

MUSIC FOR A PLAGUE

1550



Falsobordone

Oh, happy people of the future, who have not known these miseries and maybe will class our testimony with the fables...



...we have, indeed, deserved these punishments but may our posterity not merit the same!

PETRARCA (1304-1374), IN A LETTER TO HIS BROTHER

The year is 1350 and there is music everywhere! Everyone wants to escape these terrible times of danger, death and plague. Escape by dancing, loving and living for now, more than ever; perhaps a natural reaction in the face of looming disaster. New dance tunes spring out of musicians's imaginations and love poems – spiritual as well as secular – are being sung in loud voices. *Laude spirituali* and songs praising the Holy Mother Mary bring hope of salvation, while the populist uprisers known as flagellants roam the countryside with their catchy songs which are just as effective as their flails in inducing religious fervor.

People react to crises in many ways – we hoard, we cheat, we deny, we isolate, we despair, we hate, we love... but above all, we *hope*. Hope that a cure is around the corner, be it the Day of Judgement or a life-preserving vaccine. And of course we all hope for a return to some sort of normal way of life; in the year 1350 just as well as in the present.

See this album as a collage of impressions from a time when the Great Mortality was ever present. We're serving you music and recipes for food as well as for thought. We hope you will enjoy it – see you on the other side of the plague...

Falsobordone



- i **Introitus (Dies Irae, Procurans Odíum)** 4:22
 EAU: Shawms, bagpipe, medieval trumpet ♦ AR: Bagpipe, frame drum
 MP: Hurdy-gurdy ♦ DÂ: Side drum, tamborello, bells
- ii **Maria unser frowe** ANONYMOUS FLAGELLANT HYMN 4:19
 EAU: Gothic harp, bagpipe, shawm, citole, medieval recorder, jaw's harp, voice
 AR: Rebec ♦ SK: Medieval fiddle
- iii **Quant j'ay l'espant** GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT (1300-1377) 3:54
 EAU: Gothic harp, organetto, bagpipe, medieval recorder ♦ AR: Rebec, frame drum, bells
- iv **Comment qu'à moy lontéinne** GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT 5:04
 EAU: Harp, bagpipe, voice ♦ AR: Voice, tamborello ♦ SK: Medieval fiddle ♦ DÂ: Req
- v **Ognor mi trovo** FRANCESCO LANDINI (1325-1397) 4:14
 EAU & AR: Bagpipes ♦ DÂ: Tamborello, tamburo
- vi **A tutta gente** ANONYMOUS LAUDA 4:33
 EAU: Harp, Månmakapipa, voice ♦ AR: Frame drum, voice ♦ KSL: Voice ♦ MP: Hurdy-gurdy

- vii **La Manfredina** ANONYMOUS INSTRUMENTAL DANCE 5:39
 EAU: Gothic harp, rauschpfeife, medieval recorders, jaw's harp
 AR: Rebec, bagpipe ♦ MP: Hurdy-gurdy ♦ DÂ: Tammorra, side drum
- viii **Istampitta Isabella** ANONYMOUS INSTRUMENTAL DANCE 3:42
 EAU: Organetto ♦ AR: Frame drum
- ix **Alta trinità beata** ANONYMOUS LAUDA 3:19
 EAU: Medieval smallpipe, symphony, voice ♦ AR: Frame drum, bells, voice ♦ KSL: Voice
- x **Plus Dure** GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT 3:31
 EAU & AR: Bagpipes ♦ DÂ: Tamborello, side drum, Quarqab
- xi **Quant je suis mis au retour** GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT 3:02
 EAU: Small Gothic harp, medieval recorder, voice
- xii **Processio flagellantorum** ANONYMOUS FLAGELLANT HYMNS 11:56
 (Nu tret herzuo der bössen welle, Maria muoter reinû mait, Ad mortem festinamus)
 EAU: Gothic harp, shawms, bagpipe, rauschpfeife, citole, medieval trumpet, folk flute,
 whips, voice ♦ AR: Bagpipe, rebec, frame drum ♦ MP: Hurdy-gurdy, voice
 DÂ: Side drum, tamborello, bells ♦ SK: Medieval fiddle



There is really only one way to kick off an album like this: With the mother of all tunes associated with death and ominous forebodings; the very music for the Mass of the Dead – **Dies Irae**. One of the most quoted melodies of all time, it is originally a Gregorian chant possibly dating back so far as to the 7th century. Here we pair it together in the opening track called **Introitus** with a famous *conductus* that was still popular in the 14th century: **Procurans Odium** from the *Carmina Burana* that stems from a monastery in Bavaria back in the good old 13th century (which was a comparably peaceful and plague-free time). By the way, *Dies Iræ* makes one more surprise appearance somewhere along the way on this album... can you find it?

From there we go on to a Mother Mary hymn documented by Hugo Spechtshart of Reutlingen when he described the flagellant craze that started in the summer of 1348: **Maria unser Frowe**. It has been shortened here since the original has over 50 verses, making sure it would last for even an extended flagellation spree.

Now we meet one of the most famous composers of the Middle Ages: Guillaume de Machaut who composed the love song **Quant j'ay l'espard** ("When I have sight of your glance so bright, most honoured lady"), a two-part *rondeau* that we play here on a seemingly incongruous setting of harp, organetto, rebec, bagpipes and percussion! His monophonic *virelai* **Comment qu'à moy lonteinne** ("However far from me you may be, you are near to me in thought night and day") is based on an earlier *chanson de toile*, *Bele Doette*, in which a lady laments the death of her lover in a joust. Incidentally, Machaut isolated himself in a remote monastery for most of 1348-1349 to wait out the plague (see "The end of the plague" at the end of this booklet) where he supposedly composed much music during his quarantine.

If pressed for an Italian counterpart of Machaut, you could do worse than suggesting Francesco Landini, a master of the *trecento* musical style as well as a virtuoso on the organetto! In his madrigal **Ognor mi trovo** the two parts bounce of each other in a very clever way and luckily it fits the bagpipe's somewhat limited range. The percussion here is fittingly flamboyantly Italian in style! This type of song (alongside other genres like the *virelai* and *ballata*) would fit the bill for the company of young people in Boccaccio's *Decameron* who escape a Florence ravaged by the plague, and isolate themselves to sing, dance and tell stories in a countryside mansion.

We remain in Italy for **A tutta gente** ("I pray and ask every person, to praise the fragrant Margaret"), a type of song called *Lauda Spirituale* that is closely associated with the flagellants (or their Italian counterpart "*disciplinati*"). **La Manfredina** and **Istampitta Isabella** are both rather raucous tunes and examples of the vanishingly small repertoire of medieval instrumental dance music that has survived. As mentioned, some people embraced music and dance to forget about their world crashing down around them. Dancing manias would continue to appear across Europe over the next two centuries, the most famous incident being the Dancing Plague of 1518, when over 400 people danced themselves to death in Strasbourg over a period of several months.

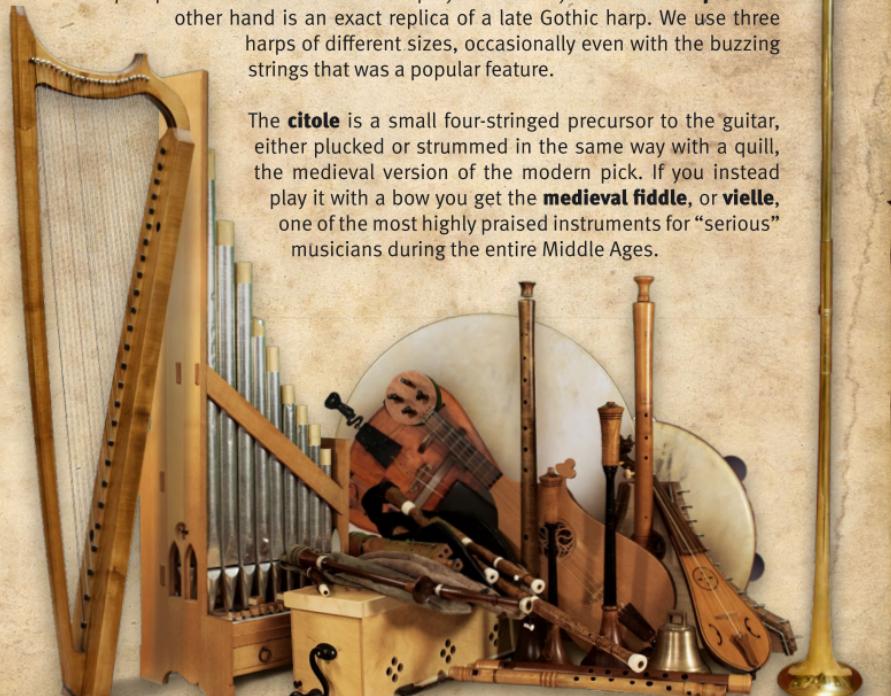
Alta Trinità beata, another *lauda*, is probably familiar to anyone who has ever spent some time in a choir; this is however an earlier original version. Then, Machaut has provided us with another showstopper: **Plus dure** ("Harder than a diamond are you, my lady"). He is also behind one of the most famous and beautiful of all medieval love songs, **Quant je suis mis au retour** ("When I return from seeing my lady, upon my soul, I haven't a care in the world").

The end draws nigh, when we come across a procession of flagellants (**Processio Flagellantorum**) singing their recruiting hymn **Nu tret herzuo der bössen welle** ("Now join us all who will repent, let's flee the fiery heat of hell") after whipping themselves into a frenzy. This is followed by another hymn to Mother Mary, **Maria muoter reinū māt** ("Mother Mary, virgin pure, have mercy on Christendom") before we rather irreverently turn it into a dance tune inspired by the *saltarello*. Finally we top things off with a veritable *Saltatio Mortis* (dance of death): **Ad mortem festinamus** ("We hurry towards our death, so stop sinning!") from the famous song collection *Llibre Vermell*. Although this was compiled later in the century, most of the music appears from its style to originate earlier. We should say also, that technically flagellants were forbidden from using any musical instruments, so we're clearly dealing with an extra heretical faction here...

And so we eventually part ways, but not before some more chance encounters in the countryside; so be sure to stick around a bit!



The instruments we use on this recording would all most likely be familiar to musicians in 1350. Some are copies of actual instruments in museums and others are reconstructions. Our **organetto**, Francesco Landini's favourite instrument, is a mixture of several depictions of this portable (or **portative**) organ where one hand pumps the bellow and the other plays on the keyboard. The **harp** on the other hand is an exact replica of a late Gothic harp. We use three harps of different sizes, occasionally even with the buzzing strings that was a popular feature.



The **citole** is a small four-stringed precursor to the guitar, either plucked or strummed in the same way with a quill, the medieval version of the modern pick. If you instead play it with a bow you get the **medieval fiddle**, or **vieille**, one of the most highly praised instruments for "serious" musicians during the entire Middle Ages.

The **rebec** is another type of fiddle, teardrop-shaped and usually with only three strings. On the other end of the social ladder you find the drone instruments – **hurdy-gurdies**, of which the **symphony** is a boxed-in variant, and of course **bagpipes**. They have always been very popular for dance music since they provide their own accompaniment, but as we hopefully prove on this recording they work just as fine for polyphonic art music! If you remove the melody pipe, or **chanter**, from the bag, you get the **shawm** – precursor to the modern oboe and a very versatile instrument, but somewhat hard to control. To remedy that, you can utilize a windcap on the top and you then get a **rauschpfeife**, one of the loudest instruments available in the pre-electric era.



MÄNMARKAPIPA

The other type of wind instrument we use are, first, the **trumpet**; without any modern valves it is confined to the tones of the overtone series and so it is of limited melodic use. We use it mostly as a symbol for the heavenly "tuba" heralding the end of days. Secondly, we have different types of fipple flutes; the **medieval recorder** has a larger bore than its modern counterpart and thus a much stronger tone but less range; more common was probably a number of non-standardized **folk flutes** that are similar to the recorder but with a very different sound. For example, the **Mänmarkapipa** is based on old Swedish traditional wooden folk flutes but it is indicative of what the instrument must have been like in its earlier forms before it was settled into the familiar recorder of today.



VIEILLE

The drums we use are mainly different types of **frame drums** and **tambourines / tamborello**, but also the traditional **side drum** makes an appearance, as well as the uniquely named **qarqab**, a type of clappers. Finally, the tuned **bells** and the **jaw's harp**, played biting down on the shackles surrounding the metal tongue, are also part of the percussion family.

The musicians on this album are all highly sought-after specialists in their own field, and we in Falsobordone are very happy and lucky that we were able to work with them! The result is a mixture of live takes and studio recordings (sometimes from across the globe) but we hope you won't be able to hear which is which... And so, we are proud to present:



Karin S. Lagergren
Voice

Karin is a singer and musicologist specializing in Gregorian chant and she is familiar to anyone who knows our first album, "Figs, fiddles and fine play" where she - just like here - sings two Italian Laude in her own transcriptions. You can also listen to her in her own ensemble *Gemma*.



Shira Kammen
Medieval fiddle

We first had the pleasure of performing with Shira at a US tour in the early 2000's, and ever since she is one of our absolute favorite musicians! Equally at home in the folk and early repertoires, her energy and personal playing style is unique and we're thrilled that she joins us here!

WWW.KARINLAGERGREN.SE



Magne Pettersson
Hurdy-gurdy, voice

Magne is a very talented multiinstrumentalist who has played all genres from punk to medieval music, among other groups in the seminal Swedish band Vox Vulgaris. He is the son of legendary hurdy-gurdy player Harald Pettersson (who built Erik's very first bagpipe back in 1991!).

WWW.SHIRAKAMMEN.COM



Daniel Åhlman
Percussion

Famous from the medieval "boy band" Patrask and with an extensive background in Nordic, Balkan and Italian folk and early music, Daniel is an exceptionally gifted and perceptive percussionist who it has been our pleasure to perform with on many occasions during the years!



Daniel Serra
Culinary Archaeologist

Daniel supplied the recipes to our last CD and we are happy he agreed to share some of his knowledge in this field again. He has devoted his life to research, consume and prepare food from the Scandinavian Viking Age to the Renaissance.

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/PASTFOOD
WWW.MEMENTO.ST



FALSOBORDONE

Anna Rynefors - Rebec, bagpipes, percussion, voice
Erik Ask-Upmark - Gothic harp, bagpipes, citole, symphony, jaw's harp, medieval trumpet, shawm, medieval recorders, Månskäpapipa, organetto, rauschpfeife, bells, voice

Anna and Erik founded Falsobordone in the mid-1990s and has since performed hundreds of concerts in dozens of countries, not only with medieval music (which remains their main interest) but also with music from many other historical periods. In fact, their musical range covers a period from the early Viking Age right up to jazz of the 1940s, so they have a lot to choose from. You can find more information about their different endeavours at any of the websites:

WWW.FALSOBORDONE.SE
WWW.ANNARYNEFORS.SE • WWW.ASK-UPMARK.SE
WWW.DRAAM.COM • WWW.DJPROHIBITION.COM

Song lyrics

ii Maria unser frowe

Maria unser frowe – Kyrie eleison
Was in göttlicher schowe – Alleluia,
G'lobet sis du Maria

Zuoz ir wart ain engel gesant
Der waz Gabriel genant

Er sprach: Du bist genade vol
Got ist mit dir, dem g'felst du wol

Du enphast und gbirst ân kint
Des rich nûmmer dhain end gewint

Maria truog ânn smerzen
Ir kint undr irem herzen

Do si ir kindes do genaz
Do waz si magd as si vor waz

Do ward es ghaisseen lesu Crist
Der all der welt an tröster ist

Ein sterne luht drei küngen drin
Gen Bethlehem zum kindelin

Won Got den tauf gewihet hat
Daz er uns raint von missetat

Der diz g'dicht loblich singet
Grossen lon es im bringet

Mary our lady - Lord have mercy
was viewed by God - Halleluja,
Praised are you, Mary

An angel was sent to her
that was named Gabriel

He said, you are full of mercy
the Lord is with you, you please him well

You will receive and bear a child
whose kingdom shall never end

Mary bore without pain
the child under her heart

As she bore her child there
she became a virgin as she was before

He was named Jesus Christ
a consoler for all the world

A star led three wise men there
To the child in Bethlehem

Whomever have been baptised by God
Has been cleared of all sins

Whoever sings this song of praise
Will receive a large reward

iv Comment qu'a moy lonteinne

Comment qu'à moy lonteinne
Soiez, dame d'onnour
Si m'estes vous procheinne
Par penser nuit et jour

Car Souvenir me meinne
Si qu'adès sans sejour
Vo biauté souvereinne
Vo gracieus atour
Vo maniere certainne
Et vo fresche coulour
Qui n'est pale ne veinne
Vou toudis sans sejour

Dame, de grace pleinne
Mais vo haute valour
Vo bonté souvereinne
Et vo fine douçour
En vostre douz demeinne
M'ont si mis que m'amour
Sans pensée vilainne
Meint en vous que j'aour

Mais Desirs qui se peinne
D'acroistre mon labour
Tenra mon cuer en peinne
Et de mort en paour
Se Diex l'eure m'ameinne
Qu'à vous, qui estes flour
De toute flour mondeinne
Face tost mon retour

However far from me
You may be, noble lady
You are near to me
In thought night and day

Your memory remains with me
So that straightaway without ceasing
Your surpassing beauty
Your graceful attire
Your assured manner
And your fresh complexion
Which is neither pale nor wan
I always see without ceasing

Lady, full of grace
But your great worth
Your surpassing goodness
And your delicate sweetness
In your gentle power
Have so placed me that my love
Without any unworthy thought
Rests in you whom I adore

But Desire, who strives
To increase my labours
Will keep my heart in distress
And in terror of death
If God does not bring the happy hour
When to you, who are the flower
Of all earthly flowers
I soon make my return

vi A tutta gente, faccio prego e dico

A tutta gente faccio prego e dico
Che laudi meco Margarita aulente

O vergine, che 'n piccola etade
A Dio vi desté, e fecévi sua sposa
Et non voleste, per nobilitade
Che fosse 'n voi, esser del mondo rosa
Anzi prenderesta la fede cristiana
Che scaccia vano et fa a Dio servente

Vincente 'l mondo per disprezzamento
E 'l diaulo che sempre ne combatte
Et poi la carne per maceramento
Teneste sotto li piedi ed atutaste
Sì che da nulla parte nella rocca
Entrò per tocca cosa non aulente

Facete rocca, Margarita fina
Nel cor di Cristo, sonnia sicuranza
Et chi di lui asaggia sempre affina
Si che in battalia parli stare in danza
Et già non cura re né imperadore
O gran signori, tanto fa potente

Si fosti piena e di virtù ornata
O gemma Margarita molto cara
Che chi vi lege per sua avocata
Guardata è da turbatione amara
Et accattate grati.a di partire
Da ogne dire o fare villanamente

Però commeco con devoto core
Laudate quella vergine beata
Ch'è Margarita decta per colore
Ed a virginitate simigliata
Et per humiltade fue sì disposta
Che già per sosta non fallio neente

I pray and ask every person
To praise the fragrant Margaret with me

O virgin, who at a young age
Devoted yourself to God, who took you as his bride
Although of noble blood, you did not want
To be a flower of society
Instead you chose Christianity
That drives away vanity and makes you a servant of God

You defeated the world by disdaining it
You trampled on and tamed
The devil who always fights us
And your flesh through mortification
So that nothing unfragrant could enter your castle
Through cracks from any side

O fine Margaret, you built your castle
In the heart of Christ, who is supreme security
Those who savour him always improve
So that in battle they seem to be at a dance
And pay no heed to king or emperor
Or grand lords, so powerful he makes them

You were so fully adorned with virtue
O Margaret, most precious gem
That those who choose you as advocate
Are protected against bitter disturbance
And you procure them the grace to stay away
From any dishonest word or act

Therefore, devoutly praise with me
That blessed virgin
Who is called Margaret for her luster
And is a symbol of virginity
She was so inclined towards humility
That she never failed

ix Alta trinità beata

Alta Trinità beata
Da nui sia sempre adorata

Trinità gloriosa
Unità maravillosa
Tu se' manna savorosa
A tutt'or desiderata

Da' a nui, maiestade eterna
Deitate sempiterna
La citade k'è superna
Chiaramente illuminata

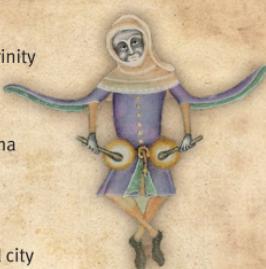
Noi credemo senza fallanza
Fermamente, cum speranza
Tre persone, una substanza
Dalli sancti venerata

Let us always adore
The blessed, high Trinity

Glorious Trinity
Admirable unity
You are savory manna
Always desired

Eternal majesty
Everlasting deity
Give us the celestial city
Brightly illuminated

We believe without doubt
Firmly and with hope
In three persons, one substance
Worshipped by the saints



xi Quant je suis mis au retour

Quant je sui mis au retour
De veoir ma dame
Il n'est peine ne dolour
Que j'aie, par m'amé
Diex! C'est drois que je l'aim
sans blame, de loial amour



Sa biauté, sa grant douçour
D'amoureuse flamme
Par souvenir, nuit et jour
M'espreat et enflame. Diex...

Et quant sa haute valour
Mon fin cuer entame,
Servir la vueil sans folour
Penser ne diffame. Diex...

When I return
from seeing my lady
upon my soul
I haven't a care in the world
Dear God! How I love her
with a pure and faithful love

The memory of her gentle beauty
makes me glow
night and day
with the flame of love. Dear God...

The very thought of her sweet perfection
so melts my tender heart
that my one wish is to serve her
constantly and selflessly. Dear God...



xii Processio flagellantorum

Prima parte: Nu tret herzuo der bössen welle

*Nu tret herzuo der bössen welle
Fliehen von die heissun helle
Lucifer ist bös geselle
Wen er behapt mith bech er lapt
Dez fliehen wir in hab wir den sin.*

Now join us all who will repent
Let's flee the fiery heat of hell
Lucifer is a bad companion
Whom he clutches, he covers with pitch
Let us flee away from him

Secunda parte: María muoter reinū maît

*Maria muoter reinū maît
erbarm dich über die cristenheit
Erbarm dich über dinū kind
dī noch in diesem ellind sint*

Mother Mary, virgin pure
Have mercy on Christendom
Have mercy on thy children
Who still are in this misery

*Maria muoter gnade vol
du kanst und mahst uns ghelfen wol
Verlih uns ânn gnedigen dot
Und bhött uns da vor aller not*

Mother Mary, merciful
You can, and want, to help us
Grant us a merciful death
And save us from all peril

*Erwirb uns huld umm dines kint
des rich niemmer dhaïn end gewint
Daz er uns lös von aller not
und bhötte vor dem gähen tot*

Receive our worship for thy child
Whose kingdom is everlasting
That he may deliver us from all peril
And save us from the plague



Terza parte: Ad mortem festinamus

*Ad mortem festinamus peccare desistamus
Scribere proposui de contemptu mundano
Ut degentes seculi non mulcentur in vano
Iam est hora surgere a somno mortis pravo
Ad mortem festinamus...*

*Vita brevis breviter in brevi finietur
Venit mors velociter quae neminem veretur
Omnia mors perimit et nulli miseretur
Ad mortem festinamus...*

*Tuba cum sonuerit dies erit extrema
et iudex advenerit vocabit sempiterna
electos in patria prescitos ad inferna
Ad mortem festinamus...*

*Vila cadaver eris
Cur non peccare vereris?
Cur intumescere quaeris?
Ut quid pecuniam quaeris?
Quid vestes pomposas geris?
Ut quid honores quaeris?
Cur non penitens confiteris?
Contra proximum non laeteris?*

Ad mortem festinamus...

We hurry towards death, so stop sinning
I want to write about the evil in the world
So that these depraved times don't pass in vain
The time has come to awake in the face of death
We hurry towards death...

Life is short, and soon it will end
Death comes faster than you expect
Death destroys everything and shows no mercy
We hurry towards death...

When the trumpet sounds, that will be the last day
And the Judge will come, who will send
The lucky to heaven and the cursed to Hell
We hurry towards death...

You will become a horrid corpse
Why not abstain from sin?
Why are you questioning and complaining?
Why are you clamoring for money?
Why are you wearing such vain clothes?
Why are you looking to be honored?
Why do you not repent?
Why do you not improve your friends' happiness?

We hurry towards death...

Bubonic plague is probably the most familiar of the three main strains of the disease that first appeared in Europe when a handful of infested ships docked in Sicily in October 1347. The ships had fled the war-torn Crimean city of Caffa (modern Feodosya) which marks the European point of entry for the pandemic. As we now know, the disease spread through infected fleas and rats, and did so extremely effectively. The two most deadly forms were septicemic (infecting the blood) and pneumonic (infecting the lungs) which were airborne and with a death rate of 99%! The bubonic form, while more notorious, was comparably mild with a death rate of "only" 50%; it was not even that contagious since you could only get it from the infected fleas and not from another ill person. But of course its main feature was the most unsettling: The black buboes that formed under the armpits and at the lymph nodes of the victim. Giovanni Boccaccio gives a harrowing account in the introduction to his *Decameron* from 1353:

"Its earliest symptom, in men and women alike, was the appearance of certain swellings in the groin or the armpit, some of which were egg-shaped whilst others were roughly the size of the common apple. Sometimes the swellings were large, sometimes not so large, and they were referred to by the populace as gavoccioli. Within a short time it would appear at random all over the body. Later on, the symptoms of the disease changed, and many people began to find dark blotches and bruises on their arms, thighs, and other parts of the body, sometimes large and few in number, at other times tiny and closely spaced. These, to anyone unfortunate enough to contract them, were just as infallible a sign that he would die as the gavocciolo had been earlier, and as indeed it still was."

The spread of the Plague

1547	1550
1548	1551
1549	after 1551
	only minor outbreak



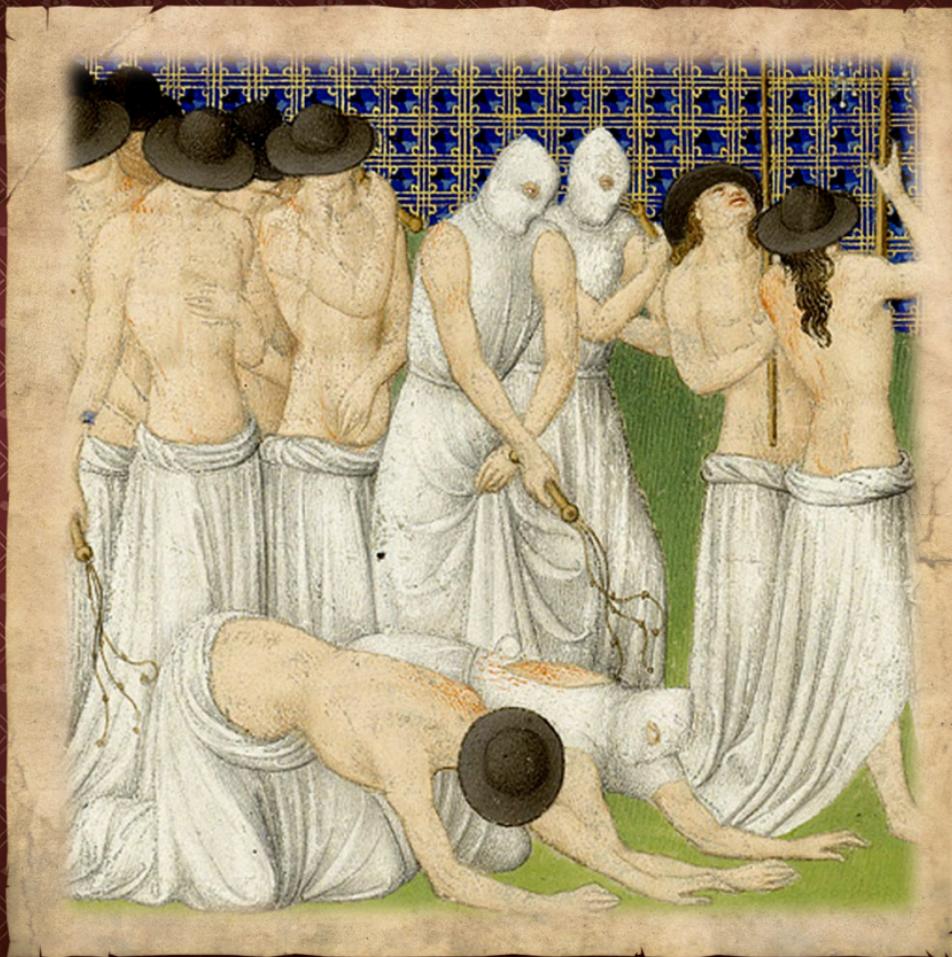


Medieval healthcare would probably be your biggest gripe if you ever found yourself transported back to the 14th century. No matter that the existence of bacteria or viruses won't be known for another 500 years, but medieval doctors really only had two proven go-to-methods when faced with any serious disease. First, they would analyse the patient's urine, which is actually pretty scientifically savvy in comparison to the alternative: to attempt to regulate the balance of the body's four humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile). This would almost always include bloodletting in some form which would weaken the ~~victim~~ patient and only make them even more susceptible to illness.

Another alternative is one of the many cure-all concoctions that abounded; *Theriac*, also known as *Venice Treacle* (from where we get the modern word *treacle*) was one of the most popular – especially against plague – but since it is comprised of at least sixty-four ingredients and takes many months to make, it is not the most practical. Instead, here is our personal favorite from an English 14th-century health manual (and with a mere 15 ingredients): “Take stavesacre, pellitory root, sage-leaves, hyssop leaves, betony, ginger, black pepper, long mustard seed, nutmeg galangal, cloves, cubebes, alum, liquorice powder and grind them all up; mix with vinegar, and gargle.” We take no responsibility – but if you decide to try it, make sure you get all the ingredients just right, or there is a slight chance it won’t work.

The flagellant movement, whose followers believed they could save the world by taking on Christ's suffering and purify themselves of sin and disease, had been around for over a century but saw a major upswing in the summer of 1348. By 1350 however, it had been banned as a heresy by the Pope in Avignon (in part precisely because the flagellants dared to claim that their actions would absolve them of all sin) and quickly declined thereafter. Contrary to what you might think, flagellant orders were quite organized and regulated as the following rules bear witness to:

First, you must reconcile with your enemies and receive the consent of husband or wife. You must show strict obedience to the leaders and have the ability to pay all your own expenses. During the campaigns, which last $33\frac{1}{2}$ days (as a reminder of Christ's time on Earth), you are to ask no alms nor to wash your person or your clothing, nor cut your beard or hair or speak to anyone of the other sex, or to lie on feather beds. Five pater noster and Ave Marias are to be said before and after meals. Finally, for as long as you live (!) you must use the *flagellum* – the special whip, often equipped with small flesh-tearing spikes – on yourself every Friday at least three times during the day and once at night (you are however forbidden to ever pursue the flagellation to the limit where it might lead to sickness or death).





The Great Mortality (the plague wasn't actually referred to as the Black Death until much later) struck Siena, a town south of Florence in Tuscany, in April 1348. The town's chronicler, Agnolo di Tura, describes the devastating effect that the disease had upon him and his fellow citizens:

"Throughout Siena, giant pits are being excavated for the multitudes of the dead and the hundreds that die every night. Their bodies are thrown into these mass graves and are covered bit by bit. When those ditches are full, new ditches are dug. And I, Agnolo di Tura, called *The Fat*, buried my five sons with my own hands. And so many died that all believed it was the end of the world."

The whole city appeared uninhabited because almost no one was found there. The pestilence remained and everyone who survived celebrated their fate. Of the monks, priests, nuns, women, and others from the secular community, they didn't worry about their expenses or games. Everyone appeared to be rich because they had survived and regained value in life. But now, no one knows how to put their life back in order."

Giovanni Boccaccio, whom we met earlier with his graphic depiction of the disease's progress, also described people's reaction to the disaster. He explained that some thought that a sober and abstemious way of life would reduce the risk of infection, so they would cut off all contact with outsiders, lock them-selves inside and do their best to "keep the spirits up with pastimes like music and by consuming modest quantities of delicate foods and precious wines".

Others took the opposite view, and maintained that the best way of warding off this particular evil was to enjoy life to the full; sing, dance, make merry, and shrug the whole thing off as one enormous joke (indeed, one of the consequences of the plague was an increased interest and acceptance of instrumental and secular music purely for enjoyment and dance). People like this would visit one tavern after another, dancing and drinking all day and night.

Boccaccio continues: "*They were sure to restrict the conversation to subjects that were pleasant and entertaining. Yet for all their riotous manner of living, these people always took good care to avoid any contact with the sick. However, in the end; it was all to no avail.*"





The shockwaves of death

and horror caused by the plague affected Italy harshly during the first years of the plague, and surviving descriptions gives us an idea on how swiftly and terribly the plague struck.

In 1348 a chronicler in Firenze, Marchione di Coppo Stephani observed the following:

"At every church they dug deep pits down to the water level; and thus those who were poor who died during the night were bundled up quickly and thrown into the pit; they then took some earth and shoveled it down on top of them; and later others were placed on top of them and then another layer of earth, just as one makes lasagna with layers of pasta and cheese."

As mentioned many times already, one way to deal with these terrible times was to enjoy life to its fullest, eat well and listen to good music. Some even argued that one ought to indulge in the excesses of the nobility in order to avoid or cure the plague. Others would go the other direction and suggested that one should avoid excessive food and drinks and for example taking baths.

Several cures and preventions were suggested in contemporary medical literature, from excessive bloodletting to avoidance of foul vapors and taking the stars into account.

However, another important and popular method to prevent the plague was through various concoctions or simply adapting your diet. For example you could drink spiced strong wine, spice your food with strong vinegar, or inhale the aroma of cloves and nutmeg.

In the cookbook *"De honesta voluptate et valetudine"* from the 15th century, the author Bartolomeo Platina recalls that during a later plague episode you were ordained to both use vinegar in the food as a spice and to clean their houses with strong vinegar to keep the plague away. Another suggestion in the same source is that chicory is good both against pestilence and poisons. And so we move on to the courses...



Pasta della Pestilenzia

Though not a cure, an obvious choice for a “plague dinner” is the lasagna mentioned by Marchione di Coppo Stephani above. You can find many lasagna recipes in medieval cookbooks both from Italy and other regions. This one comes from the *“Libro della Cocina”*, a late 14th century Tuscan cookbook:

“De le lasagne. Togli farina bona, bianca; distempera con acqua tepida, e fa’ che sia spessa: poi la stendi sottilmente e lassa sciugare: debbansi cocere nel brodo del cappone o d’altra carne grassa: poi metti nel piattello col cascio grasso grattato, a suolo a suolo, come ti piace.”

100 g / 3.5 oz fine wheat flour
½ dl / 2 cups tepid water
½-1 l / 3-4 cups rich chicken stock
120 gr / 4 oz Pecorino cheese
(½ tsp grains of paradise)
(½ tsp ground galangal)
½ tsp ginger
½ tsp cinnamon
½ tsp nutmeg
½ tsp muscovado sugar
½ tsp long pepper
1 pinch of salt



Prepare the lasagna sheets (yes, you may “vcheat” and buy fresh lasagna sheets). Let the dough rest for a bit before rolling it out. Some recipes suggest that the sheets should have the width of three fingers (approx. 6x6 cm / 2x2 in). You should get 13-16 sheets. For an extra “medieval” look, cut them like lozenges rather than squares.

Dry the sheets a bit and combine the spice mix. Grate the cheese and divide it into three parts. Boil the lasagna sheets in the chicken broth so that they are still warm while preparing the dish.

Quickly take out the sheets and place a third on the plate. After that, put on a layer of cheese and spice and repeat this process until you have three layers of pasta. Finish with a layer of cheese and spice. It helps to use two spatulas or broad knives in order to make the dish look neat.

Chicory in a vinegar sauce

One actual suggestion to cure pestilence, according to Bartolomeo Platina, was the ingestion of chicory, and he recommended serving it with a sauce made from vinegar and raisins. Platina as well as other authors suggest spicing your food with vinegar as a prevention for the plague, so this seems to be a great recipe when the plague is raging. This recipe comes from Platina’s cookbook *“De honesta voluptate...”* mentioned earlier:

“Cooked chicory relaxes the belly and is good for the liver, kidneys and stomach, especially if eaten with vinegar cooked down with raisins [...] and is good for those suffering with poisons and plague.”

3 dl / 1 ½ cup vinegar
0,75 dl / ¼ cup raisins
500 g / 1 lb chicory

Reduce the vinegar together with the raisins on low heat until you have about two-thirds left.

Clean and slice the chicory. Simmer in lightly salted water along with the raisins, for 5-10 minutes or until soft and less bitter.

Drain the chicory thoroughly, put it on the plate and pour the sauce over, and finally sprinkle the raisins over the dish.





Claret (Spiced wine)

As a drink for a "Pestilence Dinner" (please note: we do not recommend Pestilence Dinners for the first date) we would like to suggest a strong spiced wine. Spiced wine seems to have been a favorite prevention against the plague by many of the contemporary authors, although some suggest diluting it in the summer or in warmer climates.

This claret is made with a fair amount of cinnamon, ginger cloves and long pepper, all of which were considered as good spices to prevent pestilence.

While many recipes for claret and *hippocras* have survived, we have chosen this late 15th century Dutch spiced wine as it is heavy in spices, using a strong sweet wine and yet you do not have to bother with heating the wine. This recipe comes from a cookbook called

"Wel ende edelike spijse":

1 l / 30 fl oz of wine (preferably a sweet Spanish wine using the Malvasia grape)

110 g / 4 oz white cane sugar

40 g / 1½ oz cinnamon

20 vg / 1 oz ginger

10 g / ½ oz cloves

2 tsp ajwain (carom seeds)

1 small piece of mastic plant resin

2 tsp lavender

2 tsp long pepper

Grind all the spices and sugar. Mix wine, spices and sugar and let it steep for an hour. Sieve it through a cheesecloth several times until the wine is as clear as possible.

Though you may try to make your claret with any white wine, the recipe states that it should be an "old" wine, which is why we have looked at either a sweet or sulphured wine. Wine using the malvasia grape (malvasir) are mentioned in German cookbooks in recipes for sweet dishes.



The Dance of Death, or the *Dance Macabre/Saltatio Mortis*, is an example of a new phenomenon in art, literature and music that first appears in the late 14th century; most likely as a delayed reaction or coping mechanism to the trauma that the enormous amount of death and suffering must have caused. (It is estimated that somewhere between a third and half of all the people in Europe perished, about 25-30 million!)

One of the first examples is the poem "Je fis de macabré la danse", written by Jean le Fèvre after he recovered from the plague in the 1370s. For music, one of the most well-known (at least until Saint-Saëns 1874 version) is the tune you find at the end of this album, "Ad mortem festinamus" (we hurry towards death). The reason this theme struck such a chord was probably due to the message that Death doesn't care if you are a beggar or a king; he will come for you regardless, as the following images from a late 15th century manuscript clearly shows.





There is a story from a plague hospital in northern Italy, where some of the patients defied quarantine and danced and sang throughout the night, infuriating the monks and brethren charged with taking care of them. Eventually one brother by the name of Andrea had enough; he picked up the body of a deceased old woman on his shoulders, yelling for all to hear: "Now, old maiden, it is your time to thread the dance as well!" whereupon he threw the decomposed corpse in the middle of the ring, and admonished the partygoers: "Please, let her join you! How is it even possible for you to keep on insulting and disgracing God in this manner, when all the while your own deaths are fast approaching?!" The story abruptly ends: "Then, all the dancing and singing stopped."

Incidentally, the very word *quarantine* is another direct legacy of the Black Death - *quarantena* in the Venetian dialect (*quaranta* in modern Italian) means forty, referring to the number of days new arrivals had to stay isolated. The number 40 was chosen as a Biblical parallel to the amount of days Christ was tested in the wilderness.





The end of the plague

In the two years leading up to 1350, Guillaume de Machaut hid away in a monastery to avoid the plague. He describes the end of that stay in the poem "Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre":

*Si qu'einsi fui lonc temps en mue
(si comme un esprevier qu'on mue)
Et tant qu'une fois entroÿ
Dont moult forment me resjoÿ*

*Cornemuses, trompes, naquaires
Et d'instrumens plus de vii. paires!
Lors me mis a une fenestre
Et enquis que ce pooit estre?*

*Si que tantost me respondi
Uns miens amis qui m'entendi
Que ceuls qui demouré estoient
Einsi com tuit se marioient
Et faisoient festes et noces.*

*Car la mortalité des boces
(qu'on appelloit epidimie)
Estoit de tous poins estanchie
Et que les gens plus ne moroient.*

*Eins repris tantost ma maniere
Et ouvri mes yex et ma chiere
Devers l'air qui si doux estoit
Et si clers qu'il m'amonestoit
Que lors ississe de prison
Ou j'avoie esté la saison.*

And so I remained long in hiding
(Just like a hawk in moulting)
Until at last one time I heard
Which made me greatly rejoice

Bagpipes, trumpets, kettledrums
And more than seven pairs of instruments!
Then I went to a window
And asked what this might be?

And at once one of my friends
Who had heard me answered
That those who remained were acting
Just as if all of them were getting married
Feasting, and celebrating weddings

For the deadly plague of the buboes
(that was called an epidemic)
Had completely ceased everywhere
And people were no longer dying

I regained at once my composure
Turning my eyes and face
To the air that was so sweet
And clear it encouraged me
Then to leave the prison
Where I had passed the season.

The legacy of the plague was hardly something the lucky survivors dwelled on, at least not at first. As time went on, it became clear that this had been the single greatest natural disaster to befall the world, or at least Europe – a dubious honour that still holds true to this day. Today, with the benefit of centuries of hindsight, we know that the plague pandemic which can be said to have peaked in – yes, 1350 – changed the world forever in too many ways to count. For example, the massive and immediate shortage of workforce led to a dramatic increase in wages, thus accelerating the fall of the feudal system and leading to a series of unprecedented popular rebellions and uprisings in the second half of the century. Even the language changed: In England, for example, French had been the language of the ruling class over the last 300 years, but since so many of the nobility that spoke it died, the common tongue of English soon after came to replace it.

We've already discussed some of the consequences in music, art and literature; in fact the entire Renaissance was kickstarted in Italy at about the same time – while this is a harder sell to attribute directly to the plague, the grip on society the Catholic Church had enjoyed for many centuries was significantly weakened (though it would take one more century and the invention of the printing press to finally break it), as so many became disillusioned after the clergy's failure in placating a vengeful God who had sent the scourge their way. The fact that even important church centres such as both Avignon and Rome were devastated by the plague certainly didn't help either.

Die ist als got moyses-hat dr. er lichen nem. under des küniges he
mit vng die vñ wuſt der geſchach do wurdet die lüt iegypt
voll außen vñ plauen vñ gottu inchi.



Die ist vñ der nachtēfigt als goe
moyses zu pharaon schicket dm er sin
völk hies vñrty oder am hagel wurd ke
vich des vñbilic vñrchte men
hies got aber stuen knecht
tan bi den selben tagen
te pharaone vñg im sage
Das er sin lüt in so lte län
woilt aber er er welschaft widerstan
so solt er sprechen für das
Göt der herre spricht das
morgen ze dritte selben stund
Segnen ich den grüsten hagel hie
Der noch ze den zittern ie
ajenschen ögen ward erkant
Sio dat hie buhaff wart das laut
Da von lauff dm vihe mit gän
Ze veloc lauff es mi stün
Dar es ist verderbe
Vno von hagel sterbe
wie moyses sin hand gen himel strachte
vnd grülich weie kam von hagel et

Sources

All musical compositions are free of copyright, however all arrangements © 2021 Falsobordone. All texts in this booklet are written by Erik Ask-Upmark and Anna Rynefors. All pictures are either licensed or used under Creative Commons / fair use. We have tried our best to credit all photographers and sources; if you have any missing information we welcome this and will adjust it in coming editions. Please get in touch with Falsobordone if you are interested in licensing any of the recordings of this album for commercial or public use!

PICTURES • Cover, booklet and digipak: Photos by Erik Ask-Upmark • Page 2-3: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, The Triumph of Death (Museo del Prado, Madrid) • Page 4 (flagellants) and 41 (burial of plague victims in Tournai): Chronicle of Giles li Muisis, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, Brussels • Page 5: (Cleric blessing plague victims): British Library, Royal MS 6 E VI • Page 7 (musicians): Romance of Alexander, MS Bodl. 264, Bodleian Library, Oxford • Page 9 (Musicians, the city of Constatinople): Luttrell Psalter, British Library, Add MS 42130 • Page 10-11 (instruments): Photos by Erik Ask-Upmark • Page 12: Photo of Karin Lagergren: Stefan Berg, other photos unknown • Page 17 (musicians): Luttrell Psalter • Page 18 (musicians): Romance of Alexander • Page 21 (map): Original art by Erik Ask-Upmark • Page 22 (Physician): Unknown MS • Page 23 (Flagellants): Les Belles Heures du Jean Duc de Berry, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York • Page 26 (Grave diggers): Les Belles Heures • Page 28 (Dance): Heures de Charles d'Angoulême, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris • Page 30 (Preparing food), 32 (Cooking pots), 34 (Banquet): Luttrell Psalter • Pages 31, 33, 35: Photo by Erik Ask-Upmark • Page 36 (Skeleton musicians): MS 25434, Martial d'Auvergne: La Dance des Femmes, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris • Pages 37-39, 47 (Death and victims, scribe): Francais 995, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris • Page 42 (The Great Litany): Les Belles Heures • Page 45 (Doctor treating plague victims): Toggenburg Bible • Page 49 (Artists from this recording): Photos by Erik Ask-Upmark; Unknown • Page 50 (Music to Comment qu'a moy): Fonds Francais 1586, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

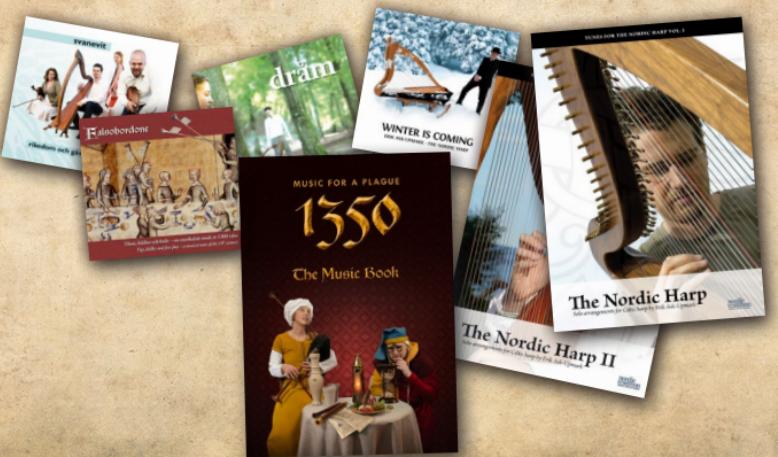
MUSIC • Dies Irae: Traditional Gregorian hymn • Procurans Odium: Carmina Burana, CB12 (primary source), René Clemencic: Carmina Burana (secondary source) • Maria unser frowe, Nu tret herzuo & Maria muoter reini mait: Hugo Spechtchart von Reutlingen: Chronica Metrificata, Russian National Library Lat. O. v. XIV. 6, St Petersburg (primary source); Paul Runge: Die Lieder und Melodien der Geissler des Jahres 1349 (secondary source) • Comment qu'a moy lonteinne: Machaut C, Fonds Francais 1586, f.150r, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (primary source), Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century vol. III (secondary source) • Ognor mi trovo: I-Fl MS Mediceo Palatino 87, Codice Squarcialupi (primary source), Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century vol. IV (secondary source) • A tutta gente & Alta Trinità beata: Magliabechiano II 122, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Firenze (primary source), Altitalianische Laudenmelodien/Martin Dürer (secondary source) • La Manfredina & Istamptita Isabella: Add MS29987, British Library, London (Primary source), Timothy J. McGee: Medieval Instrumental Dances (Secondary source) • Plus Dure: Machaut A, Fonds Francais 1584, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (primary source), Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century vol. III (secondary source) • Ad mortem festinamus: E-MO MS 1 (Llibre Vermell) f.26v—27, Monasterio de S Maria, Montserrat, Spain (primary source), Higinio Anglés, El Libre Vermell de Monserrat y los cantos y la danza sacra de los peregrinos durante el siglo XIV (secondary source)



Extroitus

Thank you for investing your time and money in listening to this album inspired by the ever fascinating era of the Black Death! We hope you enjoyed it (yes, we realize it's pretty weird to put "enjoy" and "Black Death" together) and that we will have the chance of seeing each other on a live concert stage sometime in the future! Until then, you are welcome to check out our website with lots of more information about us and our other recordings as well as the accompanying sheet music book and extra features for this album:

www.falsobordone.se





COMMENT QU'À MOY LONTEINNE (GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT)