

EARLY MUSIC

NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ

DIRECTOR

RENAISSANCE
WOMEN

The
Cathedral Church
of Saint John
the Divine

Amsterdam
Avenue at
112th Street

30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Saturday, 13 November 2004 at 8 PM

&

Sunday, 14 November 2004 at 3 PM

Early Music Foundation presents

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK - FREDERICK RENZ, DIRECTOR

RENAISSANCE WOMEN

Emergence of Women as Composers

Polyphony of the 16th Century

& Early 17th - Century Concertato Style

Ave regina caelorum, Antiphon
Ave regina caelorum (*pub.* 1539)

Plainchant
P. de la Farge

Three Chansons

Laissiés parler, laissiés dire

Hélas, pourquoy me suis je mariee?

Vray Dieu d'Amours

Anonymous, *Early 16th-Century*

Anonymous, *Early 16th-Century*

Antoine Brumel, *c.1460–c.1520*

Ave Maria gratia plena, Antiphon
Ave Maria gratia plena

Plainchant
"Laurus"

Three Chansons (pub.1544)

Avant l'aymer

Content desir

Vivre ne puis

Thomas Crequillon, *d.ca.1557*

Salve, regina, Antiphon
Salve, regina

Plainchant
Giovanni Perluigi da Palestrina, *1525–1594*

Three Villanelle

O dolce vita mia

Fontana che dai acqua

Mirat' in quante forme

Giovan Domenico da Nola, *c.1515–1592*

INTERMISSION

Domine Dominus noster, *Psalm 8*

Lucretia Vizzana, *1590–1662*

"Le tre gratie a Venere" - Bella madre d'Amore
"Godere en gioventu"- Nel bel fior

Barbara Strozzi, *1618–1677*

O superbi mundi machina

Suor Xaveria Perucona, *1652–post 1709*

O caeli cives
O dulcis Jesu
Psallite, superi

Chiara Margarita Cozzolani, *1602–c.1677*

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK

FREDERICK RENZ, DIRECTOR

Sarah Blaskowsky – *soprano*

Hai-Ting Chinn – *mezzo-soprano*

Christine DiGiallonardo – *mezzo-soprano*

Julie Dolphin – *soprano*

Margo Gezairlian Grib – *mezzo-soprano*

Jacqueline Horner – *soprano*

Nikki Schwarz – *mezzo-soprano*

Kirsten Sollek – *mezzo-soprano*

Karol Steadman – *soprano*

Patricia Ann Neely – *bass viola da gamba*

Christa Patton – *triple harp*

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

THE first half of today's program sets the stage for works by women composers active in the early years of the 17th century. Most, though not all of them, were nuns, working in Italy. Their stories tell of achievement and success while overcoming daunting obstacles.

Music by Italian nuns of the 17th century. *“Nearly all the nunneries practice music, both playing numerous sorts of musical instruments, and singing. And in some convents there are such rare voices that they seem angelic, and like sirens entice the nobility of Milan to go and hear them.”*

With these words the Milanese historian Paolo Morigia gives us a picture of musical life in Italian convents in 1595. Citations like this abound throughout the late 16th and 17th centuries and provide us with images of a fabulous musical world inhabited by women. Yet the situation is an extremely paradoxical one, for it seems that the convents of this period gave rise to wonderful singers, players and even composers, despite veritably draconian restrictions on virtually every aspect of these women's lives, and especially on their music.

These restrictions were the consequence of *clausura*, instituted by the Council of Trent in 1563. *Clausura* signified permanent total enclosure: the women within the convent walls were officially unable to leave; they were denied any unauthorized visits even from family members; all communication—both written and spoken—fell under close surveillance. They were no longer to be seen by the outside world. (These rules may sound chillingly familiar today.) *Clausura* was virtually synonymous with life-imprisonment, and when some of the nuns realized the significance of the Council decisions, they escaped the monasteries immediately following the Council's close, or committed suicide.

Yet, in the face of such adversities, these women continued to make music. Indeed, there is an enormous wealth of music from this period, which was composed either by nuns or for nuns, or gives indications for convent performance practice. Moreover, a veil of mystery surrounds this repertoire: the music written for and by these women often includes parts for tenors and basses, and the use of most musical instruments was officially forbidden in the convents. How, then, was this music performed?

The use of transposition, whether of individual voices or entire pieces, was unquestionably a common practice among the nuns, and bass parts were often transposed up an octave to be sung by an alto, while an instrument (organ, theorbo, harp, viola da gamba, even trombone) doubled the voice at the written octave. This practice flew in the face of one of the principal restrictions governing *clausura*: the use of musical instruments in the convents. Church authorities sought to outlaw most instruments, with the exception of the organ and occasionally the bass viol. Nonetheless, the presence of musical instruments within the convents is well documented and works, which call for them were composed both by and for the nuns themselves.

Certainly the most renowned of the musical convents in Milan was Santa Radegonda, whose nuns were, in the words of a contemporary chronicler, “gifted with such rare exquisiteness that they are recognized as being the first cantatrici in Italy”. One of these musicians was **Chiara Margarita Cozzolani** (1602–c.1677), author of 4 collections (unfortunately not all extant) of sacred motets, psalms and “scherzi musicali”. Her motet, *Psallite superi*, is composed in the form of a dialogue, an extremely popular genre in mid-17th-century Lombardy.

Lucrezia Vizzana was born in Bologna in 1590. After her mother’s death, an eight-year-old Lucrezia was sent to the Camaldolese convent of Santa Cristina della Fondazza, together with her older sister. Lucrezia probably professed in 1606, and she took the religious name Donna Lucrezia Orsina, or Ursula.

The convent of Santa Cristina della Fondazza, the most musically renowned in Bologna, was home to several talented nun musicians and patrons of music during Lucrezia Orsina Vizzana’s formative years. The young composer probably learned music from her maternal aunt, a nun and organist at Santa Cristina, and Latin from another aunt, particularly renowned in the city for her sanctity.

Vizzana’s “Componimenti Musicali” (Venice: 1623), the only published musical collection by a Bolognese nun, consists of twenty motets, of which *Domine Dominus noster* was the only one scored specifically for three women’s voices, two sopranos, alto and continuo. Her collection is closely linked to the spiritual and liturgical life of the convent. This weighty musical setting of *Domine Dominus noster* suggests that it was intended for an important context. Its text is prescribed in the Camaldolese Breviary for the Vigil of the Ascension.

Despite the fact that Lucrezia had entered the cloister at the tender age of eight, the motets of “Componimenti Musicali” reflect in their scoring and musical idiom *the stile moderno*, whose impacts began to be felt only after she had left the world. Yet her musical language is every bit as up-to-date as the sacred styles of her Bolognese contemporaries – for example, Adriano Banchieri. It was most probably through unauthorized contact with this musical circle that Vizzana, indirectly and from a distance, learned the new style.

Vizzana’s motets were likely conceived for the nuns’ use. They may have been performed from a large chapel above the west portico of the church, joined to the public church by three large grated windows which concealed the faces of the singing nuns but did not confine their voices.

Apart from the “Componimenti Musicali,” no other works can be attributed to Lucrezia Orsina Vizzana with any certainty.

The Ursuline order in Galliate produced the composing nun, **Maria Xaveria Perucona** (1652–after 1709). She was praised as a composer as well as a singer and, like so many of her cloistered sisters, is known for a single publication. *Sacri concerti de Motetti* of 1675 was printed at a relatively young age, after which she is unfortunately never heard from again. In the dedication, signed on March 20, 1675, Perucona claims that this “little work” is “the first born child of my poor genius.”

It is significant to note that the order of Ursuline nuns was possibly the only female monastic order not subject to *clausura*. Perhaps it is no coincidence that this gifted nun composer of the 17th-century managed to remain exempt from the tyrannical fetters of enclosure.

Nuns as performers. Undoubtedly the most spectacular description of music in the convents is that of the church of San Vito in Ferrara, recounted by Bottrigari and Artusi. They describe a group of twenty-three women, “each carrying her instrument, be it a stringed instrument or a wind, for they play all kinds...one heard with great beauty and harmonic sweetness cornetts, trombones, violins, viole bastarde, double harps, lutes, crumhorns, flutes, harpsichords and voices all at one time.”

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Nuns as composers. If musical life flourished in Milanese convents in the early 17th century, this was largely thanks to the favorable patronage of its archbishop Federigo Borromeo. Federigo strongly believed in the positive role which music played in the spiritual lives of cloistered nuns, and his fostering of their music extended even to his making gifts of musical instruments, including violins. The vast correspondence which took place between the bishop and his nuns includes this letter: “There is a nun, and it is she who taught me to sing and play... This nun knows how to compose, and she has thus composed many motets, and her brothers will have them published and want to dedicate them to Your Illustrious Lordship”.

Performance practice. Ignazio Donati (c1575–1638) was a composer and pedagogue interested in fostering music making among the nuns. His second book of solo motets of 1636, for example, presents pieces with written-out ornaments and was intended “for the education of boys and girls, or nuns, and for those who lack natural disposition.” In his lengthy but fascinating preface, Donati makes numerous suggestions for performance, even by the nuns: “if there is a shortage of sopranos the first soprano can be sung as a tenor... And if nuns wish to make use of these pieces, the bass may be sung an octave higher, which a contralto is able to do...”

Barbara Strozzi. In 1628, Giulio Strozzi, illegitimate son of a powerful Florentine family, adopted ten-year old Barbara Valle, the daughter of his housekeeper. Giulio’s intentions were specifically to educate her in artistic and intellectual freedom, perhaps inspired by the success of singer-composer Francesca Caccini, both tutored by their fathers as secular women outside the confines of convent life. By the age of sixteen, Barbara Strozzi was heralded as a virtuoso singer. In 1637, Giulio Strozzi founded the *Accademia degli Unisoni* to showcase her talents. She served as the initiator of topics for rhetorical debate and performed her own madrigali with a consort of musicians. Soon after, she was accused of creating forums as a disguise for sensuality.

Strozzi had her own income, and was able to move with her parents to a more expensive neighborhood. In 1644, Barbara published *Madrigali a due, tre quattro e cinque voce*, to poetry of her father. Strozzi was gifted with a supreme ability for melodic invention and possessed a thorough knowledge of the singing voice. Her music is superbly crafted, melodically and vocally exquisite.

Sarah Blaskowsky (soprano) received her degree from the Peabody Conservatory. She has been a soloist and ensemble member of the Peabody Renaissance Ensemble, the Ridgely Consort, Baltimore Opera, Concert Artists of Baltimore, the Santa Fe Desert Chorale, and the choir of St. Mary the Virgin in Times Square. Ms. Blaskowsky is recipient of numerous awards, including first prizes in the Bach Society of Baltimore, Rosa Ponselle Foundation, and Canticum Dominum competitions; as well as grants for study in Nice, France and the Mozarteum Sommerakademie in Salzburg, Austria.

Hai-Ting Chinn (mezzo-soprano) holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Yale University. She sings with the New York Collegium, the Waverly Consort, L'antica Musica New York, Bachworks, and VOX, among others. Her recent musical activities range from Dido with the Rebel Baroque Orchestra to Pierrot Lunaire with the Proteus Ensemble, to Lady Thiang in *The King & I* on London's West End. She also teaches at the Greenwich House Music School.

Christine DiGiallonardo (mezzo-soprano) graduated from Vassar College with a degree in Music but was first introduced to early music while singing in a madrigal choir at the age of 12. She has since been performing with various choirs including the St. Athanasius Choir, the Dessoff Choirs, and as a guest member with Cerddorian. At Vassar College she participated in Opera Workshops and was the lead singer with the Vassar Jazz Ensemble. On the other end of the spectrum, Christine was recently seen as Monica Lewinsky in *Monica! The Musical* as part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival. She is thrilled to be making her Early Music New York debut.

Julie Dolphin (soprano) has performed and toured with a wide variety of ensembles, including The Waverly Consort, Voices of Ascension, Musica Sacra, Pro Arte Singers, Music in a Sacred Space, and The San Francisco Symphony under the direction of Michael Tilson Thomas. She has performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group at BAM, and the New York City Ballet at Lincoln Center. Recently she premiered the solo soprano part in “Becoming,” by Joshua Penman, in a work commissioned by the Universal Sacred Music Foundation, at Merkin Concert Hall.

Margo Gezairlian Grib (mezzo-soprano) has recorded “Music of Medieval Love” with Early Music New York, “Music in the Land of Three Faiths” with the Ivory Consort, and “Einstein on the Beach”, by Robert Wilson and Philip Glass, also performed in opera houses around the world. Ms. Grib recently appeared as a quest soloist with the New Amsterdam Recorder Trio. An extensive theatre resume includes work with playwright David Mamet and the London Shakespeare Company. Ms. Grib received an award from the NY Council on the Arts for her performance of early music.

Jacqueline Horner (soprano) started her career as a leading exponent of new music in the UK, performing all over Europe. Since moving to the US she has worked with new music ensembles such as Continuum and SEM ensemble, as well as developing a reputation as a Baroque soloist with The Washington Bach Consort, Rebel, and Fairfax Choral Society, amongst others. She joined Anonymous 4 in 1998 and has made seven award-winning recordings with the group, including “American Angels,” which reached number one on the classical Billboard charts.

Nikki Schwarz (mezzo-soprano) is a graduate of the Ithaca College School of Music. She performed with several groups there including the Ithaca College Choir and Madrigal Singers, the Amani Gospel Choir, and the IC Triple Threat Theatre. She also appeared as a soloist in Holden, Massachusetts for their community's performance of Handel's Messiah. Miss Schwarz has toured the eastern coast of the United States and also throughout Ireland. This is her first time performing with Early Music New York as well as her New York City debut.

Kirsten Sollek (mezzo-soprano) holds vocal performance degrees from Indiana University and the Eastman School of Music. She has performed as a soloist with Paul O'Dette, Bach Collegium Japan, Ensemble Rebel, Musica Angelica Baroque, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Alarm Will Sound and the American Composers Orchestra. She is a frequent soloist at Trinity Church at Wall Street in New York, and performs regularly with groups such as Voices of Ascension and the New York Virtuosi Singers. Ms. Sollek-Avella has recorded for BIS, Cantaloupe and Albany Records.

Karol Steadman (soprano), originally from New Mexico, has been a featured artist with Concert Royal; The Orchestra of the Old Fairfield Academy; The Clarion Music Society; New York Baroque; The Classical Orchestra; Common Ground; Musica Antigua de Albuquerque; Voci Angeli; the Swedish Arts Council concert series in Stockholm; the Trinity Noontime concert series in NYC; and the MusicSources concert series in Berkeley. She has appeared previously with the Early Music New York in its Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins.

Patricia Ann Neely (bass viola da gamba) holds a BA in music from Vassar College and an MFA in early music from Sarah Lawrence College, specializing in early-bowed strings. She has appeared with many early music ensembles including ARTEK, The Boston Camerata, Connecticut Early Music, The American Classical Symphony, The New York Collegium, Glimmerglass Opera, New York City Opera, Rebel, Sequentia, with whom she was a member for three years, and the Smithsonian Chamber Players and Orchestra. She has recorded for Arabesque Records, Allegro, Musical Heritage Society, Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, Ex Cathedra, Classic Masters, Erato, Lyrichord, and Music Masters.

Christa Patton (harp) originally trained as an oboist, has since turned to other wind as well as stringed instruments. She has performed medieval and Renaissance music throughout the U.S., Europe and Japan with Early Music New York, Piffaro, Clarion Music Society and Ex Umbris. As a baroque harpist, Christa has performed with, Artek, Wolf Trap Opera Company, and the New York City Opera. A Fulbright scholar, Christa is presently studying baroque harp in Milan, Italy with harpist Mara Galassi. She has recorded for the Lyrichord, Helicon and Dorian labels.

Frederick Renz (director) is a unique figure in the early music movement. Equally adept in all forms of music and music drama from the 11th to the 18th centuries, he has reaped international acclaim for his work as conductor, producer, director and performer while leading EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK (EMNY) to preeminence in the field. Renz studied harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Holland as a Fulbright Scholar. He was keyboard soloist with the legendary New York Pro Musica for six seasons and founded the Early Music Foundation when the Pro Musica disbanded. A noted harpsichordist, he has given numerous solo recitals, appeared with orchestras and chamber groups in New York, and has recorded for Decca, Vanguard, Musical Heritage Society, Musicmasters, Nonesuch and Foné. Among his numerous accolades are commissions from the Spoleto Festival and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, as well as two Producer's Grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Recently, the State University of New York awarded Mr. Renz an honorary Doctor of Music degree.

ABOUT EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK (EMNY)

Now in its 30th anniversary year, EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK – FREDERICK RENZ, DIRECTOR (formerly New York's Ensemble for Early Music) captivates audiences worldwide with its scintillating performances of music and music drama from the medieval through the Classical periods. Profiled on the award winning national news programs, CBS Sunday Morning and ABC Nightline, EMNY performs an annual subscription in New York City at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on the Upper West Side and on the East Side at St. James' Church on Madison Ave.

EMNY has performed at the Lincoln and Kennedy Centers, regularly performs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and has toured throughout the United States and abroad, winning critical acclaim at many of the world's most prestigious music festivals including Spoleto, Brisbane, Jerusalem, Hong Kong, Edinburgh, Krakow, Ravinia, Caramoor, Charleston, Paris, Athens, Regensburg, and Tokyo.

EMNY records for Ex cathedra Records, Lyrichord, Musicmasters, Musical Heritage Society, Nonesuch, and Foné, and has produced five recordings in collaboration with The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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 to 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.

Frederick Renz – Founding Director
Gene Murrow – General Manager
Diane Ezer – Development Manager
Kevin Mayner – Administrative Associate
Linda Shaughnessy – Box Office Manager
Alexandro Catubig, Jr. – House Manager

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