Howland Chamber Music Circle presents

**EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK**
**FREDERICK RENZ, DIRECTOR**

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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

Germany – 12th century
“De Innocentibus”
“Minnesang” [instruments]

Spain – 13th & 14th centuries
Cantigas de Santa Maria - Galicia
Como poden, Muit’amar, Maravillosos [instruments]
Polorum regina - Catalonia

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

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

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.

King, maidens’ lover,
God, Mary’s glory:
Who brought forth Mary
from royal stock:
Receive her prayers, worthy

eleyson.
eleyson.
eleyson.

have mercy upon us.
have mercy upon us.
have mercy upon us.

Dignas pro mundo fusas,
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 alae 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.
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.

On thee hit is wel ethseene of alle wimmen thu hast the pris.
In thee it is very evident that, of all the women, thou hast the highest place.
Mi sweete levdi, heer mi beene and rew of me yif thi will is.
My sweet lady, hear my prayer and show pity on me if it is thy will.

Thu astiye so dairewe de leth from the derke night.
Thou didst rise up as dawn divides from the dark of night.
Of thee sprong a leeme newe; al this world hit hath ilight.
From thee sprang a new sun-beam; it has lit all this world.
Nis no maid of thine hewe, so fair, so scheene so rudi, so bright; mi levdi sweet, of me thu rew and have merci of thi knight.
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’evendew; of thee sprong thet edi bleede, th’oli gost hit on thee sew.
Thou art soil for good seed, from 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 th et ilke 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.

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.

Angelus disparuit
et statim puellaris
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.

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

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 suef alei.
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,
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 suef aleis,
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.
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.
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,
yet the clouds weep down upon
the Innocents’ blood.

Sed nubes super eundem
sanguinem plangunt.

Yet the clouds cry out in pain....

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...

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 gau dio!  On the birthday of the highest king,
each one, whether you sing or recite,
rejoice with all joy!
Castitatis nam de domo,
Prodit Deus factus homo,
Mundi pro remedio.  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 Gabrieli s
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, But you who will read of this mountain,
Leto corde, leta fronte with light heart and cheerful brow,
Librum, lector, accipe; take, o lector, the book;
Mentis cum devotione with devotion of mind,
Data benedictione and a benediction,
Lectionem incipe! begin the lesson!

**Orientis partibus**

Orientis partibus From Orient lands
Adventavit asinus, an ass came,
Pulcher et fortissimus, handsome and strong,
Sarcinis aptissimus, an excellent beast of burden.
Hez va, hez, sire asne hez! Hey, ho, hey, Sir Ass, and hey!

Saltu vincit hynnulos, He leaped higher than a stag,
Dammas et capreolos, an antelope or chamois,
Super dromedarios faster than the dromedaries
Velox Madyaneos. from distant Media,
Hez va, hez, sire asne hez! Hey ho, hey, Sir Ass, and hey!

Aurum de Arabia, Gold from Arabia,
Thus et myrrham de Saba Incense and myrrh from Saba
Tulit in ecclesia this gallant ass
Virtus asinaria. bore to the church.
Hez va, hez, sire asne hez! Hey ho, hey Sir Ass, and hey!

“Amen,” dicas, asine Say your “Amen,” O ass,
lam satur ex gramine, now stuffed with grass,
“Amen, amen,” itera and again “amen, amen,” and hold
Aspernare vetera. ancient sins in disdain.
Hez va, hez, sire asne, hez! Hey ho, hey, Sir Ass, and hey!

**Verbum patris humanatur**

Verbum patris humanatur, O, O The word of the father is made man,
dum puella salutatur, O, O while a maiden is greeted;
salutata fecundatur the greeted one is fruitful
virni nescia. without knowledge of man.
Ey, ey, eya, nova gaudia! Behold, new joys!

Novus modus geniture, O, O A new manner of birth,
sed excedens vim nature, O, O but exceeding in power of nature,
dum unitur creature when the creator of all things
creans omnia. is made creature.
Ey, ey, eya, nova gaudia! Behold, new joys!

Audi partem preter morem, O, O Hear of a birth beyond precedent:
virgo parit salvatorem, O, O 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...  

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...  

Tu se’ rosa, tu se’gillio,  
Tu portasti el dolce fillio;  
Pero, donna, si m’enpillio  
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...  

Pregot’, avocata 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...  

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.

In presepe ponitur He is laid in a manger
Et a brutis noscitur Matris velo regitur
He is welcomed by the animals,
guided under his mother's care
by the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...
The word is made flesh...

Ab angelis psallitur, He is sung by angels,
Gloria, pax dicitur glory and peace are proclaimed,
Pastoribus queritur and he is sought by the shepherds
cum virgine Maria. with the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...
The word is made flesh...

Joseph nato fruitur, Joseph enjoys the newborn,
Natus lacte pascitur who is fed with milk,
Plaudit, plorat, regitur he is applauded, wept for, guided
a virgine Maria. by the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...
The word is made flesh...

Illi laus et gloria, To him be praise and glory,
Decus et victoria, distinction and victory,
Honor, virtus, gratia honor, virtue and grace
cum virgine Maria. with the virgin Mary.

Verbum caro...
The word is made flesh...

Verbum patris hodie
The word of the father today
Processit ex virgine, proceeds from the virgin,
virtutes angelice, with angelic virtues
cum canore iubilo: and jubilant song:

Verbum patris hodie
The word of the father today
Processit ex virgine, proceeds from the virgin,
virtutes angelice, with angelic virtues
cum canore iubilo: and jubilant song:
Benedicamus Domino.
let us bless the Lord.

Nato nobis hodie
Born to us today
De Maria virgine
from the virgin Mary,
Eterno regi glorie,
with glories of the eternal kingdom,
Cum suavi iubilo:
with sweet rejoicing:
Deo dicamus gratias.
let us give thanks to God.

Stella nuova 'n fra la gente
Stella nuova 'n fra la gente
Like a new star among the people
k'aparuisti novamente.
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 composited 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-nights 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.

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

ABOUT EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK - FREDERICK RENZ, DIRECTOR (EM/NY) reaps international acclaim for vibrant and provocative performances of historically informed
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ABOUT THE EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION

Frederick Renz, with other members of the legendary New York Pro Musica Antiqua, founded the EARLY MUSIC FOUNDATION (EMF) in 1974. The mission of the Foundation is to enrich public understanding of western culture through the highest quality, historically informed performances and recordings of music and music drama from the 11th through the 18th centuries.

The Foundation presents the performances of EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK (EMNY), hosts an in-house recording label Ex cathedra Records, and functions as an advocacy service and not-for-profit umbrella for early music activity in New York City. The Foundation organized the first New York Early Music Celebration, featuring over 60 concerts throughout the City, in October of 2004.

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