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Author's Subject: Music from St. Catherine's and the Furnace Play

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To reinforce the impression you may have that my "early Slavic" world has odd boundaries, I would bring to your attention the following. A very good choral ensemble, the Cappella Romana (based in Portland, OR) has over the years performed and recorded a range of interesting "Byzantine" and related church music. They recently put together a program in conjunction with an exhibition held at the Getty featuring art from the important collection at the Monastery of St. Catherine, located at the foot of Mt. Sinai. As some of you know, the location is that where Moses encountered the Burning Bush and then ascended the mountain to receive the tablets of the Law. The monastery was endowed by Emperor Justinian in the 6th century and houses a collection that includes important early icons and a range of significant manuscripts, one of which (now dispersed) is the Codex Sinaiticus, one of the earliest copies of the Bible. The main monastery church has important mosaics from the 6th century (published in an elegant ed. by Kurt Weitzmann et al.).

Cappella Romana's program, which I enjoyed hearing yesterday and which can be heard on their new CD, "Mt. Sinai: Frontier of Byzantium," includes the "Vespers of St. Catherine" and what should be of real interest to Muscovy specialists, "The Service of the Furnace: A Liturgical Account of the Three Holy Children according to MS Sinai 1527 (late 15th century)," containing music from the only extant Byzantine liturgical drama. Those who have read Claudia Jensen's *Musical Cultures in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Indiana UP, 2009), pp. 41-44 (with references to articles by Velimirovic and Swoboda) will know about the Muscovite performances of this drama, which continued down to some time in the middle of the 17th century. You may also recall that Eisenstein used an enactment of the play to great effect in part 2 of his "Ivan Groznyi" (on this, see what Joan Neuberger has written in Kivelson and Neuberger, eds., *Picturing Russia* [Yale UP, 2008]).

If you are interested in the Cappella Romana disk, go to their website at cappellaromana.org. Note, I am not getting a commission or other freebie for bringing this to your attention.