

December 8, 2024 - *A Renaissance Christmas***Program notes by J. Michael Allsen****Christmas in the Renaissance**

Though Christmas celebrations in 15th and 16th-century Europe lacked the commercial excess of today's Holiday season, they were no less joyous. Europe was bitterly divided between Catholics and Protestants through much of the 16th century, but Christians of all faiths seemed to agree on celebrating the birth of Jesus. Christmas then and now was a season of gift-giving, charity, feasting, and in many cultures, it was a time when strict social rules and even laws were temporarily cast aside.

In England, during the time of King Henry VIII, for example, lawn bowling was strictly forbidden to commoners by law most of the year (as it supposedly distracted young men from archery practice)—but was permitted during the 12-day celebration of Christmas! And the Church—whether Catholic, Lutheran, or Anglican—seemed willing to wink at overtly Pagan traditions like burning a Yule log in England or bringing a Christmas tree into your home in Germany. (Only the Calvinists seem to have had an issue with the pagan elements of the holiday, and while they primly pointed out that there was no Biblical evidence for the date of December 25th, John Calvin himself advocated for a joyful celebration of the nativity.) Music and dancing was of course, part of these celebrations, whether it was lively instrumental dances, solemn carols in Middle English or German, or sometimes humorous Spanish villancicos.



This program is a musical Christmastide tour of Renaissance Europe. At each stop along the way, you'll hear music, both secular and sacred, inspired by the season, or appropriate to it. In addition to the music, Julie Chavez Harrington, known for her work in local Shakespeare and theater productions, will offer Renaissance poetry from each country. Also joining us are four fine vocalists, singing both as an ensemble or as soloists. You will hear and see two instruments of the Renaissance period in today's concert: a viola da gamba, and a crumhorn. The viola da gamba is similar in size and range to the modern cello. (Unlike the cello, the viola da gamba has frets for each note, similar to a guitar.) Though the gamba was capable of great virtuosity (as in the Ortiz recercada heard here), it more frequently played the bass line, particularly in pieces

with a continuo accompaniment, where it was paired with a harmony instrument like harpsichord or lute. A crumhorn is a curved woodwind instrument from the Renaissance with a capped reed, producing a buzzy, reedy tone. Unlike modern woodwinds like the clarinet, where players blow directly on the reed, the crumhorn's reed is enclosed in a cap, limiting dynamic range and expression. Its unique tone is closer to a bagpipe than to today's orchestral instruments, and it was more typically played in ensembles, similar to the way modern brass or woodwind sections work together.

Spain

Our grand tour begins in Spain with the lively 16th-century *villancico* (carol) ***Riu, riu, chiu***. Its refrain may refer to a traditional call of Catalan shepherds as they guard their flocks. This Christmas song has been attributed to Matteo Flecha, a Catalan composer who served in several Spanish and Mexican churches. It is among the most well-known works of the Spanish Renaissance: including a 1967 recording by the Monkees! The ***Recercada segunda sobre tenores Italianos***



(*Ricercar No.2 on Italian tunes*) is one of a set of virtuoso elaborations (*glosas*) on well-known madrigals and dances of the day, published in 1553 by **Diego Ortiz**, a composer in the service of the Spanish Viceroy of Naples, and who eventually served King Philip II. In this work, the viola da gamba weaves intricate variations over a repeating bass pattern.

We conclude our stay in Spain with a pair of Latin motets. **Francisco Guerrero** spent the beginning and end of his career in his hometown of Seville, but had a life of wandering in between, capped by a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1589. On his return, his ship was attacked twice by pirates, who stole all of his money and possessions. He returned to Spain and was saved from debtors' prison by a job offer from his old employers at Seville Cathedral. Guerrero eventually published a popular account of his travels. His ***In nativitate Domini*** (*At the nativity of the Lord*) is set in the rich Counter-Reformation style established by the great Roman composer Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. Following this is a motet by Spain's greatest 16th-century composer, **Tomás Luis de Victoria**. After training as a choirboy in his native Ávila, Victoria received a royal grant that allowed him to study in Rome. Whether or not he actually studied with Palestrina is unclear, but he clearly mastered the "Palestrina style," with its flawless counterpoint and careful attention to clear setting of the Latin text. After over 20 years in Rome, as a successful composer and organist, he returned to Spain at the invitation of King Philip II, who named Victoria chaplain to his sister, Dowager Empress Maria. Victoria's ***Vidi speciosam*** (*I saw the fair one [rising like a dove]*) is one of many Latin texts to Mary that address the Virgin in surprisingly sensuous language.

Portugal/Mexico

Staying on the Iberian peninsula, we turn to music from Spain's neighbor and frequent rival, Portugal. Composer **Gaspar Fernandes** was born in the Portuguese city of Évora, but spent most of his career working in Spanish colonial cathedrals in Guatemala and in the Mexican city of Puebla. We hear three of his *villancicos*, all of them probably from Puebla, beginning with the lighthearted *Andrés, ¿do queda el ganado?* (*Andrés, what's going on with your cattle?*). Set in his native Portuguese, this song is also a *guineo*, with a rich rhythmic background brought to Mexico by enslaved Africans. *Jesús de mi goraçón* (*Jesus of my Heart*) is one of a number of songs by Fernandes that mix Spanish with Nahuatl, the indigenous language of central Mexico. The Spanish *villancico* *Tañe Gil tu tamborino* (*Gil, play your drum*) paints a picture of joyful and noisy musicmaking in celebration of the birth of Jesus.



Italy

Our next stop is Italy, with a set of instrumental works. The opening and closing works in this set are by composer, organist, and violinist **Tarquino Merula**. Merula was born in the town of Bussetto and received his early training in nearby Cremona. He had a remarkably varied career, which took him to several Italian cities, and to Warsaw, where he served the King of Poland. Merula seems to have had what might be called a “difficult personality,” and many of his various jobs ended when he got into some sort of trouble! He is particularly known for his instrumental works, written in the emerging early Baroque style. The *Ballo detta Pollicio* and the *Ballo detta Eccardo* are both drawn from a collection published in 1637. In each case, these are works for a pair of elaborate solo lines and accompanying continuo, set in a series of dancelike sections.



The “most serene republic” of Venice was among the political and economic superpowers of the late Renaissance. Music and ceremony were expressions of Venice's civic pride, particularly the stellar musical establishment at the city's principal church, the basilica of San Marco. In the decades

surrounding the turn of the 17th century, San Marco could boast of one of the finest choirs in Europe, but the church also employed a large group of instrumentalists. After witnessing a festival at the basilica in 1611, the English traveler Thomas Coryat wrote that the music at San Marco was “...so good, so delectable, so rare, so admirable, so superexcellent, that it did ravish and stupefy all those strangers who had never heard the like. But how the others were affected by it I know not; for mine own part I can say this, that I was for the time even rapt up with Saint Paul into the third heaven.” Among the music that ravished and stupefied Coryat was the work of **Giovanni Gabrieli**, the finest of the many composers who occupied the organ bench at San Marco in this period. Gabrieli wrote masses and motets for use in the lavish Catholic liturgy at San Marco, but also composed instrumental pieces for use at the basilica. These impressive works have remained phenomenally popular among modern players since performing editions became available in the 1960s. The term *canzon* or *canzona* in Gabrieli’s day was simply a generic name for an instrumental piece in multiple sections. His ***Canzona prima a5*** was part of a large collection of his instrumental pieces published in 1615, after Gabrieli’s death. It evolves in a several connected sections, each developing a musical idea in intense imitation among the five players.

Germany/Sweden

The first half of our journey ends in Germany...with a brief side trip to Renaissance Sweden. **Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)** was a phenomenally gifted and prolific composer, many of whose works adapted the then-new repertoire of Lutheran chorales—the simple unharmonized tunes for congregational singing that were the backbone of the Lutheran liturgy. Praetorius created harmonized settings of many chorales, and also used them in larger and more elaborate choral pieces. We hear two of his best-known choral settings here, beginning with ***In dulci jubilo*** (*In sweet rejoicing* - known today as the carol *Good Christian Men Rejoice*). This a so-called “macaronic” text, a mixture of Latin and German, was written in the early 14th century by a German mystic. ***Es ist ein Ros’ entsprungen*** is familiar to English- speaking singers as *Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming*. Published in 1609, this chorale adapts an early 15th-century Christmas text that uses the medieval metaphor of Mary as the Rose.



In 1612, Praetorius published a collection of instrumental dances titled *Terpsichore*, after the Greek muse of dancing. Despite the lofty title, this was an eminently practical set: some 312 dances, organized by type, and giving a 4-6 piece dance ensemble more than enough music to accompany a long evening’s dances! The ***Bourrée*** heard here is one of the many distinctly French-style dances that dominate the collection. We close with an exultant Latin carol that first appeared in a Swedish publication in 1582. ***Gaudete*** is heard here in an arrangement that makes the most of this tune’s lively cross-rhythms.

France

After intermission, we pick up our journey in France. **Orlando di Lasso** (or Roland de Lassus: like many composers of the time, his name was routinely “Italianized.”) was a phenomenally prolific composer, writing well over 2000

works, in virtually every genre available to him in French, German, Italian, and Latin. Though he travelled extensively, Lasso spent nearly all of his career at the highly cultured Imperial court in Munich. His *La nuit froide et sombre* (*The night, cold and dark*) is a lovely and expressive French *chanson* drawing a picture of night giving way to daylight. This setting for four voices clearly draws on the influence of the contemporary Italian madrigal. **Josquin des Prez**, the finest Franco-Flemish composer of his time—and arguably the greatest composer of the Renaissance—was an international celebrity in his time. (So much so, that then as now, he rates “first name only” treatment.) Even Leonardo da Vinci, who seldom said nice things about



anyone other than Leonardo, wrote of his admiration for Josquin’s music. Josquin’s *Entré je suis en grant pensée* (*I have begun a great plan*), heard here in an instrumental version, is a typically melancholy setting of a “courtly love” lyric. This outlook is focused on an unattainable lady, and in this case, the poem is in the voice of a young woman, whose “great plan” involves finding a new boyfriend, making him miserable, and then dumping him for another!

The anonymous French carol *Noël nouvelet* (*A new Noël*) dates from the 15th century. The word *noël*—now used in French as a term for Christmas itself—has been used as a joyful acclamation in French poetry since the 13th century. In the 15th century the *noël* became a particularly popular French genre of poetry associated with the Nativity, with hundreds of them assembled in large collections. A few of these, including *Noël nouvelet*, have survived with their original melodies.

England

Our stop in England begins with one of the hundreds of late medieval carols that survive from the 13th through the 15th century. Most of them are focused on Mary, primarily as the mother of the Nativity story, but in the case of *Gabriel from Hevene-King* (*Gabriel, sent by the King of Heaven*), it is the Annunciation, in which the angel appears to Mary to tell her that she is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. This carol in Middle English is from as early as the 13th century. We then hear a pair of lively English madrigals, beginning with *You That Wont to My Pipes Sound*, a Christmas text with nonsense syllables (*lirum, lirum*) standing in for the sound of a strumming lute. The composer was **Thomas Morley**, one of the most prolific and financially successful

composers associated with Queen Elizabeth I. His younger contemporary **Thomas Tompkins** also served the royal court in his youth, but then spent the last 60 years of his career as organist of Worcester Cathedral. His *See, See the Shepherds' Queen*, is one of many contemporary “ballets” featuring a pastoral text and a nonsense (*Fa-la-la*) refrain.



We continue with a pair of English instrumental works, by **Anthony Holborne**, a skilled lutenist and composer who was also in service to Elizabeth I. Both of these come from Holborne’s 1599 publication *Pavans, Galliards, Almains and other short Aeirs, both grave and light, in five parts, for Viols, Violins, or other Musicall Winde Instruments*, which contained 65 of his compositions. *The Honie-Suckle* is one of the “aeirs” in the collection with fanciful titles. The following *Galliard* is one of several setting of this popular hopping and kicking dance included. Poet, composer, and physician(!) **Thomas Campion** wrote over 100 lute songs as well as dance music for theatrical masques. He practiced medicine in London until his death in 1620, possibly during an outbreak of the plague. His *Now Winter Nights Enlarge*, is one of his lute songs, written originally for solo voice with lute accompaniment. It expounds on the delights of winter: blazing chimneys, overflowing cups of wine, and the leisure of long conversations between lovers.

Plainchant

Our musical tour ends with a piece of Latin chant. We tend to think of chant as something mysterious and fundamentally medieval.

But until the Reformations of the 16th century, Latin chant was part of the everyday life of nearly every European Christian; and for millions of Catholics, Latin chant was still the official worship music of the Church until the early 1960s! Thus, it stands as a common element across musically diverse Europe. The plainchant hymn *Veni veni Emmanuel* (*O*

e-ni, ve-ni Emma-nu-el, Capti-vum solve Is-ra-cl,
 cl, Qui gemit in ex-i-li-o, Pri-va-tus De-i Fi-li-o.
 Gaude ! Gaude ! Emma-nu-el nasce-tur pro te Is-ra-cl.

Come, O Come Emmanuel) is by far the oldest hymn in current use: this text, itself some 1200 years old (though its familiar melody is much later, dating from the 15th century), refers to an even older tradition. It has its origins in the series of “O antiphons” (*O sapientia, O radix Jesse*, and several others) that were chanted at Vespers on the days leading up to Christmas—each one invoking an aspect of Jesus. In 1851, an English clergyman, John Mason Neale, adapted these ancient texts as an English poem, *O Come, O Come Emmanuel* and it was later set to the 15th-century hymn melody.

PROGRAM

SPAIN

MATEO FLECHA(?) (1481-1533)	<i>Ríu, ríu, chíu</i>
DIEGO ORTIZ (ca. 1510 - ca. 1576)	<i>Recercada segunda sobre tenores Italianos</i>
FRANCISCO GUERRERO (1528-1599)	<i>In nativitate Domini</i>
TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA (ca. 1548 - 1611)	<i>Vidi speciosam</i>

PORTUGAL/MEXICO

GASPAR FERNANDES (1566-1629)	<i>Andrés, ¿do queda el ganado?</i>
GASPAR FERNANDES	<i>Jesós de mi goraçón</i>
GASPAR FERNANDES	<i>Tañe Gil tu tamborino</i>

ITALY

TARQUINIO MERULA (1595-1665)	<i>Ballo detta Pollicio</i>
GIOVANNI GABRIELI (1557-1612)	<i>Canzona prima a5</i>
TARQUINIO MERULA	<i>Ballo detta Eccardo</i>

GERMANY

MICHAEL PRAETORIUS (1571-1621)	<i>In dulci jubilo</i>
MICHAEL PRAETORIUS	<i>Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen</i>
MICHAEL PRAETORIUS	<i>Bourrée</i>
ANONYMOUS (16TH CENTURY)	<i>Gaudete</i>

INTERMISSION

FRANCE

ORLANDO DI LASSO (ca. 1532 - 1594)	<i>La nuict froide et sombre</i>
JOSQUIN DES PREZ (ca. 1455 - 1521)	<i>Entré je suis en grant pensée</i>
ANONYMOUS (15TH CENTURY)	<i>Noël nouvelet</i>

ENGLAND

ANONYMOUS (13TH CENTURY)	<i>Gabriel from Hevene-King</i>
THOMAS MORLEY (ca. 1557 - 1602)	<i>You That Wont to My Pipes Sound</i>
THOMAS TOMKINS (1572-1656)	<i>See, See the Shepherds' Queen</i>
ANTHONY HOLBORNE (ca. 1545 - 1602)	<i>The Honie-Suckle</i>
ANTHONY HOLBORNE	<i>Galliard</i>
THOMAS CAMPION (1567-1620)	<i>Now Winter Nights Enlarge</i>

PLAINCHANT

ANONYMOUS (8TH or 9TH CENTURY)	<i>Veni veni Emanuel</i>
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PERFORMERS

Alicia Werner, soprano • **Kaylyn Yager**, alto
Jacob Gilbert, tenor • **Jacob Hernandez**, bass
Jodi Buckles, recorder & crumhorn
Maria Flurry, percussion - *chair sponsored by RoJean Madsen*
Tigran Buniatyan, harpsichord • **Katherine McLin**, violin I
Elizabeth Jones, violin II • **Barbara Metz**, viola da gamba
Julie Chavez Harrington, poetry interpreter

Alicia Werner is a Mexican American soprano acclaimed for her artistry and stage presence. She has performed in over 20 productions, including *The Rake's Progress* under the direction of David Lefkovich, an experience she credits as pivotal to her artistic development. A frequent competitor in prestigious vocal competitions, she placed 3rd in the Classical Singer Vocal Competition and is a two-time winner of the Arizona National Society of Arts and Letters competition. Early in her career, she was selected for the Metropolitan Opera High School Intensive, which solidified her passion for opera. Most recently, she performed as Sister Constance in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* at the FIO Italia Summer Program.



Jacob Gilbert is a versatile conductor and tenor based in Prescott, Arizona. Formally educated at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Westminster Choir College, he is the Artistic Director of Camerata Chamber Singers and Director of Music at Prescott United Methodist Church. A founding member of Quartz Ensemble, he has also performed with Bel Canto Company and The Josquin des Prez Chamber Ensemble. Jacob has held various leadership roles in church music ministries and is a member of the American Choral Directors Association, the National Association for Music Education, and Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia.

Jacob Hernandez is a versatile vocalist based in Tempe, Arizona. Formally trained at Arizona State University, Jacob explores his wide vocal range, from soaring tenor notes to the depths of the bass clef. With over a decade of performance experience, he has competed across the United States in choral competitions, spanning genres such as Barbershop, Classical, and Jazz. Currently, Jacob performs with the Phoenicians Barbershop Chorus, Arizona State University ensembles, and the acapella group S.A.L.O.M., alongside his solo work. He is dedicated to sharing musical artistry and inspiring audiences.



Kaylyn Yager brings a rich background in vocal performance to the



Arizona Philharmonic's holiday season as an Alto. With over a decade of choral and vocal training, she has performed with distinguished ensembles such as Rainier Youth Choirs, Washington All-State Choir, and the Arizona State University Concert Choir. Her operatic credits include roles in *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Notes on Viardot*. Currently, she is a vocalist with the Christ Church of the Ascension choir in Paradise Valley and will soon perform in Arizona State University's production of *L'Orfeo*. Kaylyn extends heartfelt thanks to her family and friends for their unwavering support.

Julie Chavez Harrington is a lifelong artist whose creative journey spans multiple disciplines. She is a distinguished figure in Prescott's theater community, known for her work as a director, actor, educator, and co-founder of the Basin Lake Theatre Project. Julie holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from California State Long Beach and a Master of Education from George Mason University. Julie is passionate about guiding others in their creative journeys. As a Teacher Member of the Folger Shakespeare Library, she fosters growth and discovery through classic theater. She invites you to her next theater production, *King Lear*, in March 2025.

