

NEWS

FROM

Wilfrid Laurier University

75 UNIVERSITY AVENUE WEST

WATERLOO, ONTARIO, CANADA N2L 3C5

TELEPHONE: (519) 884-1970 EXT. 278

038-1981
Brad Douglas
April 13, 1981

For immediate release

Wilfrid Laurier University music dean
receives \$31,000 for 14th century music study

Dr. Gordon Greene, dean of music at Wilfrid Laurier University, recently received a Canada Council grant of \$31,000 to complete his research and transcription of priceless manuscripts of 14th century European songs and instrumental pieces.

The grant, which covers a three-year period, does not include a salary for Dr. Greene but enables him to take two more trips to Europe and to employ an assistant for research purposes.

He began work on the project in 1965 and his research is now being published by Oiseau-Lyre, a publishing firm established in 1950 by banking heiress Louise Dyer of Monaco. Oiseau-Lyre's purpose is to preserve as much 14th century repertoire as possible.

Dr. Greene has made eleven trips to Europe in the last 15 years, seeking out surviving examples of music and transcribing them by hand for today's musicians to play or study.

He cannot, unfortunately, bring his findings home but must make use of photographs or microfilms which are stored in his office at Wilfrid Laurier University.

"To make sure that everything is absolutely accurate you ultimately have to go back to the source," he said. "Sometimes you find that what looked like a note in microfilm is really a flyspeck or wormhole on the copy."

-more-

There is one element that cannot be reproduced in modern form: calligraphy and artwork which make so many old manuscripts visual delights with their vibrant colors and gold leafing. These, however, have provided him with clues about how obscure songs were meant to be performed.

Retrieving these manuscripts has forced the Laurier dean to become both a detective and diplomat. One such incident in 1977 led him to a monastery in Montserrat, Spain, where a valuable manuscript was discovered under strange circumstances.

In the year 1509, a 100-year-old song book had been used as padding in the construction of a leather cover of a book. It had been cut to size to fit the molding and was discovered when old bindings were being repaired by the monks. With careful removal and analysis, Dr. Greene and other scholars can now reconstruct many parts of such damaged scores.

The entire project, containing 24 volumes, will be completed by 1984 and the collection will likely stand as the most comprehensive gathering of 14th century music in the world.

Dr. Greene is responsible for the completion of six volumes of French music in the series. For his efforts he receives no royalties, only a personal copy of each volume.

But he said, "I have absolutely no regrets. There have been so many benefits you just can't put a price on it."