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Peter Urquhart, Associate Professor of Music Travels to Europe

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~ Faculty Travel through CIE

International Perspectives

Center for International Education

PETER URQUHART, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF MUSIC

Professor Peter Urquhart traveled this summer to several locations in Europe. While abroad he presented a paper at a conference in Vienna and worked on a number of projects that took him from Austria to Switzerland and France.



The 16th century Rathaus in Basel.

With the help of a CIE grant, I took a trip to Europe in August of 2007. The grant was aimed specifically at my participation in a conference held in Vienna, so I left wife and child with family members in France, while I travelled further east. In Vienna I read a paper about a Josquin motet, *Benedicta es*, and its final cadence, which is peculiar in the context of music of the time. That probably sounds like a specialized and pointed topic, typical of esoteric scholarship in any field; but actually my paper serves as an invitation to a very large chapter in a book I am writing, which is about one of the central problems in Renaissance music: what it sounded like, in terms of the pitch content. OK, that still sounds esoteric, but the audience was specialized themselves, and thus got most of the implications. But since many of them have in the past claimed rather different things about my topic, reception was cordial, mixed, and

guarded. More explicit differences of opinions will emerge upon publication.

But my trip was about more than that conference. I carried three other projects along with me, and started discussions about them in Vienna with scholars in my field. One was about the instrumentation (or not) of the 15th century *chanson*, a project that I am pursuing together with a graduate student at UNH. We hope to publish the results this fall, which will prove that the lute or harp participated in the performance of *chansons*, an idea that has been disparaged over the last 25 years. I made a trip to Basel, Switzerland, to talk to the premiere lutenist in this area of 15th century plectrum lute, Crawford Young of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, an institute set up in the 1930s by Paul Sacher. Many of Boston's finest early music players and singers came through the Schola Cantorum, so it was interesting to get a tour of the place, and hear Crawford Young's input on our paper.

The second topic I carried about was fuzzy and ill-formed; I have long wished to see the area where the composer Pierrequin de Thérache was from. He worked in Nancy, France, from about 1492 on, but his name evokes the region of the Thierache, a farming region best known for its remoteness from city life. There are a few monastic institutions there, where choirs and singers may have been supported, but there is not much to go on. Most of the churches are fortified, for the region has been raked by wars for

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most of its history. Still, since Thérache's music, and perhaps his brother, were present in Cambrai circa 1500, and the composer landed in Nancy in the Lorraine, it certainly seems possible that the composer as a choirboy came from the Thierache, which is directly between the two cities. It was illuminating to see the area, and although I cannot say anything material will come of it, I am publishing a recording of Thérache's music, as well as an edition of his music.

Finally, I've embarked on a study of the provenance of the UNH chantbooks, two 15th century manuscripts that were donated to Dimond Library in the 1970s, and 'rediscovered' by a student in 2001. My guide turned out to be a lady of the 8th century by the name of Saint Odilia. Ste. Odile is venerated to this day in the valley of Alsace, for she founded a monastery about the year 690 on the western edge of Alsace, in the Vosges mountains above Obernai. Our chantbooks have a section devoted to Ste. Odile, which suggests a connection with this area; she is also listed in the Kalendarium. I spent a day looking at chant manuscripts in the Bibliotheque Municipal in Colmar, concentrating on manuscripts of the type and from the time of the UNH books. Although the Colmar chantbooks lacked any reference to Ste. Odile, there were a few connections to be made, especially regarding physical resemblances. More striking however were the churches in the area around the Mont. Ste. Odile. A number of institutions, such as the 12th century abbey in L'Andlau, still have connections to Ste. Odile, and likely did hold books of this type in their choirs. Further work may eventually lead to a provenance for the UNH choirbooks.



*Prof. Urquhart in L'Andlau, France,
where a church is located in which
Ste. Odile is venerated to this day*

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