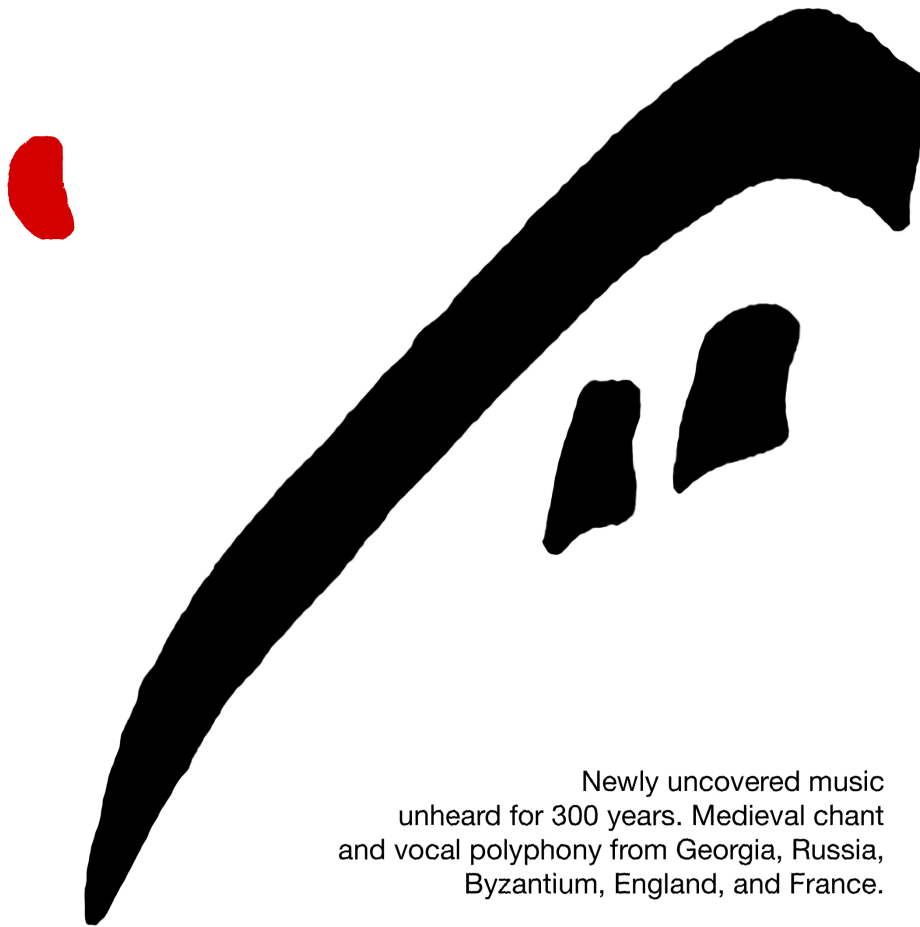


DEMESTVO PRESENTS
LOST POLYPHONIES



Newly uncovered music
unheard for 300 years. Medieval chant
and vocal polyphony from Georgia, Russia,
Byzantium, England, and France.

Contemporary works by Justin Wright,
Lucy McKnight, and Caroline Shaw

8 PM / December 5 / Princeton Theological Seminary Chapel

Program Order

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Anonymous (ca. 1710) Muscovy	Рождественский Задостойник (Christmas hymn to the Theotokos) <i>Partes polyphony</i> Transcription by Evgeny Skurat US premiere
Hildegard von Bingen (ca. 1098–1179) Bingen am Rhein, Holy Roman Empire	Caritas Abundat (Love Abounds), Psalm Antiphon
Caroline Shaw (b. 1982) United States	Caritas Abundat
Anonymous , oral tradition (transcribed 1898) East Georgia	შებ ხარ ვებობო (You are a Vineyard): East Georgian variant
Anonymous , oral tradition (transcribed 1960s) West Georgia	შებ ხარ ვებობო (You are a Vineyard): West Georgian variant
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Anonymous (ca. 1730-40) Russian Empire	Трисвятое Надгробное (Burial Trisagion) <i>Partes polyphony</i> Transcription by Evgeny Skurat US premiere
Anonymous (Winchester Troper, ca. 1025 - 1075) Winchester	Responsory Laudemus Dominum (Let us praise the Lord) Transcription by Susan Rankin
Justin Wright (b. 1986) Canada	Idle Hands: A Cyclic Mass for Two Cellos
Anonymous (ca. 1670) Muscovy	Рождественская Стихира (Christmas Stichira) Transcription by Evgeny Skurat World premiere
Lucy McKnight (b. 1998) United States	Troestrochny polyphony legok i mal (2024) World premiere
Ioannis Plousiadenos (ca. 1429–1500) Kingdom of Candia (Crete)	Communion Hymn for Mid-Pentecost
Manuel Gazes (fl. 1st half of 15th century) Constantinople	Holy Friday Hymn Prologue
Anonymous (ca. 1730-40) Russian Empire	Burial Trisagion a8 Transcription by Lada Kondrashkova US premiere

Texts, Translations, and Notes

Alle Psallite

Anonymous (Montpellier Codex, ca. 1300)

Paris

Alle psallite cum luya

Alle concrepando psallite cum luya

Alle corde voto Deo toto, psallite cum luya

Alleluya

Alle (sing with) luya

Alle (resounding loudly sing with) luya

Alle (with heart devoted fully to God sing with) luya

Alleluya

The Montpellier Codex is one of the earliest and most important sources of French medieval polyphony, dating to 1300 and containing 336 pieces. Alle Psallite is an even more joyous version of the word “Alleluia”, itself an expression of joy. It adds enthusiastic exhortations in between the word Alleluia itself (“sing with”, “resounding loudly sing with”, “with heard devoted fully to God, sing with”).

Со Святými Упокой (With thy Saints Give Rest)

Anonymous (ca. 1690)

Muscovy

Demestvenny polyphony

Transcription by Anastasia Shmytova

World premiere

Со святými упокой, Христé, дýши рабов Твоихъ, идéже нéсть болéзнь, ни печáль, ни воздыхáние, но жéизнь безконéчная.

“With the Saints give rest O Christ, to the souls of thy servants, where sickness and sorrow are no more, neither sighing, but life everlasting.”

Demestvenny polyphony, from which our ensemble Demestvo gets its name, flourished in Muscovy from the late 16th century to the early 18th. This polyphony was the most elite form of liturgical music-making, sung at the Czar’s court and for Patriarchal services by professional singers. It is written for four voices - *verh* (“top”), *demestvo*, *put’* (“way”), *niz* (“bottom”). The *demestvo* voice, the most virtuosic of the four, begins the piece with a solo incipit.

Рождественский Задостойник (Christmas hymn to the Theotokos)

Anonymous (ca. 1710)
Muscovy

Partes polyphony
Transcription by Evgeny Skurat
US premiere

Величай, душе моя, Честнейшую и Славнейшую горних воинств, Деву Пречистую Богородицу.

Любити убо нам, яко безбедное страхом, удобее молчание: любовию же, Дево, песни ткати спротяженно сложенные неудобно есть. Но и, Мати, силу, елико есть произволение, даждь.

Magnify, my soul, the Most Honorable and Glorious of the heavenly hosts, the Virgin Most Pure Mother of God.

It would be easier for us to keep silence, as not exposing us to fear: with love for You, Virgin, to weave harmoniously composed songs is not easy. However, grant us as much strength as we have zeal, O Mother.

Partes, (from the Latin: “parts”) is a style of polyphony that originated in Kiev and was popular in Muscovy beginning in the mid-17th century, and in particular, during the reign of Peter the Great (1682–1721). Peter himself was known to sing the sprightly lowest (bass) voice, which requires particular agility. This style was influenced by contemporaneous Western European choral harmony, but was used to set traditional Ancient Russian *znamenny* chant—creating a unique blend of medieval and early modern musical sensibilities.

Caritas Abundat (Love Abounds)

Hildegard von Bingen (ca. 1098–1179)
Bingen am Rhein, Holy Roman Empire

Caroline Shaw (b. 1982)
United States

Caritas Abundat (Love Abounds), Psalm Antiphon

Caritas Abundat

Caritas abundat in omnia,
de imis excellentissima
super sidera
atque amantissima
in omnia,
quia summo regi osculum pacis
dedit.
E u o u a e

Love abounds in all,
from the depths exalted and excelling
over every star,
and most beloved
of all,
for to the highest King the kiss of peace
she gave.
E u o e a e

Hildegard’s medieval chant is a meditation on the idea of Caritas, or Divine love, and its all-encompassing, cosmic significance. Caroline Shaw’s 2018 musical setting of Hildegard’s mystical text penetrates even deeper into the text, breaking it into its very constituent parts: the syllables that make up each word. These are sung one at a time, emerging out of dark vocal fry (illustrating Love’s reach to the exalted depths) and later soaring upward to ringing chords (Love excelling over the stars). Eventually, the words themselves dissolve and only pure vowels are left: E u o e a e, a medieval shorthand for “saeculorum, Amen” (“world without end, Amen”).

შენ ხარ ვენახი (You are a Vineyard)

Anonymous, oral tradition (transcribed 1898)
East Georgia

შენ ხარ ვენახი (You are a Vineyard): East Georgian
variant

Anonymous, oral tradition (transcribed 1960s)
West Georgia

შენ ხარ ვენახი (You are a Vineyard): West Georgian
variant

Georgian text	Transliteration	English translation
შენ ხარ ვენახი, ახლად აყვავებულნი, ნორჩი კეთილი, ედემს შინა ნერგული, (აღვა სუნელი, სამთხეს ამოსული,) (ღმერთმან შეგამკო ვერვინა გჯობს ქებული,) და თავით თვისით მზე ხარ და გაბრწყინებულნი.	shen khar venakhi, akhlad aq'vave- buli. norchi k'etili, edems shina nerguli. (alva suneli, samotkhes amosuli.) (ghmertman shegamk'o vervina gjobs kebuli.) da tavit tvisit mze khar da ga- brtsq'invebuli.	You are a vineyard newly blossomed. Young, beautiful, growing in Eden, (A fragrant poplar sapling in Para- dise.) (May God adorn you. No one is more worthy of praise.) You yourself are the sun, shining brilliantly.

Shen Khar Venakhi, Georgian for “You are a vineyard”, is a medieval Georgian hymn whose text is attributed to King Demetrius I of Georgia (1093–1156). Because the text does not explicitly mention anything theological, this piece was one of the only traditional Georgian chants permitted to be sung at weddings in the Soviet Union. In reality, the text glorifies the radiance of the Virgin Mother, though it does not specifically name her. The song has 25 musical variants, testifying to its popularity in various regions of Georgia throughout the past nine centuries. We will sing two of these, coming from Eastern and Western Georgia, respectively.

Трисвятое Надгробное (Burial Trisagion)

Anonymous (1700)
Muscovy

Трисвятое Надгробное (Burial Trisagion)
Znamenny chant

US premiere

Anonymous (ca. 1730-40)
Russian Empire

Трисвятое Надгробное (Burial Trisagion)
Partes polyphony

US premiere

Святой Боже, Святой Крепкий, Святой безсмертный, помилуй нас.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

The Burial Trisagion is sung on Holy Saturday in the Orthodox Church, when Christ’s burial is commemorated. This *znamenny* chant and its early eighteenth-century polyphonic setting come from manuscripts from the central Russian cities Yaroslavl’ and Rostov Velikiy. The polyphony is written in the Ukrainian *partes* style, a favorite of Peter the Great, who enjoyed singing the virtuosic bass lines.

Laudemus Dominum / Idle Hands

Anonymous (Winchester Troper, ca. 1025 - 1075) Responsory Laudemus Dominum (Let us praise the Lord)
Winchester Transcription by Susan Rankin

Justin Wright (b. 1986)
Canada

Idle Hands: A Cyclic Mass for Two Cellos (2023)

i. Trope

ii. Cantus Firmus I: Motet

iii. Organum

iv. Cantus Firmus II: Notre-Dame School

v. Isorhythm and Beyond

Laudemus dominum in beati antistitis Swithuni meritis gloriosis; ad sepulchrum ejus egri veniunt et sanantur.

Let us praise the Lord in the glorious merits of the blessed bishop Swithun; to his tomb, the sick come and are healed.

The Winchester Troper refers to two manuscripts of 11th-century polyphony from the Winchester Cathedral in Hampshire, England. This is one of the earliest examples of organum, a very early form of Western polyphony in which one voice (*vox organalis*) is added to the chant (*vox principalis*), sung above it. This responsory commemorates Saint Swithun, an Anglo-Saxon bishop of Winchester (c. 800-863) with a reputation for posthumous miracle-working.

Idle Hands is inspired by medieval chant and its many transformations over the centuries, using the antiphon *Laudemus Dominum In Beati Antistitis* as a source melody. Each movement is a contemporary take on a different concept of transformation, that will either showcase or obscure the source material. Like a traditional cyclic mass, this piece consists of five movements, all making use of the same musical phrase.

Рождественская Стихиря (Christmas Stichira)

Anonymous (ca. 1670)
Muscovy

Transcription by Evgeny Skurat

World premiere

Troestrochny polyphony

Днесь раждает Дева Творца всех: Едем приносит вертеп, и звезда показывает Христа, Солнца сушим во тьме. С дары волсви поклонишася, верою просвещаеми: **Ай не на най ни тай не не най ни ай най ни** и пастырие видеша чудо, ангелом воспевающим и глаголющим: слава в вышних Богу и на земли мир **Ай не на най ни тай не не най ни ай най ни** во человецех благоволение.

Today the Virgin gives birth to the Creator of all: Eden brings a cave, and a star shows Christ, to the Sun in darkness. With gifts the Magi worshiped, enlightened by faith: **Ai ne na nai ni tai ne ne nai ni ai nai ni** and the shepherds saw a miracle, the angel singing and saying: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace **Ai ne na nai ni tai ne ne nai ni ai nai ni** good will among men.

This Christmas hymn is among the treasures of 17th century Russian polyphony. An example of *troestrochny* polyphony (from the Russian for “three lines”), it incorporates nonsensical syllables to illustrate the voices of angels as they descend from heaven to sing to Jesus on the eve of his birth.

legok i mal (2024)

Lucy McKnight (b. 1998)
United States

World premiere

Каждый легок и мал, кто взошел на вершину холма

Утро Леодин Аронзон (1966)

Everyone is light and small who ascends to the top of the hill

From the poem *Morning* by Leonid Aronzon (1966)

“legok i mal” is inspired by the first line of Anastasia’s favorite poem: “Kazhdyi legok i mal kto vzoshol na vershynu holma” which means, “Everyone is light and small who ascends to the top of the hill.” The piece also uses the traditional nonsense syllables typical of angelic moments in 17th century Russian polyphony. It was an immense pleasure writing this for my dear friends and imagining us all basking in the beauty of a gorgeous hike and frolicking from hill to valley.

-Lucy McKnight

Communion Hymn for Mid-Pentecost

Ioannis Plousiadenos (ca. 1429–1500)
Kingdom of Candia (Crete)

‘Ο εωρακός εμέ εώρακε τόν πατέρα, καί ο τρώγων μου τήν σάρκα, καί πίνων μου τό αίμα εν εμοί μένει καγώ εν αυτώ είπεν ο Κύριος.

He who has seen me has seen the Father, and he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him, says the Lord (John 14:9 and 6:56).

These two Byzantine hymns are some of the only examples of polyphonic (“multi-voice”) music in the Byzantine liturgical repertory, which consists almost entirely of monophonic (“one-voice”) chant. Plousiadenos and Gazes were composers living on Crete under Venetian rule; Gazes was a refugee fleeing Constantinople after the fall of Byzantium in 1453. Their two-voice style of polyphony is strongly reminiscent of that practiced by contemporaneous Western European composers, called *cantus planus binatim* (Latin for “plainchant twice”).

Holy Friday Hymn Prologue «Already the Pen»

Manuel Gazes (fl. 1st half of 15th century)
Constantinople

Ἦδη βάπτεται κάλαμος ἀποφάσεως, παρὰ κριτῶν ἀδίκων, καί Ἰησοῦς δικάζεται, καί κατακρίνεται σταυρῷ, καί πάσχει ἡ Κτίσις, ἐν σταυρῷ καθορθῶσα τόν Κύριον. Ἄλλ’ ὁ φύσει σώματος δι’ ἐμέ πάσχων, ἀγαθὲ Κύριε δόξα σοι.

Already the pen of sentence is being dipped in ink by unjust judges, and Jesus is being convicted and condemned to the Cross; and creation, seeing its Lord on the Cross, is suffering. But loving Lord, who for me suffer in your bodily nature, glory to you!

Burial Trisagion a8

Anonymous (ca. 1730-40)
Russian Empire

Transcription by Lada Kondrashkova
US premiere

Святы́й Бо́же, Святы́й Крепкий, Святы́й безсмертный, помилуй нас.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.

Another setting of the same Trisagion text, this Burial Trisagion is a late masterpiece of the Slavic *partes* polyphony, dating to the 1810s. The intricate setting of polyphony in eight parts is indicative of the composer's familiarity with contemporary Western harmony, yet retains the particular qualities of the *partes* style. Its shimmering, soaring long lines evoke the calm stasis of heavenly beauty and peace.

Demestvo is

Maddy Kushan soprano, treasurer, baker

Anastasia Shmytova soprano, founder, director

Lucy McKnight singer, composer, merch maker

Emma Simmons mezzo soprano, manager

Biographies



Lucy McKnight is an artist who works with colors, textures, and sounds to create environments in which she and others can explore intense emotions. She is interested in using touch, connection, movement, and sound to build mutually cathartic experiences for performers and audiences alike. Her work has been performed across the U.S and in Europe by artists including Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, JACK Quartet, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Yarn/Wire, Nois, Parker Ramsay, Nick Photinos, Dither Quartet, Longleash Trio, and Transient Canvas. Currently, Lucy is pursuing her PhD in Music Composition at Princeton University.

Anastasia Shmytova is a musicologist and soprano from Saint Petersburg, Russia, pursuing a PhD in musicology at Princeton University. Her work focuses on medieval and early modern Slavic and Byzantine chant; early Slavic polyphonies; history of notation; history of liturgy. In addition to her research, Anastasia sings with the Princeton University Chamber Choir, the Aquinas Institute Choral Scholars, Osanna Chamber Ensemble, and Chronos Ensemble. She is the founder and director of Demestvo, an ensemble that sings medieval Slavic chant and early polyphony.



Emma Simmons is a mezzo soprano and PhD candidate in the department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Princeton. Born and raised in the UK, as an undergraduate Emma was a choral scholar in the Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, as part of which she performed in numerous concerts, tours and recordings, alongside roles in student opera and giving recitals. As a masters student she was a member of Yale Schola Cantorum, and since beginning her PhD at Princeton, as well as her choral activities in Chamber Choir and Demestvo, she has also performed as a soloist, most recently in selections from Cavalli's opera *Veremonda*.

Maddy Kushan is a Musicology PhD candidate working in the music cognition lab. Her research explores attention and coordination in ensemble singing. She sings Soprano in local choirs including the Princeton University Chamber Choir and the choir of Trinity Church.



Caroline Shaw is a musician who moves among roles, genres, and mediums, trying to imagine a world of sound that has never been heard before but has always existed. She works often in collaboration with others, as producer, composer, violinist, and vocalist. Caroline is the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize in Music, several Grammys, and an honorary doctorate from Yale. Her favorite color is yellow, and her favorite smell is rosemary.

Justin Wright is a composer, cellist, and multidisciplinary artist from Montreal. Wright's music is characterized by a seamless blending of avant-garde approaches and timbral experimentation with the evocative and meditative spirit of folk and sacred music traditions. Classical concert halls, underground loft venues, art museums, pop music venues, planetariums, and the glaciers of the High Arctic have all comfortably been home to his performances, a reflection of his defiance of traditional categorization and wide-ranging artistic interests. Wright's primary composition tools, for both electronic and acoustic music, are his cello, Ableton Live, a modular synthesizer, and a 4-track tape machine. He has a background in molecular biology research, and was self-taught as a composer before beginning his PhD in music composition at Princeton University.

Guest singers

Rupert Peacock bass

Gabriel Crouch bass

Benjamin Musachio tenor

Maxim Schidlovsky tenor

Guest instrumentalists

Karl Ronneburg bombo drum

Ellie Cherry soprano recorder

Ben Matus recorder

Justin Wright viola da gamba, cello

Irene Han cello

Sponsors

We would like to acknowledge the co-sponsoring of the event by the Seeger Center for Hellenic Studies, the Humanities Council, the Department of French and Italian, the Center for Culture, Society and Religion, the Medieval Studies Department, the Department of Music at Princeton, the Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures, the Scala Foundation, the Graduate School and the department of Russian East European Eurasian Studies. Co-sponsorship does not equal endorsement.