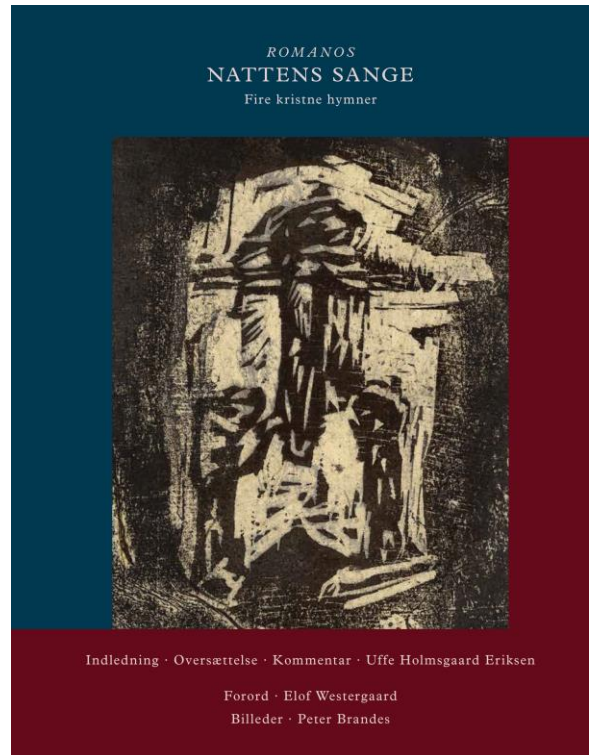


Songs of the Night – Romanos the Melodist in Danish Translation

By Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen

Thursday 11.01.2024 - 19:00 @The Danish Institute at Athens

In this lecture, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen will present his new book “Nattens Sange” (Songs of the Night) which is the first monograph on the byzantine poet Romanos the Melodist (485-560 CE) in Danish. The book contains an introduction, translation of four hymns (kontakia) of Romanos into Danish and a commentary on each hymn. The Danish artist Peter Brandes has made beautiful artwork for the book, and bishop Elof Westergaard (Diocese of Ribe) has written the foreword. The name Romanos will be familiar to most Greeks and his Christmas kontakion Ἡ Παρθένος σήμερον will resound in the ears of all Greeks during Christmas celebrations. Romanos lived during the 6th century in Constantinople where he wrote his famous kontakia. He is said to have been born in Syria, perhaps a Jew by birth, and came to the capital of the Eastern Roman empire in the first decades of the 6th century. According to the legend, he received the gift of composing songs at Christmas Eve where he fell asleep during the service. The Virgin appeared in his dream and told him to swallow a scroll. He did so, woke up and began chanting Ἡ Παρθένος σήμερον. Although a few hymns of Romanos have been translated into Danish before, “Nattens Sange” offers new and fresh translations that try to capture the spirit of the poet. Romanos sang his kontakia to a broad audience and retold biblical stories where the congregation were invited to participate in the sacred events by witnessing dialogues between biblical characters and voicing their prayers and praises via the refrains. Romanos deserves a seat close to the much celebrate poets of ancient Greece. This is not only the opinion of many Byzantine scholars, but also of the Danish artist Peter Brandes. He has done artwork for several translations into Danish of ancient Greek and Latin poetry (Homer, Vergil, Ovid Sappho, Homeric Hymns) who first came to know Romanos as a young child through the beautiful Swedish translation of the Christmas hymn by Hjalmar Gullberg. In the lecture, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen will share his thoughts on translating poetry from the 6th century into modern Danish as well as the collaboration with artist Peter Brandes.



Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen, PhD, has worked at Aarhus University in Denmark and the University of Southern Denmark, as well as Uppsala University in Sweden. He is affiliated with the project Retracing Connections – Byzantine Storyworlds in Greek, Arabic, Georgian, and Old Slavonic (c. 950 – c. 1100).

For online participation, register here:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcoduCqqDwuE9TX2wFY6RIjr2jPUIWlhxTP>

