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A MEDIEVAL CHRISTMAS

Saint Mary's Church in the Highlands
Cold Spring, New York
December 10, 2006 at 4 PM

This concert is sponsored by Robert A. McCaffrey Realty Inc.

A MEDIEVAL CHRISTMAS

England – anonymous, late 13th-14th centuries

Rex virginum amator
Edi be thu hevenqueene
“Nota”
Angelus ad virginem

France - Notre Dame School, ca. 1200

“Danse Roial”
Exultemus et letemur/Gaudens in Domino
Beata viscera

Anonymous
Anonymous
Magister Perotin

Germany – 12th century

“De Innocentibus”
“Minnesang” [instruments]

Hildegard von Bingen, 1098-1179
Neidhart von Reuenthal, c.1190-c.1240

Spain – 13th & 14th centuries

Cantigas de Santa Maria - Galicia
Como poden, Mui’ amar, Maravillosos [instruments]
Polorum regina - Catalonia

Alfonso el Sabio, 1221-1284
Llibre Vermell, 14th century

France - Notre Dame School, c.1200, anonymous

In natali summi regis
Orientis partibus
Verbum patris humanatur

Italy - late 13th-14th centuries, anonymous

Laude novella
Verbum caro factum est
Verbum patris hodie
Alleluia [instruments]
Stella nuova

TEXTS

Rex virginum amator

Rex virginum amator,
Deus, Mariae decus,
eleyson.

Qui de stirpe regia
producis Mariam,
eleyson.

Preces eius suscipe
dignas pro mundo fusas,
eleyson.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

King, maidens’ lover,
God, Mary’s glory:
have mercy upon us.

Who brought forth Mary
from royal stock:
have mercy upon us.

Receive her prayers, worthy
offerings on behalf of the world:
have mercy upon us.

Christe Deus de patre,
homo natus Maria matre,
eleyson.

Oh Christ, God from the father,
born a man from thy mother, Mary:
have mercy upon us.

Quem ventro beato Maria
edidit mundo,
eleyson.

Whom Mary gave forth to the
world from her holy womb:
have mercy upon us.

Sume laudes nostras, Mariae
almae dicatas,
eleyson.

Accept our praises, consecrated
to thy beloved Mary:
have mercy upon us.

O paraclite obumbrans
corpus Mariae,
eleyson.

Oh comforter, protecting the
body of Mary:
have mercy upon us.

Qui dignum facis thalamum
pectus Mariae,
eleyson.

Who made the body of Mary
a worthy chamber:
have mercy upon us.

Qui super celos
spiritum levas Mariae,
fac nos post ipsam
scandere tua virtute,
Spiritus alme
eleyson.

Who lifts the spirit of
Mary above the skies,
make us ascend after her
through thy power,
beloved spirit:
have mercy upon us.

Edi be thu

Edi be thu, hevenqueene,
folkes froovre and engles blis,
maid unwemmed, moder cleene,
swich in world non other nis.
On thee hit is wel ethseene
of alle wimmen thu hast the pris.
Mi sweete levdi, heer mi beene
and rew of me yif thi will is.

Blessed be thou, queen of heaven,
people's comfort and angel's bliss,
maid unblemished, mother pure,
such as no other is in the world.
In thee it is very evident that, of all
the women, thou hast the highest place.
My sweet lady, hear my prayer
and show pity on me if it is thy will.

Thu astiye so dairewe
deleth from the derke night.
Of thee sprong a leeme newe;
al this world hit hath ilight.
Nis no maid of thine hewe,
so fair, so scheene so rudi, so bright;
mi levdi sweet, of me thu rewe
and have merci of thi knight.

Thou didst rise up as dawn
divides from the dark of night.
From thee sprang a new sun-beam;
it has lit all this world.
There is no maid of thy complexion -
so fair, so beautiful, so ruddy, so bright;
my lady sweet, on me show pity,
and have mercy on thy knight.

Erth art tu to goode seede,
on thee lighte th'evdew;
of thee sprong thet edi bleede,
th'oli gost hit on thee sew.

Thou art soil for good seed,
on thee the heavenly dew alighted;
from thee sprang that blessed fruit -
the Holy Ghost sowed it in thee.

Bring us ut of kar, of dreede
that Eve bitterlich us brew;
thu schalt us into hevne leede;
wel sweet is us thet ilke dew.

Moder ful of thewes heende,
maide dreigh and wel itaught,
ich am in thi luvbeende
and to thee is al mi draught.
Thu me schild, ye from the feende,
as thou art free and wilt and maught,
and help me to mi lives eende
and make with thi sune saught.

Angelus ad virginem

Angelus ad virginem
subintrans in conclave,
virginis formidinem
demulcens, inquit "Ave!
Ave regina virginum!
Celi terraeque dominum
conciplies et paries
intacta salutem hominum,
porta caeli facta,
medela criminum."

"Quomodo conciperem
que virum non cognovi?
Qualiter infringerem
quod firma mente vovi?"
Spiritus sancti gracia
perficiet hec omnia.
Ne timeas sed gaudeas segura,
quod castimonia
manebit in te pura
dei potencia."

Ad hec, virgo nobilis,
respondens, inquit ei,
"Servula sum humilis
omnipotentis dei:
tibi caelesti nuncio
tanti secreti conscio,
consentiens et cupiens videre
factum quod audio,
parata sum parere
dei consilio."

Angelus disparuit
et statim puellaris

Bring us out of the misery and fear
that Eve bitterly brewed for us;
thou shalt lead us into heaven -
very sweet to us is that same dew.

Mother full of gracious virtues,
maiden patient and well-instructed,
I am in the bonds of thy love
and all my attraction is towards thee.
Shield thou me from the fiend,
as thou art generous, willing and able,
and help me to my life's end
and reconcile [me] with thy son.

The angel,
stealing into the maidens's room,
said,
assuaging her fear, " Hail!
Hail, queen of maidens!
Thou shalt conceive and bear,
undefiled, the lord of heaven
and earth, the salvation of men;
thou hast been made the gate
of heaven, the remedy for sin.

"In what way should I conceive,
who have not known a man?
How should I break what I
have vowed with constant mind?"
The grace of the Holy Spirit
will perform all these things.
Fear not but rejoice untroubled,
for purity
will remain in thee undefiled,
by the power of God."

To these words the noble maiden,
replying, said to him:
"I am the humble handmaid
of almighty God; I see that thou art
the heavenly messenger
of a very great secret;
I give my consent; and desire to see
done the things of which I hear;
I am ready to give birth
according to the will of God."

The angel disappeared
and at once

uterus intumuit
vi partus salutaris.
Qui, circumdatus utero
novem mensium numero,
hinc exiit et iniit conflictum,
affigens humero
crucem qua dedit ictum
hosti mortifero.

the virgin womb swelled up
by virtue of the savior-child.
And he, after nine months
inside the womb,
issued forth and entered the conflict,
taking on his shoulder
the cross, with which he gave a blow
to the deadly enemy.

Eya, mater domini,
que pacem reddidisti
angelis et homini
cum Christum genuisti,
tuum exora filium
ut se nobis propiciam
exhibeat et deleat peccata,
prestans auxilium,
vita frui beata,
post hoc exilium.

O mother of the Lord,
who returned peace
to the angels and mankind
when thou didst bear Christ,
pray thy son that he show himself
gracious to us and that he
cancel our sins,
granting refuge,
for the enjoyment of felicity,
after this exile.

Exultemus et letemur/Gaudens in Domino

Exultemus et laetemur,
Nicholaum veneremur,
Eius laudes decantemus,
Et suaviter.
Decantando predicemus,
Et si m'entendeiz.

Rejoice, rejoice!
Let us now honor Nicholas
and sing his praises -
softly, softly.
And by singing do them justice.
Do you hear me?

Gaudens in Domino,
In hoc sollempnio
Letetur omnium
Turba fidelium.

Rejoicing in the Lord,
In this solemn feast
let the concourse of all the
faithful be exceedingly glad,

Hymnis et organis
Ad laudem presulis,
Cuius miracula
Canit ecclesia.

in the hymns and harmony
for the praise of this bishop,
whose miracles
the Church sings.

Quidquid adest homo gaude
Presul adest dignus laude
Omnis ordo, gratulare,
Et suaviter.
Non est dignum exultare?
Et si m'entendeiz.

All who are here, be glad:
a priest most praiseworthy is here.
Welcome him all orders -
softly, softly.
Is this not the time to be joyful?
Do you hear me?

Qui ab infantia
Divina gratia
Servavit Domino
Devoto animo.

Who from infancy,
by divine grace,
served the Lord
in devoted spirit.

Et tu, progredere,
O lector, incipe,
In primo carmine
Dic: "Iube, Domine!"

And thou, too, o reader,
step forward and begin
in the first song
to intone: "I pray you, Lord!"

Vates tuus sit hic clamor
Nicolae noster amor
Hec et noster quid sit rector
Et suef aleis,
Iube domne dicat lector
Et si m'entendeiz.

Prophet, yours be all this outcry,
our beloved Nicholas,
and yours be all we have, o guardian -
softly, softly.
Let the reader say, "I pray you Lord."
Do you hear me?

Beata viscera

Beata viscera Marie virginis,
cuius ad ubera rex magni nominis;
veste sub altera vim celans numinis,
dictavit federa Dei et hominis.

O blessed womb of virgin Mary, whose
breasts suckled the king of great name.
Concealing this divine strength under
the cloth of flesh, he spelled out the
pact between God and man.

O mira novitas et novum gaudium,
matris integritas post puerperium.

What a marvelous thing and what a great
new joy: the wholeness of the mother
after childbirth!

Solem, quem libera, dum purus oritur
in aura cernere visus non patitur,
cernat a latere dum repercutitur,
alvus puerpere, qua totus clauditur.

We cannot bear to gaze upon the sun
as it rises pure in the open air;
may we then behold its reflection
from the side [i.e., in your offspring],
O birth-giving womb
in which all things were contained.

O mira novitas...

What a marvelous thing...Super

"De Innocentibus"

Rex noster promptus est
suscipere sanguinem Innocentum.
Unde angeli concinunt
et in laudibus sonant,

Our king is eagerly ready to welcome
the blood-witness of the Innocents.
Angels gather in chorus singing
highest praise,

Sed nubes super eundem
sanguinem plangunt.

yet the clouds weep down upon
the Innocents' blood.

Tyrannus autem in gravi somno
mortis propter malitiam suam
suffocatus est.

Because of his malice,
the Tyrant (Herod) has suffocated
in the heavy sleep of death.

Sed nubes super eundem...

Yet the clouds cry out in pain....

Gloria Patri et Filio
et Spiritui sancto.

Glory be to the Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.

Sed nubes super eundem...

And the clouds cry out in pain...

Polorum regina

Polorum regina omnium nostra,
Stella matutina, dele scelera.

Queen of all our country,
morning star, conquer all wickedness.

Ante partum virgo Deo gravida,
Semper permansisti inviolata.

Before the birth, virgin filled with
God, you remained forever inviolate.

Polorum regina...

Queen of all our country...

Et in partu virgo Deo fecunda,
Semper permansisti inviolata.

And in the birth, virgin filled with
God, you remained forever inviolate.

Polorum regina...

Queen of all our country...

Et post partum virgo mater enixa
Semper permansisti inviolata.

And after the birth, Virgin, happy
mother, you remained forever inviolate.

Polorum regina...

Queen of all our country...

In natali summi regis

In natali summi regis,
Quisquis cantas sive legis,
Omni gaude gaudio!
Castitatis nam de domo,
Prodit Deus factus homo,
Mundi pro remedio.

On the birthday of the highest king,
each one, whether you sing or recite,
rejoice with all joy!
For from the house of chastity
God made man proceeds
for the world's salvation.

Casta natum de puella
Novum regem nova stella
Novo monstrat radio;
Tribus donis tres Chaldei
Cunas querunt nati Dei
Magno desiderio.

From a chaste maid a new star,
from a new ray shows forth
a son, a new king;
bearing gifts, the three wise men
seek the cradle of God's son
in fervent love.

Prophetia Danielis
Promissumque Gabrielis
Complentur in virgine:
Lapis ille preelectus,
monte sine manu sectus,
Mons crevit in homine.

Daniel's prophecies
and Gabriel's promise
are fulfilled in the virgin:
that stone pre-elected,
is cut without hands from the mountain,
and the mountain in man is born.

Ad hunc ergo montem magnum
Detritando mundi stagnum
Mortisque periculum,
Velum mentis trasportemus,
Et securi navigemus

Therefore, by coming to this great
mountain, by treading down stagnation
of the world and the danger of death,
let us set the mind's sail in motion,
and securely, let us sail

Lenitum naviculum.

our gentle craft.

Sed lecturus de hoc monte,
Leto corde, leta fronte
Librum, lector, accipe;
Mentis cum devotione
Data benedictione
Lectionem incipe!

But you who will read of this mountain,
with light heart and cheerful brow,
take, o lector, the book;
with devotion of mind,
and a benediction,
begin the lesson!

Orientis partibus

Orientis partibus
Adventavit asinus,
Pulcher et fortissimus,
Sarcinis aptissimus,
 Hez va, hez, sire asne hez!

From Orient lands
an ass came,
handsome and strong,
an excellent beast of burden.
 Hey, ho, hey, Sir Ass, and hey!

Saltu vincit hynnulos,
Dammis et capreolos,
Super dromedarios
Velox Madyaneos.
 Hez va, hez, sire asne hez!
Aurum de Arabia,
Thus et myrrham de Saba
Tulit in ecclesia
Virtus asinaria.
 Hez va, hez, sire asne hez!

He leaped higher than a stag,
an antelope or chamois,
faster than the dromedaries
from distant Media,
 Hey ho, hey, Sir Ass, and hey!
Gold from Arabia,
Incense and myrrh from Saba
this gallant ass
bore to the church.
 Hey ho, hey Sir Ass, and hey!

“Amen,” dicas, asine
Iam satur ex gramine,
“Amen, amen,” itera
Aspernare vetera.
 Hez va, hez, sire asne, hez!

Say your “Amen,” O ass,
now stuffed with grass,
and again “amen, amen,” and hold
ancient sins in disdain.
 Hey ho, hey, Sir Ass, and hey!

Verbum patris humanatur

Verbum patris humanatur, O, O
dum puella salutatur, O, O
 salutata fecundatur
 viri nescia.
 Ey, ey, eya, nova gaudia!

The word of the father is made man,
while a maiden is greeted;
 the greeted one is fruitful
 without knowledge of man.
Behold, new joys!

Novus modus geniture, O, O
sed excedens vim nature, O, O
 dum unitur creature
 creans omnia.
 Ey, ey, eya, nova gaudia!

A new manner of birth,
but exceeding in power of nature,
 when the creator of all things
 is made creature.
Behold, new joys!

Audi partem preter morem, O, O
virgo parit salvatorem, O, O

Hear of a birth beyond precedent:
a virgin hath given birth to the savior,

creatura creatorem,
patrem filia.
Ey, ey, eya, nova gaudia!

the creature bears the Creator,
the daughter, the Father.
Behold, new joys!

In parente salvatoris, O, O
non est parens nostri moris, O, O
virgo parit, nec pudoris
marcent lilia.
Ey, ey, eya, nova gaudia!

In the savior's birth
there is no parent of our kind:
a maiden gives birth,
nor do the lilies of her chastity whither.
Behold, new joys!

Homo Deus nobis datur, O, O
datus nobis demonstratur, O, O
dum pax terris nuntiatur,
celis gloria.
Ey, ey, eya, nova gaudia!

The God-Man is given us,
the given one is shown to us,
while peace is announced to the nations
and glory to the heavens.
Behold, new joys!

Laude novella

Laude novella sia cantata
a l'alta donna encoronata.

Let a new song of praise be sung
to the noble crowned lady.

Fresca vergene donzella
Primo fior, rosa novella,
Tutto'l mondo a te s'appela;
Nella bonor fosti nata.

Fresh virgin maid,
first flower, new rose,
the whole world appeals to thee,
thou wert born in happiness.

Laude novella...

Let a new song...

Tu se'verga, tu se' fiore,
Tu se' luna de splendore;
Volunta avemo e core
De venir a te, ornata.

Thou art the branch, the flower,
thou art the moon of splendor;
we have the will and the heart
to come to thee, adorned one.

Laude novella...

Let a new song...

Tu se' rosa, tu se' gillio,
Tu portasti el dolce fillio;
Pero, donna, si m'empillio
De laudar te, honorata.

Thou art the rose, the lily,
thou borest the sweet son;
therefore, I thus set to work
to praise thee, distinguished lady.

Laude novella...

Let a new song...

Pregot', avvocata mia
Ke ne metti en bona via;
Questa nostra compagnia
Siate sempre commendata.

I pray thee, my advocate,
to put us on the good way;
may this our company
always be commended to thee.

Laude novella...

Let a new song...

Verbum caro factum est

Verbum caro factum est
de virgine Maria

The word is made flesh
from the virgin Mary.

In hoc anni circulo,
Vita datur seculo.
Nato nobis parvulo
de virgine Maria.

In this circle of years
life is given to the world.
Born to us is a little child
from the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...

The word is made flesh...

De semine Abrahe
Ex regali genere
Oritur de sidere
de virgine Maria.

From the seed of Abraham
of royal family
he arises from the star
of the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...

The word is made flesh...

In presepe ponitur
Et a brutis noscitur
Matris velo regitur
a virgine Maria.

He is laid in a manger
and welcomed by the animals,
guided under his mother's care
by the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...

The word is made flesh...

Ab angelis psallitur,
Gloria, pax dicitur
Pastoribus queritur
cum virgine Maria.

He is sung by angels,
glory and peace are proclaimed,
and he is sought by the shepherds
with the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...

The word is made flesh...

Joseph nato fruitur,
Natus lacte pascitur
Plaudit, plorat, regitur
a virgine Maria.

Joseph enjoys the newborn,
who is fed with milk,
he is applauded, wept for, guided
by the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...

The word is made flesh...

Illi laus et gloria,
Decus et victoria,
Honor, virtus, gratia
cum virgine Maria.

To him be praise and glory,
distinction and victory,
honor, virtue and grace
with the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...

The word is made flesh...

Verbum patris hodie

Verbum patris hodie
Processit ex virgine,
virtutes angelice,
cum canore iubilo:

The word of the father today
proceeds from the virgin,
with angelic virtues
and jubilant song:

Benedicamus Domino.

let us bless the Lord.

Nato nobis hodie
De Maria virgine
Eterno regi glorie,
Cum suavi iubilo:
Deo dicamus gratias.

Born to us today
from the virgin Mary,
with glories of the eternal kingdom,
with sweet rejoicing:
let us give thanks to God.

Stella nuova 'n fra la gente

Stella nuova 'n fra la gente
k'aparuiesti novamente.

Like a new star among the people
he appeared.

NOTES

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 eleventh and twelfth 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 (the Shepherds, The Three Kings, Herod and Rachel lamenting the slaughtered children), the New Year and Epiphany. Although not a part of the medieval Christmas season, the EEM also includes songs in praise of Saint Nicholas, the bearer of miraculous gifts.

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 melody *Kyrie eleyson* of Mass IV 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*, the EEM alternates sections of this thirteenth-century, two-voice composition with the (single-line) chant upon which it is built.

Edi be thu combines a lovely melody accompanied by a second lower voice, moving mainly in parallel thirds (an interval relation favored by the English). Its poem in the vernacular, pronounced as closely to original intent as is known, is from a thirteenth-century Augustinian priory in Gloucestershire.

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*. The EEM 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.

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

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.

Though Saint Nicholas had no direct connection with Christmas celebrations in the Middle Ages, his Feast-day on December 6, is the first major “holy-day” in Advent. For this reason, along with the legendary miracles of his gift giving beneficence, perhaps confused with the Three Kings and their gifts to the Christ-child celebrated at the conclusion of the Christmas season, there was in the nineteenth century a melding of holiday celebrations not unlike the early absorption of Winter Solstice and the pagan new year. *Exultemus et letemur* and *Gaudens in Domino* are a pair of two-voice songs which have been arranged for the EEM in alternation; *Gaudens in Domino* is represented by two manuscript versions in tandem. The text invites the “reader” to step forward and intone the lesson, suggesting that these conducti (from L. to conduct) were sung while a reader proceeded to the lectern.

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 Catalonian Llibre Vermell. As in the "Cantigas," the poetic and musical forms utilize 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.

EM/NY's arrangement of *In natali summi regis* utilizes musical settings from two manuscripts of the same poem, one in two voices, in imitation of psalm-tone singing and a contrasting, dance-like monophonic tune. As *In Gaudens in Domino* above, the lector is invited to "begin the lesson" in the last verse.

Verbum patris humanatur is an alternative variation of the text *Verbum patris hodie*, while *Verbum caro 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 (see below). *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 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 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.

Laude novella and *Stella nuova* are Italian equivalents of the Spanish refrain song. These two 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 thirteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth. 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 thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Later, numerous congregations, called "Companie de laudesi" (or "Laudisti") were founded to foster devotional singing among the Italian people. *Verbum caro factum est*, though in Latin and for two voices, is actually a fourteenth-century polyphonic lauda with its unmistakable repeated refrain and internal poetic structure. *Verbum patris hodie* is for two voices as well but (like *Rex virginum amator* above) this text is built on a troped expansion of the salutation *Benedicamus Domino* with the response *Deo gratias* (sung at the conclusion of all Offices).

Frederick Renz

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EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK is represented by:

EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION, INC.

1047 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10025-1798

Box Office: (212) 280-0330; Administrative: 212-749-6600

E-mail: info@EarlyMusicNY.org; Web: www.EarlyMusicNY.org

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