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The Linarol Consort of Viols

La Nouvelle Musique - Music from the court of Philip the Fair



Programme

Two basse dances, from the Songbook of Zeghere van Male	Anon
Myn hert altyt heeft verlanghen	Pierre de la Rue (c.1452 - 1518)
Fors seulement	de la Rue
Two settings of Tandernaken	Jacob Obrecht (c.1457/8 - 1505)
	Petrus Alamire (c.1470 -1536)
Three settings of De tous biens playne	Hayne van Ghizeghem (1445 - 1476~97)
	Johannes Ghiselin (fl.c.1401 - 1507)
	Jean Japart (fl.c.1476 - 1481)
Madame helas	Dux Carlos (Charles I The Bold 1433 - 1477)
La plus grant chiere	Anon from the Dijon Chansonier (c.1470)
Dung aultre amer	Mabriano de Orto (c.1460 -1529)
Mi mi	de Orto
Cecus non judicat de coloribus	Alexander Agricola (1445 - 1506)
O rosa bella	John Dunstaple (c.1390 - 1453)
Il sera/L'homme armé	Robert Morton (1430 - 1479)
Mijn morken gaf mij een jonch wijff, from Songbook of Hieronymus Lauweryn van Watervliet	Anon
Comment peult haver joye, from Canti B 1501	Josquin des Prez (c.1450~55 - 1521)

The Burgundian court at the end of the 15th century

By the time Philip the Fair inherited the title of Duke of Burgundy in 1482, at the age of four, the Low Countries had risen to be one of the wealthiest mercantile powers of Europe, dominated and unified by powerful cities such as Bruges (Philip's birthplace), Mechelen, Antwerp, Liège and Ghent. By the end of the 15th century, the entire region was known as Flanders, although the area with that name is only one of seventeen provinces over which Philip ruled. These spanned from Friesland and Groningen in the north, to Luxembourg in the south and as far west as Artois, thus taking in present day Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and a large swathe of northern France.

The Duchy had existed as the successor of the Kingdom of Burgundy with considerable autonomy since the granting of the title to Robert, the younger son of Robert the Pious of France in 1031. Considerable independence was granted to Robert when, in the following year, his brother, Henry I of France, awarded him the right to pass on the title to his heirs. By the end of the 15th century, despite intervening periods of considerable political upheaval, Flanders enjoyed a reputation as one of the chief producers of luxury goods such as high quality wool, tapestries and fine arts. Just at the time that artist Jacob van Eyck was creating momentous works such as the Ghent Altarpiece, the Arnolfini Wedding Portrait and the Madonna in the Church, through the patronage of successive Dukes the musical culture of the region had developed to the extent that many of the court musical establishments throughout Europe were dominated by Flemish composers and performers. This was especially true of Italy, where the towering figures of Heinrich Isaac, Alexander Agricola and Josquin des Pres spent considerable parts of their glittering careers.

The Burgundian court chapel, or *Capilla Flamenca*, drew on this pool of native genius, supported by centres of musical learning in the cathedral cities of the duchy, including Liège, Bruges, Ghent, Lille and Cambrai. The Capilla enjoyed substantial financial advantages due to the system of canonicates, awarded by the Pope, whereby canons of the chapel benefited from incomes raised from prebenda, payments made from local churches, often quite remote from the activities of the beneficiary. Indeed, many canons enjoyed prebenda from a plurality of churches without ever going to the locations themselves, clerical services being then delegated (for a small payment) to a local priest. Guillaume Dufay received incomes from Cambrai Cathedral, St. Donas in Bruges and St. Walburgis in Mons. A Canon was expected to celebrate mass daily, taking part in polyphonic settings on feast days. His duties would also include composition and the education of the younger choristers and could even extend to servile duties within the court. Secular activities at court required appropriate music, which was largely supplied by the same musicians, in addition to instrumentalists employed from outside the Capilla. The earliest evidence of viols being played at the Burgundian court dates from around 1504, when three *musette* players were appointed. Exactly what was meant by this term at that date is unclear, but shortly after, two of the players were described as viol players: Guillaume Terro, "*jouer de vyole du Roy*" in 1505 and Mathieu de Wildre, "*player upon lutes and veoldes*" in the employ of Henry VIII in 1506, the year of Philip the Fair's death. As a child at the court of his aunt, Margaret of Austria in Mechelen, Philip's son Charles (later Charles V) was taught viol by Henry Bredemers, who received payment "*...pour avoir fait mectre à point, gardé et entretenue les grandes violes...*". When Cesare Borgia visited France and Burgundy on an important diplomatic mission in 1498, he wrote to Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, asking to borrow players of the viol, because they were so highly regarded in that region. Two Flemish viol players, Hans Highorne and Hans Hossenet, travelled with Philip to Spain in 1506, during which journey the entire court was blown onto the English south coast by the "Great Storm". Both players survived and from the early 1520s entered the service of Henry VIII, two decades later becoming known as "*The king's olde violes*". Tinctoris, in his treatise *De inventione et usu musicae* of the last quarter of the 15th century, describes the duetting of the brothers Jean and Charles Fernandes:

"...nor must I pass over a recent event, the performance of two blind Flemings, the brothers Charles and Jean, who are no less learned in letters than skilled in music. At Bruges, I heard Charles take the treble and Jean the tenor in many songs, playing the viol so expertly and with such charm that the viol has never pleased me so well."

The language of the court was French, Flemish being considered largely the language of the vulgar people and of commerce. Throughout the 15th century the dominant secular vocal form was the Burgundian chanson, in which some of the finest French verse is set, predominantly for three voices. Instrumental performance of this repertoire is testified to by the huge number of chansons in un-texted copies in collections, both published and

private, that made their way across Europe. Ottaviano Petrucci's 1501 publication, *Odhecaton*, was not only the first printed book of music, but also a conduit for largely Burgundian chansons entirely without text. It was hugely popular and widely disseminated in the Italian peninsular.

A notable characteristic of these Franco-Flemish composers and performers was their mobility. Once educated, huge numbers of them travelled the length and breadth of Europe, becoming the dominant influence in the development of music through the latter half of the 15th century. Guillaume Dufay, one of the most important composers of the pre-Josquin generation, was born and educated in Cambrai, but then lived and worked in Pesaro, Rimini, Laon, Rome, Ferrara, Savoy, Florence and Bologna, before returning to live in Cambrai. During his last years at Cambrai he visited Savoy, Turin, Geneva and Besançon.

The sources

As discussed above, much of the instrumental consort repertoire of the Franco-Flemish composers survives in collections from across Europe. From the time of Petrucci's ground-breaking Venetian publication *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton* in 1501, printed music became more and more available to a wider public. Until then, the repertoire was disseminated through individually copied collections, or *chansonniers*, many of which were small in size and modest in nature, but some were lavishly and professionally illuminated manuscripts. The *Songbook of Zeghere van Male* was compiled in or around the year 1542 in Bruges for a prominent merchant of the city. It actually consists of four bulky part books containing 229 compositions. All of the principle musical forms of the early 16th century are represented: the French chanson, mass movements and Latin motets, as well as Dutch songs and instrumental works. Every page in each book is lavishly decorated with illuminations of extraordinary quality, often depicting scenes of everyday life in Bruges. The *Songbook of Hieronymus Lauweryn van Watervliet*, now in the British Library, bears the inscription "*Hieronymus Laurinus est meus herus*". Lauweryn was a prominent court official who served during the reigns of Maximilian I, Philip the Fair and Margaret of Austria. He died in 1509 having amassed a considerable fortune, collecting taxes and other revenues from the Flemish provinces as Philip's counsellor and treasurer. He was rewarded by Philip with the fief of Watervliet, amongst others, and he founded the town of that name, now on the Belgian-Dutch border. The manuscript lacks the elaborate ornamentation of that found in the van Male songbook, but contains a wide-ranging repertoire, including a considerable collection of songs in Middle Dutch.

La plus grant chiere, from the *Dijon Chansonnier* is an example of the text of a chanson describing a musical encounter, this time between the Englishman Robert Morton and the Flemish composer Hayne van Ghizeghem. Morton and Hayne, we are told, are chief players in "*the greatest merrymaking ever seen*" that occurred in Cambrai. Their singing and playing was so loud that "*they could be heard near Metz*", a town some 175 miles southeast of Cambrai. The chansonnier, one of a number from the Loire Valley dating from the end of the century, contains decorated initials typical of many such manuscripts of the sort that Hieronimus Bosch served his apprenticeship creating.

Not all the sources are lavishly decorated. Petrucci's *Canti B* of 1501 is clearly a book primarily designed to be used rather than admired. It was compiled in Venice predominantly from the works of the northern composers for the burgeoning Italian market. The complete set of three books, *Canti A, B* and *C*, became extremely popular throughout the peninsular, contributing to the dominance of the Flemish polyphonic school in the ensuing decades. They were the first music printed using moveable type technology that revolutionised the availability of printed music.

The composers

Pierre de la Rue (c.1452 - 1518) was one of the most important polyphonists of the Flemish school and certainly the principle figure in the Capilla Flamenca. He was born in Tournai and probably educated in the cathedral's song school. Like so many composers of this period, few biographical details are known of his early life, but suggestions of his appearing in Italy are now considered spurious, making him one of the few Flemish composers not to travel widely in the south. We do know that by 1492 he had entered the Hapsburg-Burgundian court chapel, working for four successive rulers: Maximilian I, Philip the Fair, Margaret of Austria and Charles V. With Philip, he made two trips to Spain, in 1502 and in 1506, when he spent three months at the court of Henry VII following the shipwreck of the Burgundian fleet. Upon Philip's death in

Spain in 1506 he remained in the service of Philip's widow, Joanna the Mad, until her incarceration in 1508, whereupon he returned to the Low Countries, resuming his position in the Capilla under the regency of Philip's sister, Margaret. He remained in Flanders, at Kortrijk, where he died in 1518. Although he spent most of his working life in just one court, it was one of the richest in Europe in which to serve, working alongside many of the greatest composers of the age, such as Agricola, Weerbecke, de Orto, Champion and Divitis. He became the favourite musician of Margaret of Austria, whose two extant chansonniers contain many of his works. His large output of both sacred and secular works fill over ten volumes in the modern "Complete Works" edition. Few works survive in only one manuscript, many appearing in a large number of sources, attesting to his huge popularity during and immediately after his lifetime.

Jacob Obrecht was the most significant composers of cyclic masses (masses in which all the movements are based on a single theme), writing over thirty. His popularity during his lifetime led to him being held in similar esteem as Josquin. Other than the fact that he was the son of a trumpeter in Ghent, very little is known of his early life, although it is likely that he was trained to follow his father as a trumpeter. It is also possible that he came under the influence of Busnoys, who was serving in the Burgundian ducal chapel around the time of Obrecht's youth. By the 1480s, his reputation had grown to the extent that Tinctoris mentioned him in his writings along with the major composers of the century: "...for who has not heard of Johannes Dunstaple, Guillelmus Dufay...Johannes Okeghem, Anthonius Busnoys...Jacob Obrechts?" He worked for most of his life in Flanders, having a sometimes unsteady relationship with his employer, Mother Church. He was formerly reprimanded whilst at Cambrai after an outbreak of scabies amongst the choirboys, and he was later dismissed from the same cathedral as a result of an unexplained deficit in his accounts. He secured permission for fairly lengthy absences from his church duties throughout his career, spending a considerable amount of time in Italy, and in particular, at the court of Ercole I, Duke of Ferrara. He died shortly after his appointment as Maestro di Cappella there, during an outbreak of plague, which also claimed the life of the Duke.

Petrus Alamire (c.1470 - 1536), or Petrus Imhoff (van den Hove) was of German origin, first appearing in Burgundian records at 's-Hertogenbosch in 1496/7. His family were important Nuremberg merchants with considerable business links to Antwerp. Petrus' first musical engagement for the Illustre Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap in 's-Hertogenbosch was as a copyist. A receipt for his services records a payment made for three manuscripts on 15th August 1496. Four years later he appears in the service of Philip the Fair as a music copyist of some reputation, being paid £50 for delivery of a large book of 26 parchment quires containing masses and other liturgical works. The quality of his scriptorium was soon considered second to none and examples of his work - which are some of the very finest illuminated manuscripts of the era - were amongst the most highly prized possessions of many royal establishments. Alamire was later (1515 - 1518) to be sent to the English court of Henry VIII, where, together with his colleague Nagel, he seems to have been involved in spying for Henry, passing on information regarding the movements of the Richard de la Pole, an exiled pretender to the throne. Work for Henry ceased when the latter discovered that Alamire was also spying for de la Pole. He was described by Erasmus upon receiving letters from his hand, as "*a not unwitty man*", and he surprised Occo, a business man of Amsterdam for whom Alamire had copied a large choirbook, by delivering a lecture on the craft of mining to Occo's guest, King Christian IV of Denmark. His diplomatic work was to continue over a long period and he maintained his position as copyist to the court for over twenty-five years.

Jean Mouton is another composer whose known early biographical details are scant. He was probably a native of Samer, but information concerning his early education is completely lost. He was ordained a priest by the early 1480s and was working as a choir master in Nesle. At some time after 1502 he is to be found in the service of Anne of Brittany, one of the wealthiest women in Europe, first as a singer in her chapel and later as *magister capellae*. Mouton remained in the service of the French court for the rest of his life, providing motets for numerous royal occasions. A contemporary described him thus: "...besides being gifted, he is the most humble man that one can find and a good servant of God".

Dux Carlos, or Charles I *The Bold*, was Duke of Burgundy from 1467 to 1477. Sometimes known as *Charles the Rash*, his early death at the hands of the Swiss in the Battle of Nancy is considered instrumental in the final absorption of Burgundian territory by France. He was a keen lover of courtly entertainments, including music, and much to the embarrassment of his courtiers, he would frequently perform himself.

Mabrianus de Orto (c.1460 - 1529) was christened Dujardin but soon used the Latin translation of his name. He was the illegitimate son of a priest of Tournai and it is likely that he received his first education at the song school there. He travelled to Rome with the Cardinal-Bishop of Tournai in 1482 and was appointed singer in the papal chapel in the following year, where he worked closely with Josquin des Pres. At some time around 1504 or 1505, de Orto was appointed singer in the chapel of Philip the Fair, who legitimised him. In 1505 or 1506 he was promoted to *Premier Chapelain* and was therefore responsible for the musical retinue that travelled with Philip on his final voyage to Spain in 1506. Upon the Duke's death in April that year de Orto and his companions were retained by Joanna, but he left Spain in December, returning to Flanders where he seems to have reorganised the chapel in accordance with the requirements of the new Duke Charles V under his regent, Margaret of Austria. He was still receiving payments as *Premier Chapelain* in 1518, and in 1522 he was engaged for Charles' voyage to England and Spain. He died, probably of plague, at Nivelles in 1529.

Alexander Agricola (1445 - 1506), who became so famous in his day that he was referred to merely as *Alexander*, was a native of Ghent. He and his brother Jan were the illegitimate children of Lijsbette Naps, a wealthy and independent business woman who died in 1499. Their father was Heinric Ackerman, by whose name Alexander was also known. Details of his early years are not known, but as his mother made a large donation to the musical establishment of the parish church of St. Nicholas in Ghent, it is believed that it was probably here that the young Alexander received his initial training. He spent much of his life in Italy, serving Duke Sforza in Milan and the Medici in Florence, where he worked alongside Heinrich Isaac, another Flemish composer who enjoyed considerable fame. Alexander was employed as a singer at Cambrai and at the French Chapel Royal and visited the court of King Ferrante I of Naples, who wrote to Charles VIII of France: "*We have seen [Alexander] happily – as much for his being a servant of your majesty as for his own virtues – and he has stayed with us for a few days. Indeed, we have taken pleasure in his singing and we should have been glad to retain him in our service.*" He gained considerable fame as a viol player and seems to have been closely associated in Italy and Naples with another viol player, Antonio Ponzio. He entered Philip the Fair's Capilla Flamenca in 1500, but died six years later at the age of 60 in the same outbreak of plague that saw Philip's demise during the fateful visit to Spain. Alexander's music was considered distinctive even during his lifetime. It has been described as restless and hyperactive, even surly and bad-tempered.

John Dunstaple (c.1390 - 1453) and **Robert Morton** (1430 - 1479) represent a momentous and unique occasion in the history of music, when English music heavily influenced the course of continental taste and musical development. In continental Europe, this was known as *La contenaunce Angloise*, a term coined by the Burgundian poet Martin le Franc. He mentions John Dunstaple as one of the major influences on the music of the court of Philip the Good, and thereby that of the rest of Europe. Robert Morton played an active role in the Burgundian chapel, serving for fifteen years as a *Clerc*, then as *Chapelain* in 1471 or 72. His surviving compositions are all secular and demonstrate the assimilation of the earlier *contenaunce Angloise* with the more open and simple harmonies of the French school. The short piece, *Il sera/L'homme armé* is the earliest known use of a melody that was to become a popular basis for over forty mass settings (including those of Peter Maxwell Davies and Karl Jenkins). The text of the upper part pokes fun at another English composer contemporary with Morton, Symon le Breton, a cleric who is boasting that he will lick the Turks single-handed.

Hayne van Ghizeghem (1445 - between 1476~97) may have been born in the village of Gijzegem, near Ghent. He was placed under the tutelage of Constans Breuwe, a singer in the service of Philip the Good, when he was 12 years of age and in 1467 he is listed as a singer and chamber valet in the household of Philip's son, Charles (later, Charles the Bold). Although clearly in the service of the Duke, he was never a member of the ducal chapel, fulfilling a role as a secular musician. His works survive in many French manuscripts, especially those emanating from the court, suggesting that he eventually found a position in the service of the French monarchy. We know for certain that he was dead by the time Crétin wrote his *Déploration sur la morte d'Ockeghem*, as the text describes him playing his lute amongst the already deceased musicians to welcome Ockeghem into their company. A testimony to its immense popularity, his chanson *De tous biens playne* survives in twenty-six copies in staff notation, a further half dozen in lute tablature and it is referred to in numerous plays, literature and poems. It provides the basis for the largest group of parody settings, a popular idiom of the late 15th century, so must have been one of the most recognisable melodies of the age.

Jean Japart originated in Picardy and received his early education in this region, dominated by the Flemish school. His first known employment was in the court of the Sforza family in Milan, and he later was one of the highest paid members of the chapel of Duke Ercole d'Este in Ferrara. Here he served alongside several major Flemish composers, including Agricola, Compère and Weerbeke.

Josquin des Prez, the composer *ne plus ultra* of the late 15th and early 16th centuries, succeeded Martini as *Maestro di cappella* for Ercole I of Ferrara, serving for just a year, from April 1503 to April 1504. He was hired contrary to the advice of Ercole's agent, Gian de Artiganova, who, in a letter of 2nd September 1502, recommended Heinrich Isaac over Josquin:

“To me [Isaac] seems well suited to serve Your Lordship, more so than Josquin, because he is more good-natured and companionable, and will compose new works more often. It is true that Josquin composes better, but he composes when he wants to and not when one wants him to, and he is asking 200 ducats in salary while Isaac will come for 120 – but Your Lordship will decide.”

200 ducats was the highest salary ever paid to a member of the ducal chapel. Not long after Josquin's arrival in Ferrara, the city suffered an outbreak of plague and the court removed itself to the coast at Comacchio. It could have been the plague that prompted Josquin's early departure the following year to Condé-sur-l'Escaut, where he was to spend his retirement as Provost at the church of Notre Dame. His works were copied into many collections throughout Europe and his fame was so great that a large part of the work of modern researchers is spent in removing countless pieces from what was thought to be his oeuvre, often re-attributing them to lesser composers who had used his name to further their own compositions.

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Biography

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The Linarol Consort of Renaissance Viols draws together players who are leading exponents of the viol as both a consort and solo instrument, and focuses uniquely on their love of the instrument's very earliest sound and repertoire.

The Consort takes its name from the maker of the original viol on which the instruments they play are modelled: all are copies of one surviving viol by the Venetian maker Francesco Linarol, who was active throughout the 16th century and currently displayed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. David has worked closely with viol maker Richard Jones (who has made over 100 copies of the Linarol viol), to recreate two sets of viols: a "high" consort of treble, two tenors and a bass, and a "low" consort, pitched a fourth lower, comprising a tenor, two basses and a "great" bass.

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Oliver Wass harp



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Callino Quartet



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Oxford Lieder



Friday 21 May, 1pm
Oxford Lieder



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Theo Plath bassoon



Friday 28 May, 1pm
Ben Goldscheider
horn

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