

2024
YORK
EARLY
MUSIC
FESTIVAL
6 – 13 JULY

ApotropaiK

Bella Donna

Undercroft, Merchant Adventurers' Hall
Thursday 11 July 9.45pm

ApotropaiK

Clémence Niclas *voice, recorders*

Louise Bouedo *bowed fiddle*

Marie-Domitille Murez *gothic harp*

Clément Stagnol *medieval lute*

Bella Donna

Temperance

A chantar m'er de so qu'eu no volria

[canso]

Can l'erba fresch' [instrumental]

Santa Maria leva

Honte, paour, doubtance de meffaire

[ballade]

Pièce sans titre, f. 49 v. [instrumental]

La belle se siet au piet de la tour

Comtessa de Dia

fl. end 12th century-early 13th century

Bernart de Ventadorn

c.1130/40-c.1190/1200

Anonymous¹

Guillaume de Machaut

c.1300- 1377

Anonymous²

Guillaume Dufay 1397-1474

Charm

Santa Maria amar

Ave Maris Stella [instrumental]

Medée fu en amer veritable [ballade]

Anonymous³

Anonymous⁴

Anonymous⁵

Torment

Phyton, le merueilleus serpent [ballade]

O Crudel Donna [madrigal]

Ha, Fortune, trop as vers moy grant tort [ballade]

Isabella [estampie – instrumental]

Machaut

Anonymous⁶

Anonymous⁷

Anonymous⁸

This concert is supported by the John Feldberg Foundation

This concert is being recorded by BBC Radio 3 for broadcast on the Early Music show at 5.00pm on Sunday 6 October. Please silence mobile phones and any other electronic devices.

¹ Cantiga de Santa María, no. 320

² Codex Faenza (déb. xve s.), Faenza – Biblioteca Comunale, MS 117

³ Cantiga de Santa María, no. 7

⁴ Codex Faenza (déb. xve s.), Faenza – Biblioteca Comunale, MS 117

⁵ Codex Chantilly (fin. XIVE/déb. XVe s.), Chantilly – Musée Condé, MS 564

⁶ Codex Rossi (c.1370), Roma – Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Rossi 215

⁷ Codex Chantilly (fin. XIVE/déb. XVe s.), Chantilly – Musée Condé, MS 564

⁸ London – British Library, Add. 29987 (c.1400)

The figure of the ‘Bella Donna’ echoes courtly love which praises a woman who is idealized and coveted. However, although sublime, woman also embodies a poisonous and deadly flower. In the field of botany, belladonna or deadly nightshade characterizes an engaging but poisonous fruit which is also well known to witches in the preparation of hallucinogenic ointments. What more appropriate metaphor could there be to illustrate the ambiguity of the female figure in the medieval imagination?

Exploring the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this programme of intersecting themes reveals a mosaic of fascinating female figures. Thus, the secular songs performed here depict complex psychological portraits of women who by their actions or crimes overturn the existing world order. The spiritual repertoire also spotlights fascinating female characters. The means of expression are similar in both the secular and sacred, whether it is to sing of the beloved woman in the tradition of courtly lyricism or of the Virgin’s praises, as in the famous Cantigas de Santa María.

Temperance, Charm, Torment: through these themes and the associated female figures, the music displays various styles of writing. Starting from a canso composed by a trobairitz – the troubadour’s female alter ego – the works progress through monodies and polyphonies of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

ApotropaiK

‘Apotropaique’ is a French adjective meaning an object or saying used to protect against evil or misfortune. The members of the ApotropaiK ensemble chose this evocative name to unite them in their passion for medieval music. They met at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Lyon where they were taught by some of the leading specialists in medieval music.

The repertoire of the ensemble goes from the twelfth century to the fifteenth century, from the first troubadours’ songs to the birth of Renaissance music. It is

particularly interested in instrumental or vocal monodies such as the French and Italian estampies or the Cantigas de Santa Maria. Its members also immerse themselves in the repertoire of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by playing the instrumental diminutions of the Faenza Codex or the Buxheimer Orgelbuch, the Bourgogne court songs or the melodies of the medieval heart-shaped songbooks.

The ensemble gave its first performances at the Cluny medieval music centre in Paris in November 2016. Then, after winning the first prize at the Journées de musiques anciennes de Vanves competition in November 2017, they were invited to several festivals and concert venues in France and Europe. In July 2022, they took part in the York International Young Artists Competition, winning the Friends of York Early Music Festival prize, the EEEMERGING prize and the Cambridge Early Music prize. ApotropaïK is in residence at the Royaumont Foundation 2023-2025. The ensemble's first CD, *Bella Donna*, was issued in June 2023 on the Édition des Abbesses label.

apotropaik.eu

We are grateful to the John Feldberg Foundation for supporting events in the Festival that showcase the achievements of young musicians



John Feldberg was a talented violinist and harpsichord builder who died aged 30 in 1960. He and his future wife Ann met at Cambridge, where she was a music student and keyboard player with passion for early music. In 1957 they set up a harpsichord building workshop. John died just as the workshop was beginning to take off; Ann, continued the business with great success for another 22 years.

The John Feldberg Foundation aims to support some of the many charitable causes Ann and John Feldberg espoused, in particular:

- encouraging people to access music and the arts
- finding ways to live sustainably and protect and conserve the environment
- enabling people to bring about change through their activities in these spheres – even where the challenge seems impossible

The John Feldberg Foundation is a Charity registered in Hamburg: Charity No. 922.20-64 (2367) and recognised by the UK Charity Commission.

YORK EARLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

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York Early Music Festival is administered by the National Centre for
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