

**'THEY WERE AHEAD OF THEIR TIME'**

MARC BEAUDIN/News-Press

Members of the Drama Quartet of Cape Coral, Lenny Manno, left, Bob Fliss, Lee Otto and Barbara Atkins at the piano, entertain spectators at the Solar Festival at the Koreshan Unity Solar festival Saturday in Estero. The festival is held annually to honor the birthday of Dr. Cyrus Reed Teed, the founder of the Koreshans.

## Celebrants remember Koreshans' legend

By MIRIAM PEREIRA  
News-Press staff writer

Southwest Florida is a place with much little-known history.

It is a place where Native Americans settled, Ponce De Leon landed — and where the urban pioneers known as Koreshans came to.

On Saturday, about 35 people celebrated the birthday of the religious group's founder, Dr. Cyrus Reed Teed, during the 102nd annual Solar Festival.

For more than two hours, people watched vaudeville acts and listened to how Teed formed the

religious and social commune.

"They had no real set dogma. They were really in touch with the social reform issues of the day," said Sean Milks, the festival's master of ceremonies and the foundation's operations officer.

**TEED**

Teed, a medical doctor who was known as Koresh, the ancient Hebrew translation of his first name, organized the religious and

social commune in 1870 in north-east New York.

The group interpreted the Bible from a scientific point of view, believed in the communal pooling of industry and resources and practiced celibacy. They also supported such controversial social issues as women's rights.

The Koreshan Unity movement spread to Chicago and other areas of the country, but religious persecution prompted the group to flee to Estero, the "New Jerusalem," in January 1894.

Koreshans settled on land along present-day U.S. 41 and Corkscrew

Road where they had a printing-publishing plant, boat building area, wood-work shop, saw mill and an apiary-honey processing plant.

The group's existence ended with the 1982 death of Hedwig Michel, the organization's second female president.

The foundation's headquarters include the Hedwig Michel Auditorium and library-museum, which display the Koreshans' historical papers and other artifacts.

"I think they were ahead of their time as far as trying to provide unity to the area," Cape Coral resident Liz Tourangeau said.