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The poetry of medieval female troubadours comes alive thanks the vocal ensemble Tiburtina Ensemble and the composer Michal Nejtěk



The female vocal **Tiburtina Ensemble** with its director **Barbora Kabátková** joined its forces with composer **Michal Nejtěk** in order to breath new life into the half-forgotten woks of medieval *trobairitz* (the Occitan term for “female troubadours”). In a cycle, titled **Trobaireitz**, they provide music for the poetry of eleventh-to-thirteenth-century women poets from the south of France, sung in the recording in the original Provençal dialect and in Czech translation, and accompanied by an ensemble of historical instruments performed by foremost international soloists. The album is released by **Animal Music** on **6 December 2024**, on CD and digitally, including the immersive Dolby Atmos format,

in collaboration with the Prague Spring festival, which commissioned the composition and during whose 2022 edition the work premiered.

The **Trobaireitz** cycle comprises musicalized versions of poems in different styles and forms, written by eight women troubadours whose works reflect the unusual freedoms enjoyed by women in the south of France on the turn of the thirteenth century. In contrast to their male counterparts, the poetry of the *trobairitz* is characterized by a greater directness of expression and a departure from the accepted social norms. And yet, all of these female poets were also experts in the courtly-love style. Four of the poems represented in the album are sung in the medieval Occitan, four are in Czech translation. The **Trobaireitz** cycle is being released in a world premiere.

The artistic director of Tiburtina Ensemble Barbora Kabátková and composer Michal Nejtěk have invited foremost international soloists on historical instruments to participate in the project, including **Marco Ambrosini**, a nyckleharpa player pioneer of the modern expansion of the instrument beyond the limits of Scandinavian folk music, **Margit Übellacker**, a world-renowned performer on dulce melos, the baroque psaltery and classical cimbalom, and **Catalina Vicens**, an organetto player, a teacher and an expert in historical keyboard instruments. The four guest instrumentalists have been joined by a foremost Czech percussionist **Martin Novák** who has also collaborated with Tiburtina Ensemble on several other projects.

Barbora Kabátková explains the origins of the project: *“I first became acquainted with the poetry and music of the medieval troubadours while interpreting them as a singer many years ago. I was immediately intrigued by their work and wanted to find out more about the times and social environment from which these works originated. And it wasn’t long before I came across the very inspirational world of their female counterparts – the poet musicians, the so-called trobaireitz. And because virtually no music has come down to us with their poems, and since I’ve always been fascinated by ‘female’ topics, I’ve decided to try and combine the old with the new and to explore the role of women in the Middle Ages from a lesser-known perspective.”*

Composer **Michal Nejtek** also considers this juxtaposition of something old and something new to be a defining feature of the whole project: *“In the retrospect, it seems as if I were creating a mosaic, without having an idea what it should look like in the end. As if I were not only a composer but also some kind of a musical archaeologist, lifting forgotten jewels out of the ground and letting them feed my own imagination.”*

The album was recorded in collaboration with sound engineer Jakub Hadraba and the recording director and producer Petr Ostrouchov. The cover, featuring a photograph by Václav Jirásek, is by Zuzana Lednická from Studio Najbrt. The Dolby Atmos mix was done by Kryštof Kříček at the Soundsquare studio. The recording took place in June 2024 at the former Church of St Anne (Prague Crossroads Centre).

The album is released on 6 December 2024, on CD and digitally, as part of the Animal Music 2024 edition, supported by a grant from the City of Prague. The album’s release is supported by the Ministry of culture of the Czech Republic, as part of the “2024 – Year of Czech Music” programme. The multichannel Dolby Atmos mix was kindly supported by the former director of the Prague Spring festival, Roman Bělor. The publishing activities of Animal Music are supported by the PPF Foundation.

A short video has already been made available on YouTube, documenting the recording process at the Prague Crossroads Centre this June and including interviews with Barbora Kabátková and Michal Nejtek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIBB8A2k6eM>

Tiburtina Ensemble

The female vocal Tiburtina Ensemble was founded in 2008 in Prague. It specializes in the interpretation of Gregorian chant, medieval polyphony, and contemporary music. Having established itself as one of the foremost interpreters in the international Early-Music scene, Tiburtina Ensemble has performed in prestigious venues in Czechia and abroad, appearing at festivals in Belgium, France and the US, among other places. The ensemble is recognized for its unique sound, heart-felt performance, and inventive programming. The founding director of Tiburtina Ensemble, Barbora Kabátková, has made many guest performances with ensembles such as Collegium Vocale Gent, Collegium Marianum, Collegium 1704, Musica Florea, Cappella Mariana, Concerto Melante, Accentus Austria, La Grand Chapelle, Concerto Palatino, Il Gardellino and Ricercar Consort.

Michal Nejtek

Michal Nejtek is a composer and pianist of international renown, and one of the foremost contemporary Czech authors. He has written symphonic as well as chamber music and has also been dedicating himself to scenic projects. He likes jazz, alternative and classical music, and gets inspired by *“anything that is original, genuine and powerful”*. He has collaborated with ensembles and on projects from diverse genres, including Orchestr Berg, MoEns Ensemble, Agon Orchestra, The Plastic People of the Universe, NTS, and Michal Pavlíček & Trio. He teaches at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

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