

When I visited Nürnberg in 1980, the city had been rebuilt considerably after the war's devastation. The Frauenkirche (with the great Kaiser Karl clock over the entrance) and the farmer's market in the square in front of it were flourishing. St. Lorenz faced the main street not far away, and a huge photograph of the ruined street scene had been erected to show how much the reconstruction had progressed (it was mounted at the position where the picture had been taken). At the other end of downtown, the rebuilt St. Sebald was only a shadow of its former glory. The woodcarvings of Tilman Riemenschneider and Veit Stoss decorated both of the latter churches. It was hard to avoid the feeling that the beautiful medieval free city had been bombed because of its symbolic value to the Nazis, who had gathered there annually.

One of the treasures of St. Lorenz is the Geesebook (now New York, Morgan M 905), a chant manuscript that is illuminated with a picture of a choir of geese, singing from a chant book and directed by a wolf, while a fox lurks behind them (an odd scene for which no symbolism is offered). The chant on the illuminated page, the introit for the feast of the Ascension, is the first piece sung on the disc. Other chants are unique to the Nürnberg source, local feasts such as the Holy Lance and Nails, St. Deocarus, and St. Sebaldus. Other Mass Propers of wider use but still of local importance, such as St. Monica, St. Martha, and St. Lawrence, are also recorded mostly for the first time. The first two and Martha are complete Mass Propers, including a sequence. Schola Hungarica came to nearby Wendelstein to record the program in a church as warm in sound as the Ócsa church that they have used so often. Later Matthias Ank played eight pieces by south-German Renaissance composers on St. Lorenz's famous organ, built in a so-called swallow's nest in 1444 (it hangs on the north wall), and these are inserted into the chant program. It's a lovely instrument of considerable power.

The Schola is every bit as brilliant as ever. Their trademark fast tempos, semiological interpretations, and alternation among men, women, and boys make the chants always fresh and vivid. The boys, as always, produce a marvelous quality of tone, not marked by any of the extreme characteristics that usually describe other boys' choirs. The alternation among the three sections is always logical, and they never combine in octaves. In a departure (in my experience) for Naxos, the texts and translations can only be downloaded from the Web site; even after deleting the notes (already printed in the booklet) and the German translations to save space, I got 11 pages. This recording is part of a larger project on the Geesebook that includes a DVD-ROM and a Web-based facsimile of the source. This disc will have a permanent place among chant recordings of unique significance. Don't pass it by. **J. F. Weber**