

**Golden Instruments guarded by Angels:  
The five Freiberg renaissance violins, their relevance to the music of the 16th and 17th centuries  
and the resulting consequences for the playing practice**

Abstract

During the remodelling of the Freiburger Dome (Saxony), accomplished 1594, 30 instruments were placed more than 10 meters high in the hands of golden statues of angels, among them five violin family instruments, which have remained all those centuries almost untouched.

These instruments are unique - no other violins ensemble of the 16th century has survived until today, especially without having suffered severe later alterations.

In recent years, research on the early history of violin instruments has taken decisive steps, but the resulting findings, including those connected to the Freiberg violin instruments, did not lead to substantial new secondary literature and/or were not implemented in practice.

For more than 25 years I have dealt with technical questions and the playing of various historical violin family instruments; for almost 15 years with the Freiberg Renaissance instruments and their replicas as head of the practical research group for the five violin family instruments within the research project of the Musical Instrument Museum of the University of Leipzig. With my ensemble *chordae freybergenses* I have realized numerous concert projects all over Europe as well as 3 CD productions.

For the year 2018 the Kunstuniversität Graz has commissioned copies of the five Freiberg Renaissance violins. This provides an important basis for further exploration of the instruments and their significance.

The objective of my research project is firstly a classification of the relevance of the five Freiberg violin family instruments for the performance practice of the 16th century, in particular in connection with the court chapels of Saxony, Bavaria and of the Habsburg courts. Further research will be carried out into the repertoire relevant for the Freiberg violin ensemble with regard to the 16<sup>th</sup>-century court chapel in Graz.

Together with the musicians of the ensemble *gamma.ut* an artistic exploration of the playing techniques of all five instruments of the Freiberg Ensemble will take place with special attention to possible holding techniques of the various instruments and its effects on other topics of the performance practice.

Biography:

Susanne Scholz (\*1969), violinist on Renaissance, Baroque and Classical instruments and conductor of ensembles from Renaissance consorts to opera ensembles, performs concerts and gives master classes and lectures throughout Europe and beyond.

In addition to her studies in Graz, Vienna and The Hague she gained wide musical experience within many European countries. Since 1995 she has been active as a teacher, first in Vienna (Private University), then from 1999 to 2017 in Leipzig (HMT) and since 2012 in Graz (University of Performing Arts), where she is a professor for baroque violin and chamber music/baroque orchestra. Working together regularly with colleagues from all over Europe, she strives to demonstrate and pass on her interest and passion for new questions in music practice. She also explores new repertoire and how to convey this cultural richness to the audience.

Under her leadership opera productions were put up mostly in Leipzig and, since 2015 also in Graz, many of them as first modern-day performances, with operas by Sebastiani, Heinichen, Telemann, Bononcini, Förster, Blow, Hasse as well as major works by Vivaldi, Purcell, Campra, Stradella, Fux, Draghi, Lully,. Monteverdi, Händel and oratorios by Stradella and A.M.Bononcini. Researching into questions of repertoire and performance practice led to publications and to an international lecture activity.

Numerous recordings bear witness to her artistic activity, the realization of her artistic research has led to two recent CD productions with her ensemble *chordae freybergenses* playing on copies of the five Freiberg Renaissance Violins and to a very special recording of Corelli's Sonatas opus V together with the harpsichordist Michael Hell (released by *Querstand* in 2015 and 2018).