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Accademia San Felice

present

CANTASI COME



Laudi & contrafacta in fourteenth-century Florence

Music by

Francesco Landini
(ca1335 - 1397)

Håkon's Hall, Sunday 06.09.2009, 19:30

In collaboration with

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Source for the music:

Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana of Florence:
Codice Mediceo Palatino 87 "Squarcialupi"

Sources for the texts:

Biblioteca Riccardiana of Florence:
Ms 2871

Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence:
Ms. Magliabechiano Strozzi XXXVIII.130

transcriptions of texts by Alessandra Stefanin
transcriptions of music by Federico Bardazzi and Jostein Gundersen



ENSEMBLE SAN FELICE
Cristina Bagnoli *portative organ*
Federico Bardazzi *medieval fiddle*
Giulia Peri *soprano, medieval fiddle*

www.accademiasanfelice.com/esf.htm



ENSEMBLE CURRENTES
Kristin Mulders *mezzo soprano*
Jostein Gundersen *recorders*
David Catalunya *clavisimbalum*
Hans Lub *medieval fiddle*

www.currentes.com

PROGRAMME

Dè! Dinmi tu

(three-part *caccia*, instrumental)

Po' che da morte nessun si ripara

cantasi come Po' che partir convien (three-part *ballata*)

Ami ciascun cristian con pura fede

cantasi come Ama, donna (two-part *ballata*)

Amar sí gli alti

(three-part *ballata*, instrumental)

Ciascun ch'el regno di Gesù disia

cantasi come Non creder, donna (two-part *ballata*)

Ciascun ch'el regno di Gesù disia

cantasi come Poi che da te mi convien (two-part *ballata*)

Chosi pensoso

(three-part *caccia*, instrumental)

Donna s'i' son partito da Cristo per peccare

cantasi come Donna, s'í t'o fallito (two-part *ballata*)

O Vergine Maria per pietà prego

cantasi come Or' è ttal l'alma (two-part *ballata*)

El mie dolce sospir qual move 'l core

(three-part *ballata*, instrumental)

Vita chi t'ama in croce morto stia

cantasi come Vita non è più miser' (two-part *ballata*)

Kyrie eleison

contrafactum of *Questa fanciull', amor, fallami pya* (three-part *ballata*)

PROGRAMME NOTES

In fourteenth-century Italy, musical activity was connected to the church or to the court of the local ruler. The music for church was of course liturgical and in Latin. The music for the court was mostly in the vernacular (which in some Italian courts would mean in French). In Florence, the many merchants contributed to a different kind of music making: The singing of *Lauda*, poems of praise, combined the sacred content of the religious music with the vernacular employed in secular, courtly compositions. In other words, the *Lauda* was a sort of vernacular chant.

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries many lay confraternities were formed in Florence, referred to as *laudesi*-companies. These companies sung *Laudi* at official services, and also sponsored separate services every evening around the hour of compline (a service of evening prayers chanted before retiring for the night). In addition to singing themselves, the companies would hire musicians to sing with them. A *Lauda* is a poem that was sung rather than recited. Although most of them were performed monophonic (only one voice) and syllabic, there were also some more melismatic and virtuosic *Laudi* that required a professional singer. In addition, professionals were needed for the performance of *Lauda*-poems set to secular polyphonic songs. This practice of substituting one text for another without changing the music resulted in so-called *contrafacta*. An obvious advantage of choosing a famous secular song for the performance of a sacred text was that anyone could join in on the chorus without having to learn a new song first. Just imagine a slightly more sophisticated and pious version of our tradition for creating wedding- or birthday-songs to well-known tunes...

Hundreds of books of *Laudi* have survived. Only a few of them contain music, the rest contain only poetry. Some of these texts have instructions regarding the music to which it is to be sung, e.g. "Questa si canta come quella che comincia così: *Or è .ttal'anima mia per costei rinvenuta*", translated, "This is to be sung like the one that starts like this: *Or è .ttal'anima mia per costei rinvenuta*". The shorthand notation of the same instruction was "cantasi come", followed by the title of the secular song to which the text was to be sung. A song could be used for more than one poem, as is exemplified in our programme by the two versions of *Ciascun ch'el regno di Gesù disia*.

The similarity of rhymes suggests that poems sometimes were composed with specific preexisting secular compositions in mind (*Po' che da morte/Po che partir; Donna s'ì son partito/Donna, s'ì t'o fallito*). Most popular were the polyphonic compositions by the famous blind poet, organetto- and organplayer, composer, instrumentmaker and -inventor, Francesco Landini.

Landini is the Italian composer of the fourteenth century from whom we have the most compositions: More than 150 surviving two- and three-part songs make out about one quarter of all the polyphonic compositions we know from that period in Italy. He seems to have worked his whole life in Florence. The only documented travel to other regions is a fragment of a motet to the Venetian Doge. According to the Florentine chronicler Villani, Landini received a laurel from the King of Cyprus, who visited the Veneto republic in the 1360s. Landini died in 1392, and was buried in San Lorenzo.

146 of Landini's works are included in the most sumptuous of all fourteenth-century music manuscripts: *Squarcialupi Codex*. Creating a musical manuscript was a very expensive and laborious undertaking. *Squarcialupi Codex* is a particularly well-planned and expensive ms. It has the character of an encyclopedic Florentine collection, including compositions by all the most famous Florentine composers of the day. The first page of each composer's section contains a miniature of the composer. Landini is depicted as a blind man playing the organetto (see miniature on the front page of this booklet). Clearly visible are the above-mentioned laurels, the classical mark of honour for poets. In addition to the miniatures, the manuscript is ornamented with illuminations including gold leaf and ink in many different colours. Also musical instruments are depicted in the manuscript. On the first page of Landini's section, we find reed instruments, recorders, lutes, fiddles, and a harp. In our programme, you hear fiddles, recorders, organetto, percussion, and also a clavisimbalum, a very early harpsichord-like keyboard instrument.

TEXTS

Po' che da morte nesun si ripara

lasciamo star ciascun mondan diletto
e seguiam Gesù Cristo benedetto
non ci parendo nostra croce amara.
Ché chi non è dalla croce diviso
nel chor à Cristo e senpre seco 'l vede
e trasformato sta nel paradiso,
morte non chura ma 'llei brama e chiede.
In sulla croce, de[h], fermiamo il piede
in questa vita hor vita di tempo,
sì che possiam po' nel durabil tempo
istar co' santi in quella vita chara.

Ami ciascun cristian con pura fede

la Vergine Maria,
ch' ell'è colei per chui troviam merçede;
merçe no' si troviam, non c'el dà poi,
ché Cristo fece i 'llei avvenimento
e 'l liberati ci à pe' prieghi suoi.
Ben può di lei ciascunn esser contento
chi del peccato al mondo à pentimento:
in ciel portato fia
là dove Cristo eternalmente vede.

TRANSLATIONS

Since no-one is preserved from death
let us leave every worldly pleasure
and follow the blessed Jesus Christ
so that the cross will not be bitter.
For those who are not separated from the cross
have Christ in their hearts and always see him with them,
and dwell transformed in paradise.
They do not care about death, but long and ask for it.
Let us rest our feet on the cross
in this life, this temporal life,
so that we then in eternal time
can be with all the saints in that precious life.

Every Christian, love with pure faith
the Virgin Mary,
because she is the one through whom we find mercy;
we find instant mercy, she does not hesitate to give it,
because Christ made in her that singular capacity,
and she has liberated us through her prayers.
Anyone who regrets his worldly sins
can be content with her:
she will bring them to heaven
where Christ eternally sees.

Ciascun che rregno di Giesù disia
piangha con doglia la sua morte ria.
Pianger dobiam la morte del Signore,
sostenne al mondo per dar a noi posa,
in sulla croce chon crudele dolore
dinançi alla sua madre gloriosa;
dunque di piangere è lecita cosa
chi vuol seguire la Vergine Maria

Donna s'i' sson partito
da Cristo per pecchar, c'orgnior consento,
prieghal ch'al perdonar ci sie contento.
Madre di Cristo ciascun ci à per fede
che tte sie 'l suo volere
e ttu i llui ti posa e senpre stai.
Donna pietosa, poi ch'ài il potere,
chiedi per noi merçede
e certi sian che salvi ci farai;
Madre di Dio tu ssa'
ché tte facesti il santo portamento
per vita darci e scanparci da tormento.

Everyone who desires the kingdom of Jesus,
cry with pain over his cruel death!
We must cry over the death of our Lord,
he suffered in the world to give us rest,
on the cross with cruel pain,
in front of his glorious mother.
Therefore crying is permitted
for those who wish to follow the Virgin Mary.

Woman, if I have left
Christ to sin, to which I do admit,
pray to him that he will be content to forgive us.
Mother of Christ, everyone believes
that your will is his,
and that you rest in him, and always will.
Mercyful woman, since you have the power,
ask mercy for us,
we are sure that you will save us;
Mother of God, you know
that you were the sacred carrier,
to give us life and save us from torment.

O Vergine Maria

per pietà prego aiuta
chi da fallire si muta,
sì che non esca più de la tua via.
Vergin, pria che bando
io abbi di costì du' sempre è giorno,
aiuto ti dimando
tal ch'io non caggia più d'und'io ritorno.
Mentre che qui soggiorno,
siemi sempre pietosa
et alfin gloriosa,
con teco elegge a stare l'anima mia.

Vita chi t'ama in croce morto stia

che cotal morte in vita vita sia.
Desia di stare in croce al mondo vagha
per que' che diede sé per darti vita
e 'tte spechia[n]do 'n quella dolce piagha
non fia la croce mai da 'tte partita;
contenta sie di star senpre rappita
in sulla croce, ch'è croce sua via

O Virgin Mary,

for the sake of mercy I pray help
for those who turn into sinners,
so that they do not any more abandon your way.
Virgin, before I am banned
from the place of everlasting day,
I ask your help,
so that I do not fall back again to where I now return from.
While I dwell here,
be always merciful to me,
and in the end, o Glorious,
call my soul to stay with you.

O Life, may those who love you die on the cross,

so that this death in life may be their true life.
Long for the beautiful cross,
in the name of the one who offered himself to give you life.
Mirror yourself in that sweet grief,
and the cross will never be separated from you.
Be always content to be put on the cross,
because the cross is His way.