

Les Délices mesmerizes with Machaut's *Lai of the Fountain*

by Mike Telin



Now that the cold and dreary winter is behind us, our thoughts turn to spring. And with trees beginning to blossom and flowers blooming we can begin to think about cultivating the garden. On April 8 at 7:30 pm, [Les Délices](#) will celebrate the Medieval garden and its centerpiece — the fountain — with the debut of Machaut's *Lai of the Fountain*. The program is presented in collaboration with Boston's Blue Heron and features video art design by Camilla Tassi. Click [here](#) for ticket information.

While devotees of Les Délices will recognize the name Guillaume de Machaut, why has the ensemble returned to his music so frequently? “The practical reason is that there is so much of it,” artistic director Debra Nagy said during a telephone conversation.

“He created six copies of his own complete works that are full of compelling story-telling, which is something I'm always interested in when it comes to programming. Once you've invested a certain amount of time in learning the language —

not just the 14th century French but the style and rhythmic language — it's hard not to want to spend more time there.”



Just as a fountain is the center-piece of the Medieval garden, so its symbolism is the focal point of the program. “To have a water feature in a garden is something to enjoy. If you look at illuminated manuscripts in *Roman de la Rose* you see lovers or courtiers lounging in the garden with a fountain,” Nagy said. “There’s the fountain of love, the fountain of youth, and the idea of something that is constantly renewing or stays fresh. When you say that it stays fresh it’s also saying that the water stays pure. Then of course it can even cleanse you of your sins, in the case of another type of fountain like a baptismal fount. Machaut uses the image of the fountain to talk about the Trinity, and in “Lai” the fountain of love becomes the fountain of life.”



Clevelandclassical.com was able to gain access to *Lai of the Fountain* in advance of Thursday’s debut — and it’s not to be missed. The program features stellar performances by Kim Leeds (mezzo-soprano), Elena Mullins (soprano), Scott Metcalfe (vielle and harp), Allison Monroe (vielle), and Debra Nagy (voice, medieval winds and harp), captivating visuals by Camilla Tassi, and stunning cinematography. And like the fountain, all

the artforms come together to make a singular piece of art — a 60-minute feast for the ear and the eye.

Opening night will include a live post-concert Q&A session with select artists. The concert will be available for on-demand streaming through April 19. A full review will follow later this week.

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