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New York Debut of German Vocal Ensemble “Singphoniker”

Highlights Include a Tribute to the Legendary “Comedian Harmonists” of Weimer Germany

In recent decades no other German vocal ensemble of its kind has enjoyed the success afforded to **Singphoniker**, which makes its New York debut at The Frick Collection on Sunday, February 7, 1999 at 5:00pm. One of the most anticipated events in the 60th season of The Frick Collection’s **Chamber Music Series**, this program reveals the range of this talented group, featuring selections by **Franz Schubert** (1797 – 1828), **Robert Schumann** (1810 – 1856), **Felix Mendelssohn** (1809 – 1847), as well as a set of songs called *Berliner Requiem* written by **Bertoldt Brecht** and set to music by popular composer **Kurt Weill** (1900 – 1950). Reflective of the rich social turmoil in Germany that followed World War I, *Berliner Requiem* was composed in 1928 and addresses in six selections a range of issues from the economic crisis to growing anti-Semitism.

Particularly capturing the imagination of this “sold-out” audience is a tribute to the legendary **Comedian Harmonists**, the wildly popular vocal group that flourished in Germany before the Nazis forced them to disband in 1934. The original a cappella ensemble is the subject of a movie “Harmonists” that opened the Jewish Film Festival this month and was reviewed by Peter Gay in *The New York Times* on January 10, 1999. The **Comedian Harmonists** performed to adoring audiences in Weimar Germany, charming them with lyrics that provided “a clever mixture of schmalz and suggestiveness.” While the original **Comedian Harmonists** — a virtual cult phenomenon — left behind several treasured recordings of their music, this event at The Frick Collection offers Americans their first sense of what it was like to experience the group live. Of the recent recording of this tribute by **Singphoniker**, Allan Ulrich of the San Francisco Examiner commented, “Resist if you dare.”

Singphoniker was founded in 1980 while the six members were students at the Musikhochschule in Munich. Its first public performance and television appearance were in that city in 1982. Since winning first prize at the International Choral Festival in Italy in 1988, it has toured France, Switzerland, Italy, and Austria. Its recordings span Gregorian chants through 20th century American music, including commissions for the group. Die Singphoniker is universally hailed for its trademark full, warm ensemble sound, and a joyous, spontaneous interpretive style which aims to recreate each work anew in performance. The group’s great success is reflected in dazzling reviews and numerous recording prizes including four *Diapason*

d'or awards, and the *Grand Prix du Disque* “Charles Cros.”.

About The Frick Collection's Concert Series

For sixty years, The Frick Collection has offered free concerts in the gilded age mansion of founder Henry Clay Frick (1849 – 1919). Small audiences have enjoyed chamber music as it was meant to be experienced – in the elegant, intimate surroundings of a private home. The close-up performances of major figures as well as international debuts occur in the salon-like Music Room of this former residence, one of the few remaining grand mansions in Manhattan. Also marking its sixtieth anniversary is a partnership between WNYC FM (93.9) Radio and The Frick Collection, which is expanding its broadcasts of the concerts with a new hour-long format this year in order to bring the series into more homes nationwide. Hosted by **John Schaefer**, the programs will now be presented as part of a yearlong series offered on Public Radio International.

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