



front

Chicago Zither Club Flag
Club Founded November 3, 1913
Flag Dedicated November 6, 1927



reverse

Chicago Zither Club

Gala
90th Anniversary

Fall Concert



Sunday November 23, 2003

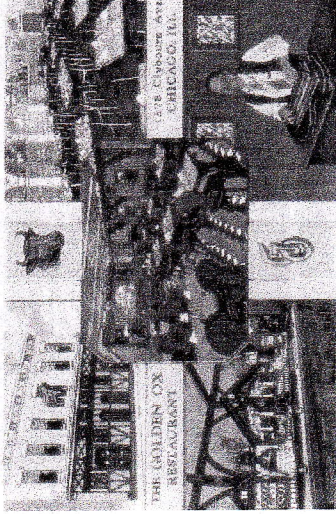
St. Patrick's Performing Arts Center
5900 West Belmont Ave.
Chicago, Illinois

3:00 PM

John Olivo Conducting

CZC Through the Years

The Chicago Zither Club was founded on November 3, 1913 at the Golden Ox Restaurant, 1613 Larrabee Street. There were seven zither players and Musical Director Carl Baier. The first president was Charles Hopfner who was the proprietor of the Golden Ox. There had been an earlier Chicago Zither Club which dissolved in 1890 due to members dissensions. Indeed, there were probably other zither clubs in the area, but we have little documentaion of them. The Golden Ox moved to it's well-known address at 1579 North Clyborn Ave. and continued a tradition of zither music entertainment til its untimely closing in 2000.



Pictured in this 1920's postcard is Fritz Stien playing zither. Rudy Wacek played at the "Ox" for many years, as did Ruth Valentino who continues as a club member and officer.

Karl Zahaberger and Martin Doppelhammer also played there. Downstairs in the Keller at the Golden Ox there were three very antique zithers on the wall until it closed - remnants of the early Zither Club meetings there? - perhaps they belonged to Charles Hopfner? We don't know. The Chicago Zither Club returned to the Golden Ox regularly over the years to celebrate special occasions. In 1914 William Harjes became president and other presidents have been Richard Würtz, 1917-19, Paul Kramer 1919-21, Harry Fleming, 1921-23, Theo Miller, 1923-1930. Musical Director Carl Baier later became director of the Los Angeles Zither and Jodling Club. Other early Musical Directors have been Carl Sturm and Frank Stabla.

The first public appearance of the young club was the Bazaar of the Austrian-Hungarian Benefit Society and the German Red Cross on November 18, 1914 in the North side Turner Hall. The first large concert was on February 16, 1916 with the Campbell Mandolins and Guitar Club in the Kimball Hall and the collaboration continued for many Spring and Fall concerts until 1923 when a new administration of the club took over. The concerts moved to Aldine Hall and Fritz Koch's Hall until they proved too small for the concert attendance. They then were moved to De Paul Auditorium where they were able to hold a large Masked Ball after the concert.



**15. Stiftungsfest
und Frauenweibe**
mit KONZERT und BALL

Chicago Zither-Club
Gegründet am 4. November 1917
BY PAUL AUDITORIUM
Chicago, Ill.

On Sunday, November 6, 1927 an Concert and Flag Dedication Ceremony was held at De Paul Auditorium. The club had 28 active members: 5 violins, 15 zithers, 5 guitars, 1 bass and 2 flutes. The club also had 93 passive (non-playing) members who helped operate the concert and ball - a great service to the Chicago Zither Club.

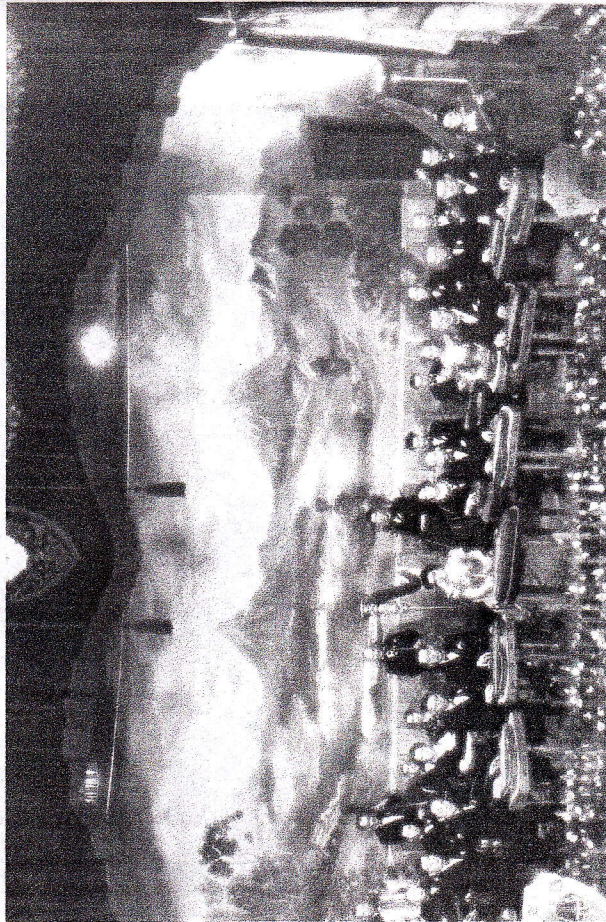


Active Players with President and Director
1927

back row, 2nd from left, Franz Schoennagel, 3rd from left, Willie Gronwald. Third row, 3rd from right, Mr. Werk. Second row, seated, unknown, Rudy Wacek, Frank Stabla, Director, Theo Miller, President, Otto Mackh, unknown. . Kneeling, center, unknown, Johanna Wieser (Ramirez), Ernst Schaefer

Otto Mackh became President in 1930-32, P. H. Brünsteiner 1932-1933 and Otto Mackh returned to the presidency in 1933 and continued in the post for another 50 or more years - surely an outstanding record of devotion to a club's success. He joined the club in 1916, and often lamented that he was not a charter member - but almost!!!

In 1938 when the club celebrated its 25th Anniversary, Otto was President and Joseph Waldherr was Musical Director. The Silver Jubilee Concert was held at the Lincoln Turner Hall, 1005 Diversey Parkway. The Club played *Grüß aus Wien (Greetings to Vienna)* and *Zur Weihe des Tages (Commemoration of the Day)*, *Serenade by Krebs-Funk*, and *Concert Overture II* by Swoboda. A quintett of members, Louise Godetz, Johanna (Ramirez) Eicherl, Karl Kandlbinder, Alois Stockinger and Otto Mackh, played *Sie Mir Gut (Be Kind to Me)* and *Blue Violets*. Special guests for the concert were the Chicago Mandolin Club and a Mixed Chorus of the Erinnerung Mens Chorus and the Columbia Ladies Chorus.



1938 25th Anniversary Concert: from left front row, Carl Kandlbinder, Alfred Herrmann, Joseph Waldherr, conductor, Louis Godetz, on right, Johanna Ramirez, guitar, 2nd from right Otto Mackh. 2nd row 2nd from right, Julia Pohl at zither table. Standing rear, Rudy Wacek, accordion, Ernest Schaefer, bass

Johanna Ramirez became Secretary of the Club in 1934 and continued in that office, like Otto Mackh, for nearly 50 years. She played guitar and sang in many duets in concert and at club meetings with Mali Wassner Mackh. She joined the club in 1924 shortly after she emigrated from Steiermark, Austria.



JOHANNA RAMIREZ

On November 18, 1951 the club celebrated its 38th Anniversary Otto continued as President, and Carl Kandlbinder was Musical Director. There were 17 zither players listed as members of the orchestra - two members of that concert continue as members playing with us today: Betty Meindl and Charlotte Kunard Geib. The orchestra also included a harp, a bass, 8 violins, 3 guitars, 2 cellos and 1 accordion. The program included *Kinder der Puszta*. A *Medley from The White Horse Inn, Jealousy*, and others. A trio of Mali (Mackh) Wassner, Johanna Ramirez and Carl A. Kandlbinder played and the special guest chorus was the Sängerkranz "Harmonie". The concert was held in the Lincoln-Turner Hall. Rudy Wacek's Orchestra provided dance music. Carl A. Kandlbinder assumed conductorship of the Zither Club in 1947 after Joseph Waldherr retired. Carl had learned zither in his home in Mannheim, Germany and brought his talents to Chicago 1926.

THE CHICAGO ZITHER CLUB

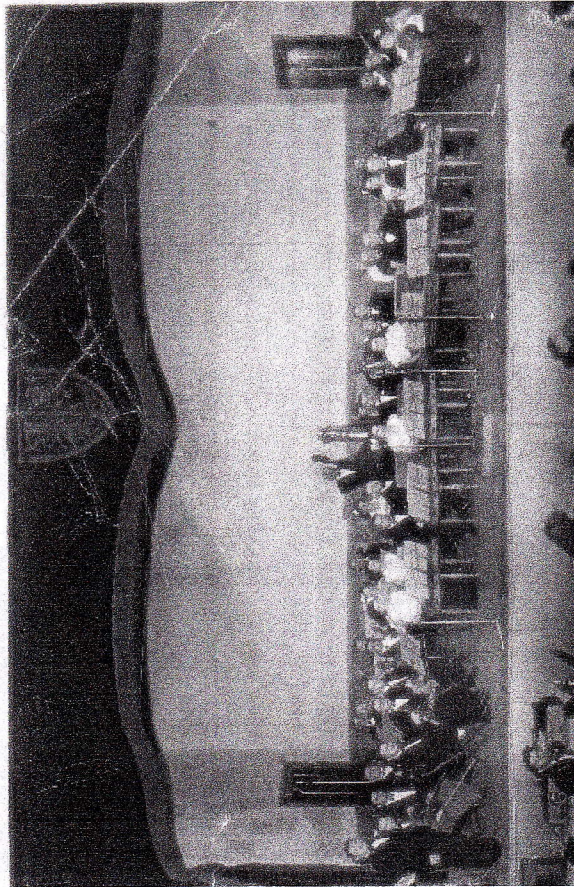
CARL KANDBINDER, Director
MEMBERS OF THE ORCHESTRA

- ZITHERS**
 - Laura Scherler
 - Mali Wassner
 - Charlotte Geib
 - Edith Mackh
 - Frank Meindl
 - Carl Wassner, Sr.
 - Charlotte Geib
 - Otto Mackh
- VIOLINS**
 - Wm. Stockinger
 - Bill Kozicki
 - Carl Wassner, Jr.
 - Steve Shuman
 - Jack Schumaker
 - Edith Mackh
 - Betty Wassner
- VIOLA**
 - Johanna Ramirez
 - Charlotte Geib
 - Joe Eberitz
- CELLO**
 - W. Scherler
 - Dr. Otto F. Gurrich
- ACCORDION**
 - Rudy Wacek
- BASS**
 - Ernest Schaefer
- HARP**
 - Betty Dixon

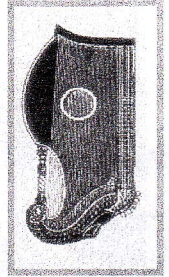


CARL KANDBINDER

The 40th Anniversary was held at the Lincoln Turner Hall, with Carl Kandlbinder conducting, on November 22, 1953. Selections included *Pizzacato Polka* and *Emperor Waltz* by Johann Strauss, Jr. and a medley from *Showboat*. A trio from the Alpenklänge Zither Club of Milwaukee performed, as a reciprocating friendship between the clubs had been established. 21 members were honored during the concert for having belonged to the club from 25 to 40 years. All members achieve honorary membership after 25 years, but at this Anniversary Concert some of the charter members still participated.



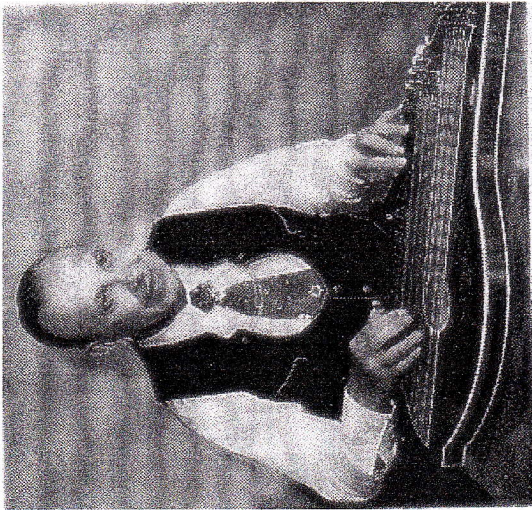
Apparently Lincoln Turner Hall was under renovation during the 1953 concert.



In 1950 the film *The Third Man* was released, creating the signature tune for the zither for the remainder of the century. Anton Karas, who played zither in a Grinzinger wine stüberl around Vienna, attracted the attention of the producer, Carol Reed, who pressed him into writing and playing the background music for the film about the post-war occupation of Vienna. Memorable performances by Orson Wells, Joseph Cotton and Valli have embedded the various themes of the film in zither music forever. Anton Karas visited Chicago as part of the publicity tour for the film and he had various contacts with Chicago Zither Club. They met him at his plane arrival, at Midway Airport, hosted him at a meeting of the club, and had other leisure time with him while he was here.



Another lasting impact of the film occurred in the club: Rudy Wacek had played zither as a young man - taking lessons in Vienna and joining the Chicago Zither Club with his father, A. Wacek, in 1923. Somewhere along the way Rudy segued over to playing accordion and operating a very popular dance band.



When the film The Third Man came along, he revived his zither and resumed entertaining with it. He invented an electric zither for which he became quite famous. He built amplification systems for the entire club, as well as for zither players around the country. He built six complete electric zithers and a few of them are still in use around the country. Many more of his magnetic amplification bars are still in use by various zither players.

Rudy, Sr. became one of the most popular attractions of the Chicago Zither Club concerts, as he entertained following each concert well into the 1990's. His reputation spread far and wide - among local and distant Austrian clubs, including many appearances on the TV Show International Cafe. He became known as the "King of the Electric Zither" and his Viennese "soul" remains in our hearts today.

His son, Rudy, Jr. inherited the slot as accordion player in the Zither Club for a few years.

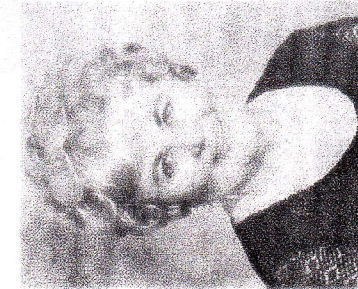
The 50th Golden Jubilee Anniversary Concert was held at the Lincoln Turner Hall on November 16, 1963 with Esther Rehberg-Mueller conducting. Officers (below) were Otto Mackh, Frank Meindl, George W. Seifert and Johanna Ramirez.

Otto Mackh retired as President in 1961 when he retired from his employment. Frank Meindl became President for a term, but Otto took up the reins again upon his return from Europe.



The program included Aschenbrödl's Brautzug (Cinderella's Wedding Procession), Clarinet Polka, 50 Years of Memory Tunes, Orchestra members in 1963 who remain in the orchestra are Charlotte Geib, Ruth Pohl Valentino, Janet Stessi and Betty Meindl.

Carl Kandlbinder became Conductor of the Chicago Zither Club orchestra once again in the mid 60's, following the death of Esther Rehberg-Miller. The location of the concerts was moved from Lincoln Turner Hall due to its eminent demolition and St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church Hall became the venue for the club for several years.



Ernestine M. Kandlbinder reactivated her interest in the club along with her husband's reinstatement, and CZC benefited from their skilled promotional and business attention. "Erna", as we all fondly called her, became Vice President, and ably assisted Otto Mackh in the executive duties of the club. The locale for the

concerts was changed and a new format instituted. We moved to the Golden Tiara, 3231 North Cicero, and started offering buffet dinners following the concerts. Tickets in 1971 were \$2.50 in advance, \$3.00 at the door, and it included the Zither Concert, a buffet dinner, Dance Music by Richard Ecker, Rudy Wacek and his Electria Zither, and dance performance by the Jolly Lumber

Jacks.



The 60th Jubilee Concert, Dinner and Dance was held at the Golden Tiara, on November 11, 1973. The orchestra played Lara'a Theme from Dr. Zhivago, München Kindl, and Sound of Music medley, Louise Godetz Taborsky and Mali Mackh presented duets including Rondino by Simon Schneider, Eleanor Warber sang Wien wird bei Nacht erst schön and Hi-Lilli Hi-Lo.

The next 20 years of the club saw concert attendance reaching 1,000 -1,200 here at the Golden Tiara and later at Thirteen Colonies - we call them the Golden years of the club.

Mali Mackh was made Assistant Conductor to help Carl Kandlbinder who was a busy guy with his insurance agency. Mali, nickname for Amalia, and her first husband, violinist Ralph Wassner, had been long time members of the club. Mali was a proficient zither player and singer - she often appeared in various German nightclubs before World War II that were clustered around North, Halsted and Clyborn Avenues in the old German neighborhood. She continued singing in featured spots the Zither Club concerts, but also she had learned to make zither arrangements for the club and was providing them regularly for the concerts. Her arrangement of *Sound of Music* will be played today in the 90th Anniversary Concert and the club's musical library abounds with her cogent arrangements. She led the early rehearsals of the orchestra and Carl Kandlbinder came in for the last few rehearsals before each concert.

Widowed in the 1940's, Mali married Otto Mackh in 1956, joining the list of truly legendary officers and members of the Chicago Zither Club. She passed away in 1983 and Otto lived a few years longer.



Otto and Mali Mackh

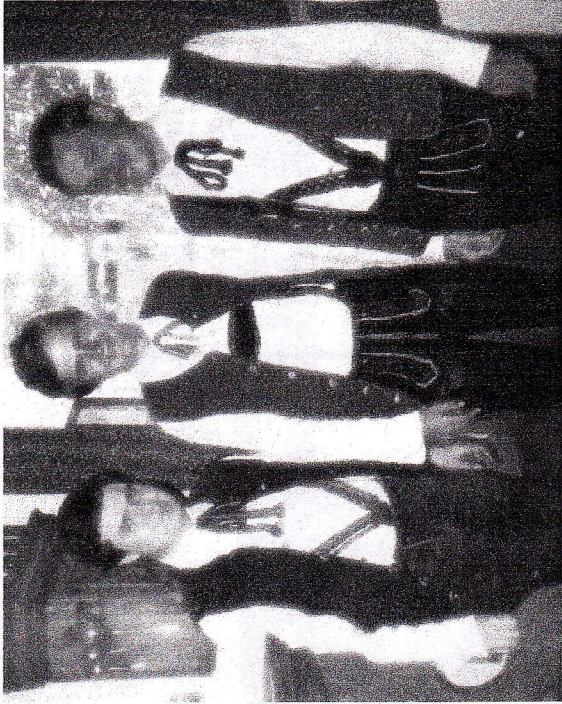
Erna and Carl Kandlbinder
date unknown

The Golden Tiara Banquet Hall turned itself into a bingo parlor, so the club had to look for new surroundings. We moved to Thirteen Colonies, 8301 W. Belmont Ave. and the format became a sit-down dinner and continued to have all of the accouterments - dance orchestra, Rudy Wacek entertaining with his electric zither, one or another of the dance ensembles performing, and as ever, the Chicago Zither Club Orchestra. It was during this period when the club was 100% amplified with Rudy Wacek equipment.

Following Mali Mackh's death, and after a sudden illness of Carl Kandlbinder, Fred Fischer was made Assistant Conductor of the orchestra for insurance against future emergency health problems.



photo from 1980's: front row, Ed Schultz, accordion, Betty Meindl, Ruth Valentino, Janet Stessl and Frank Meindl, zithers. Second row, seated, Marianne Martynowycz, Lou Stessl, Joe Suba. Standing, l. to r. Carl Kandlbinder, unknown cello player, Henry Kusher, violin, Art Anderson, guitar, Manny Losoff, mandolin, Charlotte Geib zither, Fred Fischer and Joan Culler, singer.



1985 began a period of internationalism for the Zither Club and its members. The Popp/Lägel Zither Trio of Munich performed in the Fall Concert, led a weekend workshop for zither players and ignited a new realm of zither music for the Chicago players.

The contacts with European zither players have continued over the ensuing years in both directions. Visitors here, in addition to the trio, have included Lili Grünwald, famous daughter of Richard Grünwald and teacher, Christoph Schwarzer, Freddy and Helen Golden, Gertrud Huber, the Villacher Saiten Musi of Austria in 1992 and the entire Munich-Pasing Zither Orchestra in 1996. The club has helped sponsor zither seminars in other parts of the USA i. e. Aspen, Colorado, Oak Harbor, Washington, Baltimore, Maryland. Members of the Chicago Club have been traveling to Europe since 1986 to participate in seminars, and the German Zither Society's Zithermusikstage in 1988, 1992, 1996 and 2000. Members of the Tokyo Zither Club have visited Chicago to share zither music.

The Zither Newsletter USA was founded by Janet Stessl in 1987 providing a networking tool for zither players around the country to share activities and events.

Carl Kandlbinder passed away two days before the Spring Concert of 1988 and Fred Fischer assumed direction of the club for the next 14 years.



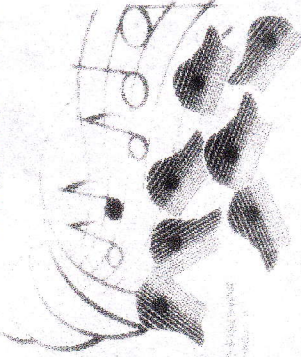
Fred Fischer
Conductor

The Diamond Jubilee 75th anniversary was celebrated at both concerts that year - Spring and Fall. For the Fall Concert the club played Bayrische Brüder, Der Weg zum Herzen, Wiener Walzer Klänge and other selections. A small group consisting of Charlotte Geib, Betty Meindl, Ruth Valentino, Janet Stessl, Lou Stessl and Art Anderson played a *French Medley* and *Chicago Medley*. Joan Culler, soprano, and Cal Metts, tenor, were featured soloists, as they had been frequently appearing with the club during the 1980's.

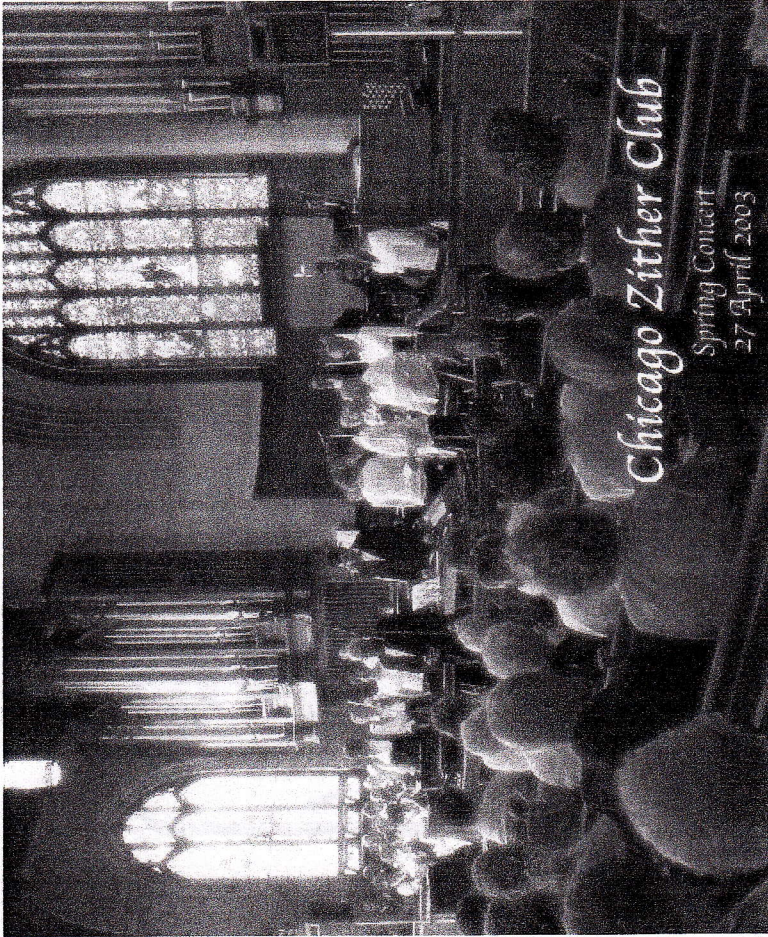
Erna Kandlbinder became Honorary President and turned the reins over to Vice President Ken Wesa in 1989-1990 as she didn't want to continue without Carl at her side. Ken continued in his valuable capacity as our own "graphic artist" designing our program covers over the next decade. Janet Stessl was elected President in 1990 and continued in that office until 1998.



Saturday November 19, 1995



Decreasing attendance prompted a change in venue: the Spring Concerts were held at the Nineteenth Century Woman's Club in Oak Park, IL in a theater with a Coffee and Sweets Table following the concert. The Fall concerts continued in the Dinner, Concert and Dance format - at the Fountain Blue in Des Plaines, the Fireside in Morton Grove and the Grazie in Des Plaines most recently. . The Spring Concert continued in theater format moving to the auditorium at LaSalle Bank (formerly Talman Federal S & L) on Irving Park Rd. and recent years to St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Park Ridge.
Ruth Valentino served as Recording Secretary for many years. and became President in 1999. She continued til her recent leave of absence in 2003.



The Spring Concert of 2003 was held at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Park Ridge under the baton of John Olivo, new conductor. The concert featured Tomy Temerson, zither soloist from Germany and the Austrian Mixed Chorus.

As we celebrate 90 years the Chicago Zither Club faces the future with a full sense of the rich legacy we have inherited from our devoted members. We thank all our friends and members for their continued support and allegiance to the Chicago Zither Club and its goal of preserving and promoting zither music.

