



PHOTO: NAN MELVILLE

**A**LTHOUGH NEW YORK CITY is the home of more musicians than any other city in North America, it has never been perceived as a center for early music. Historical performance aficionados are hoping that will change this fall when the New York Early Music Celebration shines a spotlight on the wealth of New York's early music activity. For ten days, October 1-10, 40 New York City and State early music groups will offer 55 concerts and events all over town. They will range from large concerts, such as Early Music New York's presentation of Handel's "Musick for the Royal Fireworks" and "Water Music" in the composer's original 58-instrument orchestration – the first time it has been done with full period instrument forces in New York – to solo turns, such as harpsichordist Bradley Brookshire's performance, "Fugue!"

The Celebration is the brainchild of Gene Murrow, general manager of Early Music New York, formerly the Ensemble for Early Music, the group founded by Fred Renz in 1974. Murrow felt that EMNY, as one of the oldest New York City groups, could use its track record with funders and audiences to take a leadership role that would benefit the rest of the early music scene. "We'd like to use the momentum we have to do advocacy for the rest of the community," Murrow says. "With a galvanizing event, we can tackle the profile of early music in this city, which is lousy. The media thinks the activity is all in Boston or in Europe. Very few people know about what's here, or else they just dismiss it as 'not very good.' The place to start is to raise the profile of the whole New York early music community and to celebrate the great things that are happening."

Murrow held his first exploratory meetings in 2002 and, with the aid of an advisory board, decided on early October 2004 as the festival period. It was also decided that the Celebration would not present or curate events but rather would invite New York early music groups and presenters to put on their own concerts during that period. Any Celebration funds would go towards publicity, marketing, and possibly ticket services that would promote all the events under the Celebration umbrella, calling attention to the rich diversity of early music activity.

Those invited to participate were early music ensembles (vocal; instrumental – using historical or modern instruments; or mixed groups), church-based choirs and ensembles, soloists, and amateur early music organizations. With an all-volunteer committee, the Celebration organizers had to rely on the completeness of their invitation lists rather than paid staff to do outreach. "We didn't chase people," says advisory board member Suzanne Ford, a former publicist who now works for Oxford University Press. "I was a bit afraid of the 13th fairy – someone coming to us in September and saying, 'I wasn't invited. Why not?' But I think we reached everybody."

### Delightful response

Murrow is delighted with the response. "These are incredible people," he says. About 100 of the musicians who will give Celebration concerts gathered in June in Central Park for a group publicity photo. "It was great that we were photographed all in one group – it felt very inclusive," says Martha McGaughey, whose Empire Viols will be playing six-part viol consort music by William Lawes on

# MUSIC CELEBRATION