

CALMUS *vocal ensemble*

Isabel Jantschek, soprano; **Sebastian Krause**, counter-tenor;
Tobias Pöche, tenor; **Ludwig Böhme**, baritone; **Manuel Helmeke**, bass

“Nothing short of remarkable...they, quite simply, bring whatever they sing to glorious life.” That is how the *Deseret Morning News* described a concert by Calmus, the First Prize Winner of the Concert Artists Guild Competition. Founded in 1999 in Germany, the *a cappella* quintet embodies the rich choral tradition of its hometown of Leipzig, the city so closely associated with Bach and Mendelssohn. Whether singing music by those German masters or other works in its diverse repertoire, Calmus captivates both audiences and critics with its charming stage presence, flawless technique and entertaining presentation.

All graduates of Leipzig’s renowned St. Thomas Church Choir School, Calmus offers the unique combination of a pure soprano voice with four male voices ranging from bass to countertenor. The seamless blend of these five voices lends itself to the almost limitless range of music the ensemble offers, from renaissance and baroque masters through great German romantic works, all the way to contemporary choral repertoire, as well as pop songs and jazz. Calmus conveys everything it performs with great respect and also with a sense of joy in singing that is obvious to the listener: “...the singers bring tremendous character and musical depth to their interpretations... that transcends the language of the lyrics.” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*)

Highlighted performances in 2017-18 include a return to Lincoln Center Great Performers in New York City, and debut concerts for: The Schubert Club’s Music in the Park Series (St. Paul, MN), Pro Musica (Joplin, MO), and the Cal Poly Arts series (San Luis Obispo, CA). In early 2018, Calmus is also a featured ensemble performing for the Wisconsin Choral Directors Association conference (at The Grand Theatre in Wausau), and for the Western regional conference of the American Choral Director’s Association (ACDA) in Pasadena, CA.

With nearly 20 recordings to its credit, Calmus current CD’s (Carus label)--*Luther’s Collage* and *Mitten im Leben 1517* (featuring the Lautten Compagny)--commemorate the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, and both were selected as *Forbes Magazine’s* ‘Classical CD of the Week’ (Jan. 25, 2017). Their 2014 *Madrigals of Madness* album was selected by *The New York Times* Classical critics among the best CD’s, and their 2015 release, *Christmas Carols of the World*, led to a special Holiday concert at NY Public Radio’s The Greene Space, with live video streaming on WQXR. Other recent releases include: *Mythos 116*, featuring six different settings of Psalm 116; *Touched*, showcasing a unique mixture of classical and popular songs ranging from Purcell and Monteverdi to Elton John and Sting; *Lied:gut!*, a disc of German folksongs which won the 2009 Echo Klassik Award; and *Christmas Carols*, Calmus’ first Holiday CD which was enthusiastically received: “...perfectly balanced ensemble singing...every chord given exacting importance” (*Classics Today*).

Recent North American highlights include Calmus’ New York debut at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, and other NYC engagements at Lincoln Center Great Performers, Met Museum Presents, The Cloisters, Schneider Concerts at the New School, and a special program in fall 2012 at Manhattan’s Holy Trinity Lutheran Church to celebrate the 800th Anniversary of the St. Thomas Choir School. Other featured US career engagements include Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Purdue University Convocations, Ravinia’s Rising Stars series, Washington Performing Arts, University of Iowa’s Hancher Auditorium, Clemson University’s Brooks Center for the Performing Arts, San Francisco’s Morrison Arts Series, Bach Society of Houston and Northeastern Illinois University’s Jewel Box Series (Chicago). US Festival appearances include: the Virginia Arts Festival; Rockport Chamber Music Festival; Chautauqua Institution; Princeton Summer Music and Wisconsin’s Madison Early Music Festival and Green Lake Festival.

An active concert schedule worldwide has taken Calmus across Germany, Austria Belgium, Switzerland, France, Ireland, Spain and Portugal as well as Central and South America. Festival appearances include International *a cappella* Week in Hannover and the Schleswig-Holstein Festival where the group attended a master class with the King’s Singers. In addition to garnering First Prize at the CAG Competition, other prestigious awards include First Prizes at the fourth annual Robert Schumann Choral Competition, the International Competition for Vocal Ensembles in Finland and the 37th Tolosa Choral Contest in Spain.

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First Prize, 2009 Concert Artists Guild International Competition
First Prize, Fourth Annual Robert Schumann Choral Competition

Isabel Jantschek - soprano

Isabel Jantschek (born 1989) began music lessons at the age of five at the Cottbus Conservatoire. Since 2008 she has studied at the Musikhochschule in Dresden with Hendrikje Wangemann and KS Olaf Bär. Other singers who have had a considerable influence on her include Dorothee Miels, Ruth Ziesack, Ingeborg Danz and Britta Schwarz. During her studies, she sang the role of Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Kleines Haus in Dresden and *Die Kluge* by Carl Orff at the Serkowitzer Volksoper.

Isabel Jantschek has a particular interest in 17th and 18th century music. She performs regularly as a soloist with the Dresdner Kammerchor which is currently recording the complete works of Heinrich Schütz. She has worked with conductors including Hans-Christoph Rademann, Michael Gläser, Vaclav Luks, Florian Helgath, Peter Schreier, Ludger Remy, Jörg-Andreas Bötticher and she is a welcome guest at the Bachfest Stuttgart, Bachfest Leipzig, Bachfest Schaffhausen, Musikfest Erzgebirge, Wrocław Cantans, Dresdner Kunstfest and Dresdner Musikfestspiele. In addition, she sings in ensembles such as RIAS Kammerchor and Collegium 1704, and she is delighted to be singing with Calmus for the 2016-17 season while Anja Pöche is on maternity leave.

Sebastian Krause – countertenor

Sebastian Krause was born in Halle/Saale. Since he was a child of two musicians, singing played an important part in his life from childhood. At the age of 9 he became a member of the *Thomanerchor* (St. Thomas Choir of Leipzig) where he sang until 1998. As prefect there, he also gained experience conducting. After A-levels and his leaving the choir, he became co-founder of the Calmus Ensemble in 1999. He previously had singing lessons with Jörn Sakuth, since 2004 his teacher is Dirk Schmidt.

In 1999 he began studying musicology and computing science, but quit musicology in 2000. Aside from Calmus he was both a member of the “Sächsisches Vokalensemble” under Matthias Jung and responsible for the Georg Kreisler Internet Forum for a long time.

Sebastian also arranges all kinds of vocal music, both for Calmus and other vocal ensembles and choirs.

Tobias Pöche - tenor

The tenor Tobias Pöche has been the tenor of the Calmus Ensemble since September 2006. Born in Annaberg-Buchholz in 1978, he had his first singing lessons at the age of 7. After having been a member of the Kreuzchor Dresden he studied singing with Kammersänger Rudolf Riemer at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy” Leipzig.

Tobias is a former member of the Kreuzchor Dresden, and also sang freelance for the MDR Radiochoir Leipzig, the NDR Radiochoir Hamburg, the RIAS-Chamberchoir Berlin, and was a member of the Dutch ensemble “Ensemble Lyrique” and the Händel Festival Choir Halle. In those various ensembles, he has worked with conductors including Michele Mariotti, Sir Simon Rattle, Martin Haselböck, Hans-Christoph Rademann, René Jacobs, Peter Dijkstra, Daniel Reuss, Lothar Zagrosek, Simone Young, Riccardo Chailly and Krzysztof Penderecki.

In addition he has worked as soloist in various opera- and operetta productions at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Leipzig, the Eduard-von-Winterstein Theatre Annaberg and the Anhaltische Theater Dessau. As a soloist and as an ensemble singer, his diverse field of activity has taken Tobias Pöche to all parts of Germany, throughout Europe, Asia and to North and South America.

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Ludwig Böhme - baritone

Ludwig Böhme loves vocal music – as a singer, a conductor, a lecturer or an arranger, and he is a founding member of Calmus. Born in 1979, he was a member of the St Thomas' Boys Choir in Leipzig. He studied choral conducting with Georg Christoph Biller at the Academy for Music and Theatre "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy", Leipzig. Until 2002 he worked as the assistant of the Director of Music of St Thomas'.

When he is not busy with Calmus, he works as the conductor of the Leipzig chamber choir "Josquin des Préz," which focuses primarily on the music of the Renaissance but whose repertoire does also include later periods. Though basically an *a cappella* ensemble, there is regular cooperation with baroque orchestras – in concerts, radio- and CD productions. In 2010 the chamber choir "Josquin des Préz" won the second prize of the German Choir Competition.

From 2004 Ludwig Böhme has been instigating, as its artistic director, the concert series "Josquin – the Project," the first complete performance of the latter's entire oeuvre in St Thomas Church, Leipzig.

Ludwig Böhme leads workshops for vocal ensembles and choirs and is Lecturer for Conducting at the Protestant Academy for Church Music in Halle/Saale. He has also achieved success as an arranger and a composer (Contemporary A cappella Recording Award 2004).

Manuel Helmeke – bass

Born in 1988, Manuel Helmeke started his musical career as a young boy at the local children's choir of his congregation. In addition to this he took lessons at the local music school in piano, organ and singing.

In 2008 the young bassist was prize winner of the national music competition "Jugend Musiziert" for young adults. This success encouraged Manuel to start studying singing. He studied with Prof. Berthold Schmid and KS Prof. Roland Schubert at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" in Leipzig and graduated in 2014 with a diploma both in singing as well as in music education.

Meanwhile he has had various engagements as a soloist, where he performed with famous ensembles such as the Thomanerchor Leipzig, MDR radio choir as well as Gewandhausorchester Leipzig. In addition to this he took part in CD productions with the Leipziger Gewandhaus as well as in radio broadcastings with Deutschlandradio Kultur and the MDR.

Manuel is also passionate about conducting his initiated choir projects. From 2012 - 2014 he discovered his preference for ensemble music as part of the award-winning Ensemble Thios Omilos. At the beginning of 2015 he joined Calmus as the bass singer, and he is greatly looking forward to performing all over the world with Calmus.

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