

Early Arts Update

The Newsletter of the Early Arts Guild of Victoria

April – May 2017

BALLARAT AND BRIGHTON

BLACK BOOK SINGERS JOIN RARE MEDIEVAL PROGRAM

For many years the Guild has followed a policy of taking early arts to regional centres, but the country will be coming to the city when “Medieval Magic” is staged at Trinity Uniting Church in Brighton at 2.15pm on April 30.

The Rippon Lea Dancers and Early Music Consort will be there. And so, too, will the Singers of the Black Book which is a Ballarat-based ensemble that specializes in the chants, songs and sounds of medieval Europe and the Middle East.

This will be a rare appearance in Melbourne by the group which is comprised of Peter Freund, Garth Horsfield, Daniel Lamech and Gordon Morrison. Their presentation will include the early English carol *Eya martire Stephane* and the Gregorian hymn *Shenkar venakh*.

Ancient instruments, many from the Middle East, will include portative organ, psaltery and the exotic Saracen and Arabian Lutes (Saz and Oud). The premier of a reconstruction of the ancient dance *Kalenda Maya* will highlight the Rippon Lea Dancers' contribution to a fascinating program.

The first performance of **Medieval Magic** will be at the Art Gallery of Ballarat, 40 Lydiard Street North, at 2.15pm on Sunday, April 23. Admission is \$25, concession and Gallery members \$20, family \$50. [Bookings on 5320 5858](tel:53205858).

Admission to Trinity Uniting Church, at 15 Black St., Brighton, is \$15, concession \$10, under 18 free. Tickets at the door. Bookings not required.

MAIL COLLAPSE

ANNOUNCING THE LAST POST OF THE GUILD'S NEWSLETTER

For some thirty years, the *Early Arts Update* has played a vital role in the promotion of historic music, dance, gesture, brass rubbing and related activities around the nation.

It has provided an historical record of the coming of historic arts to Victoria and has been the only on-going source of information about personalities and developments in this field. Of special importance were the opportunities it provided to tell the stories of young Australian artists and, so, give them valuable start-up publicity.

But now, due to an appalling decline in the services provided by Australia Post and the recent 42% rise in the cost of stamps, we have no alternative than to change over to the electronic distribution of *Update*.

From the outset, the Guild has always been a not-for-profit organization with limited funds. The survival of *Early Arts Update* to this stage has only been made possible through generous assistance from Bayside City Council.

For those who have internet access, the changeover to electronic delivery of the Newsletter is simple. Just forward an email with the subject **Update** to marcusjhill@bigpond.com

For those without internet access – especially many of our more elderly patrons – we will endeavor to have advance copies of the Newsletter available at each concert. That will be difficult but we will do our best. With apologies to many. MH

VERY LONG WAIT FOR A MARVELLOUS MARS

The problem was there was no time for waiting. Helga Hill had just been invited to give her first international Renaissance Dance course at Schloss Breiteneich in Austria and music tapes for her classes required a harpsichord.

Helga had gone to the famous summer school in 1975 to learn how to make double reeds for the renaissance wind instruments her family, the Early Music Consort, was playing back in Melbourne.

She came home with more than reeds! In 1977 she returned to Europe to commence twenty-one years of teaching historic dance in Austria, then Sweden and, later, Dartington (UK) where, from 1986 to 1998, she worked on early operas and masques with Dame Emma Kirkby and Anthony Rooley.

But, getting back to the beginning, none of this would have happened without a harpsichord! Which is why, late in 1975, I visited harpsichord-maker Mars McMillan in Clifton Hill, only to hear the doleful news - "You will have to wait a long time for a Mars". The order book was full.

"What about that old Number Four up in the roof"? asked Alastair McAllister – another maker, who had overheard the conversation whilst standing nearby.

So down it came – stained an ugly yellow and rather battered. "I'll take it! I'll take it", I shouted with joy. "No, No", I was told. "We can't have a Mars looking like that"!

The solution – a magnificent six-foot harpsichord was soon moved into our home where it remained without charge for a year to make tapes for courses in Austria, Sweden and New Zealand and for the recently-formed Rippon Lea Renaissance Dancers.

When the beautifully restored Number Four, based on a Ruckers (c 1610), finally turned up there was just one more problem – how could the Hill Family, with four young children, ever pay for it?

But that was no problem at all. 'Mark Hill' was penciled high up on the plaster wall of the workshop, with \$750 alongside, and that running total was crossed out and replaced each time I

subsequently visited Clifton Hill. Bit by bit the account snaked its way down the wall until, one day, the precious instrument was ours.

In the interim, the "Mars" had been heard and seen in Consort performances around the state. Horsham, Shepparton, Sale and Mildura were among the many regional centres to have their first experience of the unique sound of a harpsichord, thanks to the artistry and generosity of Mars McMillan.

When Mars passed away last year, historic music devotees lost one of their greatest benefactors – a founding member of the Australian early music movement whose instruments were a vital part of developments over many years.

MH

RENAISSANCE WARRAGUL – UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

After five years, the Guild is handing over its popular regional concert series to the locals. An administrative committee has been formed and, from next year, the West Gippsland Arts Centre will also promote the project.

The venue will continue to be 'Wesley of Warragul', which boasts one of the best early music acoustics to be found anywhere.

Committee members Shirley Westerberg, Tamara McKimmie, Marni Jackson and John Hart are looking forward to Sunday, June 4, when they will welcome international artists David Macfarlane (harpsichord) and David Irving (baroque violin) to Warragul.

Their program, *Duelling Strings*, will include works by Bach and a rare playing of the *Cuckoo Sonata* by Austrian composer Johann Schmelzer (1623 – 1680). The one-hour concert will start at 2.15pm.

Members of Bayside Chamber Players, headed by Claire Nicholson (flute) and Susan Batten (oboe), will present *Chamber Music from a Golden Era* on Sunday, September 17. Handel and Vivaldi have been mentioned as 'possibles' for the performance.

Season tickets covering both concerts can be ordered through the Early Arts Guild on 9699 8417. The cost is \$40, \$15 student, \$75 family. Tickets will be available for collection at the door from 2pm on June 4. Payments can be made at that time.