

Early Music Foundation presents

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK FREDERICK RENZ – DIRECTOR

"a revered institution... ..mainstay of the New York early music scene"

~ The New York Times

"bulwark of the city's period-performance community"

~ The New Yorker



NOVA ~ NOVA CHRISTMAS STAR

First Church of Christ, Scientist

Central Park West at 68th Street

Saturday, 14 December 2019 at 7:30 PM

&

Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine

Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street, NYC

Sunday, 15 December 2019 at 2:00 PM

Sunday, 22 December at 2:00 PM

Wednesday, 25 December at 2:00 PM

Wednesday, 25 December at 5:00 PM

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ - DIRECTOR

Joe Damon Chappel - bass

Tomás Cruz - countertenor

David Dickey - alto

Jason Eck - bass-baritone

Todd Frizzell - tenor

Jared Graveley - bass

Wayne Hankin - winds

Damon Hankoff - alto/bass

Daniel Lee - vielle

Jonathan May - alto

Wilson Nichols - tenor

Tricia van Oers - recorders

Visit www.earlymusicny.org/meet-the-artists.

Discography ~ EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK ~ *Ex cathedra* Records:

A Medieval Christmas

A Renaissance Christmas

A Baroque Christmas

A Colonial Christmas

A Bohemian Christmas

A Dutch Christmas

Music of Medieval Love

Music of Renaissance Love

Music of Venice

Colonial Capers

Apostolic Mass for Saint Martial

Istanpitta I & II

Choir of Angels DVD

CD recordings of today's program will be available
at the sales table directly after the performance.

NOVA ~ NOVA

Pan-European Carols, Motets and Dances of the
Middle Ages & Renaissance

Rex virginum amator Nota [instrumental] Angelus ad virginem	Anonymous English, late 13 th -14 th centuries
“De Innocentibus” - Rex noster “Minnesang” [instrumental]	Hildegard von Bingen, 1098-1179 Neidhart von Reuenthal, ca. 1190-1284
Orientis partibus Verbum patris humanatur Verbum caro factum est Saltarello [instrumental]	Notre Dame School, ca. 1200 Anonymous Italian, 14 th century
Polorum regina Cantigas de Santa Maria [instrumental]	Llibre Vermell de Montserrat, 14 th century Alfonso el Sabio, 1221-1284
Ave regina caelorum Je falla [instrumental] Angelus ad virginem missus	Codex Specialnik, before 1500 Czech Manuscript, 14 th Century Anonymous Polish, 15 th century
Grene grow’th the holly Taundernaken [instrumental] Sweet Jesus	‘King Henry VIII’s Book,’ ca. 1515 Henry VIII, 1491-1547 ‘King Henry VIII’s Book’
Hodie Christus natus est Coventry Carol Branle de l’Official [instrumental] Psallite unigenito	G.P. Palestrina, ca.1525-1594 Anonymous, pub. 1591 Thoinot Arbeau, 1519-1595 Michael Praetorius, 1571-1621

Thanks to
Todd Frizzell - score transcriptions
&
Leanne Mahoney - Board Chairman and House Manager,
First Church of Christ, Scientist

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

There were songs of joy for the Christian festival of Christmas long before there were Christmas carols, just as for millennia before there had been songs for the festival of the Sun-god at the time of the winter solstice. The Western church had its ritual Christmas songs of praise - plainchant - since the time it possessed a formal liturgy. In the 11th and 12th centuries, however, there were songs of a different kind being written down, forthright and vigorous songs which bear many signs of importation from the secular side of the winter feast. These songs were composed and sung by cathedral choristers and cloistered monks as festive embellishments to their liturgical plainchant repertoire, elaborating the praises of the Virgin Mary, the Visitation of Gabriel, the story of the Nativity (Shepherds, Three Kings, Herod, and Rachel lamenting the slaughtered children), the New Year and Epiphany.

MEDIEVAL

The two-voice trope **Rex virginum amator**, thought to be of British origin, is an example of early polyphony where a second voice is composed above an existing plainchant melody. Using the plainchant "Kyrie eleyson" of the Mass for this interpolated (troped) text, one hears the original word "eleyson" at the end of each phrase. As is the custom in performing a nine-fold Kyrie (i.e., Kyrie eleyson x 3; Christe eleyson x 3; Kyrie eleyson x 3) *alternatim*, EM/NY alternates sections of this thirteenth-century two-voice composition with the (single-line) chant upon which it is built.

The "Nota," an untitled dance and one of a few in two voices (most extant dances are monophonic) is in a manuscript of the late thirteenth century containing the well-known *rota* "Sumer is icumen in." EM/NY has added an additional, middle voice in the improvisatory spirit of a medieval dance musician.

The tune **Angelus ad virginem** dates from circa 1200. A second voice was added later in the thirteenth century, and the three-voice version appeared circa 1360. It is assumed that this tune is the one referred to in Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale":

And all above ther lay a gay sautre (psaltery),
On which he made a-nightes melodye,
So swetely that al the chamber rang,
And Angelus ad Virginem he sang.

Hildegard (1098-1179), abbess of the German Benedictine convent of Bingen, was a visionary, artist, composer, poet and consul to the Pope. She is responsible for a prolific corpus of monophonic religious chant, both as composer and as patroness of her talented charges. '**De innocentibus**' is a poignant plaint to the Innocents who, in a violent chapter of the Christmas story, were slaughtered by King Herod in his vain attempt to assassinate the newly born Christ-child. Neidhart von Reuenthal (c.1190-c.1240) was a master of monophonic song, or '**Minnesang**,' directly influenced by the Troubadour movement. His songs are particularly modal and share striking style traits with the melodies of Hildegard.

Verbum patris humanatur is an alternative variation of the text *Verbum patris hodie*, while **Verbum car factum est** is a widely dispersed song (taking its departure from the beginning of St. John's gospel) whose text and music survive in many varying forms. "Eya" is an exclamation of attention and roughly equivalent to our English "hey."

It isn't until the Renaissance that we can use the term Christmas carol in the traditional sense. However, **Orientis partibus** is probably one of the few medieval tunes having found a place among familiar seasonal songs. The tune appears in a manuscript for the Feast of the Circumcision at the Beauvais Cathedral in the twelfth century; the tune was used as a basis for a three-voice setting in the Notre Dame style. The Feast of the Circumcision was also called the Feast of the Ass in honor of the beast-of-burden that carried the Three Kings and their gifts to Bethlehem. The short refrain in the three-voice version might be understood to be descriptive of a braying ass since this holiday (also called the Feast of Fools) is known to have permitted licentious parody of ritual.

The "**Cantigas de Santa Maria**," collected under the auspices of King Alfonso the Wise (1221-84), was a collection of songs telling of the many miracles performed by the Virgin Mary. These monophonic songs lend themselves, with their inherent rhythmic organization, to pure instrumental treatment, utilizing some of the many instruments vividly depicted in musicians' hands in the manuscript illuminations.

Polorum regina is a monophonic song praising Saint Mary the virgin from the fourteenth-century Catalan *Llibre Vermell*. As in the "*Cantigas*," the poetic and musical forms have a recurring refrain, a tantalizing invitation for everyone to join in - particularly in this popular form in contrast to the solo artifice necessary

for performing more complex polyphonic compositions. In fact, *Polorum regina* has been traced into the nineteenth century as proof of its popular usage.

RENAISSANCE

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. It contains some fifty pieces in common with compositions found in dozens of 14th- to 16th-century sources in Western Europe.

Henry VIII's Book did not belong to the King but was given that title to acknowledge the fact that it contains many of his own compositions. Thirty-three pieces in all bear the superscription: 'the kyng h.viii'. Moreover it is indisputably a document of court-music in the early years of Henry VIII's reign. The dating of this songbook in the years 1510-20 is confirmed by the fact that in this period fantastic sums of money were spent on court entertainments; on chivalric 'disguisings' and seasonal revels.

Court records indicate that on Twelfth Night, 1488, "when at the Table in the Medell of the Hall sat the Deane and thoos of the kings Chapell, which incontynently after the furst Course sange a Carall." "On Twelfth Night, ...the pageant with which the Christmas revelries concluded -- a mountain which moved towards the king and opened, and out of which came morris-dancers." **Grene grow'th the holly**' belongs perhaps to a Christmas revels.

The Book is the earliest substantial collection of part-music in England for instruments alone. '**Taunder naken**' is a Flemish popular song whose melody appears in the middle voice. Henry used this tune as a 'tenor' around which he wrote his embellished outer parts. In the "Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors," the '**Coventry Carol**' was sung by the women of Bethlehem just before Herod's soldiers came on to slaughter their children. '**Riu, riu chiu**' is a fine example of the Spanish counterpart to the English carol. A *villancico* in form, it features a repeated refrain (four-voices in this case) before and after each verse (monophonic in this case). This piece tells a story in its several verses. The rhythmic language is unmistakably Spanish however and is highly characterized by considerable, evocative syncopation.

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK -- Founded in 1974 and celebrating its 45th season, Early Music New York (EM/NY) is heard in repertoire from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as well as orchestra repertoire of the baroque and classical periods. Since inception, EM/NY is Artist in Residence at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, NYC, where its traditional Christmas events are performed to sold-out audiences as part of an annual subscription concert series.

Profiled on award-winning national news programs ABC *Nightline* and CBS News *Sunday Morning*, EM/NY has toured throughout the United States and abroad to critical acclaim with return engagements at international festivals: Athens, Brisbane, Caramoor, Charleston, Edinburgh, Hong Kong, Ilmajoki, Jerusalem, Krakow, Paris, Ravinia, Regensburg, Rome, San Antonio, Spoleto, Tokyo and Wolftrap.

FREDERICK RENZ, DIRECTOR/FOUNDER of the EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION (EMF), researches and performs music and music drama from the eleventh through the eighteenth centuries. Internationally acclaimed for his work as a conductor, producer, director, and performer, Renz has received commissions from the Spoleto Festival, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, individual artist grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram Merrill Foundation, and an honorary doctorate from the State University of New York.

EMF's Lincoln Square offices and primary performance venue are located in the First Church of Christ, Scientist, NYC.

CONTINUING ~ HARMONY of the SPHERES ~ SPRING 2020

CLASSICAL CORONA: Symphonic Zenith ~ classical chamber orchestra

Saturday, 7 March at 7:30 PM

&

BACH COUSINS: Luminous Dynasty ~ baroque chamber orchestra

Saturday, 2 May at 7:30 PM

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Central Park West at 68th Street, NYC

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We are grateful for your patronage today. Your tax-deductible contribution helps bridge the gap between ticket income and the actual cost of producing this event.



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Administrative Office: 212-749-6600 ~ Box Office: 212-280-0330

E-mail: info@EarlyMusicNY.org – Website: EarlyMusicNY.org