

Gruuthuse *songs from the manuscript*

Pandora² & Ultreya



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(For this concert Inge Zutterman replaces Sylvia Broeckaert)

The Gruuthuse manuscript: a short introduction

Since about 1850, experts in Dutch, musicologists and historians have been fascinated by the so-called 'Gruuthuse manuscript', dating back to circa 1400. The manuscript is named after the 15th-century bibliophile nobleman, Lodewijk van Gruuthuse (Bruges, circa 1422-1492), the alleged owner of the manuscript. In 2007, the manuscript was acquired by the Royal Library in The Hague. The remaining 85 parchment pages of the manuscript contain 7 prayers, 147 songs and 18 poems, both religious and profane. Except for some 6 prayers, all the texts are unique: they have not been preserved in other manuscripts.

The texts in the Gruuthuse manuscript are considered some of the most important literary works in Dutch. Quite exceptionally, the music to the songs has been preserved. Song 85 is the famous 'Kerelslied' (Churls' song), in which an elitist townsman expresses his disgust of the 'kerels', boorish and gluttonous churls. The song cycle on the untimely death of Egidius (songs 97-101) still moves the readers and listeners. These two texts are best known to the general public, but the manuscript contains several other literary masterpieces.

The poets, composers and the intended audience of the Gruuthuse manuscript all belonged to the cosmopolitan higher middle classes who lived in Bruges at the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th century. Two poets are known by name: Jan Moritoen en Jan van Hulst. Egidius, the friend whose death is lamented in a song cycle in the manuscript, is most probably Gillis Honin sr., a broker from Bruges. October 8, 1385, he died unexpectedly at quite a young age. At that time, he was an alderman in Bruges.

Noël Geirnaert, archivist Bruges

Program of the Concert in the Brewery Gruut in Gent on July 16th 2014 for the IAML Conference

Wi willen van de kerels zinghen

(snare drum, hurdy-gurdy, friction drum, bagpipe)

The “kerels”, the rebellious peasants, are a motley crew. They are dishevelled, have long beards and wear worn clothes and mended shoes. They are stupid and eat more than is needed.

Wel up elc sin die vruecht begaert (psaltery, flute, drum)

Come all who wish joy. Mary, the noble rose, lights the dark night en protects us sinners. Let us praise her and raise our glasses full of noble Rhine wine.

Egidius waer bestu bleven

Egidius, where are you now?

I miss you, my friend.

You have chosen death and I have to keep on living.

In weet bi bilich (portative organ, lute, flute)

I am totally confused, the world is twisted, courtly fidelity no longer exists.

De kapelaen van Hoedelem (lute, tromba marina)

The chaplain of Oedelem, a village near Bruges, asks his sexton to look out while he visits a married female parishioner. The husband comes home and catches them in the act in the bedroom. During the violent fight that follows, the sexton is happy to be standing outside.

Lijskin wat helpt vele ghestreiden

(jew's harp, medieval fiddle, drum)

Wouter wants to make a pass at Lijsken, but she turns him down maliciously.

Eventually, when the quarrel ends, Wouter takes what he wants.

Laet ons den wert bedanken

(portative organ, lute, flute, medieval fiddle, drum)

Let us thank the innkeeper and his wife for their hospitality and wish them the very best for the new year.

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