

# Johannes Ockeghem

COMPLETE SONGS VOLUME 1

Blue Heron

SCOTT METCALFE



## JOHANNES OCKEGHEM (c. 1420-1497) • COMPLETE SONGS, VOLUME 1

- ① Aultre Venus estes sans faille (5:03)  
MR AS sm
- ② Quant de vous seul je pers la veue (5:44)  
KL JM ST
- ③ *Anonymous* En attendant vostre venue (3:41)  
MR OM sm
- ④ Ma maistresse et ma plus grant amye (7:29)  
MN JM ST
- ⑤ *Barbingant* Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient (4:49)  
MR SR sm
- ⑥ S'elle m'amera / Petite camusecte (3:49)  
MN OM SR DM sm
- ⑦ Mort, tu as navré de ton dart / Miserere (8:59)  
OM AS ST PG
- ⑧ O rosa bella (2:09)  
Discantus by ?Bedyngheam, *Alius discantus* by Ockeghem • sm lj
- ⑨ D'un autre amer mon cuer s'abesseroit (5:33)  
SM JM ST
- ⑩ Fors seulement l'actente que je meure (8:31)  
MC MN ST
- ⑪ Fors seulement contre ce qu'ay promis / Fors seulement l'actente (7:33)  
MC JM PG
- ⑫ Se vostre cuer eslongne moy a tort (5:51)  
MN ST sm
- ⑬ Permanent vierge / Pulcra es / Sancta dei genitrix (7:56)  
MN JM DM PG ST

Total time (77:07)

## Blue Heron

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- ① **Aultre Venus estes sans faille:**  
 Plus que nulle autre creature  
 De corps, de beaulté, de figure  
 La semblez et de mesmes taille.  
 Celuy qui les amours detaille  
 Peut de vous dire par droicture,  
 Aultre Venus estes sans faille,  
 Plus que nulle autre creature.  
 Qui contredit j'offre bataille  
 A oultrance et a desmesure,  
 Maintenant qu'il vous fait injure  
 Se le tiltre tel ne vous baille.  
 Aultre Venus estes sans faille ...
- You are another Venus, without doubt:  
 more than any other creature  
 in body, in beauty, in countenance  
 you resemble her, and are of the same form.  
 He who tallies loves' details  
 may rightly say of you,  
 You are another Venus, without doubt,  
 more than any other creature.  
 To him who denies it I offer battle  
 to the death and without limit,  
 maintaining that he does you wrong  
 if he does not grant you this title.  
 You are another Venus, without doubt ...

- ② **Quant de vous seul je pers la veue,**  
 De qui tant chiere suis tenue,  
 Mon mal lors si tresfort m'assault  
 Qu'a peu que le cueur ne me fault,  
 Tant suis de douleur esperdue.  
 Pour estre vostre devenue  
 Plus que nul qui soit soubz la nue  
 Toute ma joie me default  
 Quant de vous seul je pers la veue,  
 De qui tant chiere suis tenue:  
 Mon mal lors si tresfort m'assault.  
 Dont je voi bien que je suis nue  
 De tous biens comme beste mue  
 A qui de plus riens il ne chault,  
 Car je scais bien qu'estre me fault  
 Seulle de tous biens despourveue  
 Quant de vous seul je pers la veue ...
- When I lose sight of you alone  
 by whom I am held so dear,  
 my pain then assails me so very strongly  
 that my heart nearly breaks,  
 so overcome am I by sorrow.  
 Since I have become yours  
 more than anyone under the heavens,  
 all my joy fails me  
 When I lose sight of you alone  
 by whom I am held so dear:  
 my pain then assails me so very strongly.  
 Then I see well that I am stripped  
 of all good things, like a dumb beast  
 to whom nothing matters any longer,  
 for I know well that I must be  
 alone, deprived of all good things,  
 When I lose sight of you alone ...

- ③ **En attendant vostre venue,**  
 Mon bien que je desire tant,  
 Une heure me dure bien cent  
 Quant de vous seul je pers la veue.  
 Bien souvent seullete, esperdue,  
 Je passe mon temps en pleurant  
 En attendant vostre venue,  
 Mon bien que je desire tant.  
 Mais bon Espoir m'a maintenue  
 Et de son bon gré m'assurant  
 Que je vous reverray briefment,  
 Qui en joye m'a entretenue.  
 En attendant vostre venue ...
- While awaiting your return,  
 my dear one whom I so desire,  
 one hour feels like a hundred  
 when I lose sight of you alone.  
 Very often, alone, desperate,  
 I pass my time in weeping  
 While awaiting your return,  
 my dear one whom I so desire.  
 But good Hope has sustained me  
 through her good will, assuring me  
 that I will soon see you again,  
 and so has maintained me in joy.  
 While awaiting your return ...

- ④ **Ma maistresse et ma plus grant amye,**  
De mon desir la mortelle ennemye,  
Parfaicte en biens s'onques maiz le fut femme,  
Celle seulle de qui court bruit et fame  
D'estre sans per: ne vous verray je mye?

Helas, de vous bien plaindre me devoie,  
S'il ne vous plaist que brevement vous voye,  
M'amour, par qui d'aultre aymer n'ay  
puissance.

Car sans vous voir, en quelque part que soye,  
Tout ce que voys me desplaist et ennoye,  
Ne jusque alors je n'auray souffisance.

Incessamment mon dolent cueur larmye  
Doubtant qu'en vous Pitié soit endormye.  
Que ja ne soit, ma tant amée dame!  
Maiz s'ainsy est, si malheureux me clame  
Que plus ne quiers vivre heure  
ne demye.

Ma maistresse et ma plus grant amye ...

- ⑤ **Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient,**  
On le peult bien qui vieult apercevoir,  
Mays c'est pour ce que je ne puis veoir  
Ma maistresse ainsi qu'aultres feroient.

Bien envieux certes aucuns seroient,  
Si par sa grace du bien povoye avoir.

Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient,  
On le peult bien qui vieult apercevoir.

S'il m'avenoit, grant douleur porteroient,  
Car veoir mon bien leur feroit recevoir  
Mal si tresgrant que s'il duroyt, pour voir  
Je suis tout seur que de dueil creveroient.

Au travail suis ...

My mistress and my greatest friend,  
mortal enemy of my desire,  
perfect in good qualities, if ever a woman was,  
she alone whom repute and fame hold  
to be without peer: will I never see you ever?

Alas! I should rightly complain of you  
if it does not please you that I see you shortly,  
my love, because of whom I am powerless to  
love another.

For when I do not see you, wherever I might be,  
everything I see displeases and vexes me,  
nor until I see you will I be satisfied.

Ceaselessly my sorrowing heart weeps,  
fearing that in you Pity lies asleep.  
May it not be so, my so-beloved lady!  
But if so it is, I declare myself so unhappy  
that I do not want to live one hour more,  
nor even one half.

My mistress and my greatest friend ...

I am in agony that few would believe—  
anyone who wishes to can perceive it clearly—  
but it is because I cannot see  
my mistress as others may do.

Some would be very envious, certainly,  
if by her grace I should have some good.

I am in agony that few would believe—  
anyone who wishes to can perceive it clearly.

If I were granted mercy, some would suffer greatly,  
for seeing me benefit would cause them  
such very great pain that, if it lasted, in truth  
I am quite sure they would die of grief.

I am in agony ...

- ⑥ **S'elle m'amera je ne scay,**  
Mais je me mectray en essay  
D'acquérir quelque peu sa grace.  
Force m'est que pars la je passe,  
Ceste fois j'en feray l'essay.

L'autre jour tant je m'avençay  
Que presque tout mon cuer lessay  
Aller sans que luy demandasse.

S'elle m'amera je ne scay,  
Mais je me mectray en essay  
D'acquérir quelque peu sa grace.

Puis apres le cop m'en pensay  
Que lonc temps a que ne cessay  
Ne ne fut que je ne l'amasse.  
Mais c'est ung jeu de passe-passe:  
J'en suis comme je commençay.

S'elle m'amera je ne scay ...

TENOR & CONTRATENORS  
*Petite camusecte,  
A la mort m'avez mis.  
Robin et Marion  
S'en vont au bois joly,  
Ilz s'en vont bras a bras,  
Ilz se sont endormis.  
Petite camusecte,  
A la mort m'avez mis.*

If she will love me I know not,  
but I shall put myself to the test  
to gain, in some small measure, her favor.  
I am forced to go that route:  
this time I shall attempt it.

The other day I advanced so far  
that I almost let my whole heart  
go, without asking anything of her in return.

If she will love me I know not,  
but I shall put myself to the test  
to gain, in some small measure, her favor.

Then after that try I thought to myself  
that for a long time I hadn't stopped loving her,  
nor did I ever not love her.  
But it's a game of sleight-of-hand:  
I'm right back where I started!

If she will love me I know not ...

*Little snub-nose,  
you have brought me to death's door.  
Robin and Marion  
go off to the green wood,  
they go off arm and arm,  
they have fallen asleep.  
Little snub-nose,  
you have brought me to death's door.*

7 **Mort, tu as navré de ton dart**

Le pere de joyeuseté  
En desployant ton estandart  
Sur Binchois, patron de bonté.  
Son corps est plaint et lamenté  
Qui gist soubz lame:  
Helas, plaise vous en pitié  
Prier pour l'ame.

Rhetorique, se Dieu me gard,  
Son serviteur a regretté;  
Musicque par piteux regard  
A fait deul et noir a porté.  
Pleurez, hommes de feaulté,  
Qui est sans blame:  
Vueillez vostre université  
Prier pour l'ame.

En sa jonesse fut soudart  
De honorable mondanité,  
Puis a eleu la milleur part,  
Servant dieu en humilité.  
Tant luy soit en crestienté  
Son nom et fame  
Qu'i denoment grant voulonté.  
Priez pour l'ame.

TENORS

*Miserere. Pie Jhesu domine, dona ei requiem.*

Death, you have wounded with your dart  
the father of joyousness  
in unfurling your standard  
over Binchois, the model of goodness.  
His body is mourned and lamented  
which lies beneath the tombstone:  
Alas, please you for pity's sake  
pray for his soul.

Rhetoric, so God preserve me,  
has grieved for her servant;  
Music out of piteous regard  
has put on mourning and worn black.  
Weep, men of fealty,  
for him who is without blame:  
May your community  
pray for his soul.

In his youth he was a soldier  
of honorable worldliness.  
Then he chose the better part,  
serving God in humility.  
May his name and fame  
be so reputed in Christendom  
that there they denote great force of will.  
Pray for his soul.

*Have mercy. Merciful Lord Jesus, grant him rest.*

8 **O rosa bella** (instrumental)

9 **D'un autre amer mon cuer s'abesseroit:**  
Il ne fault ja penser que je l'estrange  
Ne que pour rien de ce propos me change,  
Car mon honneur en appetisseroit.

Je l'ayme tant que jamais ne seroit  
Possible a moi de consentir l'eschange.

D'un autre amer mon cuer s'abesseroit;  
Il ne fault ja penser que je l'estrange.

La mort, par Dieu, avant me desferoit  
Qu'en mon vivant j'acoinctasse ung estrange.  
Ne cuide nul qu'a cela je me range:  
Ma léauté trop fort se mesferoit.

D'un autre amer ...

To love another my heart would abase itself:  
it is unthinkable that I would spurn him  
nor waver from this intent for anything,  
for my honor would thus be diminished.

I love him so that it would never be  
possible for me to consent to the exchange.

To love another my heart would abase itself;  
it is unthinkable that I would spurn him.

Death, by God, would put an end to me before  
I should, while living, embrace another.  
Let no one imagine that I would stoop to that:  
my loyalty would sin too greatly against itself.

To love another ...

10 **Fors seulement l'actente que je meure,**  
En mon las cuer nul espoir ne demeure,  
Car mon malheur si tresfort me tourmente  
Qu'il n'est douleur que par vous je ne sente,  
Puis que je suis de vous perdre bien seure.

Vostre rigueur follement me court seure  
Qu'en ce parti il fault que je m'asseure,  
Dont je n'ay bien qui en rien me contente.

Fors seulement l'actente que je meure,  
En mon las cuer nul espoir ne demeure,  
Car mon malheur si tresfort me tourmente.

Mon desconfort toute seulle je pleure  
En mauldisant sur ma foy a toute heure  
Ma loyauté qui tant me fait dolente.  
Las! que je suis de vivre mal contente  
Quant de par vous n'ay riens qui me sequeure.

Fors seulement l'actente que je meure ...

Save only the expectation that I shall die,  
no hope remains in my weary heart,  
for my misery torments me so very bitterly  
that there is no pain I do not feel on your account,  
since I am quite sure of losing you.

Your pitilessness attacks me mercilessly,  
so that in this situation I must rescue myself,  
for I have nothing at all that comforts me.

Save only the expectation that I shall die,  
no hope remains in my weary heart,  
for my misery torments me so very bitterly.

All alone I weep for my distress,  
ever cursing, by my faith,  
my loyalty, which makes me suffer so.  
Alas! how unhappy I am to remain alive  
when from you I receive nothing to succor me.

Save only the expectation that I shall die ...

- 11 **Fors seulement contre ce qu'ay promys,**  
 Et en tous lieux seray fort entremys  
 Et acquerray une belle aliance.  
 J'en ay desir voire dez mon enfance:  
 Point ne voudroye avoir nulz anemys.
- Mon vouloir j'ay tout en cela soubmis  
 Et hors de la ja ne ferai transmis,  
 Garder n'y veul ordre, sens ne prudence.
- Fors seulement contre ce qu'ay promys,  
 Et en tous lieux seray fort entremys  
 Et acquerray une belle aliance.
- Je cuide avoir en terre des amys  
 Et que en eulx ay ma fiance mis;  
 On doit scavoir que n'ay nulle doubance  
 Ou aultrement querroye ma desfiance,  
 Car je sceray de tout honneur remis.
- Fors seulement contre ce qu'ay promys...
- Save only contrary to that which I have promised,  
 I shall be deeply engaged on all sides  
 and shall obtain a fair alliance.  
 I have desired this ever since childhood:  
 I would have no enemies whatsoever.
- I have entirely submitted my will to this end  
 and from it shall not be moved,  
 nor will I respect order, sense, or prudence.
- Save only contrary to that which I have promised,  
 I shall be deeply engaged on all sides  
 and shall obtain a fair alliance.
- I believe I have friends in the land  
 and in them I have placed my trust;  
 let it be known that I have no doubts whatsoever,  
 for otherwise I would pursue my suspicions,  
 since I would be stripped of all honor.
- Save only contrary to that which I have promised...
- CONTRATENOR  
 Fors seulement l'actente que je meure ...
- Save only the expectation that I shall die ...

- 12 **Se vostre cuer eslongne moy a tort**  
 Et que de vous je n'ay plus [nul] confort  
 Je prendray lors sur Dieu et sur mon ame  
 Qu'en ce monde vous ne trouverez ame  
 Qui mains [que moy] vous vouldist faire tort.
- [Je cognoys bien que pour un faulx rapport  
 Vous arrestez a ce cruel deport,  
 Mais derechief vous fais serment ma dame:]
- Se vostre cuer eslongne moy a tort  
 Et que de vous je n'ai plus [nul] confort  
 Je prendray lors sur Dieu et sur mon ame
- [Que se Pitié en vostre ame s'endort  
 Tiendray pour seur que ne soyons d'accort  
 Et que bien tost perdray celle que j'ame.  
 Le demourant vous quitte aussi le blasme,  
 Car evader ne puis a male mort]
- Se vostre cuer eslongne moy a tort ...
- If your heart estranges me from you wrongly  
 and I am denied any more comfort from you,  
 I shall swear by God and upon my soul  
 that in this world you will find no one  
 who would wish you less harm than I.
- Well I see that because of a false slander  
 you are resolved on this cruel dismissal,  
 but once more I swear to you, my lady:
- If your heart estranges me from you wrongly  
 and I am denied any more comfort from you,  
 I shall swear by God and upon my soul
- that if in your soul Pity falls asleep,  
 I shall be sure that we can never be reconciled  
 and that I shall soon lose her whom I love.  
 I leave you the remainder, and the blame as well,  
 since I can hardly escape from cruel Death
- If your heart estranges me from you wrongly ...

Missing strophes by Fabrice Fitch.

*Mulier amicta sole  
et luna sub pedibus eius*

*A woman clothed with the sun  
and the moon beneath her feet*

13

**Permanent vierge, plus digne que nesune,**  
Femme couverte du soleil de justice,  
Chief couronné par divin artifice  
De douze estoiles, supeditant la lune:

Esmerveillant nature et loy commune,  
Tu enfantas par supernel office,

Permanent vierge, plus digne que nesune,  
Femme couverte du soleil de justice.

Preordonnée sans differance aucune  
Du redempteur fille, mere et nourrice,  
Soiez pour nous advocate propice,  
Toy supplions, tres belle, clere, brune,

Permanent vierge, plus digne que nesune ...

Permanent virgin, more worthy than any other,  
woman clothed with the sun of justice,  
head crowned by divine artifice  
with twelve stars, standing above the moon:

Astounding nature and earthly law,  
you bore a child by supernal action,

Permanent virgin, more worthy than any other,  
woman clothed with the sun of justice.

Preordained without any distinction  
the redeemer's daughter, mother, and nurse,  
be a propitious advocate for us,  
we beseech you, most lovely, radiant, burnished,

Permanent virgin, more worthy than any other ...

TENOR I

*Pulcra es et decora, filia Jherusalem:  
terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata.*

*Fair and comely art thou, O daughter of Jerusalem:  
terrible as an army arrayed for battle.*

TENOR II

*Sancta dei genitrix, virgo semper Maria,  
intercede pro nobis ad dominum  
Jhesum Christum.*

*Holy mother of God, ever-virgin Mary,  
intercede for us with the lord  
Jesus Christ.*

Translations by Scott Metcalfe, except translation of  
*Se vostre cuer* by Fabrice Fitch.

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## JOHANNES OCKEGHEM & HIS SONGS / SEAN GALLAGHER

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### *Primus inter pares*

Of the group of richly talented composers who emerged in the years around 1450, Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1420-1497) appears to have rather quickly achieved the status of "first among equals." Like many singers of the time, he was a native of Hainaut (the town of St-Ghislain, near Mons) and may have trained as a child in one of the region's several collegiate churches renowned for music. The first record of his professional activity is a year singing at the Church of Our Lady in Antwerp in the early 1440s, followed soon thereafter by two years of service at the Bourbon court in Moulins. How precisely he came to make this move to France remains unknown, but it would affect the rest of his life. By the early 1450s he was a member of the French royal chapel, where he would serve for more than forty-five years, most of them as master of the chapel, as well as holding the significant (and lucrative) post of treasurer of the royal abbey of St. Martin in Tours. Already in the mid-1460s his younger contemporary Antoine Busnoys (c. 1430-1492) honored him in a motet as "the true image of Orpheus," and in various treatises of the 1470s the well-informed theorist and composer Johannes Tinctoris (c. 1435-1511) consistently placed Ockeghem's name first in his lists of the leading composers of the time.

In the century after Ockeghem's death, his music appeared mainly in theoretical treatises, many of them by German authors fascinated by the contrapuntal wizardry of his more systematic works (such as the *Missa Prolationum*, with its elaborate double canons, or the *Missa Cuiusvis toni* and its speculative experiments with modes). While these writings kept Ockeghem's name in circulation, they also passed on a blinkered view of his achievements, which in some ways persisted well into the modern age. For much of the twentieth century, Ockeghem's reputation among musicians and scholars rested largely on his Masses, rather than his motets and chansons. The publication history of the different genres reflects this discrepancy: a revised critical edition of all his Masses was finished by 1957, whereas the volume containing his motets and chansons appeared only in 1992. Such a focus on the Masses is certainly defensible, given the size and significance of this part of his oeuvre. As Fabrice Fitch has noted, Ockeghem is the first composer whose extant Masses number in the double digits; moreover, several of these works figure prominently in the early history of the cyclic Mass on the Continent. But modern analytical priorities have doubtless also played a role, and it was all but inevitable that modernist preoccupations

with structural and conceptual complexity would drive analysts more toward Ockeghem's systematic works. Here one might recall that the author of the first English-language monograph devoted to Ockeghem was not a performer or historian, but a composer, Ernst Krenek (1900-91), who had begun combining twelve-tone techniques with modal counterpoint.

To be sure, Ockeghem's nearly two dozen extant chansons are not lacking in complexity, and at least one of them—the canonic (and clefless) *Prenez sur moy*—is as conceptually elaborate as anything in the Masses. But by their very nature these settings of short, mostly lyric poems in the vernacular, with their carefully calibrated metrical schemes, prompted compositional responses quite different from those needed when setting the ritualistic Latin prose of the Mass. Even if the various genres all employed effectively the same basic contrapuntal grammar, its realization in a chanson—in details of melodic contour, point, gesture and response—could differ considerably from that in a Mass or large-scale motet, especially in the hands of more gifted composers. (*Mutatis mutandis*, a comparable relation could be said to obtain between a Schubert *Lied* and one of his Mass settings, or indeed between a Mozart string quartet and one of his symphonies.) Owing to the more intimate context of the chanson—temporally, conceptually, even performatively—it should come as no surprise that it is in just such works that Ockeghem and his contemporaries often create their most finely wrought and deeply moving music.

### The chansons: quotation, allusion, homage, echo

Towards the end of his 1477 treatise on counterpoint, Tinctoris devotes a chapter to his compositional ideal of *varietas*, citing six works (one each by six of the leading composers of the period) that exemplify this quality and are worthy of emulation. It is telling that the Tinctoris, who certainly knew Ockeghem's Masses well enough to cite (and criticize) them in detail elsewhere in his writings, chose instead one of the composer's chansons, *Ma maistresse* ([4]), as a model of *varietas*. It is not hard to see why: an almost casual use of melodic imitation is handled here with great verve and *élan*, and without a trace of rigidity. Although the discantus and tenor voices begin the piece together, Ockeghem delays the tenor's second note an extra beat, thereby allowing the voices to shift smoothly into a brief canon at the fifth. The melodic motive, made up entirely of leaps, is easily perceived in the two lines. The two voices soon go their separate ways, the superius moving increasingly by step while the tenor recedes into the role of an accompanying line. Subsequent phrases are even more elegantly virtuosic, shading into and

out of various kinds of imitative writing, and juxtaposing strongly syncopated passages with homophonic ones.

Even more remarkable than the work's demonstration of contrapuntal mastery is the fact that it must be among Ockeghem's earlier songs, written some twenty-five years before Tinctoris cited it. Issues of dating and chronology, treacherous at the best of times in fifteenth-century studies, are especially difficult with Ockeghem, many of whose works survive only in comparatively late sources. But *Ma maistresse* is exceptional in this regard, surviving in a copy that can be dated with some confidence to the early-to-mid 1450s. On the basis of stylistic features, several of his other chansons could date from this same early period, though in most cases their sources are from ca. 1470 or later (e.g., the lovely rondeau *Aultre Venus estes sans faille* ([1]), likely an early song that survives uniquely in a manuscript copied in French royal circles in the 1480s).

Datable with some precision is his one clearly occasional song, *Mort, tu as navré / Miserere* ([7]), a four-voice lament on the death of the composer Gilles Binchois (d. September 20, 1460), which he presumably composed soon after the event. This hybrid work (it sets a French ballade in the discantus, with a troped paraphrase of a chant from the Mass for the Dead in the tenor) is somber and motet-like in texture, against which the discantus's extension into its upper range at the words "Sur Binchois, patron de bonté" becomes all the more haunting. While there is no clear evidence Ockeghem studied with Binchois, this moving *déploration* for the older composer, along with a polyphonic quotation in Ockeghem's rondeau *La despourveue* of a phrase from a Binchois song, the words of which read "My heart cannot forget you," together suggest the two men at least knew each other personally. Less personal in nature, though interesting both for its novelty and for what it suggests about Ockeghem's knowledge of another older composer's work, is his setting of John Bedyngham's widely-copied *O rosa bella*, here performed on two vieilles ([8]). To Bedyngham's discantus Ockeghem simply adds another line in the same range, one of several such two-voice versions of the song, all of which seem to date from the 1450s.

In several of the songs recorded here we find Ockeghem and his contemporaries participating in the kinds of quotation, allusion, or re-working that were common in the period. The first verses of *Fors seulement l'actente* and *D'un autre amer* are taken from *La Complainte* by the royal notary and poet Alain Chartier (d. 1430). The opening poetic line of Ockeghem's *Quant de vous seul* ([2]), likely one of his earlier rondeau settings, is quoted in its entirety as the last line of the refrain in



the anonymous rondeau *En attendant vostre venue* (㉓). The latter is one of twelve previously unknown chansons found in the recently discovered Leuven Chansonier, a remarkably well-preserved collection of fifty chansons (including six by Ockeghem) copied probably in France or Savoy in the late 1470s. Despite their shared poetic line, one should note how different these two songs are in character and affect. The lover in *En attendant*, though worried at losing sight of the beloved, is nevertheless buoyed by “bon Espoir,” while the female speaker in *Quant de vous* is unrelievedly despondent, the falling gesture and its echo at the words “Mon mal lors si tresfort m’assault” (My pain then assails me so strongly) evoking an emptiness that lies beyond longing.

A similar act of quotation involves *Ma maistresse* and the rondeau *Au travail suis* (㉔), the latter song attributed in central French manuscripts to both Ockeghem and—much more convincingly—to the still enigmatic Barbingant (fl. 1450s). Here we find both the opening words and melodic motive of *Ma maistresse* used in the last line of the refrain of *Au travail suis*. While there has been debate over who was quoting whom, the example of *En attendant vostre venue*, as well as the widespread poetic practice of quoting or re-working another poem’s opening line(s) elsewhere in one’s own refrain, suggest that it was the composer of *Au travail suis* quoting *Ma maistresse*. To make matters more complicated, Ockeghem himself would later base one of his Masses on *Au travail suis*—and another on *Ma maistresse*.

The related rondeaux *Fors seullement l’actente que je meure* (㉕) and *Fors seullement contre ce qu’ay promis* (㉖) seem like experiments in texture and range. The earlier of the two, *Fors seullement l’actente*, sets a low contratenor beneath two higher voices that partially overlap in range and share salient melodic gestures, at points blurring the functional distinction between them. In the later *Fors seullement contre ce* the discantus of the earlier setting (including its text) is transposed down a twelfth to become a low contratenor. Whereas the despair of the earlier song’s female persona is comparable to that found in other poems of the period, the meaning of *Fors seullement contre ce* is more obscure, with vague references to trust, dishonor, and suspicions. As he did with *Au travail suis* and *Ma maistresse*, Ockeghem later based a Mass on *Fors seullement l’actente* (in five voices; only three movements are extant). In the hands of other composers, the song would go on to have an extensive afterlife, serving as the basis for Masses, at least one motet, and a large number of song re-workings of various kinds.

The rondeau *D’un autre amer mon cuer s’abesseroit* (㉗) survives in eighteen sources (excluding later lute intabulations and various re-workings by other composers), making it Ockeghem’s most widely distributed chanson. Few other works so clearly exemplify the beauties of the mid-fifteenth-century rondeau: the close interweaving of a few well defined rhythmic-melodic gestures, the subtle nudges and responses among its three voices, the perfectly gauged use of large leaps at crucial moments. These combine to create a moving and instantly memorable work.

The loss of most song manuscripts copied in France or the Low Countries during the second half of the fifteenth century means that for a large number of chansons we must rely on copies made in Italy, often by scribes with little understanding of French, little interest in song texts, or both. Ockeghem’s chansons have been affected less than those by some of his contemporaries, but his apparently late rondeau *Se vostre cuer eslongne moy a tort* (㉘) is one such casualty. Of its two sources, copied in Italy between the mid-1480s and early 1490s, one has no more than a textual incipit, the other only a single strophe badly mangled. For this recording Fabrice Fitch has emended the surviving text and artfully supplied the missing strophes: a chanson reborn.

Beginning around 1460, composers introduced a new kind of song, the polytextual combinative chanson. While the idea of a song with more than one text was not in itself new (early examples date back to the second half of the fourteenth century), what distinguished this new type was its explicit juxtaposition of courtly love poetry (usually in the discantus) with popular songs of the time, both texts and melodies (usually in the tenor and contratenor), many of them *chansons rustiques* associated with contemporary plays. The contrast between these song-types was both textual and musical, with the contoured melismas of the discantus unfolding over the simpler, squarer phrases of one or more popular melody, the earthy texts of which countered courtly sentiment with humor and irony that easily drifted into bawdiness and obscenity. By the standards of the time, Ockeghem’s sole contribution to the combinative chanson, *S’elle m’amera / Petite camusecte* (㉙) is both subtler and milder than most. While the courtly rondeau wonders “If she will love me I know not,” the tenor lets us know that “Little snub-nose, you have brought me to death’s door.” The subtlety resides in not exaggerating the differences between the two musical styles. Ockeghem’s courtly discantus manages somehow to be both elegant and plainspoken, partly through a judicious use of repeated pitches and syncopated phrase openings (neither a common feature in his other chansons). This is the composer at his most brilliantly playful.

The five-voice Marian motet-chanson *Permanent vierge* / *Pulcra es* / *Sancta dei genitrix* (<sup>[13]</sup>) survives uniquely and without attribution in the Dijon Chansonnier, the largest collection among the so-called Loire Valley Chansonniers, a group of central French manuscripts copied largely during the third quarter of the fifteenth century and which today constitute the most significant northern song sources from Ockeghem's lifetime. The Dijon chansonnier, most of which was copied by a single scribe, also contains more songs by Ockeghem than any other source, though several appear there without attribution. These unattributed songs include his motet-chanson, *Mort tu as navré / Miserere*, and *S'elle m'amera / Petite camusecte*. The only work separating these two songs is *Permanent vierge*, and the possibility that the three constitute a nest of Ockeghem's songs in more than three voices was suggested as early as the nineteenth century. Numerous compositional and notational features strongly support Ockeghem's authorship, and the expansive gesture at the words "par divin artifice" is handled with a grace that recalls comparable masterstrokes in his motets.

## PERFORMING OCKEGHEM'S SONGS / SCOTT METCALFE

Ockeghem's songs come down to us in numerous fifteenth-century manuscripts. While seven songs (including *Aultre Venus*, *Permanent vierge*, *Quant de vous seul*, and the "alius [second] discantus" that makes a contrapuntal pair with the discantus or top part of John Bedyngham's *O rosa bella*) survive in just one copy, for some songs we have well over a dozen sources: there are eighteen for *D'un autre amer*, all transmitting essentially the same version of the piece. No autograph material exists, but we know of half a dozen songbooks that were probably produced during Ockeghem's lifetime in or near Tours, his residence and principal place of work, all of which contain some of his songs.<sup>1</sup> Most French copies of Ockeghem's songs transmit the discantus line on one page, with text written under the music; the other parts lie beneath it or on the facing page and normally lack text other than a short incipit. Such manuscript evidence, along with contemporary descriptions of performances, points to the obvious conclusion that the discantus line was intended for a singer (although many Italian sources lack text altogether and may have been prepared for solely instrumental ensembles). But what sort of singer? Furthermore, no musical source instructs us what to do with untexted tenor and contratenor lines. Are they meant to be sung or played? If sung, should they be texted or not? If played, on what instrument?

<sup>1</sup> The five so-called Loire Valley *chansonniers* are nowadays known individually by their current home or the name of a former owner: Copenhagen, Dijon, Laborde (held by the Library of Congress), Nivelles (held by the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris), and Wolfenbüttel. The recently discovered Leuven Chansonnier seems to belong among them.

A small number of contemporary accounts provide enough detail about fifteenth-century performances of polyphonic songs to allow us to draw some conclusions about the scoring options that Ockeghem might have envisioned. A very few identify the song being performed, but none is by Ockeghem.<sup>2</sup> Our first witness describes a ballata by Francesco Landini being sung in Florence; the book, *Il Paradiso degli Alberti* by Giovanni Gherardi da Prato, was written in the 1420s about fictional events set in 1389.

E prestamente con piacere di tutti, e singularmente di Francesco musico, due fanciullette cominciarono una ballata a cantare, tenendo loro bordone Biagio di Sernello.

And right away, to the delight of all and particularly that of the musician Francesco, two young girls began to sing a ballata, Biagio di Sernello taking the *bordone* [tenor].

The full text of the song *Orsù gentili spiriti* follows. Landini's setting is for a discantus and a contratenor in approximately the same range, with a tenor a fifth lower. Whether Biagio di Sernello sang or played the tenor is not clear from this passage, nor, if he sang, what he or the second *fanciulla* may have done with their untexted lines.

Similar ambiguities are found in an account of the daughters of Piero de' Medici entertaining the pope on a visit to Florence in 1460.<sup>3</sup>

... se la dita Biancha ha cenzare l'organo. ... Aconzato lo organo, la sorella che ha circa XI anni incommenza ha dare fiato ha l'organo, et non sapendo che cosa fusse grata a Monsegno, fecigli io fare doi canti: Fortuna he Duogl'angoseus et lei poi ne fece uno troppo singulare...

... then Bianca tuned the pipes of the organ. ... Once the organ was tuned, her sister [Lucrezia], who is about eleven years old, began to pump the bellows of the organ, and not knowing what would please Monsignor, I had her perform two songs for him: *Fortuna* and *Duogl'angoseus* and then she did another, highly unusual one...

Fornito il ballare se fece collatione, poi quella, la dita Biancha sonò un canto angelico cum li organi, poi cantò una canzoneta cum sua sorella, piu una altra zovene ne incomenzò una che disse Moum cuer chiantes ioussement.

When the dance was finished, everyone ate something and then Bianca played an angelic song on the organ, then she sang a canzonetta with her sister, and then another young girl began one that says *Moum cuer chiantes ioussement*.

<sup>2</sup> Most of the known accounts, including some not quoted here, are cited in David Fallows, "Specific information on the ensembles for composed polyphony, 1400-1474," *Studies in the performance of late medieval music*, Stanley Boorman, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 109-159.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted and translated in William F. Prizer, "Games of Venus: secular vocal music in the late Quattrocento and early Cinquecento," *The Journal of Musicology* 9 (1991): 3-56.

*Fortuna* may be Bedyngham's *Fortune*, *helas*. *Dueil angoisseux* and *Mon cuer chante joyeusement* are by Gilles Binchois (c. 1400-1460), for whom Ockeghem composed the lament *Mort, tu as navré de ton dart*. (Intriguingly, both *Dueil angoisseux* and *Mon cuer chante* are copied in a manuscript songbook owned by Piero de' Medici.) Did the 14-year-old Bianca sing, accompanying herself on the organ, or did she play some sort of intabulation with diminutions? And what happened after the young girl "began" *Mon cuer chante joyeusement*, a song in which the three parts actually start together?

A song by Binchois also featured among the *divertissements* at the extravagant Feast of the Pheasant (or *Banquet du vœu*) held in Lille in 1454 at the behest and considerable expense of the duke of Burgundy; the account is from the chronicle of Mathieu d'Eschouchy.

Apprez que l'église et le pasté furent chascun quatre fois joué, sy entra ung chert merveilleusement grant et bel. . . Et par dessus icellui chert estoit monté ung josne filz de eage de XII ans. . . Et a l'entree de la salle commencha ledit enfant le dessus d'une chansson, moult hault et cler, et ledit chert lui tenoit la teneur sans avoir autre personne, sy non l'enfant et l'artifice du chert, et nommoit la la chanchon qu'ilz disoient *Je ne vis onques la pareille*.

Next, after the church and the pastry had each played four times in turn, there entered into the hall a marvellously large and beautiful hart. . . Upon this hart was mounted a young boy of twelve. . . And upon his entrance this boy began to sing the dessus of a song, very loud and clear, and the hart took the tenor, with no one else but the child and the artificial hart. And the song they sang was called *Je ne vis onques la pareille*.

While D'Escouchy says the hart "tenoit [took] la teneur," another version specifies that he sang it ("lui chanta le teneur"). No mention is made of the third part of the song, a low contratenor; perhaps it was sung by a man serving as the hindquarters of the stag.

Musicians at the Feast of the Pheasant appeared in a model of a church as well as in a giant pastry.

. . . et tantost apprez fut chanté, ou pasté, par trois douches voix, une chanchon tout du long, que se nommoit *La saulvegarde de ma vie* . . .

. . . et apres fut joué ou pasté d'un leux avec deux bonnes voix . . .

. . . and immediately afterwards three sweet [or soft] voices in the pastry sang, from start to finish, a song which was called *La saulvegarde de ma vie* . . .

. . . and afterwards, from the pastry, a lute was played with two good voices . . .

. . . et apprez, ou pasté, juerrent les aveugles de vielles, et avec eulx ung leu bien accordé ; et chantoit avec eulx une damoiselle de l'ostel de ladict duchesse nommee Pacquette, dont la chose ne valoit pas pis.

. . . and afterwards the blind fiddlers played from the pastry, and with them a well-tuned lute; and a young lady of the household of the duchess named Pacquette sang with them, and the thing was not bad.

*La saulvegarde de ma vie*, apparently a song in the usual three parts, is not known to survive. Whether the pieces performed by the lutenist with two singers or by Pacquette, a lutenist, and the fiddle players were composed polyphonic works is not certain.

The *Mémoires* of Olivier de la Marche relate that a singing lion helped to celebrate the wedding in 1468 of Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, to Margaret of York, but the song it sang no longer exists.

. . . entra ung lion, dedans lequell estoient deux chantres chantans une chanson qui disoit: *Bien viengnant la douce bergiere*.

. . . a lion entered, in which there were two singers singing a song which said *Bien viengnant la douce bergiere*.

An extraordinary rendition of a three-part song by Walter Frye once took place outside Chartres Cathedral, according to the distinguished and normally sober theoretician and composer Johannes Tinctoris, writing in his *De inventione et usu musicae* (early 1480s). Tinctoris has just singled out Ockeghem as an "outstanding composer" who also "holds the palm" among "*bassos contratenoristas*," i.e. low contratenors or what we would call basses. He continues:<sup>4</sup>

. . . preterire silentio non possum quod (ut ita dicam) quoddam miraculosum canendi inventum ego et non alius hoc est a sensibus alienus viderim audiverimque. Gerardus etenim Brabantinus conterraneus meus, illustrissimi ducis Borbonii aulicus (me presente, vidente, et audiente), sub porticu dextra insignis ecclesie Carnotensis, cuius pueros musicam tunc docebam, supremam partem simul cum tenore, non voces alternando, illius cantilene *Tout a par moy* perfectissime cecinit.

. . . I cannot pass over in silence that (if I may say so) I and none other (that is, with another's senses) once saw and heard something miraculous invented in singing. For indeed my countryman Gerardus of Brabant, a courtier of the most illustrious duke of Bourbon (with me present, seeing and hearing), beneath the right-hand porch of the distinguished church of Chartres, whose boys I then taught music, most perfectly sang the soprano part together with the tenor, not alternating the voices, of the song *Tout a par moy*.

<sup>4</sup> Text and translation, slightly modified, from the complete online edition of Tinctoris's works at [earlymusictheory.org/Tinctoris/texts/deinventioneetusumusicae](http://earlymusictheory.org/Tinctoris/texts/deinventioneetusumusicae).

Our final selection returns to what we trust was more common performance practice. The poet, composer, and chronicler Jean Molinet records an event in 1486; while the songs are not named, the inclusion of motets, an invariably polyphonic form, suggests that the chansons, too, were polyphonic compositions.<sup>5</sup>

... auquel souper survint une josne fille de l'eage de vingt ans, la mieulx chantante et jouante d'instruments que pieca ne fust veue ne oyé; dont, pour conjoir l'archiduc, elle chanta seule chansons et motets, et jooit, en chantant, de luth, harpe, rebecque et clavechinbolon, tant melodieusement, artificiellement et de vraie mesure, qu'elle sembloit mieux estre une angelle que creature humaine.

... at this dinner a young girl arrived, twenty years of age, the best singer or player of instruments ever seen or heard for a long time; for, in order to amuse the archduke, she sang chansons and motets by herself, and, while singing, played lute, harp, rebec, and *clavechinbolon*, so melodiously, artfully, and in true rhythm, that she seemed more angel than human being.

These accounts suggest various options for the standard three parts of the fifteenth-century chanson. The top line might be sung by a woman, a girl, a boy, or an adult man, the latter presumably using some sort of falsetto technique.<sup>6</sup> The tenor might be taken by a singer or by an instrument and the contratenor likewise. (It seems possible that the contratenor may have been omitted on some occasions, leaving the contrapuntally complete duo of discantus and tenor.) The instruments used include fiddle, lute, harp, rebec, a small organ, and the *clavechinbolon* or harpsichord; all were classified in medieval terms as *bas* or “soft.”

For the discantus lines on this recording we employ a woman, a falsettist, or (for *Mort, tu as navré*) a high tenor. Tenor parts and a number of contratenor parts are also sung. In most cases tenors and contras are not texted in the sources, and we remain unsure about all the possibilities open to singers of such parts. It is certain that in some instances they sang text, whether the text is written in an extant manuscript part or not, for in some songs with multiple sources, one source has an untexted tenor or contra, while in another the part is copied with text, raising the possibility of treating other untexted lines similarly. We have added text to tenor parts in songs where such treatment works satisfactorily, especially where discantus and tenor share

a substantial amount of melodic material, as in *Aultre Venus*, *Au travail suis*, and *Quant de vous seul*. But the tenors and especially the contras of some songs are highly resistant to texting: sometimes there are simply not enough notes for the number of syllables, or the melodies are too disjunct and jagged to accommodate the words gracefully, or the rhythms are quite unsuited to those of the text. In these cases, some modern writers have suggested that a singer may have vocalised on a single vowel. The solution is attractive and casts the text of the discantus into satisfying relief, and we have adopted it for several songs, but I am not aware of any evidence that fifteenth-century singers ever did so.



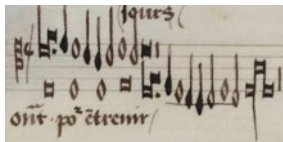
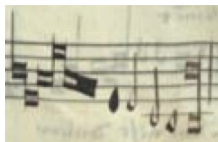
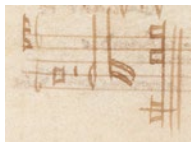
Illustration from Martin le Franc, *Le champion des dames*, c. 1438–42 (Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, MS fr. 12476, f. 98)

In several songs, we play the contratenor part on an instrument, either fiddle (*Au travail suis*) or harp. The harp, long used to accompany solo song, may have been particularly favored by composers or performers in the middle of the fifteenth century. Binchois, the century's quintessential

<sup>5</sup> Jean Molinet, *Chroniques* (Brussels 1935–7), ch. 22., vol. I, p. 481; quoted in Noël Dupire, *Jean Molinet* (1935), p. 24, n. 1.

<sup>6</sup> The French royal chapel, which Ockeghem directed as premier chapelain for most of his career, must have included falsettists, for there were no choirboys, nor younger men whose voices might not have broken, and the compasses of Ockeghem's sacred works—as much as twenty-one notes or nearly three octaves—require a highest voice that sings more than an octave higher than the lowest.

song composer, is pictured holding one in the manuscript of Martin le Franc's *Le champion des dames*. (Du Fay stands next to him with a small organ.) Certain features found primarily in contra parts such as split notes or longer passages of divided notes suggest the use of a non-sustaining instrument that could play more than one note at a time. The fifteenth-century lute was generally played with a single plectrum, while the portative organ required the player to pump the bellows with one hand while playing one line with the other, leaving harp as the most likely candidate (setting aside the rarely-mentioned *clavechinbolon*).<sup>7</sup>



Split notes and *divisi* passages. Last note of the contra of Busnoys's *Est-il mercy* in the Leuven Chansonier (Loire Valley, c. 1475); last note of the contra in Ockeghem's *Baisiés moy* in the Basevi Codex (copied c. 1508 by a Netherlands court scribe); an extended *divisi* passage in the contratenor of Busnoys's *Pour entretenir mes amours* in the Mellon chansonier (Naples, c. 1475).

In our performances of *Aultre Venus*, *En attendant*, and *Se vostre cuer* the harp plays contra, here and there adding notes above it *ad libitum*. In *S'elle m'amera / Petite camusecte*, the harp doubles the lowest sounding part and some of the upper parts, lending a little extra snap to a snappy combinative chanson. Ockeghem's untexted *alius discantus* to *O rosa bella* is uniquely transmitted in a German source in which it is copied apart from the Bedyngnam song to whose discantus it is a partner. The duo, like two other *gimel* settings of *O rosa bella* in the same manuscript, may be less a song than an abstract composition; we play it on a pair of fiddles.

## ABOUT THE INSTRUMENTS

The *vielle* or fiddle (both words, like *viola*, derive from the Latin words *vidula*, *viella*, and *viola*) existed in a multitude of forms. The *vielles* on this recording were made by Karl Dennis of Warren, Rhode Island, after careful study of fiddles pictured by medieval artists; very few bowed string instruments survive from the Middle Ages. It has a flat back, arched top, and curved bridge, with five gut strings tuned in 4ths and 5ths, all features which are more or less common among medieval fiddles. The bows were designed and made by David Hawthorne of Cambridge, Massachusetts, following examples in medieval art. Made of European pearwood and strung with horsehair, they are highly curved and very much resemble the hunting bow for which the musical bow is named.

The fifteenth-century harp sounds rather different from its modern counterparts due to the presence of brays, small wedges set atop the pins in the sound board: when the string is plucked, it vibrates against the narrow end of the wedge, creating a buzzy or snappy sound which is both louder and more sustained than that of a harp without brays. The harp played here was made by Lynne Lewandowski of Bellows Falls, Vermont, from Vermont cherry, and is based on various surviving originals and paintings, especially the tall and slender harps portrayed in the paintings of Hans Memling. Its 26 gut strings are tuned diatonically, including both B-natural and B-flat like the medieval gamut.



Fiddle by Karl Dennis, bow by David Hawthorne



Harp by Lynne Lewandowski

The fiddle and the rebec are my two instruments; I repeat, my chosen instruments, those that induce piety and stir my heart most ardently to the contemplation of heavenly joys. For these reasons I would rather reserve them solely for sacred music and the secret consolation of the soul, than have them sometimes used for profane occasions and public festivities.

Johannes Tinctoris, *De inventione et usu musicae* (c. 1481–3)

The strings on a harp clang by striking the lower nail where they are connected to the body. . . . In common parlance this is called "harping" the string.

Heinrich Glarean, *Dodecachordon* (1547)

<sup>7</sup> See Peter Urquhart and Heather de Savage. "Evidence contrary to the *cappella* hypothesis for the 15th-century chanson." *Early music* 39 (2011): 359–78.

## Singing the text

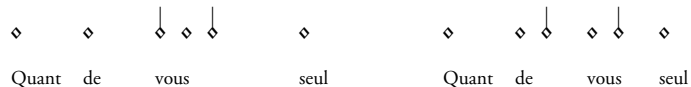
Even in the case of discantus lines which were certainly intended to be sung with words, a considerable degree of uncertainty remains as to how a fifteenth-century singer may have matched the syllables of the text to the notes of the melody. The layout of *Quant de vous seul* in its unique source, the Dijon Chansonnier, typically offers the singer virtually no guidance.



Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 517, f. 33v (detail)

The first system of the discantus part, reproduced above, includes an antecedent phrase of six notes ascending from *d'* to *a'*, followed by a rest; the consequent phrase of twelve notes, which makes its way down an octave to *a* before turning upwards to cadence to *d'*; then a rest followed by the first few notes of the next phrase. Under the notes, the scribe has written the first verse of the rondeau text, indicating the end of the verse with a slender virgule. The distribution of the words on the page bears no relation to the music or the prosody of the verse. The gap introduced between “Quant de vous seul je” and “pers la veue” makes neither grammatical nor metrical sense: the copyist was simply avoiding collisions between the text and a few low notes which intrude into the space below the staff, the notes having been written first and the words fitted in afterwards.

The verse must be divided “Quant de vous seul | je pers la veue,” but now the singer must decide how to sing the four syllables of “Quant de vous seul” to the six notes before the first rest. Two choices present themselves:



The first version places the third word on the *initium* or first beat of a metric unit, emphasizing the deictic “vous,” while the second displaces and softens the impact of “vous,” reserving the emphasis for “seul,” and sets up a play of triple meter within the prevailing duple. Making the latter choice, as we have done, will influence how one hears the rhythm of the phrase after the medial cadence, setting the words “Qu’a peu que le cœur ne me fault,” which may also fall into triple groupings:



Subtle yet consequential decisions of this kind must be made in virtually every phrase of these songs.



## (Re)discovering the sounds of 15th-century French

We have attempted to pronounce the French of these songs as a professional French singer or rhetorician of the mid to late fifteenth century might have declaimed it. Needless to say, this is not a straightforward matter. Eugène Green has noted that “with the exception of English, no other western European language has experienced such radical phonetic evolution, nor does any other language—English again excepted—to a greater degree hide its true face behind its orthography. The case of French is further complicated by the fact that, between the 14th and 18th centuries, declamation—by which was meant every ‘literary’ recitation, and thus every sung text—employed a ‘system’ of pronunciation proper to it and which did not affect the ‘spoken’ language except where the two domains overlapped.”<sup>8</sup> The subject of pronunciation is first discussed in detail in descriptive and prescriptive writings from the 1520s, and the information provided in these treatises may, with appropriate caution, be applied retroactively to lyric declamation in Ockeghem’s lifetime. Our reconstruction—necessarily hypothetical—of the sounds of fifteenth-century French has been informed especially by the comprehensive study of early grammarians by the nineteenth-century scholar Charles Thurot;<sup>9</sup> the research and practice of the latter-day dramatist, actor, and director Eugène Green;<sup>10</sup> work with an actor specialising in historically-informed theatrical performance, Léna Rondé, with whom we spent a fruitful week while preparing this recording; and a broad consideration of rhymes and metrics in texts set to music by Binchois, Du Fay, Ockeghem, Busnoys, and others, in the poetry of Charles d’Orléans, Chartier, Villon, and others, and in the anonymous lyrics that fill contemporary poetic anthologies.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> “... à l’exception de l’anglais, aucune autre langue de l’Europe occidentale n’a connu une évolution phonétique aussi radicale, et aucune autre langue – l’anglais toujours excepté – ne cache davantage son vrai visage derrière son orthographe. Le cas du français se complique d’autre part par le fait que, entre le XIV<sup>e</sup> et le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, la déclamation – par laquelle on entendait tout énoncé ‘littéraire’, et donc tout texte chanté – comportait un ‘système’ de prononciation qui lui était propre, et qui n’intervenait dans la langue ‘parlée’ que là où il y avait interférence entre les deux domaines.” Eugène Green, “La prononciation du français dans les chansons de Josquin des Prez,” *Tijdschrift voor nederlandse muziekgeschiedenis* 36 (1986), pp. 52–65, at p. 52 (my translation).

<sup>9</sup> Charles Thurot, *De la prononciation française depuis le commencement du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, d’après les témoignages des grammairiens*, two vols. plus *Index* (Paris, 1881–83).

<sup>10</sup> Green, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Useful studies of fifteenth-century rhymes and metrics may be found in Kathleen Chesney, ed., *Poésies de Guillaume Crétin* (Paris, 1932), pp. xli–lvi; Noël Dupire, *Jean Molinet: La vie—les œuvres* (Paris, 1932), esp. ch. 8 (Le vocabulaire), ch. 9 (Le style), and ch. 10 (La versification); and Leeman L. Perkins and Howard Garey, ed., *The Mellon Chansonier*, (New Haven and London, 1979), vol. 2 (Commentary), esp. pp. 79–128. See also J. C. Laidlaw, *The poetical works of Alain Chartier* (London and New York, 1974), pp. 54–6, *passim*.

The following differences from modern French pronunciation may strike the listener.

1. Final consonants are pronounced at all verse endings and pauses. Thurot’s conclusion concerning this practice is unambiguous: “The grammarians of the sixteenth century are unanimous in attesting that the final consonant was always pronounced before a pause.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, final Rs, including -er endings of infinitives of the first conjugation, are pronounced in all positions, according to the majority view of the grammarians studied by Thurot.<sup>13</sup> These practices are amply supported by the study of rhymes in fifteenth-century poetry; they preserve, for example, the audible distinction between plural and singular nouns, or between the infinitive *amer*, to love, and its past participle *amé*, loved, while permitting the poet to play on the rhyme of the verb *amer* with the adjective *amer*, bitter.
2. *an*, *en*, and *in* (also *am*, *em*, and *im*) are incompletely nasalized, preserving some of the sound of the consonant; the vowels are generally brighter or more forward. *Bien*, for example, is pronounced [bjɛ̃n].
3. *oi* is pronounced [wɛ̃].
4. A palatal / like the Italian *gl* may be heard in words like *faillie*, *bataille*, and *travail*, a pronunciation which endured until relatively recently.

The general effect of all this is a rather bright, varied, and articulated pronunciation, which may aid the singer in projecting the texts of these contrapuntally complex and highly melismatic songs.

<sup>12</sup> “Tous les grammairiens du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle sont unanimes à attester que la consonne finale se prononçait toujours devant une pause” (vol. II, p. 10). Green claims that “this sense of the living presence of the end of words” represents “one of the most essential keys for understanding French civilisation” (*op. cit.*, p. 62, n. 24).

<sup>13</sup> See vol. II, pp. 54–71.

## BLUE HERON

Winner of the 2018 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Early Music, 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.” 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, and is committed to vivid live performance informed by the study of original source materials and historical performance practices.

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; in Chicago, Cleveland, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Providence, St. Louis, San Luis Obispo, Seattle, and Vancouver; and in Cambridge and London, England. Blue Heron has been 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.

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 and restored by Nick Sandon. 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*.

In 2015, Professor Jessie Ann Owens and Blue Heron won the Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society, providing initial stimulus for the world premiere recording of Cipriano de Rore’s *I madrigali a cinque voci*, which was released in the fall of 2019 (BHCD 1009). Also in 2015 Blue Heron 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; the project will wind up around 2021, in time to commemorate the composer’s circa-600th birthday. Sean Gallagher joins Blue Heron as musicological adviser for *Ockeghem@600*. The ensemble’s recordings also include a CD of plainchant and polyphony that accompanies Thomas Forrest Kelly’s book *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation* and the live recording *Christmas in Medieval England*.



BLUE HERON. L to R: Martin Near, David McFerrin, Stefan Reed, Margot Rood, Sumner Thompson, Owen McIntosh, Paul Guttry, Jason McStoots, Scott Metcalfe (not pictured: Megan Chartrand, Laura Jeppesen, Kim Leeds, Sophie Michaux, Aaron Sheehan)



## SCOTT METCALFE

Scott Metcalfe is widely recognized as one of North America's leading specialists in music from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries and beyond. Musical and artistic director of Blue Heron since its founding in 1999, he was music director of New York City's Green Mountain Project (Jolle Greenleaf, artistic director) from 2010-19, and he has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Emmanuel Music (Boston), The Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), and Early Music America's Young Performers Festival Ensemble, in music ranging from Machaut to Bach and Handel. Metcalfe also enjoys a career as a baroque violinist, playing with Les Délices (dir. Debra Nagy), L'Harmonie des Saisons (dir. Eric Milnes), and other ensembles. He has taught at Boston University and Harvard University and served as director of the baroque orchestra at Oberlin Conservatory; in 2019-20 he has been appointed a visiting member of the faculty of Music History at the New England Conservatory.

Metcalfe 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). Some of his research on the performance practice of English vocal music in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will be published as two chapters in *Music, politics, and religion in early seventeenth-century Cambridge: the Peterhouse partbooks in context* (forthcoming). He has also edited a motet by Francisco de Peñalosa for Antico Edition (2017) and the twelve unique songs in the newly-discovered Leuven chansonnier for the Alamire Foundation (Belgium). A new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois (c. 1400-1460) is in preparation.

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Michal Truelsen & Jody Wormhoudt	John Puffer & Lila Terry
	Andrew Sigel

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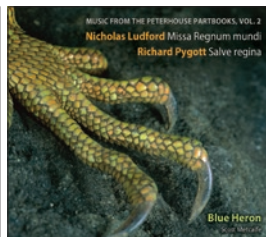
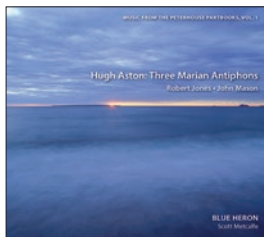


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