GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT
REMEDE DE FORTUNE

Blue Heron, Scott Metcalfe music director

AT CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL

MAR 23 2019

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Early Music Vancouver – Remede de Fortune

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12/06/2018 - 12:13:31 PM

Tony Knox

2  |  EMV Cathedral Series 2018/19

Guillaume de Machaut – Remede de Fortune

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Guillaume de Machaut
Remede de Fortune / A Remedy for Fortune

I. Prologue, or How to love well
Ballade: Esperance qui m’asseure

II. In the Court of Love
Lai: Qui n’aroit autre deport (RF1)
Motet: Hareu, hareu! / Helas! ou sera pris confors / Obediens usque ad mortem

III. On Fortune’s Wheel
Ballade: Gais et jolis (instrumental)
Complainte: Tieus rit au main qui au soir pleure (RF2)

IV. Lady Hope comes to the Lover’s aid
Chant royal: Joye, plaisance, et douce nourreture (RF3)
Motet: Qui es promesses de Fortune / Ha Fortune / Et non est qui adjuvet
Baladelle: En amer a douce vie (RF4)

INTERVAL

V. Wrestling with Doubt
Bird song (instrumental): Or sus, vous dormes trop (anon., excerpt arr. Nagy)
Ballade: Dame de qui toute ma joie vient (RF5)
Motet: Trop plus est bele que biauté / Biauté parée de valour / Je ne sui mie certeins

VI. Dancing en plein air
Instrumental: Dis tans plus (Jehan Lescurel, arr. Nagy)
Virelai: Dis tans plus (Lescurel)
Virelai: Dame, a vous sans retollir (RF6)

VII. Reunited with his Lady
Messe de Nostre Dame: Kyrie I
Estampies based on Machaut tunes (arr. Nagy)
Rondelet: Dame, mon cuer en vous remaint (RF7)

VIII. She loves me, she loves me not
Ballade: Biauté qui toutes autres pere
Motet: Trop plus est bele que biauté / Biauté parée de valour / Je ne sui mie certeins

All works by Guillaume de Machaut (c.1300-1377) unless otherwise noted. RF1-7 are from the Remede itself.

Translations of all texts will be projected as supertitles.
Complete texts & translations are available on our website: blueheron.org
Guillaume de Machaut

Guillaume de Machaut first enters the historical record in a few ecclesiastical documents from 1330-33 in which he is described variously as a clerk, almoner, notary, and secretary to the king of Bohemia, Jean of Luxembourg. Machaut probably worked as Jean’s secretary, travelling all over Europe, until the king’s heroic if foolhardy death at the battle of Crécy on August 26, 1346. (He insisted on being led into battle, although he was by then completely blind.) After Crécy, Machaut seems to have served a number of other eminent nobles, a confusing number of whom are named either Jean or Charles: his patrons included the king of Bohemia’s daughter, Bonne of Luxembourg; her husband Jean, duke of Normandy, who became King Jean II of France; their son Charles, the future King Charles V; Charles’s brothers, Jean, duke of Berry, and Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy; Pierre de Lusignan, king of Cyprus; King Charles of Navarre, and others. Machaut lived through the Black Death, which peaked in France in the years 1348-50, killing 30-60% of the European population, including about half of Paris’s 100,000 inhabitants. By 1360 or so Machaut seems to have taken up residence in Reims, where he had held a benefice at the Cathedral since 1338. (A benefice was an ecclesiastical appointment offering a salary without requirement of service in return: a literal sinecure, sine cura or free of pastoral duties.) He died sometime before November 9, 1377, when his position at the Cathedral of Reims passed to another.

While Machaut’s life is sparsely documented, his works are richly transmitted in a unique series of six “complete works” manuscripts produced between c. 1350 and 1390, mostly under the author’s supervision, several abundantly illuminated. The manuscripts contain more than fifteen long narrative poems or dits; a collection of lyric poetry known as the Loange des dames or Praise of Ladies, consisting of some 280 poems not set to music; and a music section which eventually comprised 19 lais, 23 motets, a setting of the Mass, a hocket, 42 ballades, 22 rondeaux, and 33 virelais. The order in which all this was to appear was carefully specified by the composer, as a manuscript compiled at the very end of his life tells us: “Vesci l’ordenance que G. de Machau vuet qu’il ait en son livre”: “This is the order which G. de Machaut wishes to have in his book.”

Bonne of Luxembourg & the Remede de Fortune

Of all his patrons, the one who seems to have attracted Machaut’s warmest personal devotion was Bonne of Luxembourg. Born May 20, 1315, she died at age 34 on September 11, 1349, perhaps of the Black Death, the mother of ten. Machaut may have undertaken the compilation of his first complete works manuscript for Bonne, in the late 1340s (the so-called MS C), but she died before it was finished and it was completed either for her widower Jean or for their son Charles. The lavishly illustrated book concludes with the motet Trop plus est bele que Biauté, perhaps intended as a memorial benediction for Bonne, “Far more beautiful than Beauty itself..., better than Goodness, and full of everything, in truth, that a good and beautiful lady should have.” The Remede de Fortune, too, appears to be dedicated to Bonne: the text identifies her more or less explicitly as the perfect lady of the tale, to whom everyone rightly gives the name bonne.

...tousdis enclinoie
Mon cuer et toute ma pensee
Vers ma dame qui est clamee
De tous sur toutes belle et bonne:
Chascun par droit ce nom li donne.

...my heart and all my thoughts
were ever inclined towards
my lady, who is proclaimed
by all beautiful and good above all:
everyone rightly gives her this name.

Remede de Fortune, 52-6

The Remede is a dit or narrative poem of over 4000 octosyllabic lines, telling the story of a young and inexperienced lover and his attempt to learn how to be happy, to live and love well, despite the reversals dished out by Fortune and her wheel. Interspersed into the highly didactic story are seven lyric poems, set to music, which present a catalogue of exemplary forms arranged from old to new, from the traditional, virtuoso lai, a comically extended complainte, and chanson royal—forms inherited from the previous century—to the newer forms of the so-called seconde rhétorique, the ballade and related baladelle, the virelai, and the rondeau (here labelled rondelet). The explicit goal of the Remede is to instruct its readers, by means of example and plain teaching, in how to live ethically in a world which is not designed to assure human happiness.
Lady Hope teaches the lover to trust in hope, cultivate indifference to the vagaries of Fortune—whether you are in her favour for the moment or not—and do not desire, but accept the good things Love has given you without wishing vainly for things which are impossible. These ideas are summarized in the ballade with which we open our concert, _Esperance qui m’assure_, and their essential kernel is perfectly expressed in the tenor of the motet _Trop plus est bele_, with which we conclude: “I am not certain of having a lover, but I am a loyal friend.”

**Our Remede**

Our concert version of the _Remede_, created by Debra Nagy and myself, includes all of the lyrics and music from the poem, although we have excerpted the Lai and Complainte. (Performed complete, they would last approximately fifteen and forty-five minutes, respectively.) We have replaced most of the narration with songs and motets by Machaut that explore the same themes. What remains, describing the essence of the action, has been translated into English prose to be spoken.

The supertitles provide slightly condensed translations of the sung lyrics; the complete French texts and translations may be found on Blue Heron’s website, www.blueheron.org.

For the projections, Shawn Keener has drawn on illustrations from the Machaut manuscripts, especially those found in MS C, which were created by a small team of highly skilled and esteemed artists.

—Scott Metcalfe

**The Story**

The _Remede de Fortune_ is an interesting (and funny) story for a few reasons. While it traffics in common themes from the medieval world of Courtly Love (including the central allegorical figures of Hope and Fortune and unrequited pining for the beloved), there’s also some fascinating gender-role reversal. It’s the women here who are wise, deft, and strong. Hope is all-knowing and comforting, Fortune is powerful and implacable, and the Lady is a slightly manipulative power-broker who’s well aware that her position affords her the ability to extract favors and to grant or withhold happiness. The Lover, on the other hand, is naive and self-indulgent, a bit of a sot who is reduced to quivering and puddles of tears at the slightest glance from his Lady.

**Synopsis**

Our story begins with the Lover (our narrator) attempting to enumerate what he has learned through trial and experience. (He promises twelve items and appears to deliver them, but his list is hard to follow.) Then he tells us about how he first came to fall in love. He was young, innocent, and foolish. His Lady, meanwhile, was perfection—his model in all things. Naturally, he kept his feelings deeply hidden but learned to express both his despair and exaltation through poetry and song.

One day, his Lady asks him to recite a _lai_ (a long and complex lyric poem) for her enjoyment. When she asks him who wrote it, he is scared stiff. Should he tell her the truth and risk rejection and humiliation? Conversely, how could he possibly lie to the woman he loves? He does neither: bewildered and flabbergasted, fearing that he will drop dead on the spot if the Lady expresses the slightest disfavor (!), he runs off without saying a word.
Overwhelmed by cowardice and intimidated by the strength of his own feelings, he wanders until he comes upon a secluded spot in a pleasure garden called the Park of Hesdin. First he cries himself sick—lashing out at himself, Love, and Fortune—in a 36-stanza Complainte that would take about 45 minutes to perform. (We have excerpted it for this performance.) Though he has convinced himself that he is near death, he opens one eye to find a beautiful woman sitting next to him. She is there to comfort him, instruct him about Love, and counsel him to adjust his attitude about Fortune. She barely seems real; at length she introduces herself as Esperance—Hope. Pledging her companionship through doubts and difficult times, she gives the Lover her ring. His health restored, emboldened by Hope, the Lover goes off in search of his Lady—though he quickly loses faith, causing Hope to reappear.

Approaching his Lady’s castle, the Lover comes upon a group dancing in a garden and spots his Lady among them. The dancers each take a turn singing and the Lover stumbles forward to join them. The Lady notices the Lover and insists that he take his turn to sing for the dancers. The dancing winds up and the company departs.

Back at the castle, the Lady pointedly asks the Lover where he has been and confronts him about running off. He confesses all to her and she grants him the gift of her love. They go together to hear Mass, after which a trumpet sounds, announcing dinner. The entire company then enjoys a great feast followed by music and dancing. Before the Lover takes his leave, he and his Lady exchange rings as a token of their alliance. The Lover departs, singing a rondelet (Dame, mon cuer en vous remaint) as he goes.

After spending the afternoon in a field enjoying jousting and other diversions, the Lover can’t wait to get back to his Lady. But when he finds her, she appears to ignore him. Stricken with grief and doubt, he asks whether she has decided to abandon him; she reassures him that she is merely acting to conceal their love, for true love ought not to be revealed to a slanderous, perverse, and inconstant society such as the world has presently become. Although assailed by fear and torments of all kinds, he determines to believe and trust her. The poem ends with a prayer of homage to Love, in which Machaut signs his name in an anagram.

—Debra Nagy

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Special thanks to the following for hosting our guest musicians:
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Blue Heron has been acclaimed by *The Boston Globe* as “one of the Boston music community’s indispensables” and hailed by Alex Ross in *The New Yorker* for its “expressive intensity.” Committed to vivid live performance informed by the study of original source materials and historical performance practices, the ensemble ranges over a wide repertoire from plainchant to new music, with particular specialities in 15th-century Franco-Flemish polyphony and early 16th-century English sacred music.

Founded in 1999, Blue Heron presents a concert series in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and has appeared at the Boston Early Music Festival; in New York City at Music Before 1800, The Cloisters (Metropolitan Museum of Art), and the 92nd Street Y; at the Library of Congress, the National Gallery of Art, and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C.; at the Berkeley Early Music Festival; at Yale University; and in Chicago, Cleveland, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Providence, St. Louis, San Luis Obispo, and Seattle. The ensemble has performed in Cambridge and London, England, and in 2018-19 will make Canadian debuts in Montreal (September) and Vancouver (March). Blue Heron has in residence at the Center for Early Music Studies at Boston University and at Boston College, and has enjoyed collaborations with A Far Cry, Dark Horse Consort, Les Délices, Parthenia, Piffaro, and Ensemble Plus Ultra. In 2015 the ensemble embarked on Ockeghem@600, a multi-season project to perform the complete works of Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1420-1497) and record all of his songs and motets. Volume I of the songs will be released later this year. The project will wind up around 2021, in time to commemorate the composer’s circa-600th birthday.

Blue Heron’s first CD, featuring music by Guillaume Du Fay, was released in 2007. Between 2010 and 2017 the ensemble issued a 5-CD series of *Music from the Peterhouse Partbooks*, including many world premiere recordings of works copied c. 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral. The fifth CD was awarded the 2018 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Early Music and the five discs are now available as a boxed set entitled *The Lost Music of Canterbury*. Blue Heron’s recordings also include a CD of plainchant and polyphony to accompany Thomas Forrest Kelly’s book *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation* and the live recording *Christmas in Medieval England*. Jessie Ann Owens (UC Davis) and Blue Heron won the 2015 Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society to support a world premiere recording of Cipriano de Rore’s *I madrigali a cinque voci* (1542), to be released in fall 2019.

Recordings of Blue Heron will be for sale in the lobby during the interval and after the concert.
THE ARTISTS

Shawn Keener projections design
A musicologist trained at the University of Chicago, Shawn Keener brings a scholar’s eye to the design process, combining a commitment to historical accuracy with the simple delight of seeing primary sources first-hand. Her work with Chicago’s Newberry Consort for programmes such as “Rosa das Rosas: Cantigas de Santa Maria” (2012–15) and “Le Roman de Fauvel” (2016) has been praised by critics in Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Milwaukee. After years working at the Newberry Library, Keener is now an editor at A-R Editions, the leading North American publisher of scholarly editions of music.

Owen McIntosh tenor & percussion
Described by The New York Times as a “lovely, tender high tenor” in one concert and “appropriately brash” in another, three-time Grammy nominee and Gramophone Award-winning tenor Owen McIntosh is widely known for the colour and creativity he brings to the stage. Recent solo engagements include Carmina Burana with the Carmel Bach Festival, Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo with Apollo’s Fire, Bach’s St. John Passion with TENET, Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte with Boston Baroque, Haydn’s L’isola disabitata with the American Classical Orchestra, Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610 with the Green Mountain Project, Bach’s St. Matthew Passion with the Grand Rapids Symphony and Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria with Boston Baroque.

Jason McStoots tenor & narrator
Reviewers have praised Jason McStoots as having an “alluring tenor voice” (ArtsFuse) and as “the consummate artist, wielding not just a sweet tone but also incredible technique and impeccable pronunciation” (Cleveland Plain Dealer). In 2015 he won a Grammy award in Opera with the Boston Early Music Festival (BEMF) for their recording of works by Charpentier. His recent stage appearances in period-style baroque opera with BEMF include Le Jeu in Les plaisirs de Versailles by Charpentier, Apollo in Monteverdi’s Orfeo, and Eumete and Giove in Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria. Other recent solo performances include Pedrillo in Mozart’s Abduction from the Seraglio, Bach’s Christmas Oratorio and St. Mark Passion with Emmanuel Music, and Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610 with the Green Mountain Project. He has appeared with Boston Lyric Opera, Pacific MusicWorks, Boston Camerata, TENET, San Juan Symphony, The Bach Ensemble, Pablo Casals Festival, Early Music Guild of Seattle, Tragicomedia, and the Tanglewood Music Center. He is a core member of Blue Heron and can be heard on all their recordings. With BEMF, he appears on recordings of Lully’s Psyché (nominated for a Grammy), Handel’s Acis and Galatea (as Damon), John Blow’s Venus and Adonis (soloist), and Charpentier’s Actéon (as Orphée).

Scott Metcalfe director, fiddle & harp
is widely recognized as one of North America’s leading specialists in music from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries and beyond. From 2010 to 2016 he was music director of New York City’s Green Mountain Project (Jolle Greenleaf, artistic director), which he led again in January 2019, and he has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), the Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Les Délices and Quire Cleveland, and other ensembles. Metcalfe also enjoys a career as a baroque violinist, including playing with Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy) and L’Harmonie des Saisons (dir. Eric Milnes). His scholarly activities include research on the performance practice of English vocal music in the 16th and 17th centuries, including two essays that will be published in a forthcoming collection, and he has edited music by Francisco de Peñalosa for Antico Edition (UK) and songs from the recently rediscovered Leuven chansonnier for the Alamire Foundation (Belgium); he is also at work on a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchots (c. 1400-1460). Metcalfe has taught at Harvard University, Boston University, Boston Conservatory, and Oberlin Conservatory. He received a bachelor’s degree from Brown University (1985), where he majored in biology, and a master’s degree in historical performance practice from Harvard (2005).
Debra Nagy director, recorders, douçaine & harp

Debra Nagy is one of North America’s leading performers on the baroque oboe and has been called a “musical polymath” (San Francisco Classical Voice) for her accomplished performances as a singer and historical wind player. She is the founder of acclaimed chamber ensemble Les Délices and indulges her love of late-medieval music as a regular guest with Boston’s Blue Heron and Chicago’s Newberry Consort. Inspired by a creative process that brings together research, composition in historical styles, improvisation, and artistic collaboration, highlights of Debra’s recent projects include a critically-acclaimed multimedia production of Machaut’s medieval masterpiece Remede de Fortune and a Baroque-Jazz crossover programme called Songs without Words. Debra’s passion for unearthing little-known works caused The New York Times to dub Les Délices “an early music group with an avant-garde appetite,” adding “concerts and CDs by Les Délices are journeys of discovery.” She has received many awards for her creative and scholarly pursuits and her discography includes over 30 CDs with repertoire ranging from 1300-1800. Debra is also an unabashed foodie and loves commuting by bike from her home in the heart of Cleveland’s historic Ohio City neighbourhood.

Martin Near countertenor & percussion

Martin Near has been acclaimed for the “sweet limpidity” of his singing (The New York Times), with a “cool, beaming countertenor” commended for its “crystal clear…beautiful, blooming top notes” (New York Classical Review). He enjoys a varied career exploring twin passions for early music and new music. Highlights of recent solo performances include a concert version of Machaut’s Remede de Fortune, created as a collaboration between Blue Heron and Cleveland’s Les Délices (Debra Nagy, director) and returning to Blue Heron’s season in 2019, and Richard Rodney Bennett’s Ophelia (1987) with Boston’s Odyssey Opera under the artistic direction of Gil Rose. Mr. Near maintains a parallel career in the pipe organ industry, providing services in organ pipe reconditioning and repair, voicing, tonal finishing, and tuning for Spencer Organ Company of Waltham, and he has also been known to compose, arrange, and engrave using Finale.

Charles Weaver lute, voice & hurdy-gurdy

Charles Weaver performs on early plucked-string instruments as a recitalist and as an accompanist. Chamber music appearances include Quicksilver, Early Music New York, Piffaro, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Folger Consort, Blue Heron, Música Pacífica, and the Boston Early Music Festival Chamber Ensemble. He is on the faculty of the Juilliard School, where he teaches “Historically Informed Performance on Plucked Instruments,” and was the assistant conductor for Juilliard Opera’s production of Cavalli’s La Calisto. He also works with the New York Continuo Collective, an ensemble of players and singers exploring seventeenth-century vocal music in semester-length workshop productions, and has taught at the Lute Society of America Summer Workshop in Vancouver, the Madison Early Music Festival, and the Western Wind Workshop in ensemble singing. Mr. Weaver is associate director of music at St Mary Church in Norwalk, Connecticut, where he specializes in Renaissance polyphony and Gregorian chant.

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