

EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION presents

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ – DIRECTOR

Good King Wenceslas

a bohemian christmas

First Church of Christ, Scientist
Central Park West at 68th Street
Saturday, 14 December 2013, 7:30 PM

Artist in Residence ~
Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine
Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street
Sunday, 15 & 22, December 2013, 2:00 PM
Wednesday, 25, December 2013, 2:00 & 7:30 PM

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ – DIRECTOR

Eric Brenner – alto
Patrick Fennig – alto
Brennan Hall –alto

Joe Damon Chappel – bass
Thomas McCargar – baritone
Peter Walker – bass baritone
& bagpipes

Michael Denos – tenor
Todd Frizzell – tenor
Riley Soter – tenor

Dongmyung Ahn – bowed strings
Wayne Hankin – winds
Jason Priset – plucked strings

Special thanks to
Joe Chappel for Czech language pronunciation
and
Todd Frizzell for score preparation

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK's 2013-2014 SEASON CONTINUES ~

SPRING 2014 – First Church of Christ, Scientist

EAST OF THE ELBE: TELEMANN'S VOLKSMUSIK
Saturday, March 15, 2014 at 7:30 PM

VOX SONAT: ECHOES O'ER THE ALPS
Saturday, May 3, 2014 at 7:30 PM

Detailed information at: www.EarlyMusicNY.org
Box Office: 212-280-0330

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK
Featured Compact Disc: "A Bohemian Christmas"
at the CD sales table immediately following this performance

a Bohemian Christmas

I

Alleluia	Mikolaj Radomski, fl. 1420–30
Natus est/Quem pastores/Huius sit memoria	Czech, 14 th century
Jesu Kriste, ščedý kněže	Czech, 13 th century
Ave regina caelorum	Codex Specialnik, before 1500
Vizmež pacholička	Czech, 13 th century
Flosculum amenitatis	Codex Specialnik
Tant plus vos voye	Czech Ms., 14 th century
Svatý Václave/Náš milý Svatý Václave	Czech, 13 th century/ Codex Specialnik
Ja falla	Czech Ms, 14 th century
Vzdajmež chválu	Codex Specialnik
Czaldy waldy	Czech, late 14 th century
Nobis est natus hodie	Codex Specialnik

II

Magnificat anima mea Dominum	Radomski
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III

“Minnelied”	Neidhart von Reuenthal, c. 1190-c.1240
Omnia beneficia	Polish, late 12 th century
Ortus de Polonia	Polish, 13 th century
Gaude, mater Polonia	Polish, 13 th century
Breve regnum	Polish, early 15 th century
Angelus ad virginem missus	Polish, 15 th century

IV

Koledy Łacinska (Latin carols), Kancjonał staniątecki, 1586 -1707	Anonymous Polish
Christo nato Domino • Christus, qui genitus Mariae • Angelus Domini ad pastores • Quem pastores laudavere	
Veri solis radius • Novo Anno Domini	
Balletto Polacha	Bartłomiej Pękiel(?), ca.1610-ca.1670
Largum vesper, rex gloriae • Vidua et prophetissa • Nobis est natus hodie • In natali Domini • Puer natus in Bethleem	

NOTES

Bohemia and Moravia - Bohemia, situated in central Europe, occupying the western and middle thirds of the present-day Czech Republic, has nurtured so many heterogeneous cultural elements that its history reveals periods in which no one type of music can be singled out as particularly characteristic. Foreign influences have helped to mold the culture of their country; the final result is a combination of the cultural elements of foreign influences and those of the various indigenous national groups.

St. Wenceslas (Václave), prince and martyr (ca. 907-929), is the patron saint of the Czech lands, Bohemia and Moravia. The baptism of Wenceslas' grandfather, the ruler of Bohemia, along with (St.) Ludmilla, his grandmother, was not followed by the conversion of all their subjects, and many of the powerful Czech families were strongly opposed to the new religion. Ludmilla's religious and political influence over her first grandson angered a semi-pagan party among the nobility, and in 921 Ludmilla was murdered. When Wenceslas took over power; he set himself to promote Christianity. The opposition became bitterer, with Wenceslas' younger brother Boleslav taking the lead in it. In 929, Boleslav picked a quarrel with Wenceslas and in the ensuing fracas Wenceslas was killed by Boleslav's supporters. Immediately the people claimed young prince Wenceslas and his grandmother Ludmilla as martyrs.

Early period, though the mid-14th century - The 12th and 13th centuries in Bohemia were periods of great upheaval. During the famous Czech dynasty of the Přemyslids, German colonists were invited into the country and German cultural influence became widespread. *Minnesingers* and *trouvères* brought their music to the court at Prague. The Bohemian composers took over the German *Minnelied* without significant change.

Tropes, or text and melodic interpolations in a pre-existent composition, mostly to the Kyrie (**Jesu Kriste, Svatý Václave**) of the Mass Ordinary were very popular in Bohemia. The influence of folk music on tropes was so great that Jan Hus later claimed they were more an inducement to dancing than to worship.

The 14th century was a period of prosperity and cultural development. The dynasty of the Luxembourgs came to the throne in 1310 and under John of Luxembourg (1310-1340; aka John of Bohemia) and especially his son, Emperor Charles IV, Prague became the cultural center of the Holy Roman Empire.

John was a product of the age of chivalry, but more a man of war than of art. His many travels abroad and his cultural contacts with foreign nations, especially France, never greatly benefited his kingdom, because he seldom stayed in Bohemia for more than a few months at a time. Although the esteemed composer Guillaume de Machaut spent many years as secretary to King John, French influence became widespread only under Charles, who was educated in France (**Tant plus vos voye and Ja falla**).

John Mason Neale's familiar 19th-century Christmas text "Good King Wenceslas" is imaginary (although he borrowed a medieval tune for his 1853 setting). On the other hand, the famous Czech song **Svatý Václave** ("St. Wenceslas"), probably originating from the beginning of the 14th century, is an invocation of this beloved saint.

The development of the first Bohemian school of composition takes place during this century since Charles IV greatly furthered all artistic activity. Four factors influenced this school of composition: the art music of France, that of Germany, native secular folk music, and, underlying these three factors, the potent influence of the liturgical folk song (based on plainchant) – the spontaneous expression of a religious people.

During Charles IV's reign, liturgical music in Bohemia displayed variety and richness. In addition to the Prague Cathedral choir of twelve boys (*boninfantes*) established in 1255, there were twenty-four men (*mansionarii*). The type of song used at this time was the *koleda* (**Vizmež pacholička**), sung in Bohemia since the early Middle Ages. At first, it was an incantation song but, by the 14th century, it had become more of a vagabond song – students singing for money. There were *koledy* for all feasts – Christmas, Easter, etc.; they can be compared to western carols. It is recorded in the chronicle of the town of Königssaal (ca.1338) that people everywhere, not only accomplished musicians, extemporized polyphonically in sixths, thus somewhat approximating *fauxbourdon* practice (as formally illustrated here in Radomski's **Magnificat**).

Jan Hus and the Reformation - In Bohemia, the Middle Ages flowed directly into the Reformation, and the Renaissance itself is hardly perceptible. The Reformation took on an attitude unfriendly to music, as well as to painting and sculpture, and the flowering of the arts found elsewhere in the Renaissance was here nipped in the bud. With the coming of Jan Hus (1372/3–1415) a new era starts in Czech history in general, and also in the history of Czech music. With Hus at its head, the Reformation sought to abolish the alleged abuses of the Church and to recapture the simplicity and sincerity of early Christianity. The futility of pleasures of the world and the luxuries of life were automatically banned. In the history of Czech music, Hus was an historical catastrophe.

Jan Hus was born in southern Bohemia. At an early age he went to Prague, where he supported himself by singing and serving in the churches. His conduct was exemplary and his devotion to study remarkable. In 1393, he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from the University of Prague and in 1396 the Master's degree. He was ordained a priest in 1400 and soon thereafter became rector of the university. Hus became one of the most famous preachers in Prague. The extraordinary suggestiveness of his sermons responded to the sensitivity of the masses. This gift allowed him to influence listeners, the simple folk as well as aristocrats and bourgeoisie who inhabited the capital city.

Hus's anti-artistic tendencies were based on religious grounds. Art had to be banned, because it was a luxury. Music instruments in church were banned; organs were destroyed, and only bells were retained. In 1435, musicians, looked upon as ungodly people, were denied the right to take Communion. All music was banned in the 15th century, except monophonic song, which was the typical art of the Hussites. Hus believed in the devotional value of singing and, driven by the burning ardor of religion, the whole of Bohemia sang. The Hussite song was neither secular nor liturgical. The life of the people was permeated by one religious idea, and the barriers between secular and liturgical music fell. The Hussite song was human and simple, national and social and, we might say, democratic. Folk song and liturgical song form its basis, with many tunes derived from Gregorian sources.

There were two main parties among the Hussites; the radical Taborite reformers, and the conservative faction called the Utraquists. Polyphony, which the radical Taborites considered an embellishment, was absolutely forbidden, except in the *koledy*, which were sometimes even accompanied by instruments. In Hus's day, the singing of these songs was restricted to Christmastime. These Hussites generally considered monophony more effective than polyphony and more powerful, since, as they said, unison makes all men equal in their worship. They also returned to the early policy of the Church in pointing out that the words are more important than the music and that polyphonic singing obscures the words. Thus polyphonic song became an exception and a sign of conservatism. A great battle was fought over the admission of polyphony into the Church throughout the 15th and 16th centuries until polyphony emerged victorious.

The **Codex Specialnik** is a liturgical but undefined manuscript, a *codex mixtus*, and therefore in its own way a "special" source dating around the last quarter of the 15th century. It is one of the oldest surviving collections of Czech Renaissance polyphony, and it originated in the conservative Utraquist Protestant congregations of around 1500. The Codex is a large anthology of polyphony that flourished in Bohemia from the 14th century onward. The oldest pieces can be described as the remnants of the Czech *Ars antiqua* and *Ars nova* – styles of composition from the 13th and 14th centuries, respectively. It contains some fifty pieces in common with compositions found in dozens of 14th- to 16th-century sources in Western Europe.

There are 150 Renaissance compositions in the manuscript, and only about one third of these are by composers who can be identified. Many of the anonymous works are based on Czech melodies current at the time (**Svatý Václave, Vzdajmež chválu**). Equally interesting are the imported compositions attributed to thirty foremost European musicians. The Codex also contains a number of secular *chansons* that the Prague brethren furnished with sacred Latin texts.

Polish Middle Ages and Renaissance - In the development of its native language and literature Poland lagged behind many countries of Western Europe. Latin played the dominant role here longer than elsewhere. It was only with the rapid development of Polish literature in the second half of the 16th century that the native language came to hold an equal place, although it did not replace Latin completely. In the 13th century, Polish Latin poetry was enriched chiefly by the introduction of lyrics to religious themes. This reflected the luxuriant flowering of the religious Latin lyric in the countries of Western Europe, which arrived in Poland on the occasion of the canonization of St. Stanisław in 1253, necessitating the composition of a separate liturgical office for the new saint.

Pope Innocent IV canonized St. Stanisław of Kraków (bishop and martyr) in 1253. The patron saint is revered in Poland but there is uncertainty about the events that led to the violent death for which he is venerated. Stanisław was elected bishop of Kraków in 1072 and the story commonly told is that he came into conflict with the vigorous King Bolesław II due to the vagaries of the king's private life. The bishop fearlessly rebuked his sovereign several times and finally excommunicated him, whereupon Bolesław himself attacked and murdered Stanisław while he was celebrating Mass.

Ortus de Polonia is a 13th-century antiphon and **Gaude, mater Polonia** is a 13th-century hymn. Both are from a breviary office fragment, the *Historia gloriosissimi Stanislai*. **Breve regnum** is a two-voice “student song” from the early 15th century, with the title “*Cantilena de regno scholarium Cracoviensium*” and no doubt celebrates the Feast of Fools, where a student elected by his peers plays the role of King of Misrule, a ritual practiced at the feast of the Circumcision on New Year’s Day. **Omnia beneficia** is the oldest polyphonic composition discovered in the territories of Poland, a *conductus* that dates from the end of the 13th century. **Angelus ad virginem missus** was composed at the end of the 15th century and is one in the cycle of rhymed rosary mysteries *Angelica salutatio*.

Nicholas of Radom (Mikolaj Radomski) is the central figure among the composers whose works are contained in 15th-century manuscripts in Poland. He is also the most important composer of the late *ars nova* in central Europe. Although there are but nine compositions extant attributed to him, their nature permits one to reconstruct his artistic personality and the sphere of his musical activity. He came from the city of Radom. There is a reference in the year 1422 to “*Nicolaus clavicymbalista Regine Zophie*,” and one can conclude that Radomski was a composer and musician at the royal court at Kraków at least from 1422 onward.

His extant works, which represent only a small part of his output, exhibit a great diversity of types and forms. His compositions include liturgical as well as secular music with all the various techniques and tendencies developed during that period. Among the liturgical compositions, we find settings of the Mass as well as a polyphonic setting of the **Magnificat**. In this composition, one can clearly see the transition from the *ars nova* period to the new style, which was so copiously developed by Guillaume Dufay and the Burgundian school. The use of *fauxbourdon* is the most important such indication of the period. That Radomski was familiar with the works of Dufay is evidenced by his **Alleluia** paraphrase of Dufay’s chanson “*Bon jour, bon mois, bon an*.” As the text of Dufay’s chanson can be interpreted as a New Year greeting, it is conceivable that Radomski’s Alleluia is meant to serve the same purpose.

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