

Early Arts Update

The Newsletter of the Early Arts Guild of Victoria Edition – November / December 2009

BAROQUE DANCERS POINT THE WAY TO CHRISTMAS

After almost a decade of Christmas Pageants, the search for a title for the 2009 event lacked inspiration until the Rippon Lea Baroque Dancers came to the rescue.

Fay Donlevy, Lynne Craven, Yoko Murakoshi and Jan Turner make up the group which has recently been studying dances choreographed for the birthdays of some of the English royals in the 1720's.

The suggestion arose that if the court dances were incorporated in the Christmas Pageant they could provide a comparison of royal birthdays with the greatest birthday of them all.

And so emerged – **Of all the Birthdays in all the World.** The title has inspired Helga Hill to research yet another script for a pageant that will be filled with symbolism and tradition – along with the birthday dances of King George II and Queen Caroline.

Details are on the flyer enclosed. Bookings are recommended by 'phoning **9699 8417**.

CHRISTMAS 2009 - A TIME TO COUNT MULTIPLE BLESSINGS

This has been a difficult year for many. The Guild's work has been favored by the interest and support of such organizations as the University of Melbourne's Early Music Studio, the National Gallery of Victoria, Sydney Conservatorium, Creative Gippsland Festival and the many schools which book Guild activities.

The invaluable assistance provided by **Bayside City Council** underpins all Guild activities, including the Early Music in the Very Round annual concert series.

House-full audiences have been a feature of most Guild performances this year. We are grateful to those who thus do honor to the many fine artists we engage.

EARLY MUSIC AT ITS JOYFUL BEST IN CONSORT'S NEW CD

For a number of reasons the long-awaited second CD by the Early Music Consort of Melbourne has already become a collector's item.

Highlighted by the splendid playing of Renaissance reeds and fine singing by Merrin Torpy and Caitlin Noble, the disk will always be valued as the final Consort recording made while Kathleen Van Zuylekom and Charmaine Arnephy were members.

Both retired at the end of 2008 after playing with the group since its formation in 1973.

The benefits of their long-term involvement with hard-to-tune Renaissance reeds are evident in this recording as they join with Helga Hill, Matthew Roberts and Trevor Trotter to play compositions for five reeds and various mixes of reeds, recorders, lute, virginal, fidel and – at the end – a lively hurdy gurdy!

Caitlin Noble and Merrin Torpy need no introduction to Guild audiences. Caitlin was one of the three outstanding singers in performances of the **Libre Vermell** earlier in the year and Merrin, who lives in Bendigo, sang at the recent **Organ Centenary** program for the Fincham organ at St. Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church in Brighton on September 6.

That was the occasion for the CD's release because it includes Helga Hill's playing of four items on the actual instrument.

Recorded and edited by Rod Laird, a member of the Rippon Lea Dancers, the CD makes an ideal gift for the coming Festive Season.

Purchases can be made at the Christmas Pageants or through mail order by 'phoning 9699 8417. The cost of one CD is \$20, or \$24 by mail order. A discount of 25% applies on purchases of a second or more copies. Proceeds will aid Guild activities and young artists. Your support is invited.

BRILLIANT AND MEMORABLE - THE 2009 CONCERT SEASON

The Early Arts Guild is not in the business of establishing records for frequency of concerts but, for all of that, the 2009 season was remarkable.

In just over five months, from *Llibre Vermell* at the National Gallery of Victoria on March 29 to the *Organ Centenary* at St Cuthbert's in Brighton on September 6, the Guild staged twelve performances – the busiest winter schedule in recent years.

But it was not just the number of programs but, rather, their quality and variety that really impressed.

The *Llibre Vermell* needs no further comment. Nothing like it had previously been staged with dance and gesture in Australia. But all that followed was equally memorable – starting with the breathtaking presentation of the Gesualdo Responsories at Brighton by Louisa Hunter-Bradley's Buxtehude Consort.

The three Baroque programs which came next at Brighton maintained a standard of excellence that delighted those who were privileged to be in attendance. With such artists as Laura Vaughan and Ruth Wilkinson (gambas), Donald Nicolson and David Macfarlane (harpsichords), Cynthia O'Brien (baroque violin), Adam Masters (baroque oboe) and Jennifer Cook (soprano), an early music feast ensued.

In the interim the Early Music Consort and Rippon Lea Dancers took the early arts to a large, enthusiastic audience at Bairnsdale and fitted in a series of house-full Spanish programs for the Salvador Dali Exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria.

So now, what lies ahead? The planning of Christmas Pageants is well underway and a start is being made on the 2010 program for Brighton – the tenth year of the series.

Artists there will include Miriam Morris (gamba) with John O'Donnell (harpsichord), to perform on June 6, and the Choir of Newman College, directed by Dr. Gary Ekkel, to appear on August 1. Full details will be in the series brochure which will be available through Bayside City Council, at Bayside Libraries and in Guild mail-outs during February.

The Early Arts Guild takes this opportunity to again thank Bayside City Council for its sponsorship of Early Music in the Very Round. This support is made doubly valuable by the assistance given to the project by the Bayside Libraries – at Brighton, Beaumaris, Sandringham and Hampton. Overall, a splendid team!

BACK TO "HOME" AND OFF TO SCHOOL FOR GESTURE!

Gesture is on the move. In 2010 it will return to its starting point at the University of Melbourne's Early Music Studio where, from March 13, Helga Hill will revisit her original ten-week Saturday course.

It was this program which, from 2000 to 2007, set up the team of singers and actors whose work has led the way in Gesture's emerging international revival.

Unlike the courses of the past two years, the 2010 program will be open to singers and actors from the community at large – as well as university students. Numbers will be limited to six, plus two places for drama or voice teachers or directors.

Next year will also see Gesture move into senior levels of secondary schools by way of two new workshops - **Gesture and the Quality of Mercy** for drama students, and **Gesture Revelation** for singers.

The broad aim of this development is to spread knowledge of Gesture into the wider community and to enhance student performances in the ways that only Gesture can achieve. Enquiries from schools already suggest spectacular outcomes from this new initiative.

These may include a gesture regional tour in the near future and an early opera in Melbourne in 2011.

In mid-September Helga Hill returned to Sydney Conservatorium to give a week of intensive gesture studies as a follow-up to the spectacular Scarlatti performances of 2008. A public showing of the DVD of the Sydney project is planned for the New Year.

It is increasingly evident that promotion of Gesture will become the Guild's main task in coming years.

CALL 9699 8417

- ❖ **To book seats at the Christmas Pageants**
- ❖ **To order the new Early Music Consort CD**
- ❖ **To audition for the Rippon Lea Renaissance Dancers**
- ❖ **To study Gesture at the Early Music Studio**
- ❖ **To join a Brass Rubbing class**
- ❖ **To book school programs in Brass Rubbing and/or the Art of Gesture**
- ❖ **To go on the Guild's free mailing list**