



CLASSICAL MUSIC | DECEMBER 22, 2014 ISSUE

THE ART OF THE VOICE

Music for the season at the Metropolitan Museum.

BY RUSSELL PLATT



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A golden Spanish choir screen and a Neapolitan Baroque crèche draw visitors over the holidays into the Metropolitan Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall. Many may not have noticed the meticulously painted copy of a large thirteenth-century Christian mosaic from the Hagia Sophia that is hung above one of the entrance portals. A few days ago, six gentleman choristers performed on a little balcony below it, in the museum's first-ever "Byzantine Holiday Pop-Up" concert, directed, with authority, by Eleftherios Eleftheriadis, the instructor in Byzantine music at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, in Yonkers. The singers, who performed



The Met presents a series of Byzantine choral concerts in its magnificent Medieval Sculpture Hall.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMAN MURADOV



ancient sacred and secular chants in Greek, Arabic, Armenian, and Russian, tinged with the tangy modal inflections of Levantine music, didn't always stop museumgoers from chatting, milling about, and passing through. But this half-hour presentation (offered again in three afternoon performances on Dec. 19) is a commendable effort to bring holiday music back to the magnificent space, where for more than a decade, until 2012, the great male chorus Chanticleer gave Christmastime concerts.

Most of the museum's other holiday programs, which include performances by the Attacca Quartet (Dec. 17) and by the pianist Simone Dinnerstein (Dec. 20), take place in the more sedate space of the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium. One of the more soulful of them will be presented by another formidable male chorus, Cantus, from Minneapolis. "All Is Calm" (Dec. 23) is a dramatic re-creation of the spontaneous Christmas celebration that, for a few hours, silenced the guns on the Western Front in December of 1914. Cleverly constructed by the director Peter Rothstein in the style of a radio play, the piece uses French, British, German, and American folk tunes and popular songs to weave a heartbreaking tribute to the men on both sides, who, in defiance of their commanders, had the courage to affirm their common humanity. ♦