

1975

The Tudor Singers include (from left) Linda Mabbs, Gershon Silins, Virginia Tate, Alexis Darden, Willard Thomen and Isola Jones.



*Renaissance music*

# Tudor brings treasure trove

By DOROTHY ANDRIES

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"If you take the works of Bach and Handel out of the Baroque period of music, the rest is rather mediocre by comparison. And if you take Haydn and Mozart out of the classical period of music, the picture is dismal. But in the Renaissance there were dozens and dozens of top rank composers. The music, good music, was pouring out of that period like Niagara, just like the art. It was in the Renaissance that the potential of the human voice was discovered and it was the beginning of the whole western vocal tradition. It's an exciting period and its music is very much worth hearing."

Tom Wickman, choral director, was talking about the music which he has programmed for the Tudor Singers, an octet of eight young Chicago area professionals. The ensemble will give a Renaissance concert at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at the Weinstein Center for Performing Arts, National College of Education, 2840 Sheridan Rd., Evanston. The program, if well received, will be the first in a permanent concert series by the Tudor Singers in Evanston.

"What art gallery doesn't have at least a dozen paintings from the Renaissance?" Wickman asks. "And we know that doesn't represent the sum total of what was done. So much was lost through the years. The same with the music. We have so much music from that period, but we have no idea what percentage of the total output it represents."

The concert at National College in Evanston will consist of Italian, German and English madrigals by Wilbye, Monteverdi, Marengio and Shutz as well as Isaac's famous "Lament on the Death of Lorenzo de Medici."

The group will be accompanied by an instrumental ensemble playing on period instruments. Performers are violinists Elliott Golub and Everett Zlatoff-Mirsky, Howard Brown, James Mack and Kenneth Slowik.

"It's very difficult selecting music for a concert like this," Wickman continues, "because there is so much. For example, I went to the Newberry library several

years ago to do research on Renaissance music. I narrowed my request down to music in the court of the Catholic kings of Seville between 1540 and 1565. I waited over half an hour for the books to come, and when they came, there were 60 volumes on a cart being wheeled toward me. It was incredible—and that," he added with a smile, "was a comparatively dry period."

From 1575 to 1600 in England there were at least 25 top rank composers. You see what I'm up against. Trying to give a full picture is like trying to kill an elephant with a pop gun. It can't be done."

The Tudor Singers were established in July of 1972 independent of Wickman. The young singers, many of whom studied voice with Wickman, began rehearsing unaccompanied madrigals alone. "They asked me if I would listen to them once or twice," he recalled. "I have very strong opinions and I really ran them through the ringer. But apparently they liked it. They kept asking me to come back and I began to look into Renaissance music more carefully, and found it a tremendously exciting and prolific period."

Wickman has the ability to look at a score and know immediately how it will sound when performed. "That's the first thing I do when I look for music for the programs," he said, "then I see if there is a performing edition. If there isn't, I usually forget it. There is so much to choose from."

Wickman conducts the very successful Music of the Baroque series at St. Paul and the Redeemer Church in Hyde Park where he is music director. He also is director of the Centuries of Music concert series of the Elgin Choral Union and under his direction they have performed both the Bach Passions, Handel's "Samson," "Theodora," "Messiah," and "Jephtha" the Verdi Requiem and numerous Bach cantatas and other smaller choral works.

And he has strong feelings about the importance of music on what he calls the "grass roots" level. "I think that the most exciting music is being done at small individual concerts, in small halls where there is an immediacy of communication

which can be viscerally exciting, both to the audience and the performers. The audience can become involved in a performance in a way which is not possible in a gigantic concert hall. That's what we try to achieve in our programs."

The singers in the octet are all young professionals. Alexis Darden, soprano, is a 1972 graduate of the University of Chicago. She sings in the Wickman's Music of the Baroque series and has performed with the Grant Park Chorus, the Rockefeller Chapel Choir and is a professional member of the Chicago Symphony Chorus. She has performed solo roles in a number of works including the St. Matthew Passion with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Sir Georg Solti.

Clayton Hochhalter, tenor has appeared as soloist with the Chicago Chamber Choir, the North Shore Chamber Choir, the University of Chicago Chorus and Orchestra and roles with the Chicago Opera Studio. He was an apprentice at the Santa Fe Opera in 1974.

Willard Thoman, tenor, is a member of the Harper College Music Faculty and is director of music for the Southminster United Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights. He is a professional member of the Chicago Symphony Chorus and made his Chicago debut as tenor soloist in Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" presented by the City Center Joffrey Ballet at the Auditorium Theater.

Eugene Johnson, bass, has appeared as soloist with the Chicago Symphony under Sir Georg Solti in Orchestra Hall and at the Ravinia Festival under Istvan Kertesz and James Levine. He is leading bass of the Chicago Symphony Chorus.

Gershon Silins, baritone, was a Santa Fe Opera apprentice in 1973 and 1974. He has done solo work with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Apollo Music Club, the Contemporary Chamber Players and the Elgin Choral Union.

Linda Mabbs, soprano, has appeared as soloist in the Music of the Baroque series and the Grant Park Concerts and the Northside Symphony, the North Shore Choral Society and the Elgin Choral Union.

Isola Jones, contralto, has appeared as soloist with the Santa Fe Opera Company and will perform the role of Baba the Turk in "The Rake's Progress" at the 1975



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Glyndebourne Festival. She has sung as soloist with the Elgin Choral Union, the Lake Forest Symphony, the University of Chicago Orchestra and the Chicago Symphony.

Virginia Tate, contralto, has been soloist with the North Shore Chamber Choir, and is one of the founders of the Tudor Singers. She has sung at the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, at Temple Solel, Temple Judaea and the Temple K. A. M. in Chicago.

The concert at National College is an attempt by the Tudor Singers to establish an audience on the North Shore. "We have a good solid audience for the Music of the Baroque series on the South Side," Wickman explained. "And at the University of Chicago there is a very good Collegium which does Renaissance music so I didn't want to have another series there. I think is an audience for this."