History and Art

“PAST PERFECT!”:

FIVE YEARS OF INTERVIEWS WITH CEU MEDIEVAL RADIO





EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER MIELKE, STEPHEN POW, TAMÁS KISS

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"*Past Perfect!*"
Five Years of Interviews with CEU Medieval Radio

Edited by

Christopher Mielke,
Stephen Pow, Tamás Kiss

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Preface

The present volume does not simply represent the results of over twenty-five years of university life at Central European University (CEU) in Budapest; it also celebrates the better part of a decade since the launch and creation of CEU Medieval Radio (www.medievalradio.org). In this book, we have included a selection of interviews with our most memorable and honored guests, whom we were lucky to have on our show, *Past Perfect!* This talk show became a bit of a storied tradition for our little online radio station – twice per month we would produce and broadcast an interview with a different expert each time on a wide range of fascinating topics of research which they would share with our listeners. To help our readers get the most from these interviews, we have added some explanatory notes to the transcripts.

The Department of Medieval Studies at Central European University was established in 1993, hosting forty graduate students; Medieval Studies was the first program at CEU to offer doctoral degrees. The university's first and only radio station, CEU Medieval Radio, was established by Tamás Kiss in 2012 as a non-profit oriented initiative to popularize medieval and early modern music, history, and culture. This enterprise came to life also with the collaboration of Civil Rádió FM 98, a community radio station in Budapest, which would play terrestrial broadcasts of our programs. CEU Medieval Radio is run by the doctoral students of the Medieval Studies Department, and it plays authentic pre-eighteenth-century music, a weekly talk show, and spots promoting the Medieval Studies Department's public events.

Past Perfect! is CEU Medieval Radio's show on medieval and early modern history and culture, where Christopher Mielke discusses with guests varying and myriad issues like the environmental aspects of the crusades, archeo-zoology, trade networks in the medieval Mediterranean Sea, and the Fall of Rome! In trying to make this radio station come alive as more than just a playlist of authentic medieval music, "Past Perfect!" sought to interview guests from all over the world on their various areas of specialty – we never chose to limit the discussion to narrow topics and defined themes. In the past five years, we have recorded over seventy interviews though unfortunately not all of them were able to be broadcast

for various technical reasons. The recordings were made with the aim to popularize medieval and early modern studies with the help of experts such as early musicians, historians, philologists, archeologists, etc., and we are proud to say that over the years since the inception of *Past Perfect!* we have conducted interviews with some of the most internationally well-known scholars in their fields under the auspices of CEU Medieval Radio.

The *Past Perfect!* series reflects many of the values and traditions of Central European University's own Department of Medieval Studies which recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Those values could be summed up as "keeping relevant" and "valuing interdisciplinarity." As such, our interviews reflect historic topics that carry a very strong resonance even up to the present day. One such example is our program dedicated to Crusader studies, and the impact of religious warfare on modern issues such as demography, diaspora, and even the environment. In many other cases, interviews have touched on subjects related to subaltern groups such as peasants, prostitutes, and religious minorities in an effort to understand how these various groups of people interacted with each other in everyday circumstances. In some cases, the evidence of these communities can only be detected in visual or material sources, so the guests appearing on our program had to come from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines in order to present various competing bits of data and evidence. Our guests have included archaeologists, linguists, historians, art historians, philosophers, anthropologists, cryptographers, music historians, and specialists from all sorts of geographic regions studying the time between 300 and 1600 AD. Furthermore, plans for future interviews touch on topics such as the New World and the Far East in the Middle Ages, as well as topics such as medieval humor, the Middle Ages in modern culture (such as fantasy literature and video games), and how modern political conflicts often have their roots in certain medieval events.

We have chosen to open this volume with an interview that represented a turnaround of the ordinary process; Angela Mariani interviewed Christopher Mielke, the host of "Past Perfect!" and Tamás Kiss, the founder and creator of CEU Medieval Radio. We provide that interview first as it answers any questions our listeners might have regarding how this station came to be. Following that, the interviews have been divided into three categories: our most distinguished

international guests, then a sample of interviews from the faculty of the Department of Medieval Studies at CEU, and finally a selection of our own personal favorite interviews with fascinating subjects. We are overjoyed to note that a few of the interviews presented here will be available to the public for the first time as a result of our decision to publish them in written form. At the same time, unfortunately, we were not able to include in this collection all the interviews that we found truly remarkable and fascinating – and there were many such interviews. If a sequel to this volume is prepared in the future, perhaps they might too see the light of day in print!

To all our colleagues who were kind enough to be guests on our show, to the Department of Medieval Studies (which has been our earliest and strongest champion), and to all of our listeners – and now readers! – we offer our sincerest and most humble thanks.

The Editors

Past Perfect!

Past Perfect! is CEU Medieval Radio's show on medieval and early modern history and culture in association with Civil Radio FM98, where Christopher Mielke casually discusses with his guests various issues from the crusades to archeozoology to medieval urine sampling. Listen to ***Past Perfect!*** online at www.medievalstudies.ceu.hu/radio, on Shoutcast, or on any major web radio portal (RadioTuna, MusicGoal, etc.), and in terrestrial broadcast on Civil Radio FM98 in Budapest at the following times from 7 August, 2012:

***Past Perfect!* on CEU Medieval Radio**

Tuesday, 7:00 PM	Berlin, Budapest, Oslo, Warsaw
Tuesday, 1:00 PM	New York, San Jose, Santiago, Toronto
Wednesday 7:00 PM	New York, San Jose, Santiago, Toronto
Thursday 1:00 AM	Berlin, Budapest, Oslo, Warsaw

***Past Perfect!* on Civil Radio FM98**

Sunday, 6:00 PM	Budapest and vicinity

Programme Timetable

7-8-9 August, 2012	*Online*	Prof. József Laszlovszky on modern technology's use in archaeology, religious orders in Central Europe in the Middle Ages, and the crusades
12 August, 2012	*Civil Radio*	
14-15-16 August, 2012	*Online*	Prof. György Geréby on medieval philosophy and transfer of texts and learning in the Mediterranean
19 August, 2012	*Civil Radio*	
21-22-23 August, 2012	*Online*	Dr. Ottó Gecser on medieval hygiene, medicine, and diseases
26 August, 2012	*Civil Radio*	
29-30-31 August, 2012	*Online*	Prof. Marianne Sághy on medieval paganism and its coexistence with Christianity
2 September, 2012	*Civil Radio*	
4-5-6 September, 2012	*Online*	Prof. Alice Choyke on archeozoology, imaginary animals, and the use of domestic animals in the Middle Ages
9 September, 2012	*Civil Radio*	

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A promotional poster of our very first interviews aired on CEU Medieval Radio

How It All Began. *Harmonia* with Angela Mariani Interviews CEU Medieval Radio

Hosted by Angela Mariani
with guests Christopher Mielke and Tamás Kiss

Originally aired July 16-21, 2013



From left to right: Tamás Kiss, Angela Mariani, and Christopher Mielke in the recording studio of Civil Radio FM 98 (photo by CEU Medieval Radio)

It is fitting to introduce the subject of how our radio station came to be, to highlight the motivations that drove a handful of ambitious graduate students to create it, and to open up this volume of "Past Perfect!" interviews with – what else? – a radio interview. In this case, however, the situation is rather different than what you will encounter in the rest of the book; the host and chief interviewer of "Past Perfect!," Chris Mielke, along with the creator of CEU Medieval Radio, Tamás Kiss, were the interviewees on this occasion. The interviewer was Angela Mariani, one of the longest serving and well-known hosts of Harmonia, a syndicated radio program based in the United States. Produced by WFIU Public Radio in Bloomington, Indiana, Harmonia is an hour-long program dedicated to medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque music. Their website is here:
https://indianapublicmedia.org/harmonia/

Aware of our burgeoning year-old internet radio station, Angela Mariani was visiting Budapest in 2013 and reached out to Chris and Tamás about the possibility of conducting an interview for Harmonia, something they were quite eager to do. After all, they were neither strangers to the music of the past nor radio interviews. It felt a little strange for Chris, especially, to be answering questions rather than asking them after almost a year of hosting "Past Perfect!" Nonetheless it was a great honor for members of CEU Medieval Radio to have the chance to speak with Angela who herself hosted such a well-established radio program with such a widespread audience. Here the two chief members of CEU Medieval Radio had a chance to publicize why they created the station and what they envisioned for it. Any questions you might have as a listener about your beloved CEU Medieval Radio, the Department of Medieval Studies, and even a few about CEU itself, will probably be answered in the exchange below!

***

AM: On *Harmonia* this week, we look at CEU Medieval Radio, a non-profit internet radio station run by students at the Medieval Studies Department of Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. The station is dedicated to the popularization of Medieval and Early Modern history and culture, and of music before 1700. In addition to music and features, CEU Medieval Radio also broadcasts a weekly program called

"Past Perfect!" in which host Christopher Mielke interviews scholars of medieval history and culture. CEU Medieval Radio is broadcast worldwide on the internet at medievalradio.org. I'm sitting right now in the studios of Civil Radio in Budapest, talking with Tamás Kiss and Christopher Mielke of CEU Medieval Radio. Thanks so much for being on *Harmonia* this week!

CM: Thank you very much for having us.

TK: Thank you.

AM: I wonder if you could say a few words, and the question is directed at either or both of you, about how CEU Medieval Radio came about.

CM: Go ahead, Tamás!

TK: It was me at the end of 2011 who came up with the idea of having an online radio for the Medieval Studies Department at Central European University. The idea was that we should have something about the Middle Ages that educates people, that probably entertains people as well, but definitely something that explains Medieval and Early Modern topics to a wider audience. I talked to members of the department who all decided that we should go ahead and have a radio station. It took a couple of months until I could put together the project, i.e. the infrastructure, and I found brilliant colleagues and contributors for the work, such as Chris sitting here with us today and others like Kyra [Lyublyanovics], our music editor, and Zsuzsanna [Eke].[1] We've done a great job so far inputting a radio and running it.

CM: It's one thing to have a medieval playlist – I love listening to medieval music – but with the interviews, our aim was different. It was Tamás's idea and I was something of a guinea pig in terms of how to operate the show. The idea behind it, with both our music and our programs, is that we are trying – and succeeding, in my opinion – to make

[1] Like Chris Mielke and Tamás Kiss, both Kyra and Zsuzsanna were PhD students at the Department of Medieval Studies and active and long-term volunteers with CEU Medieval Radio.

the Middle Ages as accessible to as wide an audience as possible. People watch movies, play video games, and read books, and thus have a certain idea about how things were in the year 800, in the year 1400, etc. But I have to say that I get to be very selfish. I absolutely love running the shows! I get to ask the questions that I want to ask and make interesting conversation with people researching a variety of topics, such as peasants, fights within the Church, or gender issues. I just love doing these interviews! What can I say?

TK: I think Chris just said something very important. As far as I know, we are the only medieval themed radio on the internet which has a weekly talk show on Medieval and Early Modern issues. All the others seem to be focused on music – which is a good thing. But I think we have a different mission, as long as we can show people that what they see in popular literature and culture about the Medieval and Early Modern period is sometimes not true, or at least not in full accordance with what is being said by scientists and scholars. Chris has been doing a great job, I think, in these talks… how many shows do we have by now?

CM: Almost forty.

TK: So Chris has been doing a great job in these forty interviews showing people what scientists, historians…

CM: ...and archaeologists, philosophers…

TK: ...and philologists have to say about the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

CM: There are other plans in addition to what we are doing right now. For instance, there have been recordings done of Judith Rasson[2] reading the letters of Abelard and Heloise. Trying to make the Middle Ages approachable for a wider public is something worth doing in my opinion.

[2] Judith Rasson is a professor and faculty member of the Medieval Studies Department whose focus has been travel, trade, and transhumance. She has since retired but still remains active with the *Annual* of the Department of Medieval Studies.

AM: Well, I love the idea of folding literature into the mix as well because there's such a strong relationship between the literature and the music, and you can tie these together. I'm wondering if either or both of you were already interested in broadcasting at some point or whether the Medieval studies came first and then the broadcasting came later.

TK: On a personal note, I was interested in online radio in general. I really do think there's a lot of potential in this and it seemed right to combine the potential of the online radio with the expertise of the Medieval Studies Department at CEU. I didn't know much about the technicalities of running an online radio, but I think we've learned a lot in the process of running these shows and running the radio itself while we are doing our PhDs. I'm doing my PhD at the Medieval Studies Department as well, but I also started at a media school last year.

CM: I used to play the violin, and I absolutely love to do it, but honestly when I said that I wanted to help out with CEU Medieval Radio, I expected that I would be doing things like putting letters in envelopes or typing things up on an Excel spreadsheet. So, when I was asked if I could be the host of "Past Perfect!" I really had no clue what I was getting myself into. My first interviews were very structured, and I felt that I had to fill out an A4 size paper with all the sort of possible questions I could potentially ask someone. Nowadays, I come in with a notecard and three topics and just let loose. So for me, it was a bit unexpected, but I've loved doing it.

AM: And the program is an hour? "Past Perfect!" is an hour long?

TK: Yes, it's a weekly show and as far as I know, even on a regular broadcast, one-hour shows are becoming very rare. It takes a lot of time and effort to make these shows and we are both very proud of "Past Perfect!"

AM: Can you give me an example of perhaps some of the topics of the discussions that you've had, some of the scholars that you've had?

CM: If you don't mind, I'd love to talk about some of my favorite entries in that regard: one of the external readers for my PhD prospectus, a very

lovely lady by the name of Orsolya Réthelyi at the ELTE University of Budapest.[3] Her topic was Mary, an Austrian princess who was sort of the last queen of independent Hungary in the early sixteenth century.[4] I asked her a lot of questions about who this woman was, how we know what we know about her, and we also discussed one of her current research projects that is actually on literature – public songs about queens and various tropes related to them. That one interview took about two hours to record because we were laughing and joking and telling stories and having such a good time.

TK: We obviously can relate to topics which are, in a way, associated with our PhDs theses. One of my favorite shows was the one with Georg Christ of Manchester University,[5] who was talking about Venetian trade in Mamluk Egypt in the 15th century. That was a really amazing show because he wasn't only talking about the minute details of how certain individuals tried to do business in Alexandria, but also about the importance of researching the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period. And I don't know if you remember this, Chris – I still mention it to my friends – I think Georg says something crucial in that interview. He says it is very important to research the Middle Ages and the Renaissance or Early Modern Period simply because they are far enough from us not to have so much emotional and political attachment to these issues than we have with more recent history. If you want to understand certain social or economic or political issues or occurrences in our societies, it is a must to be able to analyze similar movements or historical events in the past, in the Middle Ages or in the Early Modern Period. I think that was a brilliant interview.

CM: I remember that one. That was our first interview we did over Skype. With that interview and with others like it, one of the things that sticks out that people are really interested in is how people in the Late

[3] For Orsolya Réthelyi's interview, included in this volume, see pages 243-265.

[4] Mary of Austria, also known as Mary of Hungary, was the spouse of Louis II of Hungary who died fighting the Ottomans at the decisive Battle of Mohács in 1526. Following this event, she governed Hungary as regent and later governed the Netherlands.

[5] This interview of Georg Christ is also featured in the present volume. See pages 267-285.

Antiquity, the Middle Ages, or the Renaissance solved problems. How did they encounter a gigantic crisis and put on their big girl panties and deal with it? Every so often I get the question, "Oh, why would anyone want to study the Middle Ages?" I think that for me that's one of the key reasons why people are interested in it. One of our more recent interviews was with Felicitas Schmieder.[6] She works a lot with traveling and how people in the Middle Ages would explore new places. On one hand they would expect to find things that they had read in Pliny,[7] but at the same time they would see these bizarre, crazy, new things and they would have to make sense of them somehow. One of my friends is visiting [Budapest] now, and she's studying in China extensively. I find it very fascinating how two people can look at the exact same thing – be it a person, a set of clothing, an object, a monument – and see completely different things. The other interesting thing is that the Middle Ages, especially the later stages, are a time of growth. The towns are growing, the economy is growing; and it's sort of a foreign notion for a lot of people our age who are told that if you want to go into a PhD program it's probably not a good idea because it's limiting your job choices.

TK: I'm more of an early modernist than a medievalist, but at Central European University we have a very flexible notion of what the Middle Ages is. I know that getting a decent teaching or research position nowadays in these fields can be very hard, but I think what we see in the Early Modern period in terms of globalization and the growth of trade, banking, fine arts, architecture, etc., are actually the things that govern our lives today. They are pretty much the things that have a huge impact on how we live our lives and if we get to terms with how these topics can be researched, and how we can explore these topics, that probably will help us understand what is happening today. It is essential for us to be familiar with these historical issues.

CM: So many institutions can trace their origins back to the Renaissance or to the Late Middle Ages. I'm particularly thinking of the university.

[6] Felicitas Schmieder's interview is featured in this volume. See pages 103-119.

[7] Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) was a Roman author whose *Natural History (Naturalis Historia)* was a standard authoritative text on geography – and other natural scientific subjects – for medieval readers.

Certain legal units, e.g. the English Parliament, also traces back its history to the Magna Carta and then to Edward I.[8] Another interview that we've had about something that's very relevant today was the one with Alex Brown and Aleks Pluskowski from the University of Reading, Department of Archaeology. Their big ongoing project right now is the Ecology of the Crusades where they're looking at the Baltic region and analyzing how these Crusaders impacted the environmental conditions there. They were building castles, demolishing sacred groves. It was a really rapid change in this region for which we know the historic context. That ended up being a very fun interview in which we were dealing with massive changes in the weather patterns and huge impacts upon the environment.

AM: How do you determine who will be interviewed? What kind of a process is that? Do people ever come forward and say, "Gee, I would love to talk about my work, my research," or is it mostly coming from CEU, or yourselves? How do you decide?

TK: In fact, we operate the Radio in circumstances which are not ideal. We are running an English-speaking radio in a country where the local language is not English, and so we have a limited supply of resident English-speaking scholars or experts of the Middle Ages or early music or the Renaissance. Therefore, whenever there's a conference in Budapest focusing on medieval themes, we try to find experts there who have the time and willingness to give us an interview. Now, of course, when someone says "yes," we have to explain to them that we don't actually own a studio but use the studio of Civil Rádió, so we have to bring them all the way down here. It is a complicated process to organize the interviews.

CM: When we first started recording, four of the first five "Past Perfect!"

[8] The Magna Carta is the famous agreement signed between King John of England (r. 1199-1216) and some of his rebellious barons in 1215, which introduced reforms and strengthened the role of nobles versus the king. Edward I (r. 1272-1307) was another king of England whose reign also was characterized by important governmental reforms, such as the establishment of a permanent Parliament.

guests were faculty members of CEU, just to get the ball rolling. We have a great department of researchers in Medieval Studies. The choices are almost endless. We interviewed former alumni who are still living in the city. Recently, since we did our first couple of Skype interviews, we've started to go a bit more global.

TK: That's opened up a plethora of opportunities.

CM: Indeed. Recording interviews over Skype is not always the easiest or ideal thing to do, but someone can be in Toronto, Manchester, Orlando, Florida, and we've been able to have a program with them that way.

AM: I don't know if this station has the ISDN connection – it's a fiber-optic connection lot of the stations in the United States have. Skype has given us an incredible opportunity to be able to speak to people anywhere. It's wonderful.

TK: Definitely.

AM: I wanted to say a little bit about the music, but before that even, I wonder if you can talk a little bit more about Central European University, about the Medieval Studies program there?

CM: Alright! Central European University is a very young institution. The idea behind it is that this would be a university where mainly people from all over the areas formerly under Soviet influence could come together, study under one roof in English (a *lingua franca* that wasn't Russian). The Department of Medieval Studies was the brainchild of people like Gábor Klaniczay, or János Bak.[9] They had a lot of support from people like the Birnbaums. We got to interview Marianna Birnbaum quite recently.[10] This department is one of the few places I've been to

[9] These are two well-known and active members of the Department of Medieval Studies since its inception in the 1990s whose interviews are both featured in this volume. For our interview with Gábor Klaniczay, see pages 181-196. For our interview with János Bak, see pages 139-157.

[10] Marianna Birnbaum is a Hungarian-born professor emeritus of Hungarian

that says it's interdisciplinary and actually means it. We have a faculty with lots of expertise and the department just celebrated its twentieth anniversary this year.[11]

TK: I think CEU is generally a very well-connected university. We have a good number of partner universities and I know, especially in my field, that there are really good connections with other institutions in Europe, North America, and the Middle East. It is one of the best universities in the region. The fact that it is accredited in New York State in the United States –

CM: And Hungary…

TK: And Hungary, of course! It gives the university an international recognition and it is truly an international institution. Many universities which say they are international are, in fact, open to locals who make up the majority of students and faculty, while they have a minority of international students. At CEU it's the other way around.

CM: There are a lot of connections through programs like the ERASMUS mobility scheme, e.g. with one of my old universities in the UK, or universities in Croatia. In terms of the proportion of international versus local, in 2008-2009we had a student even from Ethiopia in the Department of Medieval Studies. It's my understanding that this upcoming year we're getting our first Chinese student. We have applicants from all over the world, which is a great achievement for a department that's only twenty years old and only offers a Master's and a PhD program. We just broke 100 applicants total last year, and the MA program in Cultural Heritage Studies is going to open up soon. It's expected to increase the number of applicants even further.

TK: It's important to point out that the Medieval Studies Department is one of the smaller departments at the university; and yet we are the first and so far the only ones to start an online university radio [station]. And I think what is actually giving the department more recognition than it

literature at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

[11] The interview was conducted in 2013.

has had before. It is the fact that it is not the Media Department, it is not the Gender Studies Department, but it is the Medieval Studies Department which has started the first online radio and so far CEU Medieval Radio is the only radio station of the university.

CM: To our listeners out there, thank you very much because it's really heartening to see how much we're growing. We've only been on the air a little more than a year and I've been doing the interviews for less than a year myself.

AM: I'd love to talk also about the musical aspect of the station, because music is a very important part of what you're broadcasting. Do I understand correctly that it's not only medieval music but rather music pre-1700, so from the Early Modern period as well?

TK: Exactly. A very important aspect of the music that we play is that it is authentic pre-1700 music. As much as we admire fusion music using elements from the Early Modern or the Medieval period, we have decided to play only music that is considered authentic.

AM: So, you're talking about music played on medieval instruments, in the original languages?

TK: Exactly.

CM: Kyra Lyublyanovics is the one who put together the large corpus of music that we have. It's hard to speak of *a global* Middle Ages, but we make sure that it's not just music from Paris in the thirteenth century and nothing besides. We have a lot of Turkish and Islamic music for instance. In addition to Gregorian chants, there's also a lot of court and dance music. One of our listeners requested more madrigals rather recently and we made sure to play more madrigals after that. In the music itself there's a wide variety and a broad geographic distribution as well, in my opinion.

AM: That's wonderful! When we were talking informally before the interview, you mentioned that you would welcome receiving music from various artists who might want to be broadcast. I wonder if we might say a few words on that because many of my listeners are performers

themselves and they might be interested in being broadcast this way. How would one go about that?



Kyra Lyublyanovics at the editing station at Civil Radio FM 98
(photo by CEU Medieval Radio)

TK: One of the most important things about this radio is that it's a no-budget radio. We do not have any kind of external funding. Some of the expenses associated with the radio have been covered by the Medieval Studies Department at Central European University, which we are very thankful for. They have been very supportive from the beginning of this project. But at the same time, we do have other expenses to cover as well, such as buying CDs or digitally available music. All these expenses are covered from our own pockets. Sending us CDs would be a very favorable support or help from listeners out there. If a band playing authentic Medieval and Early Modern music would like to get a bit more publicity, we would be happy to play their music on the stream. Listeners who simply like the Radio and would like to donate a few CDs are also invited to do so.

AM: Social media is such a big part of the interface that we have now readers between listeners and broadcasters or scholars and students. It's just an amazing tool that we have. You have a Facebook page; how has that affected you? Do you find that you have been able to reach out to people who otherwise would not have heard of the station?

CM: In the initial days of the Facebook page, I would go on and say, "Oh, there are seventy people who like CEU Medieval Radio and forty-two of them are our friends." We've actually just today hit over 1000 likes. Initially it was just friends and friends of friends. Nowadays, we're getting likes from people I've never heard of before and many leave encouraging messages thanking us for putting it up, saying that they love listening to us at work. Tamás posts the serious announcements and the practical sorts of information about the operation of the radio, and I get to have a bit more fun and post Medieval-themed articles I find interesting. There was one about the diseases crusaders in Cyprus had, analyzed by looking at their feces. Other times I try to post cartoons or funny images related to the Middle Ages. Looking at choir stalls of churches, you see these very bizarre carvings of things like a bear in a monk's habit, trying to read a book upside-down. I love showing that people in the Middle Ages had a sense of humor, however warped.

TK: I think that another important aspect of having Facebook at our service is the interaction between the listeners and the makers of the radio. It is a two-way communication between the listeners and us. It's a global radio on the internet, practically anyone can access the stream. What gives this radio a community feel is something that just makes these 1000 followers on Facebook a community is the fact that we can communicate with them, or at least we are trying our best to answer to everyone. It's not only them listening to the stream, full stop. They can send us their requests and we try to satisfy these requests in terms of music and radio shows. I think now it is a community out there building around CEU Medieval Radio.

AM: Just to get back to the music for one moment before we follow that thread talking about reaching listeners and a community. Is there an early music scene in Budapest? Do you communicate with local performers? Are there a lot of early music groups?

TK: Budapest and Hungary in general has a very well-developed early music scene. Now the problem is that even though we have lots of performers and early music bands in the country, very few of them would be able to communicate in English on a radio show like this. We do respect what they do, and we do play their music as well, but

unfortunately very few of them would be able to give an interview, especially a one hour-long interview that we usually have.

CM: One of the members of our radio team, Zsuzsanna Eke, sang in a choir that did Gregorian chants. So instead of having an interview for our Christmas show, I recorded a segment talking about this CD that she gave to us: "Here is a choir from Cluj-Napoca in Romania that put together a Christmas album and in lieu of an interview this is what we're going to have for our show."



Zsuzsanna Eke
(photo by CEU Medieval Radio)

AM: Featuring the music is wonderful. It doesn't have to be necessarily just interviews, but even if you have brief conversations and then later edit it so that what you're hearing is live music, I think that's something people really enjoy.

TK: Lately, we have started receiving CD donations from early music bands and I think it's a major breakthrough because people now are realizing that they can promote themselves on CEU Medieval Radio. When bands or individual performers send us their CDs, we are happy

to feature them on the website, which I think is a bit of publicity for them and definitely something that we do happily in return for their kindness.

AM: I wonder if you could say a few words about your vision for the future of CEU Medieval Radio. Where would you like to go? What would you like to see happen?

TK: This radio station has a lot of potential. What the future holds for us depends on the circumstances. We are highly dependent on the kindness of Civil Radio in Budapest. If this radio survives, we have a chance to survive as well. If the Medieval Studies Department at Central European University is able to cover the costs of the copyright fees that we pay, we have a chance to survive. If we have more student volunteers to help with the program, then we have a chance to survive. There are many things that the existence of this radio depends on, so I can't really say, "This is what we'll have in five or ten years' time." However, we definitely have goals for the near future. One of these is to reach one million followers on Facebook. I know that sounds childish, something that people probably laugh at. Why would you want to have one million followers when BBC News has 600,000? But that's exactly the catch. We don't have anything to promote ourselves with. And if it sounds crazy, that's good for us because that means people will find this idea probably outrageous enough to turn their attention to CEU Medieval Radio.

AM: So, it's a grassroots initiative.

CM: Definitely. People are finding us randomly online. Sometimes it is word of mouth. We were actually featured online, not only on the medievalist.net website but there was an article on us in a Hungarian comedy news website and another one on a Bosnian website. The webmaster of the Bosnian website posted up on our Facebook page. It was really one of the most random things to happen to us. I never thought that we would be featured on a Bosnian website. In terms of goals for the radio, there are a couple of short-term plans that are definitely works in progress, such as having the former shows available in podcasts.

TK: Just another thing to add to this. One of the other objectives of the radio is to have as much education content as possible. What we can do (without having to invest any money into verbal content) is syndicating other shows of other radio stations, probably online radio stations. We have already established a contact with podcasters out there; people who are willing to share their good-quality, Medieval-themed podcasts with us. We are happy to play them on the stream and we hope the radio will be used by lecturers at universities or high school teachers, saying "Next week CEU Medieval Radio will feature a podcast on this-and-this topic, so please do listen." I can imagine it becoming a website and an online radio used for educational purposes.

AM: And that's wonderful because it can also forge partnerships between educational institutions in other places.

CM: We have a significant corpus of data to work with here. From real experts in the field, probably one of the biggest interviews I've done has been with Natalie Zemon Davis, just asking her very basic questions about her research.[12]

AM: I am so appreciative. Thank you so much for taking the time to tell us about CEU Medieval Radio. Thanks also to Civil Radio in Budapest for letting us use their facilities. Thank you so much for being with us!

[12] Natalie Zemon Davis is a celebrated historian of the Early Modern period and prolific author based at the University of Toronto. For an interview with her featured in the next section, see pages 19-40.

International Scholars and Honored Guests

The Return of Natalie Zemon Davis: From Microhistory to Intercontinental Connections

Interview with Natalie Zemon Davis

Originally aired: November 5-11, 2012

Born in Detroit, Natalie's education included Radcliffe College, Harvard, and the University of Michigan where she received her PhD in 1959. Owing to the political divisions of the period her husband, Chandler Davis, lost his job at Michigan and the family relocated to Toronto, Canada. As a result, Natalie Zemon Davis is a product of two countries, having divided her time between American and Canadian institutions. For its part, Canada recognizes her as one of their own – she received the Order of Canada in 2012 for her historical works, the same year that this interview was conducted. Over the decades, she has taught at Brown University, the University of Toronto, Berkeley, and at Princeton from 1978 to 1996 when she retired. More recently, she might also consider Budapest and CEU as an academic home away from home. Every fall since 2006 she has visited for the Natalie Zemon Davis Annual Lecture Series, organized by the Department of Medieval Studies and the Department of History, which sees a world-famous scholar present three lectures. Natalie, it must be said, always takes time during these visits to talk with students about their own research projects and offer advice.

Her publication record is impressive and includes many books that have done that near-impossible feat of achieving popularity with the reading public. Especially memorable and acclaimed works by her include The Return of Martin Guerre (1983), the historical account of a sixteenth-century impostor in France which sheds light on the life of peasants of the period. She followed this up with Trickster Travels (2006) which attempts to explore the person and works of a famous and most enigmatic traveler and geographic writer, Leo Africanus. She has been serving as historical consultant to the playwright-actor-director Wajdi Mouawad for his recent play Tous des Oiseaux. Though it is set in