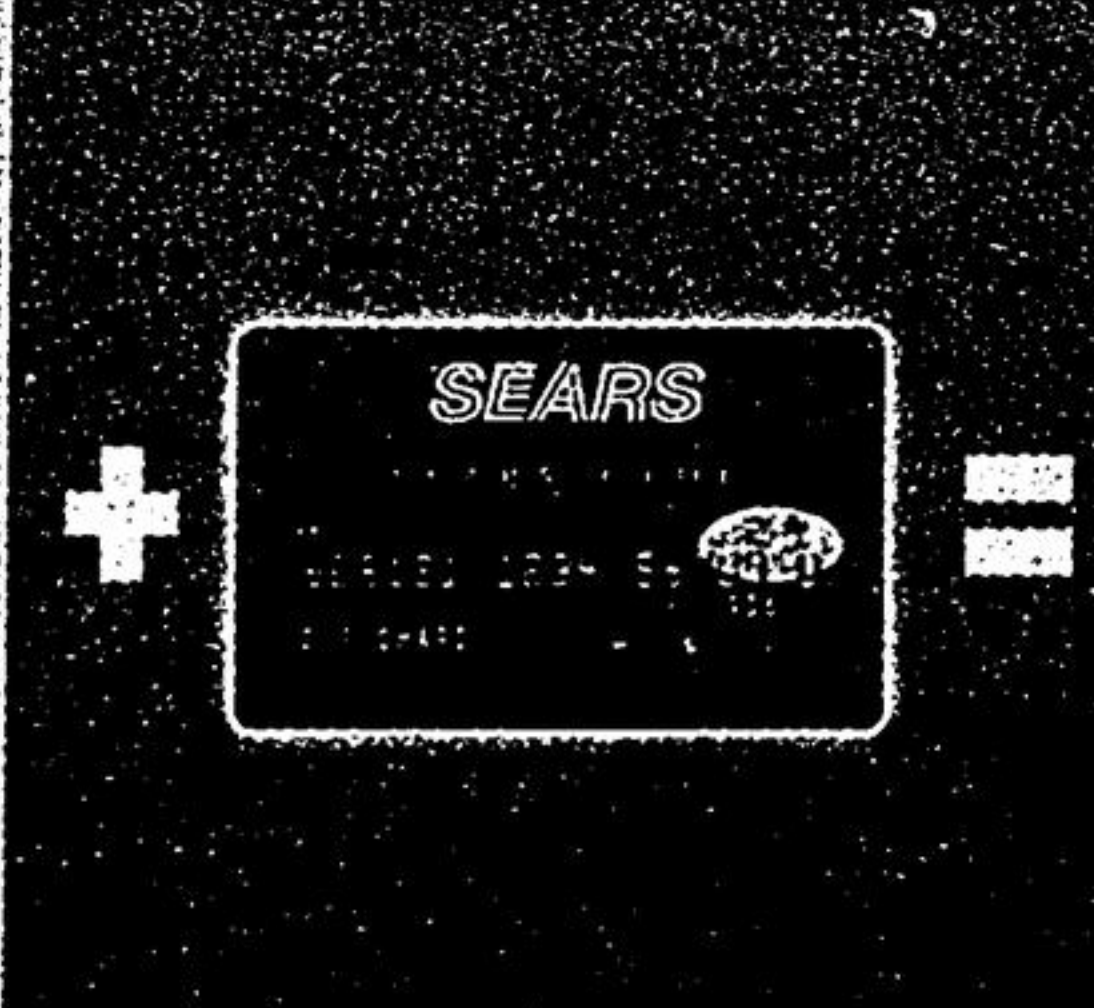
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