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CAPPELLA ROMANA RETURNS TO BING CONCERT HALL ON NOV. 4 TO REVISIT THE MYSTERIES OF HAGIA SOPHIA

A performance and related symposium will explore the animation of this medieval space through voice and light

Stanford, CA, October 24, 2016—Take a virtual journey to Hagia Sophia, Constantinople’s Great Church, when the Portland-based vocal ensemble Cappella Romana returns to Bing Concert Hall on November 4 as part of the “Icons of Sound” project. In an evening-length presentation titled Hagia Sophia Reimagined, the legendary church’s reverberant acoustics will be digitally imprinted on Cappella Romana’s Byzantine chant, and will be complemented by visuals designed to create a wholly immersive experience.

Next month’s program is devoted entirely to recently discovered music from the liturgy of Hagia Sophia, much of which has not been heard in centuries. According to Bissera Pentcheva, an associate professor in Stanford’s Department of Art and Art History who spearheaded this project, the experience offers an “incredible opportunity to share research as an aesthetic act via performance.”

The Stanford Live presentation is a joint effort with Pentcheva; Jonathan Abel, Fernando Lopez-Lezcano and others from Stanford’s Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA); and Michael Ramsaur, professor and director of production emeritus for Stanford’s Department of Theater and Performance Studies.

This labor of love first brought Cappella Romana to Bing in 2013 in a debut concert also featuring CCRMA’s digital recreation of Hagia Sophia. The ensemble’s return visit, however, will take advantage of new visual projections and lighting, which Ramsaur calls “atmospheric reinforcement,” in addition to a far more accurate simulation of the unique acoustics of an edifice that for nearly one
thousand years was the largest enclosed space in the world.

Whereas as the 2013 performance of Byzantine chant was based on stereo recordings of four balloon pops, which is all that Pentcheva was allowed to record in Hagia Sophia, this time around the CCRMA team was able to utilize more-precise sound waves and analyze recordings of multiple balloon pops in different locations.

“In Hagia Sophia, listening is as much about being enveloped by the reverberation as by the content of what you are experiencing,” explains Abel. “Some of the edifice’s unique sound results from the interaction of the dome and the colonnade. You get reflections from the sides as well as from the dome, and your attention is drawn upward.”

The concert is the result of a virtual community of dedicated scholars, scientists, musicologists, musicians and artists who have joined together to re-create the transcendent experience of listening to spiritual music within a church that became a mosque that became a state-run museum. “Everyone is surprised at how gripping and captivating this music is,” says Pentcheva.

A free symposium, titled *Voice, Architecture and Imagination*, will be hosted the next day, November 5, in the McMurtry Building’s Oshman Hall. This daylong event will explore three topics: animation as a temporal phenomenon in medieval art; the role of digital technology in staging an encounter with the past; and the role of modern performance in shaping a direction in museum display practices, cultural heritage and historical preservation.

For more information on performance and symposium, visit live.stanford.edu.

**TICKETS**

Tickets for Cappella Romana’s performance of *Hagia Sophia Reimignied*, presented by Stanford Live on November 4, range from $30-$50 for adults (subject to change) and are $15 for all current Stanford students. Tickets are available at the Bing Concert Hall Ticket Office, by phone at 650-724-2464 or online at live.stanford.edu.

**VENUE INFORMATION**

Bing Concert Hall is located on the Stanford University campus at 327 Lasuen Street on the corner of Lasuen and Campus Dr. Parking on campus is free of charge after 4:00 PM and on weekends at all times, and may be found in the Galvez Lot across Campus Drive from Bing Concert Hall.
ABOUT STANFORD LIVE

Stanford Live presents a wide range of the finest performances from around the world fostering a vibrant learning community and providing distinctive experiences through the performing arts. With its home at Bing Concert Hall, Stanford Live is simultaneously a public square, a sanctuary and a lab, drawing on the breadth and depth of Stanford University to connect performance to the significant issues, ideas and discoveries of our time.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

What: **Icons of Sound: Hagia Sophia Reimagined**  
Featuring Cappella Romana, Jonathan Abel and Bissera Pentcheva, *co-creators*  
Alexander Nemerov and Chris Chafe, *hosts*

When: Friday, November 4, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Bing Concert Hall, 327 Lasuen Street, Stanford University

Tickets: $30-$50

Description: Take a virtual journey to Hagia Sophia, Constantinople’s Great Church, when the renowned choir Cappella Romana returns to the Bing to continue its collaboration with Stanford’s Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA) and its Art and Art History department. CCRMA will digitally imprint Hagia Sophia’s reverberant acoustics on Cappella Romana’s sublime Byzantine chant, complemented by visuals designed to create a wholly immersive experience.

What: **Icons of Sound: Voice, Architecture, Imagination**

When: Saturday, November 5, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Where: The McMurtry Building’s Oshman Hall, 355 Roth Way, Stanford University

Tickets: Free

Description: Presented alongside the performance by Cappella Romana recreating the stunning acoustics of the Hagia Sophia in Bing Concert Hall, this related symposium explores how music, ritual, architecture and digital technologies converge in modern performance and immersive sensory experiences to excite our imaginations for bygone medieval cultures.

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