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## Director Plans for Illustrious Renditions of Medieval Repertoire

Tia Patsavas

*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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## Director Plans for Illustrious Renditions of Medieval Repertoire

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William Hudson

Photo credit: Tall & Small Photography, 2011

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Since pursuing his master's degree in historical performance, Professor William Hudson has had a passion for medieval music. Over a decade later, Hudson says he could never have guessed where this captivating music would take him.

Early music, which relates to music ranging from the medieval and renaissance periods to early baroque, first appealed to Hudson when he attended the Longy School of Music in Cambridge. His affection for these compositions quickly developed, leading to the creation of LIBER: Ensemble for Early Music, which Hudson formed with two of his female colleagues.



LIBER will perform Sunday, November 17 at 3 p.m. in Evelyn Chapel (1302 N. Park St., Bloomington). The concert is free and open to the public. The program, *Frauenlieder: Medieval Songs of Women*, will feature an array of music and texts written by, for and about women.

Along with Hudson as tenor and director, the ensemble now consists of countertenor Andrew Rader, who currently works as a staff member of the Choir of Men and Boys for Christ Church Episcopal Cathedral in Indianapolis, tenor Daniel Carberg, coordinator of vocal activities at Keene State College in New Hampshire, and baritone Matthew Leese, co-artistic director of the New Brunswick Early Music Festival (NewBEMF) and freelance artist. LIBER has performed at an assortment of festivals and concerts around the world.

As an artist dedicated to the rediscovery and performance of this historic repertoire, Hudson thrives on the creativity associated with the music. "My favorite feature of medieval music is the fact that no one knows how to do it – there is no one right way," he said. "These pieces give us complete creative control."

This creativity is based off the text's historical context and annotations to which the men, all graduates of Indiana University's Early Music program, are accustomed. "Often times, there are no dynamics, no tempo markings, no labeled instruments. We have to work with what was lucky enough to be preserved," said Hudson.

To help these works come together, the artists rely on *contrafacta*, the substitution of one text for another in a way that avoids significant change to the music.

A facet of these texts that cannot be altered is their historic relevance. Considering the era in which they were written, many medieval texts and poems have a predominantly religious theme. "When you're going back that far, there is only one principal church – the Catholic Church – which educated a majority of intellectuals of the time," he said.

## LIBER

Photo credit: Tall & Small Photography, 2011



One piece featured on the program is *Gaude virgo Katherina*, written by John Dunstaple in the 15th century. The text tells the story of St. Catherine of Alexandria, who is believed to have been born to a noble family in Alexandria, now modern-day Egypt. Through a vision, the martyr converted to Christianity and, according to Hudson, “was incredibly smart and such a strong woman that people wanted to contain her. But she wouldn’t allow it.” Because of her beliefs and perseverance in her faith, she was imprisoned and sentenced to death by spiked wheel. Hudson said the piece honors her as strong female presence.

LIBER will present pieces of *Marienleich* by Heinrich Frauenlob, which is told from the perspective of the Virgin Mary and uses a great deal of *Song of Songs* imagery, a unique biblical poem that praises sexual love.

The group will also perform non-secular texts, including Marcabru’s *L’autrier jost’una sebissa*. This poem relays the dialogue between a knight and a peasant girl. “There are a variety of interpretations of this scenario,” he said “In the one we’re doing, the knight tries, but fails, to seduce and charm the girl.”

“This piece shows a young women who, despite her lower class, stands her ground,” Hudson added.

Hudson said that the sixteen-piece Frauenlieder program is quite diverse. “Most of the pieces are about three to four minutes long, so it’s interesting to see how all these disparate pieces link together.”

Although the music will be performed in foreign languages, Hudson believes that the audience will be very engaged. “My plan is to have supertitles, so the audience can watch and be engaged in the performance and still know what is happening in the songs.”

With LIBER’s performance, Hudson hopes the audience will garner appreciation for this historical music form. “I want the audience to understand that the people who constructed these pieces were doing high-level thinking, writing wonderful poetry and some beautiful melodies. I hope the audience can come away with an appreciation for that.”

For additional information regarding LIBER’s performance, contact the School of Music Office at (309) 556-3061.

Contact: Tia Patsavas '16 (309) 556-3181, [univcomm@iwu.edu](mailto:univcomm@iwu.edu)