

THE BOSTON CAMERATA

Anne Azéma, artistic director
Joel Cohen, music director emeritus, director of this production

Assisted by
Sharq Arabic Music Ensemble
Karim Nagi, director

Anne Azéma, *voice, chifonie*
Anne Harley, *voice*
Salomé Sandoval, *voice, gittern, guitar*
Dana Maiben, *vielle*
Joel Cohen, *lauta, guitar, voice*
Steven Lundahl, *recorders, shawm, slide trumpet*
Karim Nagi, *percussion (riqq, tar, darabuka, duff), chifonie*
Boujemaa Razgui, *percussion (tar, darabuka), nay, raita, voice*
Mehmet Sanlikol, *voice, oud, zurna*

Tuesday, December 8, 2009

~ PROGRAM ~

A Mediterranean Christmas

I. The Sign of Judgement

Taksim (improvised prelude)

Sephardic (Balkans)

Answer us, God of Abraham, answer us. Answer us, Whom Isaac feared, Answer us, o pillar of Jacob, answer us in our time of anguish. God of the flaming chariot, God of pity and grace, answer us.

Respondemos

Alfonso el Sabio, King of Castille (1221-1284)

Mother of God, pray for us to your Son at that hour [of Judgement].

When he appears, incarnated in the flesh through you, with his Father's power, to judge the world,

Mother of God, pray for us to your Son at that hour.

When on the Day of Judgement, all, as it is written, shall see Him, tell Him how you fled with Him into Egypt.

Mother of God, pray for us to your Son at that hour.

Madre de Deus

When the trumpet shall sound, saying "Ye dead, arise," tell him that when you lost him, your anguish was not feigned.

Mother of God, pray for us to your Son at that hour.

Spain (Compostela), 12th c.

Kyrie Rex Immense Pater

Great King, dear Father, have mercy. God, immortal Savior, have mercy. You who hold everything in your hand, have mercy. Comforter, sweet Love, have mercy...

II. The Dawn approaching

Southern France (Limoges?), 12th c.

Gregis pastor

Now come to the feast of the shepherd Tityrus, with melodies on instruments and the resounding drum. Eya, Tityrus has invited us to a rich feast. With fitting and worthy praise lead us to pastures, Tityrus, flowing with honey. Praise the Lord! Eya, Tityrus has invited us to a rich feast.

Tuscany, 13th c.

Gloria 'n cielo

Glory in the highest, and peace on earth, our Savior is born. From the sovereign Virgin, the shining Star, comes the Child, born from a flower. Glory in the highest...May we all sing peace on earth, because the Virgin has given birth. Glory in the highest...

Folquet de Marseille (1150-1231)

Senher Dieus

Lord God, born of the Virgin Mary to save us from death and give us life and to keep us from the torments of Hell ; who was raised on the cross and crowned with thorns : Lord, have mercy on your people, and pardon their sins. For the night passes, and the day comes, with clear and tranquil sky. And the dawn is approaching, beautiful and fulfilling.

Limoges 12th c.

Lux refulget

The Light is shining on us this day, and the Church resounds with joy. Emmanuel ! Emmanuel ! The name shines bright in Israel.

III. Star of the Day

Alfonso el Sabio

Loemos muit' a Virgen

Let us praise most highly the Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, by night and day. We owe her more than a hundred thousand praises because it pleased God, the Lord of Lords, he who was made flesh in her, and wished to suffer our pains, as Isaiah foretold. Let us praise most highly the Holy Virgin Mary...

We shall not tire of serving her, neither of fearing her, for we know she will save us from all our sins, and win pardon for ever in life and joy. Let us praise most highly the Holy Virgin Mary...

'Tis she that God wanted us to have as advocate, when he made her both Mother and Daughter; and that is why we must glorify her, for who would not sing the praises of such a Lady? Let us praise most highly the Holy Virgin Mary...

Occitan, 12th c.

Santa Maria, virgen gloriosa

Holy Mary, glorious Virgin, friend of God, have pity on my soul. Have pity, Queen. Gracious virgin, guide me in all my affairs. Do not let me perish at sea. Star of the sea, save us from grief ; have pity, Queen.

Alfonso el Sabio

Holy Mary, star of the day, show us the way and be our guide. For you understand that I am a sinner ; yet through you I find pardon for my audacity. Holy Mary, star of the day, show us the way... Show us the true light of which you are the beacon. For God has declared that you are his intermediary. Holy Mary, star of the day, show us the way... Guide us towards Paradise, where God gives us eternal joy and laughter. And so I implore you : may I one day be in your company. Holy Mary, star of the day, show us the way and be our guide.

Santa Maria stella do dia

The Koran, XIX : 16-26

Alfonso el Sabio

You were alone and abandoned, Virgin, without any companion.

You were alone and abandoned when you believed Gabriel and once again alone when you conceived God, but in such wise you destroyed the devil. You were alone and abandoned...

You were alone and abandoned in your virginity and once more without a companion when maintaining your chastity, but in such wise the devil was laid on nails. You were alone and abandoned...

You were alone and abandoned, being the Mother of God, and once more without a companion, since he is both Son and Father, but in such wise was the devil chained like a falcon. You were alone and abandoned...

You were alone and abandoned, to bring help to us and once more without a companion, to cleanse us of our faults, but in such wise was the devil thrown down to the ground. You were alone and abandoned...

You were alone and abandoned being the tutor of God and once again without a companion, protecting those that call on you, but in such wise was the devil sprawled in the mud. You were alone and abandoned...

The solitude of Mary

Sola fusti senlheira

Montserrat, 14th c.

Queen of the heavens, star of the morning, efface our sins. Before the birth, you were pregnant with God. In childbirth, you were fruitful with God. After birth, you were a laboring mother. Forever pure and immaculate, star of the morning, efface our sins.

Polorum regina

Alfonso el Sabio

It is most meet that this beautiful miracle be accomplished by the Virgin, from whom was born for us the Glorious God.

That is why I tell you a miracle I heard spoken of, and you shall be gladdened by it, as I learned how the Virgin blessed a good and righteous monk. It is most meet...

This man scarcely could read, as I heard it told, yet he did love the Virgin without compare; and for that he assembled five psalms in order to increase his praises, for such was his desire. It is most meet...

From the psalms, he chose five, for the reason that there are five letters in Maria's name, and he did this to receive from her a reward such that he might contemplate her glorious Son. It is most meet...

To earn the grace of God, he was accustomed to say without fail these psalms each day, before the altar, and to prostrate himself on the ground and repent over what he had done during the times of his madness and folly. It is most meet...

He behaved in this manner so long as he lived in this world, but when he was about to die, in his mouth there appeared a rose-tree on which could be seen five roses, which continued to grow so that he might bless the Mother of the Almighty. It is most meet...

Gran dereit

INTERMISSION

IV. The birth of the holy Child

Alfonso el Sabio

Como somos per consello

Though we are lost if we follow the demon's counsel, we are saved if we follow the Virgin's path. On this matter, I shall tell you the story of a great miracle that happened in Spain, when a cohort of demons tried to abduct a sinner.

Now this man was a judge, vain and fond of good food, morning, noon, and night; and receiving lavish "gifts." Rather than chasing after thieves and villains, he pursued poor folk who had not the means to pay.

One day, as he sat down to dinner with his guests, he heard a great noise outside, like people having a quarrel. "Quickly," he said, "remove that commotion from here", and with his men he went out to see what the ruckus was.

But no sooner did he go outside than he was snatched up by a horde of demons, some black and others with horns. They sped him out of town and wanted to drop him in a deep, boiling well, along with other souls they had caught.

But then the Virgin arrived and cried "Free this man," and the demons all fled. For the judge, even though he had done little for her, had always placed his faith in the Virgin.

"Take stock of your sins," she said to him; "Pay your debts and trust in me and in my Son. For you have but one day to live." She left him in a field; he returned home, did penance, and, just as the Virgin said, died the next day. And noble and fearsome angels bore him to heaven

Though we are lost if we follow the demon's counsel, we are saved if we follow the Virgin's path.

Gregorian

Ave maris stella

Hail, star of the sea, God's cherishing mother, and, although still a virgin, the blessed entrance-way of heaven.

Occitan, 12th c.

O Maria deu maire

O Mary, Mother of God, pray for us to your glorious son. To the father, too, pray for all people; if he does not help us, our state is wretched. Eve believed the serpent, a shining angel, and so it turns out well for us; God is truly man. For He was born of woman, and God saved the woman -- the Man was born to save men. May that life which slew death give us paradise, and may God truly give us glory.

Occitan 12th c.

Mei amic e me fiel

My friends and companions, leave off chattering : I will sing you a new song of the Virgin Mary. Let the ignorant gossip, it's of no importance! [Mary :] I shall not lose my virginity, I shall remain forever chaste. [Gabriel :] I am the angel Gabriel, who brings you salvation. [Mary :] You are the messenger of God, and I give myself over to Him. I have told you my inspiration, each verse to a new song of the Virgin Mary.

Italian 15th c.

Verbum caro factum est

The Word was made flesh, through the Virgin Mary. In this year's end, a little child is born to us.

Alfonso el Sabio

Todo logar mui benwith

Arabo-Andalusian (Morocco)

Taouchia (from Nouba Gribt Lahcine)

Istria 19th c.

Noi samo i magi

We are the Kings of the Orient, we have seen the great star that brings news of the Lord. Longhave we travelled, following the star, night and day. We are come to adore Jesus Christ, called King of the Jews. So let's be on our way, brothers, there is no time to waste, we must follow our path !

Sephardic (Balkans)

Quando el rey Nimrod

When king Nimrod went out into the field, he looked to the skies – and there, he saw a star shining in Jewry, because Abraham, our father was born. Abraham, holy father. Let us salute today the newborn Lord, and give praise to the Truth.

France 13th c.

Heu, heu

Alas, alas, alas, how I was rejoicing Before I saw these bodies deprived of life Until I was shaken By the sight of these entrails strewn about, Oh, how these children will make me cry without end. Oh pain! Oh joy . reduced to the silence of mothers and fathers! Let forth torrents of tears! Add these to affliction! Cry for the flowers of Judea And the pain of your country.

Provence (Avignon) 17th c.

Pastres placatz

*The angel : « Shepherds, leave your flock, and run to adore the birth of the holy Child.»
The shepherd : « Angels, this is our heart's desire ; but tell us, in what place shall we find him ? »*

The angel : « He is born in Bethlehem, in a poor stable, in a crib filled with straw. »

The shepherd : « And so we are off to worship him ; and to the sound of our pipes, we'll dance before him the fivestep.»

Spain (Andalusia)

En Belén tocan a fuego

In Bethlehem, a fire, a star from heaven, flames at the door, fallen into the straw. Poor gypsy girl, treading through snow, when you could be walking on roses and carnations. The shepherds in Bethlehem are bringing firewood to warm the Child. Poor gypsy girl... I am a poor Galician peasant, bringing as a gift to the child of God woven cloth for a shirt. Poor gypsy girl... I am a poor gypsy, come from Egypt, bringing as a gift to the child of God a rooster. Poor gypsy girl...

Turkey (traditional)

Sen bir Guzel Meleksin

You are a beautiful angel. You are a flower in every heart. What a lovely baby you are! Sleep, my dearest one, sleep.

Yves Duteil (b. 1949)

Pour les enfants du monde entier

For the children of the world, for those without hope, I send this prayer to all the rulers of the earth.

Every child who disappears is the universe, erasing hope that the future could be ours.

What scripture, what holy writ, from what imbecilic hand, could possibly condemn such innocence to suffering and pain ?

For the children of the world, for those without hope, I send this prayer to all the rulers of the earth.

Since for just a few moments, in the Father's name, for Christmas, there is a peace – may that truce be eternal.

May it silence rancor, and appease in our hearts vengeance and cruelty, for all eternity.

For the children of the world, for those without hope, I send this prayer to all the rulers of the earth.

Arabo-Andalusian (Morocco)

Borea (prelude)(from Nouba Ram al Maya)

Alfonso el Sabio

Tant aos pecadores

So generously does the Virgin accord her aid to sinners that her holy name should be greatly praised.

And in this matter there happened a very beautiful miracle of the Virgin, near Madrid, at Tocha, that I shall relate to you.

In a village lived a poor woman who brought up her well-beloved son, whom she would have lost without the Virgin's help. This poor woman, along with others, went out harvesting, taking in her arms her infant son.

When she got to the field where the others were working, she laid the infant to rest among the sheaves, composed of stalks that had been gathered, and she commended him to the Virgin.

The child took one of the stalks, full of wheat germ, and swallowed it, and he immediately began to suffer.

His belly at once began to swell. His mother, lamenting and thinking her son would die, took him to Madrid.

She thought some spider or viper had bitten him, as frequently happens, and she kept him thus for several days, so sick that she feared he would die.

And while he was thus, she was advised to bring him to Tocha, to the Virgin's shrine, for God would show her a miracle.

The woman took her son, and ran with him, crying out and saying "Holy Virgin Mary, you can cure my son, without further delay."

When they came to the church, they laid the infant on the altar and undressed him, to see if there was some sort of wound.

The child naked, they all saw that his belly was swollen but that there was no wound. And then, they saw the stalk of wheat come out from his body, from his right flank.

When they saw it, they gave praises to God and to his Mother, Lady of Ladies, who worked such a miracle, and others greater still. And for this may her name be glorified.

So generously does the Virgin accord her aid to sinners that her holy name should be greatly praised.

Musical editions and arrangements by Joel Cohen (S.A.C.E.M.)
Transcriptions of the Arabo-Andalusian melodies by Mohamed Briouel
Recorded on Warner Classics CD 2564-62560-2

PROGRAM NOTES

It began, after all, in the Mediterranean basin, in a corner of the world inhabited by highstrung, passionate, God-intoxicated Semites. And their burning desire for transcendence, for union with the source of Being took form in at least three world religions, not to mention innumerable heretical sects and schismatic communities.

Yet here we are in North America, where our Christmas is associated not with the Middle-Eastern desert, but naturally and inevitably with snowy winters, pine forests, and the comfortable, inviting mold of Anglo-Saxon folkways. Still, despite our time and place, the mark of the Mediterranean is still present in our beliefs and values. Bethlehem is the last exit from the Southeast Expressway.

Our intention in this musical program is not to transport you from Boston to the Holy Land, but rather to savor Christmas at some intermediate way stations, most specifically, the Latinized areas of southern Europe. For if Spain, Italy, and southern France belong to our Western, EuroAmerican heritage, they are also places that have maintained a certain continuity of being with the cultures of the near east.

The languages of those places were, in the Middle Ages, mainly various dialects of Latin, including the early versions of Spanish, Judaeo-Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Occitan/Provençal you will be hearing at various points tonight – as well as Semitic languages, Hebrew and Arabic, both of these very much alive in medieval Iberia. Similarly, the music of these places, transmitted both in manuscript sources and (in the case of the Arabo-Andalusian melodies, and the more recent folksongs near the program's end) from oral tradition, offers a rich mix of melodic styles.

Within this diversity, there is a great deal of musical common ground as well. One shared trait you will be at points is the use of the voice melismatically, in runs of many rapid notes, to express emotions. This technique of florid song, still present all over the near East, left its mark in the Christian music of southern Europe. The solo singer who performed the upper part of *Lux Refulget* at some medieval abbey in the Limousin region was a master of this style.

Not all our Mediterranean area music is free and florid in its gestures: in fact, the bulk of the works we have chosen here are quite straightforward melodically, in keeping with the “popular” flavor of the Christmas holiday. A number of these pieces simply tell a story to an attractive tune. Narration and storytelling are central to these cultures. Mediterranean peoples typically love theatrical gesture (after all, opera was born in Italy) and dramatic dialogue has always been important. Compare the twelfth century *Mei amic* and the seventeenth century *Pastres Rintrats*, both from the Occitan/Provençal South, to sense the continuity. The wonderful, thirteenth century *Cantigas* of King Alfonso the Wise bring this narrative tradition – a simple melody, a good story, a choral refrain -- to a summit of excellence.

Of course we modern-day performers cannot hope to replicate every nuance of these centuries-old, early musical practices. What we can attempt is to provide a fertile mix of scholarship and creative energy, incorporating into our team a number of musicians whose here-and-now skills reach back into the roots of Mediterranean civilization and musical culture. The origins of the people you will be seeing onstage are several – I count all three Abrahamic religions in the background mix, and a slew of native languages, including English, French, Spanish, Turkish, and Arabic. What we all share is a love for the Mediterranean world and its music, and the desire to make the Christmas vision of peace and reconciliation strong in our hearts. This music of hope and renewal, coming it would seem from distant places, is after all quite near. And like all important art, it is ours, for all of us to share.

Joel Cohen – Music Director Emeritus 2009

Boston Camerata

The Boston Camerata was associated until 1974 with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. It was founded at that institution by Narcissa Williamson, and directed in its early seasons by Anne Gombosi, Howard Mayer Brown, Daniel Pinkham, and Victor Mattfeld. Camerata incorporated as a nonprofit entity, and began self-producing its own local concert series, in 1974. From 1968 to 2008, Joel Cohen directed the ensemble's activities, which grew exponentially under his leadership. He is now Music Director Emeritus.

In the United States, Camerata has participated in early music festivals at Berkeley and San Antonio, as well as in many of the biennial Boston Early Music Festivals. The ensemble has maintained an extensive touring schedule across the entire United States. A widely praised national tour of Cantigas in 2000 marked Camerata's first collaboration with the Sharq Arabic Music Ensemble; the two groups performed together again in Paris in 2007. Other important Camerata appearances in the United States include music making at Lincoln Center, New York, The Cloisters, New York, The Smithsonian Institute, The National Cathedral (Washington), The Library of Congress, and The Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Under the initial auspices of Radio France, Camerata began touring overseas in 1974, and has maintained an international presence in Canada, England, Spain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, Singapore, and Israel. Camerata undertook its first Japanese tour in 1995 and its first Scandinavian performances in 1996. Media appearances by the Boston Camerata have included a nationally syndicated radio series in the U.S. and numerous broadcasts on French, English, Canadian, Dutch, Spanish, Swiss, Norwegian, Swedish, Israeli, Australian and New Zealand radio. In the world of television, Camerata provided the music for Guardian of Memory, a 1993 TV project for the Library of Congress, as well as appearing on French TV. *Simple Gifts* (1995), and *The Golden Harvest*, (2007) and the group's Shaker music projects have been the subject of extensive coverage on national television, on American public radio and the BBC.

The Boston Camerata is frequently invited by institutions in the U.S. and abroad to participate in educational projects: masterclasses, lectures, residencies and colloquia. The Boston Camerata will participate in the first international colloquium of Camerata Mediterranean at Saint Guilhem le Désert, France, in 2009. 2009-2010 will see Camerata's first ongoing collaboration with New England Conservatory, Boston.

Visit the Boston Camerata on the World Wide Web at bostoncamerata.org.