

THE ANCORA



STRING QUARTET

Title: Isthmus Critics Rate the Year in Local Culture

Press: Isthmus

By: Dean Robbins and John W. Barker

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Dean Robbins:

2007 had its share of bad news for the Madison arts scene. The Overture Center's endowment fund dipped perilously low. The Madison Center for Creative and Cultural Arts shut down. The Madison Theatre Guild almost died. Former Overture Center chief Robert D'Angelo was indicted on 39 criminal counts.

But let's look at the bright side, shall we? Robert Redford chose Madison as the site of his first Sundance Cinemas, tremendously boosting the local film scene. The troubled Club Majestic gave way to the promising Majestic Theatre. Madison Ballet raised its game by hiring a dozen professional dancers. Madison Opera sold out its fall production of *La Bohème*. The Madison Repertory Theatre mounted an original production about Vince Lombardi.

And there's more. Isthmus' arts critics look back on 2007, taking the bad with the good.

John W. Barker:

Mounting a discreet challenge to the UW's Pro Arte Quartet in the last few years is the plucky Ancora String Quartet, performing in residence at the First Unitarian Society. Well-established now are two local beacons of period-music presentation: the Wisconsin Baroque Ensemble, in refreshing performances of vocal and instrumental chamber works; and Trevor Stephenson's Madison Bach Musicians, presenting the sacred and secular music of their namesake composer in ever more bold, exciting and stylish ways.

I write all this in the aftermath of Thanksgiving, which prompts me really to give thanks for so much wonderful musical activity available to us here in Madison.