



# BAROQUE PRACTICE

## Lyra Youth Orchestra Debuts This Spring

by Ginna Watson

The Lyra Baroque Orchestra has given birth to an offspring: Lyra Youth! Young instrumentalists from around the Twin Cities now have a new youth orchestra to join, one that emphasizes students taking charge and learning to play baroque music in a historically-informed way.

“Basically, we decided to start it because we had all these friends who were musicians and didn’t have anything to do besides school orchestra,” says Alice Schmitz, a ninth-grader at Minneapolis Southwest High School who plays string bass in the new group and who’s one of its founders. Some of those friends “couldn’t afford GTCYS,” Schmitz added; and thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, students won’t have to pay to play. The grant also helps fund Lyra’s Sunday-afternoon Family Concert series, now in its second year.

The group is the brainchild of Alice and recorder player Bryan Duerfeldt, a senior at Bloomington Jefferson High School. “[They] approached me last summer about doing this, giving me the idea to write a grant,” said Lyra Executive Director Tami Morse. “It’s exciting because it’s starting at the request of a group of young musicians who are excited about performing baroque music, and interested in [historical] performance practice.”

Alice agrees: “In school [orchestra] we mainly do arrangements of pieces, and nothing to challenge us. My friends from school are really interested in baroque music but don’t know how to follow up on it.”

Alice adds that Lyra Youth, which has a small core of players so far, has been raising money by selling baked goods at Lyra Baroque Orchestra concerts with an eye toward purchasing some

period instruments for members to use. The group also has been contacted by people interested in donating their used instruments to players who need them. In addition, Lyra Baroque and Flying Forms, Morse’s duo, have some baroque bows to lend the group.

Lyra Youth is open to students age 18 and under who have several years of playing experience. The group will debut this May as part of Lyra Baroque’s Family Concert series, and become a regular part of the series in the 2012-2013 season, according to Morse.

Alice says although the orchestra will be student-led, in the baroque style of players communicating with each other rather than having a conductor direct them, the group will seek coaching from professional period-instrument players, including Lyra Baroque’s artistic director, Jacques Ogg.

Having the students themselves take charge of the group is the most exciting part of Lyra Youth, says Alice: “We decide where we want to go with this orchestra.”

For more information about Lyra Youth, students and their families can contact Lyra Baroque Orchestra Executive Director Tami Morse at 651-321-2214 or [tami@lyrabaroque.org](mailto:tami@lyrabaroque.org). The group also has a Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/groups/LyraYouth/>.

*Ginna Watson is a Twin Cities string player who specializes in period-instrument performance. She plays baroque violin and viola, medieval vielle and rebec, and medieval harp with the Lyra Baroque Orchestra, the Bach Society, and The Rose Ensemble for Early Music. Ginna teaches violin at Hamline University in St. Paul and violin and viola privately. She also gives masterclasses on medieval and baroque performance practice in the Twin Cities and throughout the country. †*