



**Bob  
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## Music of Baroque enriches all ages

**ONE OF THE HOTTEST** shows in town is more than 400 years old. It is always a sell-out. And its audiences are largely young people.

Annually, Music of the Baroque, the Chicago born and bred, 65-member ensemble of vocalists and instrumentalists, offers 21 performances of the disciplined rhythms that entranced 16th, 17th, and 18th Century nobility.

And annually, more and more young adults subscribe to the series of concerts of ancient music that provide an island of beauty in a modern society of frenetic, electronic beats.

If you find a contradiction there, rest assured you are not alone. But the youthfulness of the audiences is easily explained.

The intricate, esoteric sounds of baroque music are as delightful to the spirit and the ear as they were when the ladies and gentlemen of the courts of Europe doused themselves with perfume before a concert rather than bathe under the unhygienic code of their culture.

**BAROQUE SOOTHES** the fevered brow and transports the soul to heights of tranquility rarely attainable in an age of rock and roll.

"There's something wonderfully well-ordered about baroque music, a unique combination of rationality and passion," declared Lucille Ollendorff, board president and general manager of Music of the Baroque.

"It is the musical expression of the 17th and 18th centuries, the age of reason and enlightenment. Young people seem to feel that in the steady, predictable, measured beat interwoven with flights of fancy. The glory and the tragedy of all mankind is embodied in the music."

That's a glowing, partisan critique. But it is one obviously shared by the 15,000 supporters who annually subscribe to the group's concerts.

Tuesday evening, the ensemble will present the last of four performances this season of a rarely heard example of early baroque, Claudio Monteverdi's "Vespers of the Blessed Virgin."

**THE PERFORMANCE** also is an example of the care and precision that Music of the Baroque and its founder-conductor, Thomas Wikman, invest in the effort to enrich Chicago's quality of life.

Published in 1610, the work required 27 rehearsals to produce under a special \$50,000 grant from the Arthur Andersen Foundation. And it is a masterpiece by an organization that fills a gap in the presentation of serious music addressed by no one else in the city on such a scale.

Now in its 12th season, Music of the Baroque has grown from a neighborhood group based at the Episcopal church of St. Paul and the Redeemer in Hyde Park to a nationally acclaimed success that has graced the White House.

That was in 1978, when President Jimmy Carter staged a state dinner for King Fahd ibn Abdel Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia when he was a mere prince. With a harpsichord borrowed from the Smithsonian Institution, a quartet played table music of the baroque period. And at an afternoon rehearsal, Mrs. Ollendorff seated herself in the President's chair in the White House dining room to listen.

**SUCH LOFTY ACTS** have helped Mrs. Ollendorff achieve financial stability for the ensemble in the nearly 10 years she has managed its business affairs.

"We're on the brink of disaster," Wikman told her when she first volunteered her services. Since then, the group's annual budget has grown from \$16,000 to \$652,000.

And the number of its performances of such baroque masters as Bach, Vivaldi, Purcell, and Handel has expanded from three, all at St. Paul's Church, to 21 throughout the Chicago area.

Many major corporations and foundations support Music of the Baroque, as do individuals, the Illinois Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

**TO APPRECIATE** what baroque music has done for young Chicago audiences, listen to Mrs. Ollendorff's experience when she first encountered the ensemble in 1974.

"I never had heard anything so beautiful," she recalled. "It was Bach, performed at such a level of perfection, precision and intensity in a neighborhood church that it amazed me. I had a very strong emotional response."

Later, she attended an afternoon performance of Bach's "Passion According to St. Matthew" in the sanctuary of St. Paul's.

"As the daylight dimmed through the stained glass windows and the Passion ended, I was moved to tears," she said. "I felt I was in the presence of something extraordinary."

That is Music of the Baroque, an extraordinary asset to Chicago.