Dear Members,

Welcome to the 13th Misericordia International newsletter. Here you will find all the news from active members, and information about the association. Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne has also written a report on the restoration of the choir stalls of Saint-Martin-aux-Bois. Please remember to renew your membership for May-June 2014, using the form in this newsletter.

This newsletter is also the occasion to wish you a wonderful New Year! We wish you the best for 2015, and hope it will be rich in publications and other events on the choir stalls!

Best wishes

Frédéric Billiet
Paul Hardwick
Welleda Muller

Note: do not forget to visit the official website of Misericordia International: http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/departments/english/misericordia/Pages/default.aspx where you can find digital versions of the early editions of the Profane Arts journal, which have recently been re-ordered for ease of navigation. Also, Misericordia International now has a blog: http://misericordia-international.blogspot.fr/ Please visit it and tell us what you think, and if you wish to announce anything on it.

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News from Misericordia International

- Misericordia International has created a blog: http://misericordia-international.blogspot.fr/
  Its primary purpose is to announce news from the association, but it also offers everybody a descriptive terminology of choir stalls, an index and a bibliography, that we hope will be exhaustive. Please do not hesitate to collaborate by sending any information, or short descriptions of choir stalls that you know, to welledamuller1@gmail.com.

- The papers from the Leon colloquium on choir stalls and architecture have now been collected by the editorial board for a publication, which we hope will be soon.

- The general meeting of the society will take place on the weekend of the 12th-14th September 2015 in Burgundy. This will include scheduled tours of the choir stalls of Bar-le-Régulier and of Saulieu (both from the 14th century and made by the same workshop), and of Flavigny-sur-Ozerain (1457-1462). Following the number of the participants and the number of cars, we could sleep in Fontenoy (Yonne).

- The organisation of the colloquium 2016 is continuing, thanks to Anja Seliger and to Professor Weilandt. It will take place (as we already announced) in June 2016 around Greifswald (North-East Germany) with the theme of workshops, their operation, iconography, etc.

- The publication of the Lexicon by Brepols Publishers is expected in March 2015: http://www.brepols.net/Pages/ShowProduct.aspx?prod_id=IS-9782503515120-1

Member’s Publications and Activities

- Hosted by Frédéric Billiet, the ANR’s project Musiconis (http://musiconis.blogspot.it/ and http://musiconis.paris-sorbonne.fr/) will hold its colloquium on the 11th, 12th and 13th of June 2015 in Chartres (France), titled: The Visual Representation of Speech, Sound, and Noise from the Antiquity to the Renaissance.
  The conference will focus upon the representation of sound in all types of visual representation, whether figurative, mathematical, graphic, calligraphic, epigraphic, coloristic, ornamental, compositional, substantive or other means. The conference presentations may address all visual media, from monumental art to objects and manuscript illumination. To propose a paper, send an abstract of no more than 3000 characters to Frederic.Billiet@gmail.com et à isabelle.marchesin@gmail.com avant le 31 janvier 2015.

- A new member of the association, Mr Jean-Claude Breton, has made professional photos of the French choir stalls of the monastery of Brou (Ain), of the cathedral of Saint Claude (Jura), of the collegiate church of Champeaux (Seine-et-Marne), of the church Saint-Gervais Saint-Protais in Paris, of the church of the Andelys (Eure), of the collegiate church of Blainville, of the church of Boos, and of the cathedral of Rouen (Seine-Maritime). He has offered these photos to the society and to all its members, for which we offer him our warmest thanks!
Welleda Muller has just published an article about the iconography of the dog in the choir stalls of the Great Duchy of Burgundy (Publishers Encrage). This is a part of the acts of the colloquium on The Dog, a Beast Among Humans:
http://www.encrage.net/encrage/pages/fichouvrage.php?ID=610&edtid=4

A Misericord from Amiens on the Art Market (by Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne): Christel Theunissen has let me know (thank you !) that a misericord from Amiens was sold by an art merchant from Anvers. The catalogue states: ‘What is even more important, however, is the fact that the present zittertje originally belonged to a choir chair that was most probably installed in the Cathedral of Amiens and from which four other misericordia still are in the museum of Amiens.’ Of course, it is not a misericord stolen from the choir stalls of the cathedral… However, it could be from the actual choir stalls, because the set originally numbered 118 stalls (in 1519), but was reduced to 110 stalls in 1775 when the rood-screen was destroyed. Because of the enlargement of the choir’s gate on the transept, 8 stalls were destroyed. Nevertheless, the misericord sold by the Anvers’ merchant could not be from the original set, for two reasons:

The dimensions are not the same as the misericords of the cathedral.

The iconography cannot be integrated in the iconographic programme of the cathedral. Indeed, it is an image from the Passion of the Christ while all the misericords of the cathedral are carved with scenes from the Old Testament (the Life of the Virgin is carved on the high and low jouees).

The Museum of Picardie in Amiens has other misericords, and some of them are similar to that which is sold. This set could be attached to a school of sculpture of Amiens, active around 1500-1510. The existence of several misericords may suggest that there was another set of choir stalls, close to those of the cathedral, in other Amiens churches (college churches and abbeys were numerous, and they probably had choir stalls). The lack of sources in the archives does not help the historian in this kind of research. However, investigation into this misericord is continuing and, although it is too early to draw conclusions, I will keep you informed!

1 Misericord in Dutch.

Report of the restauration of the higher choir stalls of Saint-Martin-aux-Bois (Picardie), 2012-2014 by Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne

The association Stalles de Picardie is happy to announce that the restoration of the higher choir stalls of the abbey’s church of Saint-Martin-aux-Bois is finished.

Our association was founded in March 1996 by a little group of scholars worried about the lack of care given to these choir stalls. The goals of the association were to restore, but also to study and to make known, these choir stalls, and, from a broader point of view, to take an interest in all the sets of choir stalls in Picardie.

The dreamers of 1996, among them Elaine C. Block, Frédéric Billiet, and Kristiane Lemé-Hébuterne, are glad and proud of the work that has been done: restored, the choir stalls are now highlighted in the choir of the church, appreciated the visitors who come from far away to see them.

This restoration was the result of long and concerted efforts, of numerous interventions to the authorities, of the different steps in order to secure the necessary funds, because the municipality was not able to pay the 25% of the total cost (the choir stalls are classified as “Monuments Historiques” since 1902, consequently, the French State paid the rest of the cost of the restoration). After the restoration of the 8 lower stalls in 2002, 10 years were needed to start the restoration of the higher stalls. The financial questions were not easy to solve, but since November 2009, after several interventions from the association, the Cedit Agricole Île-de-France has given the rest of the money to the municipality. In 2010, a first restorer signed a contract to undertake the first study; unfortunately, he never did it!
In 2011, a second restorer was contacted, and he quickly completed this task. Thanks to that, at the end of 2011, a tender was sent out. The association *Stalles de Picardie* was associated with all of these steps. Three restorers were initially interested in this project, but finally only two made a proposal. Mr Thierry Palanque, “LP3 Conservation,” from Semur-en-Auxois has been chosen by the municipality and the DRAC.

The work of restoration started in October 2012, and has now been completed. It consisted of a complete cleaning, by air and brushing, before application of a liquid sanitary treatment (to cure and to prevent to insects’ attacks on the wood). The choir stalls were isolated from the floor (the work of disassembly revealed that in some places the beams had been directly put on the beaten earth), the flooring has been remade with different size oak planks beams. The set has been consolidated, and re-stabilized as necessary. The 18th-century lectern has been also cleaned up, treated and positioned in front of the lower stalls. Finally, the decoration of the canopies was completely restored. The last task concerned the choice of colour: the choir stalls were painted in black in the 18th century, and, after that, in ochre. At some time after this, some parts were sanded (without any documentation). In 2002, the Monuments Historiques asked the restorer to sand the lower stalls. In contrast, the Monuments Historiques refused the sanding of the upper stalls, thinking that the distemper was original. This resulted in choir stalls with different colours, that the restorer needed to reduce, in order to harmonize everything and gain a satisfactory result.

Others problems came up during the very first discussions establish the call for projects: the curator of the Monuments Historiques wished a single flooring for the lower and the higher stalls, in order to give unity to the set. We were not in agreement with this, as the lower stalls, now in front of the higher stalls, had not originally been there. Indeed, the 8 lower stalls were at the western end, and, not in front of these higher stalls. Moreover, the platform would obstruct the movements around the altar during the liturgy (the church is still in use). Finally, it would increase the cost of the restoration. The change of curator at the beginning of the works allowed us to reconsider the question, and the idea of a single large floor was abandoned. We also tried to reconsider the question of sanding the choir stalls, unfortunately without success.

However, and analysis of the wood (which had at first been refused) was then accepted (with the engagement of the association to participate to the cost of this study). This dendrochronological analysis proved to be very interesting. It was led by Christine Locatelli and Didier Pousset, of the laboratory LEB2d (a laboratory with expertise in wood and of dating by dendrochronology) from Besancon. Many samples (by photos) were made, and then analysed in the laboratory. It is impossible to give here full details of the results of this study (a report was given to the municipality, to the DRAC, and to the association *Stalles de Picardie*). However, we can give you the most ‘spectacular’ results. The analysis of the laboratory LEB2d worked on another set of near-contemporary choir stalls: those of the “Nation Picarde” preserved at the Musée National du Moyen Âge of Cluny in Paris. Consequently, the researchers were able to make some links between the type of wood used. In both cases (Saint-
Martin-aux-Bois and Paris), it was a high quality of oak, from Picardie’s forests. The presence of some pieces of bark in the floor’s platform indicated a very precise date for the fabrication of the furniture. The trees were cut down during the winter 1497-1498.

We know that the liturgical furniture was ordered by Guy de Baudreuil, as his shield is carved on a higher jouee. Named patron abbot in 1492, he was interested by the furniture that the canons were using every day, and he decided to order new choir stalls in 1498. We proposed a dating before 1500, because of the assemblage techniques which fell out of use in the very early 16th century. This proposed dating has now been confirmed by the dendrochronological study.

The knowledge about the choir stalls of Saint-Martin-aux-Bois was highly enriched thanks to this restoration and to the dendrochronological study. The fabrication techniques of the stalls are well known. It is to be hoped that every stalls’ restoration (or for any furniture) will be followed by this kind of study, if it is technically possible.

Newsletter subscription for 2015:

FORM

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Recent Publications (Please send this list by mail1): ......................................

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1 Members are requested to offer their publications for our documentation center.

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Active members: 10 €
Students: free
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