

The William & Mary Early Music Ensemble, directed by Ruth van Baak Griffioen
(MUS E17 one credit TR 8:00-9:20 AM Wren Great Hall)

The W&M EME performs medieval, renaissance, and baroque instrumental music (and some vocal music) using old instruments and historical performance practices. It is open by audition to accomplished players (and a few singers) of modern instruments interested in learning ancient ones. We have renaissance and baroque recorders; renaissance flutes, viols, and lutes; assorted reeds, brass, and percussion, and medieval gear ranging from harp to hurdy-gurdy, as well as a variety of historical keyboard instruments. On loan we also have historic brass in the form of cornettos and sackbuts. We also from time to time work with players of solo baroque instruments such as baroque flute, baroque violin, and harpsichord.

The ensemble generally has between 15 and 20 members, of whom a handful may be either graduate students, college employees, or townsfolk, but only when they are able to play an instrument that no registered student is able or willing to play. The director rehearses the ensemble about four hours a week, but generally in subgroups: for example, the recorders one hour a week, the viols another hour, the brass yet another hour. In the late 1990s, the 20 instrumentalists were also joined by 30 or more Early Music Singers, but that part of the program has been discontinued; for vocal music the ensemble now uses one-on-a-part vocal soloists, or teams up with independent choral groups, which have included The Botetourt Singers and The Gentlemen of the College.

The ensemble performs a public full-length concert each November and April, either in the Wren Chapel, Wren Great Hall, or Bruton Parish Church. These concerts attract anywhere from 100 to 800 people, depending on how many times we offer them (once, twice, or three times). In addition, smaller groups within the ensemble play for parties, banquets, weddings, schools, and so forth up to half a dozen times a year.

The ensemble has toured as far as New Bern, North Carolina and the Washington DC area. Soloists from the ensemble were chosen to perform on the occasion of speeches by Margaret Thatcher and Christopher Reeves. Several of our alumni have gone on to careers as professional early music performers, including one current faculty member right here at W&M, and one professional baroque violinist in Tokyo.

The W&M Early Music Ensemble does all this on a budget of \$500 (yes, five hundred) a year, and despite the 6-10 hours of work this requires from the director each week in the academic year, the ensemble is considered an "overload" on a no-benefits job.

Some of our past programs include:

1994: Music of Lassus & Palestrina; German Renaissance Christmas music

1995: Music of Henry Purcell for the Life & Death of Queen Mary

1996: Music of Elizabethan England; Johann Sebastian Bach; Music of Heinrich Schutz

1997: Music of Guillaume DuFay and Johannes Ockgehem; Music for English Royalty

1998: 20th century music for Old Instruments and Young Voices; Six Senior Soloists

1999: Medieval sacred and secular music, including works of Hildegard von Bingen

[2000-2004: director left W&M and ensemble dissolved]

2005: Music by and in honor of Thomas Tallis (born 1505)

2006: Sonatas and Concertos of Telemann; Cedars of Lebanon / Ashes of Andalusia

2007: Jigs and Dirges for Jamestown 1607