

You are among a select group of singers invited to join others interested in sacred Renaissance polyphony **February 18-20, 2011** for a weekend singing the music of Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643).

The occasion is the 20th anniversary year for the Dallas-Fort Worth area **Renaissance Polyphony Weekend** at the University of Dallas. The singers' retreat will again be led by Dr. William Mahrt of Stanford University. It will conclude with a Latin Mass, and since this is the 400th anniversary of Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610, participants will sing the composer's *Messa da capella*. We will also sing some motets and Gregorian chant as part of the Mass.

About the Mass

Monteverdi's *Messa da Capella* appears in a posthumous collection (1650) of earlier Venetian sacred music. The composer's *Selva Morale* (1641) had been a collection of his latest sacred pieces in the most up-to-date styles, but the 1650 collection seems to have reached back for earlier, more contrapuntal music.

"The term 'da capella' distinguishes a style in which voices and instruments play the same parts, in contrast with 'concertato' in which instruments play parts distinct from those of the voices (as in the 1610 Vespers)," Dr. Mahrt explains, "It does not, however, specify whether instruments are to be used (doubling the voice parts), and so we will sing it unaccompanied, allowing the contrapuntal features to be heard more clearly.

"In this piece Monteverdi juxtaposes two distinct musical styles: thoroughgoing counterpoint and text-based homophony. The contrapuntal sections are intensely so, involving thoroughgoing imitation in the manner of a fugue. The text-based sections sensitively set the rhythm of the words, sometimes in an almost dance-like style. The



text-based style is strikingly affective, and represents the new Baroque approach to the Mass text--still seen in the Masses of Mozart--with the *Christe, Qui tollis*, and *Benedictus* now serving as the focal points of expressive setting.

"Monteverdi would have called this contrapuntal style 'prima prattica' or Renaissance style, but he now handles it in a Baroque way, since it is founded upon a descending tetrachord (G-F-E-D), giving the texture the impression of being based upon a ground bass. This affective style is clearly Baroque, stressing the rhythm of the words and alluding to dance rhythms. Thus--underneath the skin of what appears to be an old-style Mass--is a juncture of Renaissance and Baroque that is at once contemplative and dramatic," Dr. Mahrt says.

Logistics

Retreat check-in (with coffee) is at 6:30 p.m. Friday, February 18, in Gorman Hall on the UD campus; the first rehearsal starts at 7:30 p.m. Rehearsals continue Saturday (February 19), concluding with wine and cheese at about 4 p.m.

It is possible not to attend all of the sessions and still sing the Mass on Sunday afternoon, February 20. There will be a morning rehearsal, but participants with church music commitments need not attend it.

After an early Sunday afternoon rehearsal, we will sing the Mass in the mid-afternoon. Details will be provided in a welcome letter to participants.

Polyphony Weekend rehearsals will be combined with informal lecture and discussion. All music will be rehearsed and performed *a capella*.

Participants need not be professional singers, but should be proficient readers with a good sense of pitch.

The weekend retreat is sponsored by the University of Dallas Music Department and the Renaissance Polyphony Project.

Enrollment, housing, meals

Housing is not available at the University, but area participants will open their homes to singers from other cities. Please note if you need accommodations.

Fee for the retreat is **\$95**; scholarships are available for students. Meals are on your own.

Please return your reservation along with the \$95 participation fee as soon as possible. Refunds for cancellations will be made until February 11.

Dr. William Mahrt

Dr. William Mahrt teaches musicology at Stanford University, where he directs the Early Music Singers. He also directs the St. Ann Choir in Palo Alto, Calif., which regularly sings Gregorian chant and Renaissance polyphony in liturgical performance.

His scholarship centers upon the performance of Medieval and Renaissance music and its relation to liturgy and to music theory. He has written on the relation of music and liturgy; music and poetry in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; and on the music of Guillaume de Machaut, Orlando di Lasso, and Johannes Brahms.

He is president of the Church Music Association of America and editor of its journal, *Sacred Music*, the oldest continuously-published music journal in the United States. He gives workshops on Gregorian chant and on Renaissance music around the country.

For an article on Dr. Mahrt, go to <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2007/october3/mahrtsr-100307.html>

**Renaissance Polyphony Weekend
Registration Form**

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____
E-Mail _____

My vocal classification:

__soprano __alto
__tenor __bass

Registration limited to ten singers per classification.

I need housing _____

My roommate(s): _____
I would like to stay in a home _____
I would like information on area hotels
and motels _____

I can provide housing for _____ people in my
home.

Please send me _____ additional brochures for
the Renaissance Polyphony Weekend.

Please send a brochure to _____



Please return this form along with a check
for \$95.00 to:

Renaissance Polyphony Weekend
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9215 Forest Hills Blvd., Dallas TX 75218-3632
E-mail: sjscheib@yahoo.com

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**Renaissance
Polyphony
Weekend**

2011

20th anniversary year

Messa da cappella
Claudio Monteverdi

February 18-20, 2011
University of Dallas, Irving

Leader: Dr. William P. Mahrt
Stanford University, Stanford, California