



The Bridge Over Time

Italian Instrumental Music from 13th-15th Century Sources and modal improvisations

FA Schola Ensemble (Estonia):

Raho Langsepp - medieval flutes, otu

Lilian Langsepp - gothic harp

Janno Mäe - bell chime, frame drum

Helmi Marie Langsepp - tambron

With this programme we invite the audience to a different world of sounds. The programme is called "Bridge Over Time" because it combines both ancient and modern. We are playing pieces from the manuscript which is more than 600 years old using copies and reconstructions of ancient instruments – still the music arrangements and our interpretation are new. ?

Today in the globalizing world we are more and more used to meetings of different cultures which has brought about also many crossover projects in different genres of music. Our aim has been not only to show how exciting and fresh can be music written long time ago but also how interesting colours can we get when using replicas and reconstructions of ancient instruments. There is even more to it: we can see that many centuries ago, musical cultures of Europe and Asia have shared much more in common than nowadays. One very important musical link to be seen is modal improvisation but notable is that also instruments have been much more similar to each other and can therefore sound very well together.

Historical music sources:

Commonly called **London, BL. Add. 29987**, this manuscript is one of our central sources for Western medieval monodic instrumental music. Through this manuscript a number of long and extremely interesting *estampies/istampittas* have been preserved for us, shedding some light on the structure, sonic texturing and ornamentation of 14th century Western instrumental music. We know today that Arabic music exerted a considerable influence on the development of European music. Indeed, a Middle Eastern flavour can surely be felt in the estampies in question. Yet they remain unmistakably European. Estampies have typically four to five verses, which are repeated twice: with an 'open' then a 'closed' ending. The next verse often incorporates a substantial portion of the previous one, so the verses gradually grow in length. The first verse usually introduces the main mood of the piece, the second verse takes the piece into a high register and the third into a low register. As a rule, the final verses have varying time signatures, often also changing the mode. All estampies in this manuscript run rather long and are replete with chromaticisms. Music for the present program is based on a facsimile edition of this manuscript. Occasional variations in note length and pitch result from personal preference and improvisation.

FA SCHOLA Ensemble is part of **the FA Schola Centre for Early and Oriental Music by the University of Tartu** which was founded in January 2000 on the initiative of Raho Langsepp as collaboration between the non-profit corporation Festivitas Artium (which since 1996 has organized the Tartu Early Music Festival) and the University of Tartu (the national university of Estonia). FA Schola Centre is an institution for research and studies in early music, whose aim is to promote early Western and traditional non-Western music. The centre facilitates comparative research and promotion of the musical expressions of early European and traditional Asian cultures.

FA Schola Ensemble has collaborated with many eminent musicians from Asia. "Ancient Flute" with Guru Hemapala (bansuri, Sri Lanka), "Musical Meetings" with Dr. Mustafa Raza (vichitra vina, India), "Music from the Time of Marco Polo" with John Thompson (guqin, USA) and "Musical Meetings" with Mohammad Rasouli (ney, Iran), Levon Tevanjan (traditional Armenian wind instruments, Armenia) draw on some of the latest concert and research themes. In addition to medieval manuscripts as "London Ms. Add. 29987" (ca 1400) and Codex Rossi (1340), these involve the Codex Reina (Paris, Bibl. nat., nouv. acq. Fr. 6771, 14th century) and the Cantigas de Santa Maria (13th century Spain). FA Schola Ensemble has also included some modern compositions and Estonian traditional music in their programs. FA Schola Ensemble has toured in Europe, the USA, India, Argentina, South Korea, Sri Lanka and China, where they participated in the first ASEM Culture and Arts Festival in Beijing in September 2009. FA Schola has issued two CDs: "The Sound of Medieval Flute" (2006) and "Music from the Time of Marco Polo" (2008).

Raho Langsepp, director of the Tartu Early Music Festival since 1996, has for many years studied the history of transverse flutes in Asian as well as in medieval European music, leading him to interesting discoveries that he has written about a research paper, lectured upon as well as put into practice as a musician.

Having learned and played different types of flutes, he has Sri Lankan master V. Hemapala Perera as one of his most important teachers, by whom he has studied bamboo flute and Indian classical music. He is also playing Chinese flutes as dizi, dong xiao and xun both in the repertoire of Medieval instrumental music as well as Chinese traditional pieces. In addition to being an active musician and music teacher, Raho Langsepp is director of the concert agency FA Concerto and the FA Schola Centre for Early and Oriental Music by the University of Tartu. He is founder and artistic director of International Tartu Early Music Festival ORIENT et OCCIDENT (held annually since 1996).

With his group "FA Schola Ensemble" he has toured in Europe, the USA, India, Argentina, South Korea and China. He has issued two CDs with FA Schola Ensemble: "The Sound of Medieval Flute" (2006) and "Music from the Time of Marco Polo" (2008).

Lilian Langsepp

Versatile musician Lilian Langsepp plays harpsichord, organ, historical harps, *guzheng* and is singing and teaching Gregorian Chant. Since 1994 she has been active in recording and performing with various early music groups and as a soloist and has performed at numerous festivals and concerts in Europe, Asia, Argentina and the USA.

Her repertoire focuses on European baroque and medieval music but includes also music from Asian traditional cultures, mainly Chinese and Persian classical music. She has learned Hindustani classical and Chinese music from such eminent musicians as Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and Fan Ran. Her studies at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Switzerland (1997–2000) included historical harp performance and early music performance practice. Over the years she has developed her personal harp playing style for gothic harp which has been influenced by different styles in Asian classical music. Her aim has been to research and revive the harp-like instruments and playing techniques in Asian musical cultures as well as to use these techniques in European medieval music interpretation and improvisation.

Ms. Langsepp is lecturer of Music at the University of Tartu and teacher at the H. Eller Music School. She has worked for Tartu Early Music Festival as consultant and editor since its start in 1996.

Gothic harp

The Iconography presents us the world of medieval harps as amazingly rich in sizes, shapes and numbers of strings. The harp used in this concert is a copy, made in 2000 by the German master harp maker Eric Wilhelm Kleinmann. The original, kept at the Wartburg Art Collection in Eisenach, one of only a few preserved copies of gothic harps, is very special, as according to the legend it once belonged to the highly praised German minnesinger and poet, Oswald von Wolkenstein (1377-1445). This slim, richly decorated instrument with a Gothic appearance, has 26 strings (range G—d'''), tuned diatonically. In addition to its wide musical range, owing to the number of strings fitted on the instrument, the Wartburg/Wolkenstein harp is characterized by a rich timbre, and lends itself easily to dynamic playing techniques. It is also noteworthy that the entire instrument is equipped with L-shaped bray pins permitting the player to create a vibrant buzzing sound characteristic of medieval harps. By varying the position of the pins, the harp can be used to play quietly yet in a highly nuanced dynamic manner.

Medieval Transverse flutes

Transverse flutes can be found in Western poetry and art at least as early as the 11th century. This relatively loud instrument with its large fingerholes is practically identical with flutes used in North Indian classical music. The fingering techniques of the Indian flute are also perfectly applicable to similar medieval instruments.

What kind of transverse flutes were played in medieval Europe and what they sounded like can only be intuited by piecing together a kaleidoscope of information preserved in the graphic arts, in literary and poetic works touching on the performance practice of medieval instrumental music, in folk music traditions using similar instruments and — there is no hiding that anyway! — adding a certain measure of personal imagination to the mix. No doubt the medieval transverse flute was similar in its construction to the oldest flutes, reports of which have been recorded in Asia, a part of the world where the instrument has enjoyed continued popular use from ancient times until the present. The flutes in question are more or less cylindrical in shape, with six or seven finger holes in addition to the blowing hole. As regards the material used to make flutes, it is highly probable that flutes were made chiefly of wood and bone, yet graphic arts fragments clearly point also to bamboo. When thinking of other possible materials which could be used for making flutes in Europe, Raho Langsepp worked out special models made of clay and covered with birch bark. Two clay flutes, in g and in c, were made in 2006/07 by Raho Langsepp in cooperation with ceramist Anneli Lupp and can be heard in the program. One can also experience the sound of a huge bass flute *otu* in C made by Raho Langsepp in 2007.

Bell chimes

Although not commonly used for performances of early Western music, sets of small chime bells are depicted on several medieval illustrations. The instrument is often depicted also as played by the ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras. The set of bell chimes used here (range A—f') consists of bells made by the Swedish family firm Morells Metallgjuteri AB, established in 1920. In founding and hand working their bells the firm implements traditional methods used by their forefathers.

Tambron is a string instrument made of thick bamboo and can be played in three different ways: as a bowed instrument, as a string drum and as tambura. The characteristic soft sound of tambron fits very well into the ensemble with Medieval flutes, gothic harp and bell chime, giving a new dimension of sound both to historical as well as to contemporary music.