



HUMANITIES WEST

Exploring History. Celebrating the Arts.

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Public Info: Humanities West

www.humanitieswest.org

Tickets: City Box Office 415/392-4400

www.cityboxoffice.com

HUMANITIES WEST PRESENTS

Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275-1400)

Friday & Saturday, October 23 & 24, 2015

Marines' Memorial Theatre, 609 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (SAN FRANCISCO, 18 August, 2015) Humanities West opens its 2015-2016 Season with ***Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275-1400)***, a two-day program of lectures, discussions, and musical performances exploring the rich contributions and significant achievements of early Italian Renaissance artists, architects, writers and musicians. The program takes place on Friday, October 23, from 7:30pm to 9:30pm, and Saturday, October 24, from 10am to 4pm, at Marines' Memorial Theatre, located at 609 Sutter Street in downtown San Francisco.

Tickets for ***Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275 -1400)***, are priced as follows: Single tickets for individual Friday programs are \$55 orchestra and \$45 balcony and individual Saturday programs are \$80 orchestra and \$55 balcony, single tickets for both days of each program are \$125 orchestra and \$90 balcony. Order direct from City Box Office 415-392-4400 or www.cityboxoffice.com

Season tickets may still be available and offer a significant savings. Check www.humanitieswest.org for details and complete program descriptions for the 2015-2016 Season. A Flex Series ticket - for a choice of any three program days on the 2015-2016 Season - is available for \$225 orchestra and \$140 balcony. Individual balcony tickets for teachers and students are available for \$25/day for any program. Free tickets are available in limited quantities for students age 25 or younger (inquire at info@humanitieswest.org).

Humanities West begins its two-day lecture series for the 2015-2016 season with a journey to the ***Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275-1400)***. Designed to entertain and educate, this unique lecture/performance program brings together distinguished scholars, along with acclaimed Bay Area musicians to celebrate the art, architecture, literature and music of the early Italian Renaissance. Writers and artists of the Italian Renaissance first recaptured and reinvigorated the artistic accomplishments of classical antiquity. The republican communes erected monumental civic palaces and other major architectural works, such as fortifications and public fountains. This program explores the contributions of these artists, architects, writers and musicians. Learn about Duccio, Giotto, Simone Martini, and Giovanni Pisano as each entered new territory in painting and sculpture, paving the way for later artists such as Masaccio and Brunelleschi. Discover how Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio wrote their masterpieces in verse and prose, which Chaucer would later retrieve and reimagine in the English language. Finally, revel in the music of the time with performances by local artists performing the music of the Trecento and Ars Nova.

On Friday evening, **Paula Findlen** (Stanford) provides the opening lecture ***How the Renaissance Began***, exploring the roots of many features of the Italian Renaissance as found in the world of commerce, politics, faith, and culture. Findlen's talk provides a context for a society that would ultimately see itself as being "reborn" in some fundamental sense at the dawn of an era that came to be known as the Renaissance.

Completing the Friday evening program is a musical presentation, ***The Ars Nova and Beyond: Italian Music from the Borders of the Renaissance*** with Bay Area early music specialists **Shira Kammen** (*early strings and voice*), **Tim Rayborn** (*percussion, lute, and voice*) and **Phoebe Jevtovic Rosquist** (*voice*).

On Saturday, **Carol Lansing** (UC Santa Barbara) presents ***Courtly Culture at the Dawn of the Renaissance***. The rise of the Italian Renaissance comes after the defeat and death of Emperor Frederick II and his sons, yet the cultural influences of his court lived on. Lansing will discuss how this culture profoundly influenced young townsmen like Dante and his contemporaries in their fascination with love poetry, knighthood and courtliness. **Max Grossman** (University of Texas at El Paso) follows with a presentation, on ***Italian Civic Palaces in the Age of the City-Republics***. At the beginning of the Renaissance major Italian cities projected their power and authority by constructing monumental civic palaces, which were embellished with sumptuous marble ornament and sophisticated cycles of frescoes, as seen in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, and Palazzo Ducale in Venice. Grossman provides an analysis of these architectural and decorative motifs, revealing much about the culture and civilization of the republican age.

The program continues with a special musical presentation, ***The Subtle Art: Courtly Love at the Beginning of the Renaissance*** performed by East Bay ensemble ***Calexton*** whose members include **Allison Zelles Lloyd** (*voice and medieval harp*), **Frances Blaker** (*recorders and hackbrett*), **Letitia Berlin** (*recorders and douçaine*), and **Shira Kammen** (*vielle and rebec*).

The two-day program culminates with ***Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: The Perspectives of Literature in the Early Renaissance***, a talk by **David Lummus** (Stanford), on the monumental achievements of the “three crowns of Florence.” Lummus addresses how each author uses literature to try to come to terms with mankind’s changing place in the cosmos. It will conclude by addressing how their works and worldviews were translated and transmitted across Europe, becoming—from Chaucer onward—models for using the powers of the imagination to understand and perhaps overcome the limitations of human existence.

A panel discussion with the presenters will follow, addressing questions from the audience.

This program commemorates the 750th anniversary of Dante’s birth and is presented in collaboration with the Consul General of Italy in San Francisco, the Italian Cultural Institute, the Leonardo da Vinci Society, and the Department of History, Stanford.

*Ancillary programs providing opportunities to learn more about the featured topic and related issues complement this two-day event. For a complete program schedule and additional information about the presenters please visit www.humanitieswest.org

About Humanities West

Serving the Bay Area since 1983, Humanities West Explores History and Celebrates the Arts through time and across the globe, bringing illuminating lectures and dynamic performances that focus on the people, places, and events that have shaped, and still inform, modern cultures.

Each season Humanities West presents a number of programs in which leading scholars and artists present lectures, performances, readings and discussions to audiences in San Francisco’s Marines’ Memorial Theatre. These one- or two-day events represent an opportunity unique not only to the Bay Area, but also to the entire United States. In cooperation with other institutions, such as the Mechanics’ Institute Library and the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, additional public lectures and panels are presented to further expand upon program topics

CALENDAR LISTING FOLLOWS

CALENDAR LISTING: EVENTS/LECTURES/ARTS & CULTURE

WHAT: *Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275-1400)*

Humanities West presents *Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275-1400)*, a two-day program of lectures, discussions, and musical performances exploring the rich contributions and significant achievements of early Italian Renaissance artists, architects, writers and musicians.

**WHEN: 7:30pm to 9:30pm, Friday, October 23, 2015
10am to 4pm, Saturday, October 24, 2015**

**WHERE: Marines' Memorial Theatre
609 Sutter Street, San Francisco**

TICKETS: \$25 - \$80
Tickets are available through City Box Office at
415-392-4400 or online at www.cityboxoffice.com
Group tickets: info@humanitieswest.org

PUBLIC INFO: 415/391-9700 or www.humanitieswest.org

Ancillary Programs for *Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275-1400)

HUMANITIES WEST SALON at the Rex: Dante Across the Centuries: A Musical Journey

Kayleen Asbo (piano), **Bonnie Brooks** (voice), and **Julija Zibrat** (violin)

Dante Alighieri stands as a bridge between the music of the Medieval and the Modern worlds. The poet (1265-1321) considered himself to be upholding the legacy of the troubadours. Music forms an integral part of the structure of the *Divine Comedy*—Dante assigned a specific hymn or chant for every circle of Purgatory and Paradise. In commemoration of the 750th anniversary of his birth, explore the role of music in Dante's *magnum opus* as well as ways his work has inspired musical responses across the ages. Join in a journey from the Medieval Plainchant *Salve Regina* to Loreena McKennitt's 1997 Celtic-infused *Dante's Prayer*.

When: 6:00pm, Thursday, September 24, 2015

Where: Hotel Rex
562 Sutter Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$25

TIX: www.cityboxoffice.com or 415-392-4400

HUMANITIES WEST BOOK DISCUSSION with Lynn Harris

The Divine Comedy – Dante and Translated by Clive James, Book 1 & 2 Hell & Purgatory

The Divine Comedy is the precursor of modern literature, and Clive James's translation—decades in the making—gives us the entire epic as a single, coherent, and compulsively readable lyric poem. For the first time ever in an English translation, James makes the bold choice of switching from the terza rima composition of the original Italian—a measure that strains in English—to the quatrain. The result is "rhymed English stanzas that convey the music of Dante's triple rhymes" (Edward Mendelson). James's translation reproduces the same wonderful momentum of the original Italian that propels the reader along the pilgrim's path from Hell to Heaven, from despair to revelation.

When: 5:00pm, Monday, September 28, 2015

Where: Commonwealth Club of California
555 Post Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$5

TIX: www.commonwealthclub.org or 415-597-6700

TOUR/LECTURE: The Art of Soul–Dante and Rodin - Walking Tours with Kayleen Asbo

In these two riveting 90 minute lectures, esteemed professor and cultural historian Dr. Kayleen Asbo will guide participants through the two greatest Rodin collections outside of France to explore the fascinating tale of how Dante’s genius reached across the centuries to ignite both passionate romance and epic tragedy. Kayleen Asbo, PhD, is on the faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes of UC Berkeley, Dominican University and Sonoma State University, where her classes on cultural arts and mythology have been hailed as a riveting and addictive blend of passion, artistry and scholarship. A portion of each ticket sale supports Humanities West.

When: 11:00am, Tuesdays, October 6 & November 3, 2015

Where: Legion of Honor
100 34th Avenue, SF, CA

Cost: \$40

TIX: www.kayleenasbo.com/rodin.html

PANEL DISCUSSION: Humanities West Panel on Living in the Material World

George Hammond (Humanities West). Panelists include **Caroline Winterer**, Director and Anthony P. Meier Family Professor in the Humanities, Stanford Humanities Center; Professor of History and of Classics at Stanford University; **Russell Hancock**, Pianist, Saint Michael Trio, and President and CEO of Joint Venture Silicon Valley; **Judy Salter**, Board Member, Cal Humanities, and former President and CEO of Turtle Bay Exploration Park.

The runaway success of material culture in the last two centuries has often overshadowed the pursuit of subtler, more humane forms of happiness and understanding. Recently even the great universities, the last strongholds of liberal education, have been struggling to define the value of critical thinking versus career building. How will these subtler pursuits survive the cultural onslaught of materialism? Join a panel discussion of how to live humanely in the 21st Century. In association with the Humanities Member-Led Forum.

When: 6:00pm, Monday, October 12, 2015

Where: Commonwealth Club of California
555 Post Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$20

Tickets: www.commonwealthclub.org or 415-597-6700

FIRESIDE CHAT with George Hammond – Dawn of the Italian Renaissance – Preview

Join Humanities West board member George Hammond for a preview of the two-day lecture/performance series ***Dawn of the Italian Renaissance (1275-1400)***

When: 6:30pm, Tuesday, October 20, 2015

Where: Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA

Cost: Free

LECTURE: Civil Saints and Civic Pride in the Renaissance City-State

Mary Doyno (Sacramento State University)

Civic pride—what Italians call *Campanilismo*—was a quintessential part of life in the Italian city. The city provided for Renaissance men and women a crucial piece of their identity: one was Sienese, Florentine, or Venetian before all else. The veneration of a city’s patron saint—whether it be the Virgin Mary in Siena, Saint John the Baptist in Florence, or the evangelist Mark in Venice—provided a crucial element in creating this all encompassing civic identity. At the same time that Renaissance society was championing an ancient and pre-Christian world-view, it was also creating complex civil religions steeped in devotion to the saints.

When: 6:00pm, Thursday, October 22, 2015

Where: Commonwealth Club of California
555 Post Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$20

Tickets: www.commonwealthclub.org or 415-597-6700

MEETUP with Humanities West at the Hotel Rex Library Bar

When: 6:00pm, Friday, October 23, 2015

Where: Hotel Rex
562 Sutter Street, SF

Cost: No-host Bar

HUMANITIES WEST BOOK DISCUSSION with Lynn Harris

The Divine Comedy – Dante and Translated by Clive James: Book 3 Paradise

The Divine Comedy is the precursor of modern literature, and Clive James's translation—decades in the making—gives us the entire epic as a single, coherent, and compulsively readable lyric poem. For the first time ever in an English translation, James makes the bold choice of switching from the terza rima composition of the original Italian—a measure that strains in English—to the quatrain. The result is "rhymed English stanzas that convey the music of Dante's triple rhymes" (Edward Mendelson). James's translation reproduces the same wonderful momentum of the original Italian that propels the reader along the pilgrim's path from Hell to Heaven, from despair to revelation.

When: 5:00pm, Monday, October 26, 2015

Where: Commonwealth Club of California
555 Post Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$5

Tickets: www.commonwealthclub.org or 415-597-6700

LECTURE: What is Vernacular? How Dante Invented Italian

Albert Ascoli (Italian Studies, UCB).

Sponsored by the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in collaboration with the Leonardo da Vinci Society.

When: 6:30pm, Thursday, October 29, 2015

Where: 601 Van Ness Avenue, SF

Cost: Free

Info: Events@davincisanfrancisco.com or media@sfiic.org