



**They record the music**

Oct. 4, 1986

## At a glance

# PREVIEW

### On the cover

For years Judith and Richard Mintel of Bloomington recorded the concerts of Music of the Baroque, a Chicago group specializing in performing baroque music. It was a hobby for the couple when they were students at the University of Chicago. And, it was a passion. Now it will become a radio program syndicated to 70 public radio stations throughout the country. Dan Craft spoke with Mrs. Mintel on the eve of the couple's recognition. (Cover photo by Maureen O'Connor)

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By DAN CRAFT  
PREVIEW staff

**B**y day, Richard Mintel of Bloomington teaches at the University of Illinois Medical School in Champaign and his wife, Judith, is an attorney for State Farm Insurance specializing in rate and anti-trust litigation.

By night and by weekend, however, the Mintels aren't likely to be found in academic or legal circles, or Bloomington-Normal for that matter. Instead, they'll probably be hauling out their recording equipment and trekking northward to Chicago, all the better to get one of the city's most respected musical institutions, Music of the Baroque, down on tape.

They've been making that trek for nearly 16 years now.

In the past, the Mintels' second profession as per-

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## When, what, by whom

Following is the complete 13-concert schedule for "Music of the Baroque," aired at 7 p.m. Fridays by ISU's WGLT-FM (the series also can be heard at 3 p.m. Sundays on the U of I's WILL-FM):

**Oct. 10:** Monteverdi's "Vespers of the Blessed Virgin (1610)," a compendium of the new styles of sacred music in vogue during the 17th century.

**Oct. 17:** Cantatas and Orchestral Works of J.S. Bach.

**Oct. 24:** "Athalia," Handel's dramatic oratorio featuring English soprano Lorna Haywood singing the title role.

**Oct. 31:** The Music of the Baroque Orchestra in Concert, featuring works by Bach, Handel and Vivaldi.

**Nov. 7:** "King Arthur," Purcell.

**Nov. 14:** "Mass in Time of War," Haydn; plus other works of Haydn, Telemann, Bach and Handel.

**Nov. 21:** "Theodora," Handel.

**Nov. 28:** "Ode on St. Cecilia's Day," Purcell; plus other works of Handel, Bach, Blow and Green.

**Dec. 5:** Cantatas and Chorale Preludes of J.S. Bach.

**Dec. 12:** "The Day of Judgment," J.S. Bach.

**Dec. 19:** "Mass in B Minor," J.S. Bach.

**Dec. 26:** Brass and Choral Music of the 16th and 17th Centuries.

**Jan. 2:** Cantatas of J.S. Bach.

ipatetic recording engineers and audio producers was an activity that few people knew about.

Beginning at 3 p.m. Sunday on WILL-FM radio and at 7 p.m. Friday on WGLT-FM, a lot of people will know about that activity as a new 13-week series, "The Music of the Baroque," begins being syndicated to more than 70 public radio stations across the country. Each program will feature Music of the Baroque performing classical selections from the 16th-18th century era that inspired the group's name.

The Mintels are responsible for the show's recording, editing, timing and other preparational work. Post-production chores, such as the insertion of commentary from the program's host, will be completed at the studios of Chicago's premier fine arts station, WFMT, which is handling the series' syndication chores. All the concerts were taped during live performances between 1983 and 1986 at various "acoustically interesting" churches in the Chicago area.

**M**usic of the Baroque, founded in 1970 by conductor Thomas Wikman, is the country's largest professional music organization devoted to the performance of 16th, 17th and 18th century compositions. Boasting a membership of 70 musicians, the ensemble presents 37 concerts in the Chicago area annually, all of which are recorded by the Mintels. It also has performed twice at the White House. In 1983, the group was proclaimed a "national treasure" by the National Endowment for the Arts and awarded its highly coveted Challenge Grant Award, becoming one of only five music organizations nationally to receive the award that year. The group also has recorded four albums, each of which were recorded and produced by the ubiquitous Mintels.

When "The Music of the Baroque" begins its syndicated foray into the nation's airwaves this weekend, more people will hear the group during the first program than have heard it in its entire 16-year history. That statistic marks the realization of a dream Dick and Judy Mintel have been clinging to through more than a decade of hope, frustration and waiting.

The couple's association with the group began while they were attending the University of Chicago. Dick Mintel had nurtured an interest in musical recording since his high school days.

While studying organ in 1968 with the university's organist, Edward Mondello, he began recording his mentor's recitals as well as those of Music of the Baroque's soon-to-be-conductor Thomas Wikman. Impressed by the quality of Mintel's work, Wikman asked

the organist-turned-recordist to tape the first performance of Music of the Baroque at the Church of St. Paul and the Redeemer in Hyde Park. Mrs. Mintel assisted her husband in the task, which required "not only technical competence in reproducing sound, but also scientific experimentation with such things as selection of recording equipment components and microphone placement."

While her husband manned the recording equipment, Mrs. Mintel embarked on her quest to assemble the tapes into a series that could be syndicated to public radio stations around the country. In 1977, after Chicago's WFMT aired one of the Mintel's Music of the Baroque recordings and won a prestigious Peabody Award in the process, the station approached the couple about syndicating the show.

"Then, nothing happened," Mrs. Mintel recalled. "And time passed."

And passed.

It wasn't until 1983 that it looked as if the series might finally become a reality. Three years later, via the good graces of WFMT, one of the country's three major public radio syndicators, the show is very much a reality. But there are still problems: as of now, the series still has no commercial underwriter to help foot the bills, according to Mrs. Mintel. The funds for the first season are being jointly underwritten by WFMT and Music of the Baroque. "We feel that we'll get commercial support once the interest gets going, once everyone hears it (the show)," she said.

One of the series' big draws is that "most of the best composers come from that era (the baroque) — Bach, Handel — and most of the familiar classical works are by those composers," Mrs. Mintel said. "The music has a driving beat and a lot of emphasis on rhythm. People who don't normally like classical music find it more accessible." In addition, she said, a lot of baroque music, with its religious and liturgical emphasis, is commonly performed by church choirs, which adds to its familiarity. "It's primarily vocal, not instrumental."

In addition to their recording activities with Music of the Baroque, the Mintels also record all Bloomington-Normal and Springfield Symphony concerts and various music events, such as the Grand Teton Music Festival. Mrs. Mintel is also "the voice of the Bloomington-Normal and Springfield Symphony" during its broadcasts on Springfield's WSSR-FM.

Her advice for anyone thinking about getting into the public radio syndication business: "Keep at it. It takes a lot of time, energy and perseverance. And have another source of income — definitely..."



Judith and Richard Mintel are usually backstage during a concert, recording the music so more can hear it. The Pantagraph/MAUREEN O'CONNOR

On the catwalk above the stage; Illinois State University, Braden Auditorium.