

Debra Nagy and Les Delices to perform three Baroque concerts

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Chris Stephens/The Plain Dealer

Basking in the Baroque: Debra Nagy is founder of and Baroque oboist in the early-music ensemble Les Delices, which performs at three Northeast Ohio locations Saturday through Monday.

PREVIEW

Les Delices

What: The Cleveland-based early music ensemble performs "In the Apartments of the King," a program of music by Marais, Lully and others.

When: 7:30 p.m. Saturday, 5 p.m. Sunday and 8 p.m. Monday.

Where: First Unitarian Church, 21600 Shaker Blvd., Shaker Heights (Saturday); Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1250 W. Exchange St., Akron (Sunday); West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church, 20401 Hilliard Blvd., Rocky River (Monday).

Tickets: Freewill offering. Call 216-534-9208.

In the skirmish between the Baroque and the modern, the distant past triumphed. Such is the saga of Debra Nagy, an oboist who set out with a modern instrument but found her true calling on Baroque oboe.

Nagy's musical odyssey from New York and Oberlin to Belgium and Cleveland resulted in the creation of an early-music ensemble, Les Delices, which performs at three Northeast Ohio locations Saturday through Monday.

Nagy, 29, founded the group two years ago with colleagues from near and far. She met Baroque violinist Scott Metcalfe and viola da gamba player Emily Walhout, his wife, in the Trinity Consort in Portland, Ore. Harpsichordist Lisa Goode Crawford is a retired faculty member from the Oberlin Conservatory, where Nagy received a master's degree in historical performance.

The ensemble's *raison d'être*, French Baroque music, stems from Nagy's Oberlin studies with the late James Caldwell, an admired oboist who had made historic Baroque recordings in the 1960s. Nagy absorbed Caldwell's love of the French Baroque and affinity for the older instrument.

"It felt very natural to me," said Nagy, a native of White Plains, N.Y., who lives in Cleveland Heights.

"It's an extremely expressive instrument that gives you a lot of flexibility. I'd always considered myself a chamber musician. I don't want to make it sound like I knew what I was going to do professionally, but it was very attractive to me and exciting to learn."

Nagy learned quickly. Even while pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees at Oberlin and a doctorate at Case Western Reserve University, she was on the road several weeks a month playing with Baroque ensembles around the country.

But Nagy, who performs often with Apollo's Fire and directs the Collegium Musicum at Case, wanted to form an ensemble based in Cleveland with colleagues equally enamored of French repertoire. Since Metcalfe and Walhout live in Boston and Crawford spends half of the year in Paris, getting together would prove a challenge.

Nagy persevered, and Les Delices played its first concert in February 2006. The group joins forces twice a year for performances. The musicians hope to present three series next year.

The ensemble's name is a reflection of the music Nagy and company perform.

"I wanted something to express the nature of the repertoire," she said, "which is both delicate and a delicacy. There happens to be a piece by [Michel] Corrette, 'Les Delices de la Solitude.' "

Corrette won't be on this weekend's program, "In the Apartments of the King," a potpourri of pieces that Louis XIV heard in his intimate quarters at Versailles. Les Delices will perform music by Lully, D'Anglebert, Philidor (the king's oboist, *mais bien sur*), Marais, Couperin, de Bacilly and others.

In true Baroque tradition, several pieces are Nagy transcriptions of works originally for flute, rather than oboe.

"Normally, then as now, the music was for amateur flute players," said Nagy. "There were very few amateur oboe players. If you wanted to sell it, you advertised it for flute. I transposed [the music] back down a step."

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