

### **Peter Philips: Harpsichord Works Review by Blair Sanderson**

#### **AllMusic Review - 4\*/5\***

A contemporary of **John Bull** and **Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck**, **Peter Philips** was one of the most prolific English composers of the late Renaissance, and he composed in nearly all the available genres and styles of the period. His keyboard works are typical of the Elizabethan era, relying chiefly on the fantasia, pavan, and galliard as standard forms; but his catalog also includes transcriptions of songs and madrigals by other composers, notably **Orlande de Lassus** and **Giulio Caccini**, among others. This 2006 release from Naxos presents the best-known pieces, played with élan by **Elizabeth Farr** on a 1658 Italian harpsichord, restored by **Keith Hill**. Her performances are actually the saving grace of this recording, because **Philips'** music tends to be stylistically narrow, limited in modes and harmonies (apart from some piquant dissonances caused by cross-relations), and very chaste in expression; for all the ornaments, variable tempos, and flexible rhythms that are natural features of these pieces, they convey only a small range of emotions and can seem to blend into each other, so restrained are the moods of each. Still, **Farr's** execution is fluid and clean, and her touch is even throughout, though it can be quite crisp and marcato when necessary. The reproduction by RMC Classical Music, Inc., is first rate and an image of the instrument used in the recording appears on the cover.

### ***Philips - Elizabeth Farr - review by Glyn Pursglove***

*MusicWeb International*, October 2006

Peter Philips was brought up by Sebastian Westcote, the catholic layman who from 1547 was master of the choristers at St. Paul's and who, apart from his musical duties, organised the performance of plays at court by the 'Children of Paul's' from 1557 until his death in 1582. Perhaps the young Philips acted in some of these plays – plays which were important in the evolution of Elizabethan drama? Several future composers were youthful choristers under Westcote's tuition – their number included Robert Knight and William Fox, Thomas Morley, William Byrd – and Peter Philips. Perhaps it was also from Westcote that Philips learned his Catholicism? Certainly he was a beneficiary of Westcote's death in 1582. It was surely not coincidental that it was in that same year that Philips left England for good; he was in Rome by October of 1582. He was admitted to the English Jesuit College and also entered the service of Cardinal Farnese.

He spent three years in Rome – at a time when great composers such as

Palestrina, Marenzio and Victoria were at work in the city. The influence of Palestrina and Victoria (and Lassus) is audible in Philips's choral works and that of Marenzio in his madrigals; nor need we be surprised that he chose to transcribe madrigals by Marenzio for the keyboard. Philips worked as organist at the English College, before meeting the English catholic Thomas Paget, third Baron Paget, and entering his service as a musician. He travelled with Paget to Spain and to Paris. On Paget's death in 1590, Philips moved to Antwerp, where he made his living as a music teacher and as a music editor for the publisher Pierre Phalèse. Most of his works for harpsichord – which seem more 'English' and less 'Italian' in style than his vocal works, both sacred and secular – probably belong to the first part of his career.

While still in London in 1580 he wrote a Pavan in G major, recorded here, which became popular both in England and in Europe, though it was never published in his lifetime. It is an attractive piece, played here with dignified grace by Elizabeth Farr on a fine instrument. It was built in Rome in 1658, probably by Jerome de Zentis, and recently restored by Keith Hill - see a fascinating account of the instrument and its restoration. It exudes both charm and dignity, as played by Elizabeth Farr and proves eminently suitable for the music of Philips, with a rich bass and a sweet, clear upper register.

Elizabeth Farr plays – and plays very well – a bout half of Philips's surviving keyboard works on this CD; one only regrets that we don't have a second CD on which the rest might have appeared. She makes a very good case for Philips's intabulations of vocal works, bringing out the powerfully expressive nature of much of Philips's writing, without ever going 'over the top', as it were. Her booklet notes confirm her perceptiveness, being full of brief but suggestive observations on the music, especially on the elements of word-painting in these intabulations – such as those in "Le rossignol" and Striggio's "Chi farà fed'al cielo".

Every single one of the works recorded here is of interest and all are intelligently (and adroitly) performed. The skillful variations in the Passamezzo Pavan and Galliard, or the poignancy of the Paget Pavan and Galliard in C minor (surely written on the occasion of Paget's death, as Elizabeth Farr suggests) would each be sufficient on their own to make a case for Philips. And that case has a persuasive advocate in the well judged playing of Elizabeth Farr. I particularly like her refusal to rush, allowing Philips's expressive writing full scope. There are other recordings of Philips's work for harpsichord, such as those by Anneke Uittenbosch (Etcetera 1022), Emer Buckley (Harmonia Mundi HMC901263), Colin Booth (Soundboard SB CD 992) and Paul Nicholson (Hyperion CDA 66734). Elizabeth Farr's recording is on a par with the best of them and, in any case, this isn't music of which a single recording can ever be 'definitive' to the exclusion of other recordings, if only because of the great variety of possibilities, of different perspectives on the music, created by the use of different instruments.

A lovely instrument, well-played, at the service of music which should be far better

known than it is.

***Philips - Elizabeth Farr - review by Haskins***

*American Record Guide*, February 2007

In my review of Ms Farr's release of *Jacquet de la Guerre* (Mar/Apr) 2006, I noted her frequent use of staggering-varied degrees of non-synchronous coordination of the right and left hands-and observed that sometimes it worked against the grain of the music. For Peter Philips, though, the technique works quite well-especially when the performer takes slow to moderate tempos, as Farr does. The program includes two pavans and galliards; his early Pavan in G; intabulations of vocal music by Caccini, Striggio, Marenzio, and Lasso; and the Fantasias in F and D minor. Her performance is so perfect that I can't find the slightest thing to complain about. In particular, she makes all of the intabulations sound very lyrical and heartfelt. (Usually they sound jangly and technically brilliant.) She plays a 1658 Italian harpsichord that has been expertly restored by Keith Hill, and once more Naxos's engineers capture the delicacy of the instrument and Farr's deft articulation in vivid detail.

Comparisons are few: my library contains the first volume of Rampe's readings for MDG (Jan/Feb 2006) and Paul Nicholson's program for Hyperion (Mar/Apr 1995). Rampe plays with lightning-fast speed in the intabulation for Lasso's 'Margot, Labourez'; compared with Farr's more singing approach, Rampe's sounds like a breathless Renaissance dance. Rampe also varies the instruments: his recording of the F-major Fantasia (on organ) makes for an interesting change from Farr's, but I prefer the sound of these works on the harpsichord. Nicholson plays a fine copy of an Italian instrument. His performances are comparable to Farr's (and duplicate some selections) and are still available at more than twice the price. All three discs are important to the diehard collector of Philips's work, but everyone else can make do very well with Farr. Naxos, keep up the good work. I hope Farr records some Bach before too long: her performances would be revelatory.

**MACHAUT *S'il estoit nuls/S'Amours tous. On ne porroit penser. Dame, se vous m'estes lointinne. Moult sui. Ne pensez pas. En demantant. Mes esperis. J'aim sans penser. Ma fin est mon commencement. C'est force. Je puis trop bien. Tant doucement/Eins que ma dame* • Orlando Consort • HYPERION 68318 (61:01 )**

The eighth CD in Hyperion's traversal of Guillaume de Machaut, titled *The Lion of Nobility*, is distinguished by the first recording of *Ne pensez pas* (ballade 10) and the first sung recording (complete at that) of *En demantant* (lai 18/24). The

protagonist of the lai gives the disc its title, a "lion" believed to be King John II, who was taken to England as a hostage after he was defeated at Poitiers in 1356, then ransomed after four years. One reason these two works may not have been recorded until now is the faulty transcriptions by both Friedrich Ludwig and Leo Schrade (as Lawrence Earp points out, *Guillaume Machaut: A Guide to Research*, Garland, 1995). The problem has been solved by the Consort's use of the forthcoming Complete Works by Medieval Institute Publications, now the third publisher to undertake such a project. To be sure, faulty transcriptions of many other works have not prevented recordings being made in spite of the corrections offered by Richard Hoppin in 1958 and Ursula Günther in 1962–63, as Earp points out.

There are three reasons to acclaim the Orlando's first eight CDs in a project to record the complete works of Machaut in addition to their use of the new edition. The aim of completeness has already given us first recordings of six works, not including two that existed only in an instrumental version. Second, the selections are sung without instrumental accompaniment. Third, each work is sung complete, with all three verses of the ballades and virelais. The magnificent Ferrell–Vogüé manuscript, so long inaccessible even to scholars, has now been published in facsimile, providing the editors of the new edition with an exceptional resource. (To be sure, the Bibliothèque nationale has put its six complete manuscripts online in color.)

Yet the Orlando chooses tempos that are too slow in the virelais. Matthew Venner's solo *Dame, se vous m'estes lonteinne* does not move along as well as Catherine King on a Gothic Voices disc (30:4), even though the song belongs to a male lover. Angus Smith's solo *C'est force* matches Andrew Tusa's singing on one of the finest Gothic Voices discs (*Fanfare* 15:4, 31:6), but Tusa sings only two verses. Donald Greig's *J'aim sans penser* is a mournful rendition compared to Marc Mauillon's vivid performance with an ensemble of seven instruments on a Machaut disc that disappointed me overall (37:4). *Je puis trop* is a bit faster than Orlando's earlier Archiv version (22:5), which was a superb disc when it was issued. The motet *Tant doucement* is transposed down five tones from the pitch chosen by the Hilliard Ensemble (27:5), a most unfortunate decision, but *S'il estoit nuls* is preferable to the most recent version by Musica Nova (28:1, 35:2), which (equally unfortunate) was sung four tones lower.

*Ma fin est mon commencement*, one of the more frequently recorded works on this disc, receives a new interpretation here with a full explanation in the notes. The Hilliard Ensemble has been the touchstone for this work, even after the Orlando Consort recorded it on that Archiv CD using an edition prepared by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson. This new version uses the edition prepared for the new complete works, with one singer starting at the beginning of the rondeau, another at the end reading backwards, the two meeting in the middle; the third singer has a separate part, half as long, which he vocalizes three times forward and back in the *b* section of the rondeau.

The eight CDs issued so far by Hyperion have retained the same four singers, Matthew Venner, Mark Dobell, Angus Smith, and Donald Greig; the last two even sang on that Machaut disc for Archiv. There is so much to anticipate in a complete traversal of the leading composer of the 14th century that Hyperion has to be commended for this project. Hear it for yourself. **J. F. Weber**

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***Early Music Review: Machaut: The lion of nobility - The Orlando Consort*  
60:57  
Hyperion CDA68318**

Back in the twentieth century, another periodical sent me two discs to review. One was of Restoration church music performed by one of the most reputable – and, as it has proved, most durable – early music ensembles. I gave what I felt was a complacent, limp-wristed (albeit uncharacteristic) recording a scathing review, which was duly published. Unbeknown to me, the appalled record reviews editor responded by sending the disc to a more pliant reviewer, who duly obliged by providing a – not doubt sincerely – gushing review which was published in the following issue. Needless to say I never heard from that periodical again. This was disappointing because the other disc was a mesmerising performance by the Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, of the Messe de Nostre Dame by Guillaume de Machaut, which I praised – sincerely – to the skies (Herald HAVPCD 312). Nor has another recording of Machaut have come my way until now. So which of those two recordings does this new one most resemble?

Thankfully the latter. The music is – of course – superb, emanating as it does from a mediaeval composer who can be named alongside Dunstable, Power, Dufay and Ockeghem, and who preceded all of them. However, for a recording which consists of pieces the majority of which last less than five minutes, the selection of material is crucial. This is accomplished well, with a mixture of motets, lays, ballades, rondeaux and virelais. Just as crucial is the programming. Machaut's mass is for four voices, but all of these mainly secular works are in the thinner gruel of one, two or three parts, so monotony has to be avoided. And it is, with works for differing vocal resources (number of parts, or scoring) adjacent to one another for the most part; when two works for similar vocal resources are placed side by side – such as the intense virelai *Moult sui de bonne heure nee* beside the agitated ballade *Ne pensez pas* – the nature of the works themselves provide the variety. The disc includes the famous *Ma fin est mon commencement* but the

fulcrum of the record is the juxtaposing of the substantial and striking lai *En demantant et lamentant* which runs for nearly eighteen minutes, with the driven, fretful ballade *Mes esperis se combat* which itself takes nearly seven minutes. The performances are outstanding. Individual members of the Consort have voices sufficiently good to carry off the solo items, yet they blend well, while rendering each line and Machaut's delightful rhythms clearly. For example, the way the two voices round off *Moult sui de bonne heure nee* is exquisite. And there are no obtrusive instruments! Anyone seeking a reliable introduction to Machaut's music, or seeking to expand their knowledge of it, can be confident of ample rewards in this fine recording.

Richard Turbet

## Gramophone Review

### MACHAUT The Lion of Nobility (Orlando Consort)

[View record and artist details](#)

**Author:** Edward Breen

The latest album in The Orlando Consort's Machaut project features works from his 'Prologue', a fictional autobiography beginning his complete works manuscript. The selection features several famous works well known from previous recordings, and illustrates – in the words of editors Anne Stone and Jacques Boogaart – 'the whole spectrum of Machaut's poetic and musical art'. As ever, the performing editions used here are from the forthcoming *Complete Works of Guillaume de Machaut* and just this autumn the American Musicological Society awarded its prestigious Noah Greenberg Award to this Machaut project.

The real headline performance on this album is the lai *En demantant et lamentant* ('With troubled mind and lamentation'), a long, lingering lament for 'The Lion of Nobility', thought to be King John II of France. One of only two polyphonic lais by Machaut, it is here performed TTB, with voices taking the text in turn as the others vocalise. The result is rich, mesmeric and deeply moving, as is R Barton Palmer's translation.

The famous rondeau *Ma fin est mon commencement* ('My end is my beginning') is especially pleasing in this thoughtful, clear performance. The Orlando Consort bear Machaut's virtuoso writing lightly and keep the text clearly in the foreground. I particularly appreciate the booklet-note reference to Revelation 22:13, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega', in discussing this work. Also of note is the solo-voice ballade *Dame, se vous m'estes lonteinne* ('Lady, if you are distant from me'), with its familiar theme of unobtainable longing offering a moving moment of repose, beautifully sung by Matthew Venner, whose mellow countertenor tone infuses this album with warmth. Another wonderful and fascinating instalment in this impressive series.

## Guillaume de MACHAUT (c1300–1377) - MusicWeb Review

### *The Lion of Nobility*

*S'il estoit nuls / S'Amours tous / Et gaudebit cor vestrum* [2:11]

*On ne porroit penser* [4:07]

*Dame, se vous m'estes lontaine* [3:04]

*Moult sui de bonne heure nee* [4:58]

*Ne pensez pas, dame, que je recroie* [2:42]

*En demantant et lamentant* [17:52]

*Mes esperis se combat* [6:57]

*J'aim sans penser laidure* [2:25]

*Ma fin est mon commencement* [6:03]

*C'est force, faire le vueil* [4:28]

*Je puis trop bien ma dame comparer* [3:43]

*Tant doucement m'ont attrait / Eins que ma dame / Ruina* [2:27]

The Orlando Consort

rec. 2019, St John the Baptist, Loughton, United Kingdom

**HYPERION CDA68318** [61:01]

The four-person Orlando Consort (Matthew Venner (countertenor); Mark Dobell (tenor); Angus Smith (tenor); Donald Greig (baritone)) formed in 1988 by the Early Music Network of Great Britain, specialises in vocal music from the middle of the eleventh to the middle of the sixteenth century. *The Lion of Nobility* is the eighth in their series for Hyperion of Machaut's (c1300 - 1377) music. And it's a splendid hour's worth.

A rough contemporary of Chaucer and Boccaccio, and writing poetry and music a couple of generations after Dante, Guillaume de Machaut was highly regarded in the France of his time. Fortunate enough to have a succession of patrons, he assembled a substantial body of texts and compositions in most of the genres of late mediaeval France... lyrical, humorous, motets, *rondeaux*, a mass, laments, *lais*, *virelais* and so on.

Towards the end of his life Machaut composed a substantial allegorical and fictional retrospective work. It consists of multiple *dits* (longer narrative poems) interspersed with *ballades* and lavish illuminations. What we now call Machaut's 'Prologue' was intended to stand at the head of an eventual manuscript of his complete works. It examines how and why he first became a creative writer, artist and composer; and as such represents a remarkable testament to Machaut. Here the Orlando Consort sings a dozen of these works with vigour, focus and intensity. Yet with restraint - and even with the detachment needed to lend yet greater brightness and depth of colour to the picture which Machaut painted.

There is as much spontaneity and drive in the Orlando Consort's singing as there is controlled precision. Listen to the articulation and expressiveness in the verses of *Je puis trop bien ma dame comparer* [tr.11], for instance... the lower voices support the upper ones as Machaut struggles to put Love in its place as he feels it (she) could kill him:

*Mais Amour en li conjoint  
Un fier desdaign et le grant desire voit  
Qui m'ocira*

But Machaut espouses reality just as readily as hope and celebration: the 'lion of nobility' was (probably) France's King John II, whose forces were defeated at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356 in the Hundred Years' War. *En demantant et lamentant* [tr.6], by far the longest and most complex work on this disc, examines this event. Machaut is at his finest here by facing up to the tragedy rather than offering any kind of faint hope. Machaut also suggests, at times promotes, counterbalances in how we experience love. The singers of the Orlando Consort 'endorse' such a vision of Machaut's; as a result each feeling expressed in the text becomes more real in the music.

In fact, one of the things which makes this collection of Machaut's works so remarkable is the way in which the singers embrace musical complexity. (It is now thought that the complex structure of *En demantant* actually required a kind of polyphony in the simultaneous execution of which Charles Ives might have been proud.) Intricacy, convolution, even, judiciously serve as mirrors to emotional and reactive ambivalence, doubt and (implied) striving for reconciliation. This is not easy to communicate. The Consort is expert at doing so.

And although it would be going too far to suggest that this embracing of the schematic, the structural and the inter-relatedness in their superb singing holds the CD together, the sheer variety of the works could merely dazzle because one fails to empathise with Machaut's vision. The Orlando Consort sets such a superficial response aside by their deep understanding of what the composer really wants to convey of love and loss, hope and despair.

The acoustic of the St John the Baptist church in Loughton, Essex, is dry but offers just the right amount of 'reflection' to avoid spurious atmospherics and cushioning of the music. Yet it supports the singing and expert engineering of the Hyperion team. We are brought close to the music - face-to-face, almost - yet we are able to wander with it and experience its texts as Machaut intended... less a performance, certainly not a recital; rather a confident exploration of Machaut's gently beautiful and restrained world.

The booklet is well up to the usual Hyperion standards. Its writers set the context of fourteenth century poetry and song, survey each work here and comment on the overall significance of Machaut's achievement, and its variety. The full texts are reproduced in French or Latin with English translations; there is then a brief summary of the scope of the Orlando Consort's work.

Collectors of this golden corner of mediaeval music will want this recording, no matter they may already have (m)any of the individual pieces already: the Orlando Consort's freshness, enthusiasm and colourful precision make it a truly distinguished collection. It's hard to think that anyone new to such repertoire will not be impressed by the clarity and force of these singers... a persuasive introduction to Machaut.

**Mark Sealey**

**DU FAY** *O tres piteulx / Omnes amici. Je vous pri. La dolce vista. Je me complains. Mon chier amy. Malheureulx cueur. Ma belle dame je vous pri. Pouray je avoir vostre merci. Helas et quant vous veray. Je ne suy plus. Je vueil chanter. Ce moys de may. Belle que vous ay je mesfait. En triumpfant. Par le regard. Vostre bruit. Le serviteur. Puisque vous estes campieur •*  
Orlando Consort • HYPERION 68236 (70:48 )

This marvelous program is a major addition to recordings of Du Fay's secular music. It would be tempting to see it as a tribute to Alejandro Planchart's monumental two-volume *Guillaume Du Fay, his Life and Works* (Cambridge, 2018), but its appearance is probably coincidental. The disc leads off with the much-recorded *Lament for the Fall of Constantinople*, the only surviving setting of four that Du Fay composed after 1453. It has had two dozen recordings since 1938 and can probably found already in most collections of early Renaissance music. My favorite version came from Andrew Kirkman on the same label (*Fanfare* 32:5), a disc that featured the most frequently recorded of the composer's Masses, *Se la face ay pale*. The second track, *Je vous pri*, is also scored for four voices, a "combinative chanson" (the only one by Du Fay) recently recorded by Gothic Voices (42:1), one of the better interpretations on that uneven disc. The remaining 16 selections are all scored for three voices, mostly rondeaux along with a ballata, two ballades, and a virelai mixed in. The ballata, of course, is Italian-texted, the first satisfactory version of *La dolce vista* after several earlier recordings. Three more pieces have been sung to fine effect by Scott Metcalfe's ensemble (31:1). They are *Je me complains*, *Malheureux cueur*, and *Puisque vous*

*estez campieur*. *Ce moy de may* exists on a rare Hilliard Ensemble CD that I have not even seen. I cannot recommend a single previous version of the remaining dozen songs. In familiarity, they range from *Mon chier amy*, recorded over a dozen times, to *Ma belle dame, je vous pri*, recorded only in the Medieval Ensemble's complete set of secular works made almost four decades ago.

We have had an abundance of Du Fay's Masses and motets on records in the last three decades, but in the last 15 years only a few issues that contained very much secular music. Scott Metcalfe's debut disc and the recent Gothic Voices, both just mentioned, had both types of music. Just before Metcalfe's disc appeared, collections of songs with instrumental accompaniment were recorded by the Tetraktys ensemble, Giuseppe Maletto, and Antoine Guerber (Tetraktys actually rendered all of the three-part songs with a voice and two instruments). Hence the full disc by the four voices of the Orlando Consort has little real competition. The notes are by David Fallows, a longtime advocate of Du Fay whose little book of 1982 (second edition 1988) was all we had until Planchart completed his life's work, for he devoted a chapter to discussing each song in turn with keen insight. This splendid offering will serve as an ideal introduction to Guillaume Du Fay's secular music for collectors who may have known mainly his sacred music. Highly recommended. **J. F. Weber**

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## **DUFAY Lament for Constantinople & other songs**

### **Gramophone Review**

**Author:** Fabrice Fitch

This isn't the first recording of Dufay's chansons to appear since the Medieval Ensemble of London's complete survey nearly 40 years ago (L'Oiseau-Lyre, 12/81), but it's the most rounded and satisfying view of him to be had from a single anthology (in that Cantica Symphonia's 2006 Glossa survey focused on the early songs). I was happy to be reacquainted with a few personal favourites (the early ballade *Mon chier amy*, the late virelai *Malheureux cueur* and rondeau *Vostre bruit* and the cheeky drinking-song *Puisque vous estez campieur*), but having listened several times through I'm struck by several that had not quite done so before, which now speak very eloquently: *Pouray je avoir, Belle, que vous ay je mesfait?* and the understatedly perfect *Par le regard*. Like so many of the individual songs, the recital grows in stature with repeated listening.

The reason is that the Orlandos are so experienced in this repertory that, nearly always, the choice of tempo and tone is spot-on (and tempo is perhaps the most important decision, given that absolute tempos are never indicated), which

maximises the music's communicative potential and more than compensates for the occasional vocal blemish (that this is fiendishly exposed singing cannot be overstated). The programme takes a while to get going: the choice of *O tres piteulx* as an opener is curiously muted and downbeat, and thereafter *En triumpphant de Cruel Dueil*, which seems to me a touch slow given the voices involved. I imagine some may find the Orlandos' overall approach corseted and overly cautious, as though hearing Dufay through the prism of their recent Machaut recordings. I can understand this, but in singing of such insight there is so much to learn. And as to the music – did I mention it earlier? – Dufay is simply astonishing.

### **Guillaume Dufay: Lament for Constantinople Review by James Manheim** **AllMusic Review - 4 1/2\*/5\***

The music of **Guillaume Dufay** is often said to lie on the boundary between medieval and Renaissance. It is complex in the manner of medieval polyphony, sometimes with multiple texts in different languages, and intricate rhyme schemes. Yet, in its evocative use of vertical sonority and its original texts in the songs, it approaches a manner of text-setting that you can recognize as modern. His chansons are not often recorded, so this release of 18 chansons from the **Orlando Consort** would be welcome on general principles; it has virtues considerably beyond that. The program, and its gloss in the booklet or online materials, go a long way toward bringing this rather difficult music to life. The **Orlando Consort**, a quartet of male singers (countertenor, two tenors, and baritone), does well to begin with the so-called Lament for Constantinople, written by **Dufay** after the fall of the Eastern Empire to the Turks in 1453. He marks this event with two texts, one in French, and one drawn from the Book of Lamentations, and the result here for the listener is to hear the specific meanings in the rather general melancholy texts of these songs. Annotator **David Fallows**, a veteran in this repertory, contributes excellent notes that similarly go into the meanings of the other chansons on the album: they were all written for specific times and reasons. The **Consort** sings beautifully, with a bit of passion, not in the ethereal style so often used for Renaissance polyphony. They'd have even more intensity were it not for Hyperion's impersonal church acoustic here. This is an excellent choice for the general listener and for the student of **Dufay** alike.

### **Guillaume DUFAY (c.1400-1474) - MusicWeb Review**

*O très piteux/Omnes amici* [3:45]

*Je vouspri/Mas très douce amie/Tant que mon argent dura* [1:23]

*La dolce vista* [3:22]

*Je me complains* [2:18]  
*Mon chier amy* [5:59]  
*Malheureulx cueur* [5:27]  
*Ma belle dame, je vous pri* [4:22]  
*Pouray je avoir vostre mercy ?* [4:32]  
*Helas, et quant vous veray ?* [1:08]  
*Je ne suy plus tel que souloye* [2:24]  
*Je vueil chanter de cuer joyeux* [2:50]  
*Ce moys de may* [3:24]  
*Belle, que vous ay je mesfait ?* [4:07]  
*En triumpant de Cruel Dueil* [6:00]  
*Par le regard de vos beaux yeux* [4:25]  
*Vostre bruit et vostre grant fame* [6:26]  
*Le serviteur* [5:07]  
*Puisque vous estes campieur* [3:40]  
 Orlando Consort  
 rec. 2017, Parish church of St. John the Baptist, Loughton, UK  
**HYPERION CDA68236** [70:48]

Dufay's secular music has, for me, always been a great joy. We were spoiled, of course, back in 1981 when Peter and Timothy Davies with 'The Medieval Ensemble of London' recorded Dufay's complete secular works, now on a five disc box set on L'Oiseau Lyre. They used a group of top singers at the time with an instrumental group and it made a colourful set of records. Since then Dufay has continued to be recorded in all sorts of guises but this new disc with four male voices marks, not a new way of presenting music but one that is not so often encountered.

One of the many amazing things about the four men of the Orlando Consort is the amount of time they are spending in the Hyperion studios/churches as they are in the midst of recording Machaut's complete works (with, I feel, mixed results) and they also produced in March 2017 a disc of early fifteenth century English music *Beneath the Northern star* (CDA 68132). Anyway they are in pretty good form here, with only occasional blemishes and moments when the music doesn't quite hit their normal heights.

I especially like the chronological aspect of this recording, I don't know if David Fallows who writes the usual exemplary booklets notes and indeed wrote the 'bible' on Dufay in the 'Master musicians' series (J.M.Dent 1982) was partially, at least, instrumental in putting together the programme, but it works very nicely beginning though, oddly with track 3 *La Dolce vista* which is more in the style of Ciconia so is probably very early, it is in Italian and described as a ballata. I say oddly, because the disc opens with two polytextual pieces. The first *O très piteux/ Omnes amici* a lament for the fall of Constantinople and then *Je vous pri/ Ma très*

*douce amie/Tant que mon argent dura* which apparently dates from as late as 1470. Neither comes off quite as well as the rest of the disc. After that the programme works through to the last pieces, a set of late rondeau including the wonderfully expressive and clever *Le serviteur*. Other forms heard include the virelai, ballade and in the case of the second track a 'Combative Chanson' of which I have never before heard.

It was often the case in the notation of medieval and renaissance music that only one or sometimes two of the parts were texted. The Orlandos now do the standard thing of vocalising the non-texted parts as in the beautiful rondeau *Par le regard*. Some performers and scholars believe that these parts were instrumental as were also the melismas normally at the ends of phrases. This can also work well as with the Gothic voices disc *The Dufay Spectacle* (Linn CKD 568) which came out in 2018.

Its good also that some of the songs are less often recorded or less well known like *Pouray je avoir* and *Belle, que vous ay je mesfait?* But one of the strengths of the group is the beautiful balance, which only occasionally mis-fires, and their tremendous concept of a suitable tempo for each song also of course their superb diction and use of vowels.

It's good finally to have a disc completely of Dufay, which is totally *a capella* and even if you have discs by other groups from other eras this will add perfectly to your collection. All texts are included and well translated.

**Gary Higginson**