

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ – DIRECTOR



Cathedral Christmas

*A Medieval
& Baroque
Treasury*

**Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine
Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street, NYC**

Saturday, 3 December 2011, 8:00 PM

Sunday, 4 December 2011, 2:00 PM

Sunday, 18 December 2011, 2:00 PM

Sunday, 25 December 2011, 2:00 PM

Sunday, 25 December 2011, 8:00 PM

Early Music Foundation presents

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Cathedral Christmas

A Medieval & Baroque Treasury

I

Angelus ad virginem	Anonymous English, late 13 th -14 th centuries
Nota [instrumental]	Anonymous English, late 13 th -14 th centuries
Beata viscera (Notre Dame School)	Magister Perotin, ca. 1200
Beata viscera	Anonymous French, ca. 1200
Orientis partibus	Anonymous French, ca. 1200
Danse Roial [instrumental]	Anonymous French, ca. 1200
"De Innocentibus" - Rex noster	Hildegard von Bingen, 1098-1179
Minnesang [instrumental]	Neidhart von Reuenthal, ca. 1190-1284
Polorum regina	Llibre vermell, 14 th century
Cantigas de Santa Maria [instrumental]	Alfonso el Sabio, 1221-1284
Laude novella	Anonymous Italian, late 13 th century
Saltarello [instrumental]	Anonymous Italian, 14 th century

Eric Brenner – alto	Joe Chappel – bass
Michael Denos – tenor	Eric Dudley – tenor
Patrick Fennig – alto	Todd Frizzell – tenor
Jonathon Hampton – alto	Thomas McCargar – baritone
Charles Weaver – bass baritone & plectrum lute, guitar	
Wayne Hankin – flutes, double reeds, musette	Vita Wallace – vielle, violin

II

Alleluia	Mikolaj Radomski, fl. 1420-30
Ave regina caelorum	Codex Specialnik, before 1500
Angelus ad virginem missus	Anonymous Polish, 15 th century
“Czaldy waldy” [instrumental]	Anonymous Czech, late 14 th century

III

All sons of Adam	Anonymous Scotch, ca. 1666
Nou let us sing	Anonymous Scotch, ca. 1660
Noels [instrumental]	Esprit Philippe Chédeville, +1762
Les bourgeois de Châtres	Marc-Antoine Charpentier, d.1704/ arr. Renz
Or, nous dites marie	Michel-Richard Delalande, 1657-1726/ arr. Renz
Joseph est bien marié	Charpentier/ arr. Renz
Viens vite laisse ta houlette	Charpentier/ arr. Renz
Vous qui desirez sans fin	Charpentier/ arr. Renz
All you that are good fellows (<i>To the tune of “Nancie”</i>)	Anonymous, ca. 1642
The old yeare now away is fled (<i>To the tune of “Greensleeves”</i>)	

<p>Thanks to Todd Frizzell for score transcriptions and Scottish pronunciation, and Charles Weaver for French pronunciation coaching.</p>

NOTES

Middle Ages - 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 are 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.

The new songs elaborated 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. The tune *Angelus ad virginem* dates from around 1200. A second voice was added later in the 13th century; 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.*

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 13th century containing the well known *rota*, *Sumer is icumen in*.

Most of the pieces on this program are anonymous with the occasional attribution. **Perotin**, the composer of the monophonic *Beata viscera*, was choirmaster at Notre Dame in Paris at the end of the 12th century and a leader of the Notre Dame School. He is associated with the development of polyphony, although, by proof of this tribute to Mary, it is evident that the ability to produce a well-wrought melody was paramount. An accompaniment has been invented by the EM/NY performers.

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 that found a place among familiar seasonal songs. The tune appears in a manuscript of items for the Feast of the Circumcision at the Beauvais Cathedral in the 12th century; the tune was used as a basis for a three-voice setting in the Notre Dame style. This Feast 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.

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 stylistic traits with the melodies of Hildegard. EM/NY performs these dance-like tunes, using rhythmic drones and melodic imitation

Polorum regina is a monophonic song praising Saint Mary-the-Virgin from the 14th-century Catalanian “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 19th century as proof of its popular usage. 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 rich illuminations in the “Cantigas” Ms.

Laude novella is the Italian equivalent of the Spanish refrain song. *Laude* (devotional songs), with their many verses, virtually tell the complete Christmas story. *Laude* played an important part in the religious life of the Italian people from the 13th to the middle of the 19th century. Their origin and early development were closely connected with St. Francis of Assisi (c. 1182-1226) as well as with the many penitential fraternities (flagellants) of the later Middle Ages when numerous congregations, called *Companie de laudes*” (or *Laudisti*) were founded to foster devotional singing among the Italian people.

Polish & Czech 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. **Angelus ad virginem** missus was composed at the end of the 15th century and is one in the cycle of five rhymed rosary mysteries *Angelica salutatio*.

Nicholas of Radom (Mikolaj Radomski) is the central figure among the composers contained in 15th-century manuscripts in Poland and also the most important composer of the late *Ars nova* in central Europe. He came from the city of Radom, located in the heart of present-day Poland. There is a reference in the year 1422 to “Nicolaus clavicymbalista Regine Zophie,” and one can conclude that Radomski was engaged at the royal court at Kraków from 1422 onward. That Radomski was familiar with the works of Guillaume 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 for the same purpose.

Scottish, French & English Baroque -

The music of the realm of Scotland during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – music of court, cathedral, castle, kirk, burgh and countryside – is from a rich repertory of which only fragments have survived the passage of time and the destructive forces of man. Long years of civil war ensued for Scotland, and it is with a Restoration flourish that, in 1662, John Forbes, printer to the burgh of Aberdeen, made available to his countrymen for the first time a printed song-book of “musick fine:” *Cantus, Songs and Fancies*, containing not only a choice of English lute-songs and madrigals and continental pieces but also some of the best of the art-music of earlier Scotland. Hailed as a masterpiece in form and content, it was quickly reprinted.

All sons of Adam (“The Christmas Medley”), published in 1666 by John Forbes, is based on a French model, akin to the *fricassée* (Ger. *quodlibet*, Sp. *ensalada*) in which many textual and musical quotations are incorporated. Although the quotations here can no longer be identified, this three-voice composition is particularly noteworthy for its contrasting compositional styles, the throwback imitation of the fauxbourdon technique popular in the 15th century – “*lauda Deum tuum, Sion*” and the striking juxtaposition of motet (church) style and secular (dance) style. *Nou let us sing* (manuscript copy, John Forbes, 1662 and Thomas Wode’s part-books, c.1562-92, with later additions by other hands, after 1606 & c.1620) is a drinking song for four voices. Another poem, with identical opening words, no doubt associated with the same music, continues with four stanzas “In honour of our Lordis birth.”

The *noel* is a popular Christmas song, particularly of French origin. From the 17th to the 19th centuries innumerable *noels* were published (as sheet music), in which semi-religious texts were set to secular tunes, dancing and drinking songs, *vaudevilles*, etc. In the 17th century, the name was applied to organ pieces designed to be played during the Christmas service in the form of variations on popular Christmas melodies. Esprit Philippe Chedeville wrote *noel* variations for the *musette*, a courtly kind of bagpipe, not winded by the lungs but, operated with a bellows.

Instrumental (chamber and orchestral) *noel* settings were arranged as well by composers such as Marc-Antoine Charpentier and Michel-Richard Delalande. It is from these settings that Mr. Renz has based his own vocal realizations. Four of the *noel* tunes appear in Charpentier’s “*Messe de Minuit*” (“Midnight Mass for the Nativity”). Charpentier cast these *noels* in prevailing dance forms of his day and combined them in imitation of a French suite. In the same vein, Mr. Renz ordered the following: “**Les bourgeois de Châtres**” – as an *ouverture*, “**Or, nous dite Marie**” – a *loure*, “**Joseph est bien marie**” – a *gavotte*, “**Vous qui desirez**” – a *minuet*. To round out the requisite dance forms of a French suite, Mr. Renz incorporated Charpentier’s own *gigue* tune (composed as an incidental drinking song for Moliere’s “*Le médecin malgré lui*,” 1666). It is immediately recognized, particularly with its late 19th-century *contrafactum* text, as “Bring a torch, Jeanette, Isabella.” Mr. Renz has borrowed a contemporary, 17th- century text, *Viens vite. laisse ta houlette*, in his arrangement of this familiar tune.

The austere years of the Puritan Commonwealth ended in 1660, and Christmas returned to England with the restoration of Catholic King Charles II. And like the monarchy, Christmas came back shorn of some of its old cavalier flamboyance. Its festivities became more social than ceremonial, more middle-class than regal. Its chief celebrants were no longer kings and nobles but the country squire and the rich merchant. No more aristocratic feasts of boar were carried in to the songs of minstrels or carolers, but a side of beef was served, or a pig, or turkey. A domestic Christmas in London, both devout and quietly festive, is described in Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) diary entry of 1666, the year of the great London fire.

"25 Christmas day. Lay pretty long in bed, and then rose, leaving my wife desirous to sleep, having sat up till four this morning seeing her mayds make mince pies. I to church, where our parson Mills made a good sermon. Then home, and dined on some good ribs of beef roasted and mince pies; only my wife, brother, and Barker, and plenty of good wine of my owne, and my heart full of true joy; and thanks to God Almighty for the goodness of my condition at this day. After dinner, I begun to teach my wife and Barker my song...."

In 16th-century England, the **ballad** was a simple tale told in simple verse. Ballad singers made a living by singing their newest productions in the streets and at country fairs, and by selling the printed sheets (broadsides) which usually gave a direction: "to be sung to the tune of...", e.g.: "Greensleeves." In 1651, John Playford published "The English Dancing Master" with rules for dancing of country dances, with the tune to each dance. Many of the tunes are the same ones used for singing broadside ballads.

Frederick Renz

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