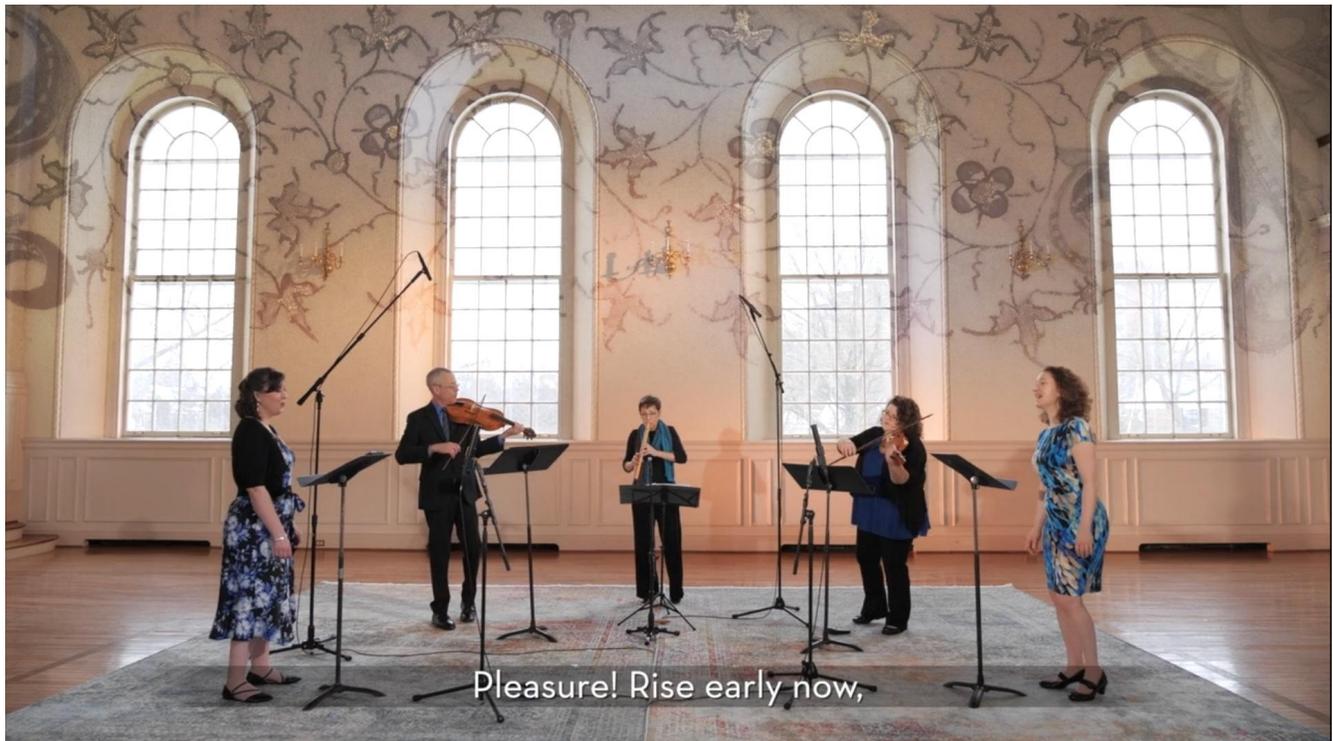


**Les Délices: Machaut's
*Lai of the Fountain***

by Daniel Hathaway



Les Délices has once again joined forces with Boston's Blue Heron, this time to produce the impressive video "Machaut's Lai of the Fountain," which debuted on Vimeo on April 8, and remains available on-demand until April 19.

LD's artistic director Debra Nagy introduces the hour-long program with a discourse on the importance of the garden and its centerpiece, the fountain, for artists and musicians of the 14th century. Later in the program, Blue Heron artistic director Scott Metcalfe expands on the subject by exploring the Trinitarian metaphor behind that bubbling source of water in the Medieval mind.

It takes only eight musical selections to fill the hour. Machaut's title work, one of nineteen *lais* he wrote, takes up a good portion of the program, its twelve strophes alternating monophony with three-voice canons.

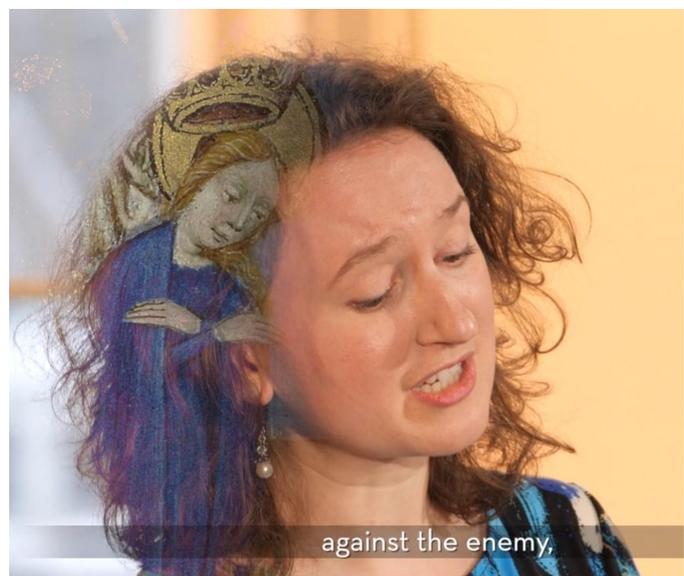


Enroute to Machaut's "Fountain of Love," the program lingers in "Le Petit paradis" for Johannes Ciconia's *Le ray au soleil* and Machaut's *Gais et joli*, sees reflections in the water through Magister Franciscus' *De Narcissus*, and contemplates the "Source of Life" in Machaut's *Le lai de la fonteinne*.

On the way back, the musicians give us the anonymous *Bel fiore dança* from the Faenza Codex with additions by Nagy, Ciconia's *Sus une fonteyne*, and Pykini's *Playsance* or *tost*, redolent with the sounds of birds.

The cast is small but mighty. Nagy plays Medieval winds, joins the clear and expressive vocalists Kim Leeds and Elena Mullins for the texted pieces, and along with Scott Metcalfe, takes up the harp to support master vielle player Allison Monroe (Metcalf also wields a mean bow at times).

But what makes the video special, beyond the wonderful performances, are the projections and video art designed by Camilla Tassi. Machaut and his colleagues inspired some engaging iconography, and Tassi has found intriguing ways to shine images on the walls of Herr Chapel at Plymouth Church, where the program was filmed, and even to superimpose them on the faces of performers.



Here's hoping that Les Délices will make this video available for purchase beyond its expiration date. Lovers of Medieval music will certainly want to own and cherish it.

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