

Capella Antiqua Bambergensis in the inner courtyard of Wernsdorf Castle. Wernsdorf Castle is built on the ancient walls of a Franconian royal castle. The most vibrant contribution of the Middle Ages lives on here: music.



Capella Antiqua Bambergensis

Yesterday's world was different, even if only a little. It was most certainly more peaceful and full of joy in anticipation of every holiday – of which there were 52 in total every year.

Town pipers were engaged for entertainment and dancing, and for a little extra cash even the council fiddlers would play. For events sponsored by noble and generous patrons these musicians would arrive in a carriage and pair full of musical instruments: crumhorns that would croak like ravens, roaring pipes and shawms, crates full of recorders and flutes, gemshorns, cases of fiddles and violas, plus a small organ and a spinet. The percussionist usually needed his own trailer to carry all 50 pounds of his wooden and metallic sound and bell tools.

What was music like in those good old days? Which dances were performed when Albrecht Dürer celebrated the profitable sale of one of his paintings? Which music did the Prince Bishop of Bamberg order his musicians to play for him? The Capella has the answers – it has the music and the period instruments.

In its Museum of Musical Instruments in Wernsdorf Castle the Capella has approximately 250 playable instruments on display, most of them copies true to the originals of the Middle Ages. Many of them were made in the workshop of Andreas Spindler, a professional maker of musical instruments and a member of the Capella, others are instruments from all over Europe, some even originals from bygone days.

When on concert tours the musicians carry about one third of these instruments in their luggage.

WERNSDORF CASTLE

More than a thousand years ago the castle complex of Wernsdorf near Bamberg constituted a corner stone of the eastern border of the Occident. Today, below the surface of the earth, one can still find the remains of strong round towers and a large rampart from medieval times.

In 1620 Prince Bishop Johann Gottfried von Aschhausen had all the buildings connected to form the complex as we see it today; the castle became a hunting

INFORMATION

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TIP

Wernsdorf Castle has more than just one access to the Middle Ages. Computer programmes help make images of wonderful historical manuscripts come alive. More than 200 historical musical instruments can be looked at and heard live in concerts. Masters of these instruments are regularly invited to perform, for instance Ian Harrison with his cornet, bagpipes and shawms, Ann Heymann with her gold-stringed harp and Nora Thiele playing her percussion instruments with virtuoso perfection. Although they are behind bullet proof glass you can clearly see the facsimile editions of three of the more important literary works of the Middle Ages: the Manesse, two Heidelberg Song Manuscripts and the Weingartner Manuscript. Again, there are many entrances – do come in.



Wernsdorf Castle –
Foundation walls
from Charlemagne’s
times. Start your
musical journey into
the Middle Ages here.

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castle with famous furnishings. After secularisation in 1803 a chapel and the wall around the inner courtyard disappeared and the large estate was broken up. After 1945 the whole complex lay dormant.

In 1993 the Capella bought the castle and park. By contributing

40,000 hours of their own work, the Capella members contributed a great share of work to restore Wernsdorf Castle once again to its former beauty. Today the castle is the home and stage of the Capella. Concerts are regularly performed in the concert hall and the inner courtyard.