

The Medieval Swingers



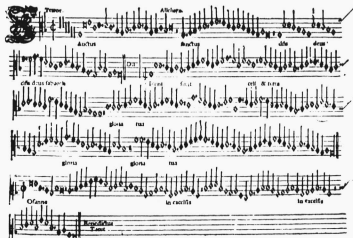
"Let's go! Let us give each other a good glass of wine. Hurrah! Good fellow, I'll be glad to bring you one. Hurrah! Let there be nothing but joy while we drink the cool wine. Hurrah! Oh what a great misfortune when there is a lack of wine!"

Those were the lyrics of a little song written by Hans Leo Hassler, who lived in Germany in the late 16th century and for a time was organist at a Dresden chapel. A century earlier, Heinrich Isaac, one of the great composers of the Renaissance, penned these words for one of his works.

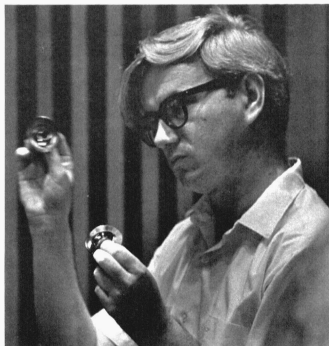
"A peasant had a young daughter who no longer wanted to be a maiden. My beautiful little Maruscka, I shall not leave you in that misery."

Which all goes to help prove that history doesn't have to be dull and there's a lot to be said for culture. There's also a lot to be said for the Collegium Musicum, the University group that performs a wide variety of pre-Romantic works, ranging from such songs and dances of the late Renaissance to Gregorian chants, Lutheran cantatas and 18th century masses and concertos.

"Literally," explains Dr. Andrew Minor, "collegium musicum means college music. It was an 18th century term given groups which performed music of the times. Now, of course, collegiums largely present music of the past, but music not ordinarily in regular repertoire."



Music above is photostat of the original manuscript of "Missa Alleluja," one of works performed by Collegium Musicum.



Started on the Columbia campus in 1959, the Collegium Musicum has been directed since its inception, by Dr. Minor, professor of music history and theory. Although the Missouri organization was one of the first in the Midwest, most major universities now have collegiums. The University's group remains one of the most active, however, and probably has performed as many "firsts" as any collegium anywhere (a first being a work that has not been presented since it was originated).

The reception by the public has been enthusiastic, due in part, undoubtedly, to the enthusiasm and skill of the performers. Composed of both faculty members and students, instrumentalists and vocalists, the Collegium has presented some 30 public concerts of 15 entirely different programs since 1959. They have played before such diverse audiences as the Central Renaissance Conference and American Biochemical Association. They have performed in both St. Louis and Kansas City, as well as in Dallas. The University Press has published two of its albums.

Biggest success ingredient, however, is authen-



MUSIC IN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE LIFE:

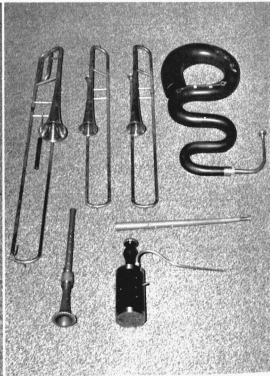
anthology of vocal and
instrumental music, 1200-1614



Collegium Musicum of the University of Missouri

University of Missouri Press, Columbia

Cover design of the first album recorded by Collegium
is reproduced above. Long-play record still is available
at \$4.95 each from the University of Missouri Press.



ticity. "Music," says Dr. Minor, "loses to the extent it is taken out of its original context."

And Dr. Minor and his group go to fantastic lengths to achieve this accuracy. First of all, there are the instruments themselves. The Collegium is well-equipped with exact reproductions of Renaissance and baroque-type musical instruments, many of them purchased with \$4000 from the Alumni Achievement Fund. Although they are difficult to play, the reproductions make the music sound better because the original music was written with those types of instruments in mind. "For the most part," says Dr. Minor, "the old instruments have a cleaner, more transparent texture. There is more resonance and richness of sound."

An example of this is the harpsichord, similar in shape to that of the modern grand piano, although smaller. But since the harpsichord sound is produced by plucking the strings instead of hitting them with a felt-covered hammer, the older instrument produces clearer notes. Alumni Achievement money was used to buy the harpsichord, as well as 15 other instruments, ranging from a bagpipe to a sackbut (early-day trombone) and serpent (a leather-covered woodwind). Altogether the Collegium has 28 instruments, but there are some gaps in several of the "families," and there are more students wanting to play with the group than there are instruments available.

The Collegium provides a good learning and research experience because of the insistence on authenticity. Besides making sure the right instruments are used for the right music (you wouldn't use a fanfare trumpet for an 18th century cantata), Dr. Minor and his staff go back to the original compositions for the music they play. And Renaissance music wasn't scored. It was written in four parts and played on the instruments available. All percussion was improvised ("Some of my best percussionists are jazz drummers," says Dr. Minor). This means that the old music must be arranged to obtain the best possible—and most accurate—sound. The correct number of vocalists and instrumentalists must be used. One program last year featured 37 orchestra members, 31 singers.

It is this penchant for careful research which has led to the several "firsts" performed by



the group. Last spring it was Johann Michael Haydn's "Missa Sancti Hieronymi," composed by the brother of the famous Joseph Haydn in 1777. A recording of the "Requiem" by Michael Hayden performed by the Collegium was published last winter by the University Press. "In all respects it is a production of which a university group can be proud," wrote the *Kansas City Star* reviewer. Earlier the Press published another Collegium album, "Music in Medieval and Renaissance Life." Both long-play records still are available. Another first was the production of special Medici wedding music and a play, written in 1539. This work was the collaboration between Professor Minor and Professor Bonner Mitchell of the Romance Language Department. The University Press plans to publish both the play and the music in book form.

On Dec. 3 the Collegium opens its ninth season with Handel's oratorio, "Joshua," written by the composer of the more famous "Messiah" in 1748.

As Hans Hassler wrote 375 years ago, "It is now meet to make lovely music." □