

Renaissance Chorus Association Newsletter, January 2020

Greetings, friends of RenChorNY, the Renaissance Chorus of New York,

It's been a while since our last newsletter. We hope you are well and have enjoyed the holidays. Don't forget to occasionally visit our website, www.RenaissanceChorus.org, to see what we're up to.

Our Fall Program:

In the spring of 2019, the RenChorNY board decided to undertake the "revival" of a work first presented in the spring of 1975, conducted by Harold Brown: the festal third Mass for Christmas by the Eton-era master Robert Fayrfax (1464-1521): Missa "Tecum principium" for five-voice chorus. Three performances were given: November 30 at St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Shrine in Washington Heights; The Tank, a secular performance space on West 36th Street; and Hudson View Gardens Lounge in Sig's building not far from Cabrini. The first and third included other Tudor era works appropriate for the season: "Puer natus est" by William Byrd (c.1540-1623), and "Quid petis o fili?" by Richard Pygott (c.1485-c.1552).

Claude Lévy was invited to direct this imposing program, and accepted. He and John Hetland developed the program notes for the three concerts, aided by scholarship generously shared by John Bradley, who also was kind enough to recommend some singers. John Hetland produced practical editions of the mass, based on the one used by Mr. Brown originally, and of the Byrd and Pygott pieces.

Recruitment began in summer and rehearsal commenced September 16 and continued on succeeding Mondays, with several new singers. Some, however, were not able to continue, so this was an ongoing concern. We were able to use the Lounge at Hudson View Gardens to rehearse, and for the third concert and reception.

We were fortunate to present at the St. Frances Cabrini Shrine thanks to their Sisters and Cherie Sprosty. The enthusiastic audience was enhanced by a school tour from Georgetown that had reserved several dozen tickets through the Eventbrite ticketing firm. This was our first experience utilizing Eventbrite. For the concert at The Tank, where we presented the Mass alone, we called it a "Tudor Vocal Symphony." This was an experiment for us, which we will again consider in future. The third concert at our "home base" elicited some enthusiastic comments from a knowing musical community, as everyone understood the rarity and profundity of the works.

We are indebted to Gotham Early Music Scene Inc. for their publicity notice (<http://hosted-p0.vresp.com/242191/f508c2c714/ARCHIVE>), to Risa Ehrlich for local HVG Kiosk note, and to the HVG Performing Arts Group for the listing on their program. There were several other choral and early music listings.

A major thank you to George Gilliland who created the extraordinary flyer sourced from DIAMM per the Master and Fellows of Caius and Gonville College, Cambridge UK: The image is the Gloria from the mass. All five parts are on this manuscript, from c.1530:
www.renaissancechorus.org/rencorflyernov2019_2.pdf

We extend gratitude to members who persevered in learning a demanding genre: **Sopranos:** Lee Ann Beauchamp, Sally Barton Elliott, Kate Ellis, Andrea Reiter, Iris Young; **Altos:** Ann Berkhausen, Maribeth Dunajski, Virginia Kaycoff, Fran Morton, Dorrie Rosen, Jaylan Turkan, Holly Weiss; **Tenors:** Steve Bonime,* Ross French, Richard Liebowitz,* Bruce Rickenbacher, Robert Thorpe,* William Van Steveninck; **Bass 1:** Tom Frenkel, Ezra Halleck, Erik-Peter Mortensen,* Sigmund Rosen, Brian Wong,* **Bass 2:** Paul Geidel,* Chisom James Maduakor,* Jonathan Miller. (*guests)

We acknowledge with great gratitude the extraordinary professional skill, commitment and scholarship of Claude Lévy, rendered with occasional levity.

In all these events we were supported by friends and neighbors: Photography on 11/30 by Sharon Moir, on 12/14 by Alice and Caroline Brown; audio recording by John Hetland at all three events and on 12/2 by Erik-Peter Mortensen, who also sang baritone; video by Iris young on 11/30 and by Tatiana Daubek on 12/14. Stage management was done 11/30 by Sara Ruderman, and on 12/14 by Lee Ann Beauchamp, who with Iris Young also oversaw the reception. Special thanks for set-ups to Richard and Maribeth Dunajski and Ross French. For the ticket/door 11/30 was Alec Spencer, on 12/14 John Hetland and Theodore Nathan Rosen.

We invite you to view our history and current work at www.renaissancechorus.org, and gladly welcome your comments on everything. To move forward the rediscovery of neglected masters whose music we continue to marvel at, we will need, of course, your financial support. There is a “Donate” button on our Home page. Thank you!

Sigmund Rosen, President

John Hetland, Vice-President

Ruth Horowitz, Corresponding Secretary

Dorrie Rosen, Treasurer