

April 2, 2012

Dear Rose Ensemble Musicians,

I'm writing to share with you some information that pertains specifically to a key component of my Artistic Vision, which was developed and distributed last season. You will recall that a major goal specific to my vision, as it pertains to programming and outreach, is that every single member of the ensemble will not only be familiar with texts, translations and program notes, but will be versed and acquainted with programmatic content to the degree of being able to take part in and/or conduct various educational activities. As you know, we have begun a new process of training musicians to be better educators in K-12 settings, and some of you are now doing choral master-classes on the collegiate level. These are good first steps, but if we are to proceed with expanding our outreach into residencies (schools, colleges, conferences, etc.), the scholarly and intellectual nature of programs like *Three Faiths* (and, really, all others) requires us to be experienced beyond simple master-classes and workshops. Indeed, intensive dialogues, panels and lectures must also be taken into consideration if we are to realize this vision.

In preparation for next season and, specifically, for our residency with the Society for Biblical Literature Conference in Chicago this November, I have created descriptions for the three, intensive 2 ½-hour workshops we'll be presenting at SBL (these are in addition to a concert performance and at least one major panel appearance). There will be over 10,000 Biblical scholars from around the world attending the conference (the theme of which is Oral Tradition) and I understand that such music-centered offerings are both highly unusual and greatly anticipated. The topics vary greatly and cover a wide spectrum of ideas and perspectives.

Ensemble-wide participation is what is expected; please have a look at what I've submitted to SBL and decide where you will fit in. In your response to me, please indicate in which workshop you'll feel most comfortable participating, and whether you will play a leading or secondary role. Provide specific examples or a simple outline of what you can offer (note: while performing music will probably be a workshop component, it does not qualify as a secondary responsibility). Lecture, demonstration and the engaging of participants in dialogue represent the bulk of the outreach activities.

Yours,

Jordan

Rose Ensemble Workshop Topics for 2012 Society for Biblical Literature Conference

1.) Research Methods and Critical Issues in the Recovery of Oral Traditions

Oral vs. Written: In modern chamber music circles, the dividing lines between folk and classical genres run deep. That which can be definitively attributed to a composer or written source is embraced as historically legitimate while material procured from oral sources is often discounted and placed in the seemingly lesser categories of “folk” or “world” music. The result is a largely unbalanced representation of the whole of the repertoire (particularly vocal music). Is it the daunting task of conducting research that prevents equal representation, or is there an underlying belief that orally-transmitted is, by definition, less authentic? How do we challenge those who exclude oral traditions? In this session we will examine the assumptions that govern research into religious musical oral traditions and explore how can we both encourage and develop research skills for preserving oral traditions. In addition, we will consider how orally transmitted music differs from that which is preserved in manuscript and the particular issues this raises for those doing research into oral traditions.

2.) How Performances Shapes Tradition

When musicians present concert programs featuring music that has been transmitted orally (e.g. through field recordings or by rote learning), how can they ensure authenticity in source material? And how does each performance contribute to the gradual and inevitable shaping of the tradition? This session explores the tension between preservation and innovation in the performance of musical oral traditions, and will demonstrate how scholarly performers negotiate the challenges presented by a desire to maintain purity and historical authenticity while being attentive to the impact of contemporary as well as historical physical, social, political, and cultural contexts. Case studies will include the music of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

3.) Preservation to Performance: Discovery and Re-oralization in the Modern Age

When a musicologist encounters a text without accompanying musical notation, how does he/she know it is in oral tradition? What consideration should be given to the re-oralization and transmission of text, with respect specifically to the nature of religious traditions? With myriad dynamics introduced by YouTube and other modern media, the potency of the master-apprentice relationship is greatly diluted. And as the intimate nature of learning becomes more diffuse, who is the actual authority? Does the internet rule? Do commercial recordings validate historical, linguistic and musical accuracy? What can scholars learn about religious practice and belief through the study of musical oral traditions?