



A concert project: **Gregorian Chant and Norwegian religious Folk Tunes**
A Cultural Meeting - Scandinavia Sicily

October 5 – 7 /2018

Project:

The two concerts in the famous Norman Churches in Sicily will present central Gregorian chants and parts of the earliest Norwegian church music “Historia Sancti Olavi” and religious folk tunes.

Performers:

The Norwegian Scola *Consortium Vocale Oslo*, based in the Cathedral of Oslo, Norway, and one of the leading Norwegian female folk singer *Berit Opheim*, will sing religious folk tunes from the core of the old Norwegian popular tradition.

In the 12th century the miraculous Norman churches in Sicily were raised. This was among the most glorious manifestation of Christian culture in the southern outskirts of Europe. In the same period the Cathedral of Nidaros (Trondheim) was built, the greatest and the most powerful church in Northern Europe. In this cathedral, the earliest known Norwegian music was performed, based on an imported inter-European liturgical practice. The first Normans in Sicily had Scandinavian ancestors, and with the sound of Gregorian plain chant in these magnificent Southern and Northern cathedrals, a renewed spiritual connection between Trinacria and Ultima Thule was established.

“Historia Sancti Olavi” is unique in its status as a monumental music work from medieval Norway. These old plain chants were sung on the feast day of St Olaf, July 29.

Today we are aware of a renewed interest in St Olaf. Old routes travelled by medieval pilgrims on their way to Nidaros have been improved and marked. Pilgrim centres take care of travelers – both those who consider themselves pilgrims, and those whose interest is more of a cultural nature. Public interest in the historical and religious figure of St Olaf is growing. Many walk the old pilgrim trails across the mountains towards Nidaros cathedral, and it is rather common to encounter hikers and pilgrims from many parts of Europe.

Consortium Vocale Oslo, founded in 1985, is a male vocal ensemble based at Oslo Cathedral. Since 1998 the ensemble has specialized in Gregorian chant under the direction of [Alexander M. Schweitzer](#). Under Schweitzer's guidance the group has dedicated itself to the palaeographic study of medieval manuscripts, to an appropriation of the theological-spiritual dimension of the Gregorian repertoire, and to an interpretation of Gregorian chant according to semiological principles.

The collaboration with Schweitzer has led to numerous performances in Norway and Europe. In 2003 and 2015 Consortium Vocale Oslo was invited to perform at conferences held by AISCGre, the International Association for Studies of Gregorian Chant. In 2004 the ensemble was awarded first prize in the prestigious Guido d'Arezzo International Choir Competition in the category for Christian plainchant, as well as the "Domenico Cieri" special prize. In 2008 the ensemble received the Guidoneum Award presented by the Fondazione Guido d'Arezzo for outstanding artistic achievements in the field of Gregorian chant. Activities in subsequent years have included concerts in Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Belgium, Slovakia, Italy, the Vatican, and Greece, and appearances with Trio Mediaeval, Berit Opheim and Kåre Nordstoga, among others.

Under the leadership of Alexander M. Schweitzer, Consortium Vocale Oslo has released seven CDs of Gregorian chant: *Laus mea Dominus* (ASV Gaudeamus, 2002), *Exaudiam eum* (2L, 2007), *Vultum tuum* (EOS Verlag, 2008), *Resurrexi* (EOS Verlag, 2013), *Salvum me fecit* (EOS Verlag, 2016), *Historia Sancti Olavi* (Lawo classics, 2016) and *Mirabilia fecit Dominus* (EOS Verlag, 2016). ([Recordings](#))

CVO singers: *Mats Bergstrøm, Hans Borchgrevink, Alf Howlid, Svend Erik Haaland, Viktor Strand, Pål Strøm, Lars Brusletto Sveen and Kjell Viig.*

Berit Opheim (born 1967) is a highly respected and talented folk singer, and is one of the foremost singers of traditional music from western Norway. She won the first prize in the National Contest for Traditional Music in 1992, 1995 and 1996. During the past 10 years she has participated in many recordings and has toured in Norway and abroad. She has received several awards and is a member of various folk music ensembles. Opheim sings primarily folk songs from her home town, Voss. Her repertoire spans a wide range, and she has collaborated with jazz musicians and other contemporary musicians. Her first solo release was recorded in one of Norway's oldest churches, the stave church at Urnes in Sogn.

Alexander M. Schweitzer, conductor, is a theologian and musician who since the mid-1980s has specialized in Gregorian chant. He studied chant in Rome, Cremona and Munich (with J.B. Göschl). Schweitzer has trained Gregorian ensembles worldwide and taught Gregorian chant and liturgical music in various institutions. He has been working regularly with Consortium Vocale Oslo since 1998.

Schweitzer is a member of international juries; he teaches Gregorian semiology in the DAS program of the Music University in Lugano and at the courses of the International Society for Studies of Gregorian Chant (AISCGre) held in St. Ottilien and Venice. Since 1999, Schweitzer has been a member of the AISCGre board of directors and the melody restoration workgroup. In 2015 he was elected president of AISCGre, succeeding Johannes B. Göschl in this role.

Consortium Vocale Oslo <http://consortiumvocale.no/>

The booklet of the CD "Historia Sancti Olavi", Consortium Vocale Oslo: https://lawostore.no/assets/files-rte/booklet_lawo/LWC1106_Consortium_Vocale_Historia_Sancti_Olavi_Ebooklet_lettersize.pdf