

MUSIC BEFORE 1800

Louise Basbas, director

Hesperus

Hesperus Plays The Hunchback of Notre Dame Early Music & Early Film

Tina Chancey, director, vielle, kemenj, rebec

Barbara Hill, soprano, percussion

Brian Kay, tenor, lute, citole, percussion

Dan Meyers, baritone, recorders, bagpipes, pipe and tabor, ciaramella



The Hunchback of Notre Dame: Compassionate Esmeralda offers water to shackled Quasimodo

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City
Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Please turn off cell phones. Photography and recording are not permitted.

NYC Cultural
Affairs

Sunday, January 23, at 4 p.m., 2022, live at Corpus Christi Church

Sunday, January 30, at 4 p.m., 2022, online concert with live Q&A

MUSIC BEFORE 1800

47th Season

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Music Before 1800 requires everyone who comes to any of our concerts to show proof of vaccination and a booster. We also require concert attendees to stay masked while indoors.

Concerts, Sundays at 4 p.m.

December 5

Juilliard415, Robert Mealy, director
Wonders of Baroque Italy

December 19

Ars Lyrica Houston, Matthew Dirst, director
Crossing Borders

January 23

Hesperus, Tina Chancey, director
Hesperus Plays The Hunchback of Notre Dame

February 13

ACRONYM
Ad Astra: To the Stars

February 27

Piffaro, Joan Kimball and
Robert Wiemkin, directors
The Musical Legacy of Charles V

May 8

Blue Heron, Scott Metcalfe, director
Divine Songs: Ockeghem @ 600

Videos of all concerts will be available on demand a week after the live performances.

Rebecca Arkenberg's notes about the movie, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*

Victor Hugo and Notre-Dame de Paris

The 1923 silent film “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” was based on a novel by Victor Hugo (1802-1885). Hugo, whose father had been a general in Napoleon’s army during the French Revolution of 1789, conceived the novel during the revolution of July, 1830. Published in 1831 as *Notre-Dame de Paris*, it became an immediate success.

Hugo was a pioneer of the Romantic Movement in literature, whose proponents emphasized individual experience, the power of imagination, and human emotion rather than classical themes drawn from Greek and Roman antiquity. As a reaction against Classicism, Romantics tended to avoid historical subjects entirely. Therefore, even though Hugo set *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* in 1482, he did not rely on historical sources for his plot. The story originated entirely in his imagination, and it unfolds feverishly with a myriad of characters and vivid, melodramatic action. Quasimodo, the deformed bell-ringer of Notre Dame Cathedral—his name means “half-made”—is elected the Pope of Fools for the dubious honor of being the ugliest man in Paris. Meanwhile, Esmeralda, a gypsy street dancer, appears, and arouses the interest of Claude Frollo, an evil priest (named Jehan in the film) who enlists Quasimodo to kidnap her. She is rescued by Captain Phoebus who also becomes infatuated with her. Frollo stabs Phoebus in a jealous rage, and Esmeralda is accused of the crime. Quasimodo, remembering how she once was kind to him, attempts to shelter Esmeralda in the cathedral. In the novel, Esmeralda is captured and hung. In despair over her death, Quasimodo throws Frollo from the cathedral towers. The hunchback is never seen again, but years later, his remains are found embracing the skeleton of Esmeralda. In the film the lovers reunite, but Quasimodo dies in the company of his beloved bells.

An ardent republican, Hugo wove the political trends of the time into his tale of gypsies, misfits, and vagabonds—issues of equality, liberty, and fraternity. The brutality of the aristocracy towards the poor and oppressed is set off against their equally brutal reactions.

The Cathedral

While the movie differs from the novel in some small details, it remains faithful to Hugo’s focus on the 12th-century Cathedral of Notre Dame as the heart and soul of Paris, a relic of France’s glorious past. In the early 19th century, the cathedral had been neglected and damaged by war and vandalism. With his fellow Romantics, including Eugene Delacroix, who depicted the towers of Notre Dame in his famous painting *Liberty Guiding the People*, Hugo raised public consciousness and instilled a sense of national pride that was instrumental in encouraging the government and populace to save the cathedral. By 1845, a massive restoration project had begun.

The Hunchback of Notre Dame, the Movie

At a total cost of \$1,250,000.00, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) rivaled *Robin Hood* (1922) as Hollywood spectacle. The two blockbusters shared a number of similarities—a strong-

willed and talented star who dominated the film, a plot that explored themes of social justice, and dazzling special effects. Like Robin Hood director Alan Dwan and star Douglas Fairbanks, Hunchback director Wallace Worsley was friends with Lon Chaney, and gave him free reign to create and portray the grotesque Quasimodo.

Hugo's intense, dramatic story lent itself well to a silent movie presentation, providing just the right mixture of swashbuckling action scenes and intimate encounters. The Festival of Fools revelry that opens the movie and the storming of the Cathedral that ends it literally involve a cast of thousands, and the bird's eye shots evoke a Bruegel painting. Varied and detailed costumes bring the rich diversity of a medieval city to life, and the struggle between aristocracy and peasant must have found resonance in 1920s Hollywood: The Russian Revolution had happened only a few years before, and ideals of socialism were spreading in a world tired of the old European monarchies. Scenes such as the poet Gringoire invited to dine at Captain Phoebus's table, then continually prevented from eating when he is obviously hungry, emphasize the gap between the rich and the poor, even in humorous scenes.

Another striking image appears in both book and movie: that of the spider and its web. Victor Hugo employed this image as a metaphor for inescapable fate, and in the movie a shot of a spider appears as Esmeralda begins to succumb to the charms of Captain Phoebus. The silent movie also proved to be an effective medium for visual metaphor, not the least of which was the looming Cathedral as a symbol of refuge and safety. Notre Dame was replicated by combining two techniques: Its lower half was physically constructed on the set, but the towers and the top half are rendered by a "glass shot," a miniature painting that hangs in front of the camera.

The sheer number of characters in *Hunchback* presented a challenge. Each time a new actor was introduced, a title card appeared that imparted a little background—Gringoire the poet; the mad woman who had lost her child to the gypsies; Clopin, the King of the Gypsies; Fleur-de-Lys, Phoebus's intended bride. A flashback sequence helps the audience to understand the madwoman's hatred of the gypsies and to visually make the connection to Esmeralda. Close-ups help define the characters and allow the actors to explore a range of emotions—broken hearts, bitterness, lust, and adoration. No one is more expressive than Lon Chaney as Quasimodo.

Lon Chaney, The Man of a Thousand Faces

Lon Chaney already had established himself as a versatile character actor before his role in "Hunchback." Closely following Victor Hugo's description of Quasimodo, he transformed his face with false teeth, a wax wart, and grease-paint, topped his head with a wild, frizzy wig, then devised a hump that could be attached to his body by a harness and breastplate. The contraption twisted his torso so that he could not stand erect, and the combined weight of hump and breastplate has been estimated between fifty to seventy pounds. Over all he wore a skin-tight, flesh-colored rubber body suit covered with animal hair, the heat inside leaving him perpetually drenched in perspiration. The rope-swinging, bell-riding, and gargoyle-leaping stunts must have been excruciating, whether they were performed by Chaney himself (as the studio advertised), or by a stunt man.

He could have relied on the disguise alone to portray Quasimodo, but Chaney had other strategies up his sleeve. He used his body and face to bring his characters to life. In *Hunchback*, he cavorts, grimaces, recoils, scowls, and in general “chews the scenery.”

However, in portraying these emotions, he managed some psychological nuance, inspiring both revulsion and pity. Chaney’s skill at observing human nature and mimicking what he saw can be traced to his childhood. Born in 1883 to deaf-mute parents, he learned at an early age to communicate through facial expressions, pantomime, and sign language, skills that served him well in theater and the movies. Observing the silent world of his parents also gave him an insight into what it was like to be an outsider.

A number of deformed characters appear in the silent films of the early part of the century. The visual impact of beauty or ugliness, as well as the contrast between them, held great fascination for viewers. While the very real circumstance of encounters with maimed and wounded soldiers returning from World War I might have caused people to avert their eyes, in the darkness of the movie theater, staring was allowed.

Lon Chaney did not shy away from playing grotesque, bizarre, or villainous characters, and he often went through tortuous transformations, binding his legs to play a legless man, for example. Between 1913 and 1930, he appeared in more than 150 Hollywood films, including *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Lon Chaney died of bronchial cancer in 1930, just as he was about to make the leap from silent films to “talkies.” His genius at transformation inspired a popular Hollywood joke, “Don’t step on that spider! It might be Lon Chaney!”

—Rebecca Arkenberg

Tina Chancey’s notes about the performance

I started scoring silent films in 2003 (*Robin Hood*) in response to a seemingly random request by a local silent movie scholar, Rob Farr. What started out as a diversion soon became a serious interest. Since then, Hesperus has premiered scores for seven more silent films, most made between 1919-28, and a dozen animations and early cartoons from 1907-1926.

We create three kinds of scores:

Mostly Early Music: *Robin Hood*, *Hunchback*, *Zorro*, *Three Musketeers* and *Häxan*; **Period but Not Early Music:** *The Golem* [Sephardic] and *The General* (Civil War); **Early Music plus Other Styles:** the score for our newest project, *Nosferatu*, contains German medieval and renaissance tunes plus Rom (gypsy) dances and folk flute improvisations, as well as electronic sounds.

For our DVD of early animations that pioneered a great variety of visual techniques; our scores range from early music by Dowland and Susato to Delta blues, free improv, and scores made only of sound effects.

Audiences ask, “Can you really just jettison the score written for the film?” Yes, there was a fair amount of spontaneity in how people approached silent film accompaniment beginning with the storefront nickelodeons in 1905, to the advent of sound films around 1927.

First, when a film was sent on tour, there was an expectation that every new theater would change the accompaniment; few small movie theaters could use the score written for the Hollywood première; it was expensive to rent and required a big orchestra. The performing contingent of these small theaters often consisted of a single pianist or organist, maybe with a drummer.

So a few different things might have happened. The lone keyboard player might have improvised from scratch, guided by written notes on the film plot provided by the movie studios, frequently sourcing themes from printed collections of generic love songs, chase music, marches, and Indian powwow chants, etc.

Accompanists might also have improvised over a particular genre of music written for film accompaniment that we’d call light classics today.

And these days, inspired by that rampant creativity, Hesperus is one of the groups that creates and performs a dedicated score to a film. These scores can be quirky—sometimes with only a hammered dulcimer, electric guitar or klezmer fiddle as soloist, or maybe an all-percussion band. Hesperus is the only group to specialize in swashbucklers set in the Middle Ages or Renaissance, and to use pre-existing music from the period the film was set. We treat the music three ways.

- We play it as it comes, (for processional, fights, action scenes)
- We transform it according to what happens on stage, (different scoring, simplify, loosen the meter, ornament) or
- We improvise over a scene to reinforce a mood, generally using free improv over a mode. In our recent summer project, *Häxan*, we did all three; which gave us a distinctive score based on the Cantigas de Santa Maria.

Here’s how we develop a project: I assembled a score for today’s film, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, by trying to choose just the right music for each scene from the 400-or-so pieces of medieval music that I know well. Most medieval genres are represented, from chant to motet, and music from all over Europe and Britain can be heard for a total of about thirty-six works. I can’t say exactly how many because some of them have been designated as personal *leitmotifs* for the main characters (in the style of Wagner) and we repeat them sneakily in different scorings and forms. This assembly process basically works because I have a good memory for a tune, as well as weird luck matching visual and aural moods and energies.

Now, to early music aficionados this may seem like a rather imprecise way to create a score, but remember, we're talking about the *imaginary* past. Most, if not all of the familiar historical characters we know and love, such as Robin Hood, Zorro, and the Hunchback are fictional, though they may have been inspired by real people. In this case, when Victor Hugo wrote *Notre Dame de Paris*, he set it 1482, though I think that its depressed, edgy vibe is better represented by more dissonant 14th-century music by Machaut and L'Escurel, Italian istampitta, chant by Hildegard von Bingen, and some early English polyphony. So, since we're putting mood and character first, it makes sense to widen our selection to include different centuries and countries.

Once the music is chosen we experiment, creating a repeat structure that matches the scene, changing tempo as the scene heats up or calms down. While there's a fair amount of spontaneous ornamentation as we play, since we can't watch the scene for changes AND read the music, we also add some opportunities for longer improvisations, both free and rhythmic. We need to determine the underlying *tactus* (regular beat) of each scene, which we can scope out by watching how people walk and gesture, because our tempo should reflect that. And finally, if a piece isn't quite right, we'll replace it or pare it down to basics.

If we've chosen well and shaped it right, our score will mirror the plot, reinforcing the actors' story with music. Early music played on original instruments gives a period film a sense of context, of time and place, that grounds the audience and enhances the experience of visiting another time.

If there's one thing to say in summary: every film is different and needs to be approached on its own terms. We get our reward when someone comes up afterwards and says either "Wow, I didn't know whether to look at you or the film," or "Wow, the music was just absorbed in the film." Both responses show how the music and the acting tell the story together. We hope you enjoy today's performance.

—Tina Chancey, director

BIOGRAPHIES

Innovative, historically informed, and multi-cultural, **Hesperus's** programs connect the rich musical past with curious 21st-century concertgoers. They offer early music soundtracks for such classic silent films as *Robin Hood* and *Nosferatu*, partnerships with theater, mime and dance, musical portraits of a single culture through time, fusions of European early music with American traditional styles, and single-genre early music programs from the medieval era to the American Civil War. Whatever the genre, Hesperus performs with creative energy, technical assurance, and a delicious sense of irony.

Tina Chancey is director of Hesperus. She plays medieval and traditional fiddles and viola da gamba on roots (world) music—from Sephardic and Irish to Machaut and Joni Mitchell. Her particular specialty is the pardessus de viole: she presented debut concerts at Carnegie Recital Hall and Kennedy Center and released five pardessus recordings. She also directed an International Pardessus Conference at the Boston Early Music Festival. A member of Trio Sefardi, she is a former member of Ensemble Toss the Feathers, the Folger Consort, the Ensemble for Early Music, the New York Renaissance Band, and Blackmore's Night. Tina teaches, performs, improvises, produces recordings, composes and arranges, writes popular and scholarly articles, and directs workshops on playing by ear and improvisation. She has been given a Special Education Achievement Award by Early Music America and four Wammies for best classical instrumentalist.

Barbara Hill is a Boston-based, Grammy-winning soloist and ensemble singer specializing in early and contemporary music. As a soloist, she has appeared with many prominent groups in Boston and Cambridge, MA: Musica Sacra, Masterworks Chorale, and Seven Times Salt. She sings in the Old North Festival Chorus (Marblehead, MA), and is the soprano cantor at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston. As an ensemble member, she performs with the Grammy-winning ensemble The Crossing (Philadelphia, PA), Emmanuel Music (Boston, MA), Ensemble Altera (Providence, RI), and Cappella Clausura (Newton, MA). Her recent highlights were premiering Julia Wolfe's *Fire in my mouth* with The Crossing and the NY Philharmonic in January, 2019, recording Heidi Breyer's *Requiem for the Common Man* in 2021, and joining the 2021 Cambridge Christmas Revels as a featured soloist and ensemble member. Barbara is a member of Beyond Artists and donates a portion of her artistic earnings to organizations such as 350.org (beyondartists.com).

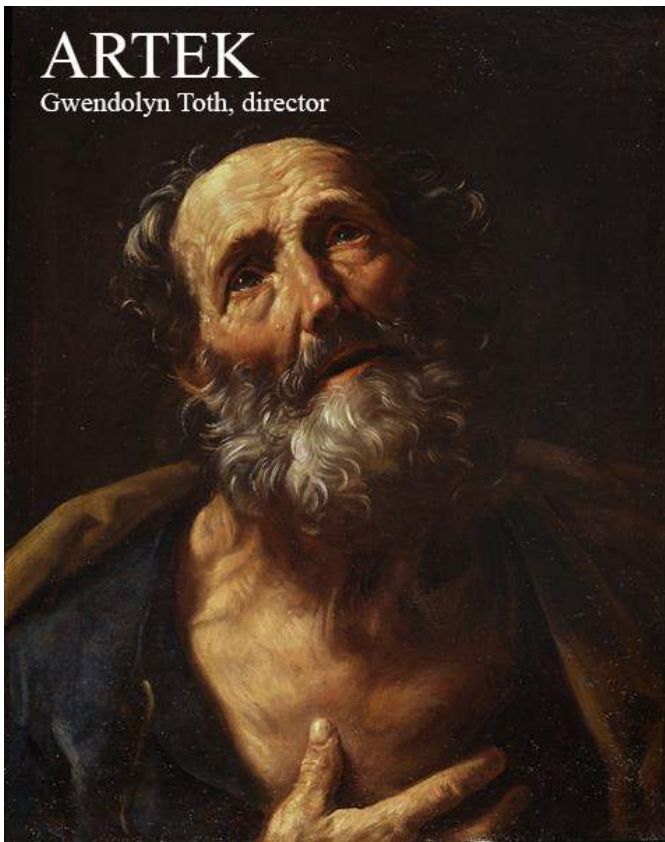
Brian Kay is a modern-day troubadour. He is the first Artistic Leadership Fellow of Apollo's Fire and in 2019, he won a Grammy Award for his work on their *Songs of Orpheus* recording. He has performed throughout the world at venues such as the National Concert Hall of Dublin, Belfast Castle (Ireland), Carnegie Hall, and the Kennedy Center. He is a multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, arranger, traditional and historical music specialist, poet, painter, and avid

proponent of meditation. Brian was the first featured artist in *EMAg*'s column "Early To Rise" and was the first of three soloists to be featured in the Lute Society of America's Emerging Artist Series. He is a core member of Twa Corbies and Apollo's Fire, and regularly performs with Hesperus, The Folger Consort, Early Music Access Project, Trio Sefardi and is a founding member of the early music improvisation group, Divisio.

A versatile multi-instrumentalist, **Dan Meyers** has developed a reputation as a flexible and engaging performer of both classical and folk music. His credits range from headlining a concert series in honor of Pete Seeger at the Newport Folk Festival to playing Renaissance instruments on Broadway for Shakespeare's Globe Theatre Company. He is a founding member of the early music/folk crossover group Seven Times Salt, and also performs regularly with the 7 Hills Renaissance Wind Band and the medieval music ensemble, Meravelha. In recent seasons he has performed with The Folger Consort, The Newberry Consort, The Boston Shawm and Sackbut Ensemble, Early Music New York, Amherst Early Music, The 21st Century Consort, In Stile Moderno, and the Cambridge Revels. He teaches early wind instruments for the Five Colleges Early Music Program. He also performs southern Italian folk music with the award-winning band, Newpoli, and traditional Irish music with the bands, Ulster Landing and Ishna.

hesperus.org

Lagrime di San Pietro Orlando di Lasso



Tickets to the live performances:

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Saturday, February 5 at 7:30 pm

Sunday, February 6 at 4 pm

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*Lagrime di San Pietro (Tears of St. Peter) was dedicated to Pope Clement VIII just three weeks before Lasso's death in 1594. The work is a magnificent cycle of 20 spiritual madrigals and a concluding motet, in seven vocal parts, illustrating the emotions of St. Peter after his denial of Christ: *Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly. (Matthew 26:75)**

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Singers:

Christina Kay, soprano; Eric Brenner, countertenor; David Dickey, countertenor; Nickolas Karageorgiou, tenor; Andrew Fuchs, tenor; Michael Steinberger, tenor; Peter Becker, bass-baritone.

Viols:

Rosamund Morley, treble viol; Lawrence Lipnik, treble viol; Sarah Mead, alto viol; Daniel McCarthy, tenor viol; Jessica Powell Eig, bass viol; Lisa Terry, bass viol; Motomi Igarashi, violone.

Winds:

Christa Patton, shawm, soprano & tenor recorder, harp; Mack Ramsey, tenor & soprano recorder, traverso & tenor sacbut; Joan Kimball, tenor & bass recorder, tenor & bass dulcian; Robert Wiemken, bass recorder, bass & contrabass dulcian; Bodie Pfost, alto & tenor sacbuts; Liza Malamut, tenor sacbut; Daniel Green, bass sacbut; Gwendolyn Toth, organ.



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BACH, *Mass in B Minor*

Thursday, April 28 @ 7:30 PM

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