



ORLANDO CONSORT

ROBERT HARRE JONES COUNTERTENOR
CHARLES DANIELS TENOR
ANGUS SMITH TENOR
DONALD GRIEG BARITONE

1	Omnium bonorum plena	11.06
2	Se j'ay parlé	2.04
3	Seray je vostre mieulx amée	7.30
4	Ave Maria	5.57
5	Alons fere nos barbes	1.46
6	Ne vous hastez pas	6.44
7	Asperges me, Domine	3.55
8	Che fa la ramacina	0.44
9	Scaramella	0.48
10	Missa in Nativitate Deus Noster Jesu Christe	17.07

Total playing time 57.41

Sleeve note by David Fallows
Translations by Nicholas Robertson
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London on 7 and 8 September 1993
Recording Engineer: Leigh Jamison
Recording Producer: Robert Hollingsworth
Executive Producer: Tim Smithies

Cover picture: Joos Van Cleve Virgin &
Child (detail). Fitzwilliam Museum
Cambridge

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Loyset Compère (ca 1445-1518)

An extraordinary group of composers emerged in the last third of the fifteenth century. Today the most famous are Josquin, Obrecht and Isaac, partly because they left the most music. But of the composers with a slightly smaller output perhaps the most attractive and distinctive is Loyset Compère, a flawless technician who produced many works of mouth-watering beauty. Not that his works are scarce: there are over fifty songs, many of them among the most widely copied works of their generation, alongside almost twenty motets and half a dozen Mass cycles. So there is a wide range of material available for a record like this, so much in fact that a single record can give only a glimpse of his variety and – in many respects – sheer brilliance.

His first name is just a diminutive of 'Louis', pronounced in three syllables 'Lo-y-set' (King Louis XI always signed his letters 'Loys'); and his surname translates as 'godfather', though it also meant 'gossip'. Which is to say that this may well not have been his baptismal name: many composers at the time had professional sobriquets, and this looks like one. So it is hard to trace his early life: conflicting early reports give his birthplace as St Omer, Arras and somewhere in the nearby county of Hainault. Whichever is true, however, he came from that area on the present French-Belgian border in which most of the leading fifteenth century composers grew up.

There are good reasons for thinking that he may have studied in Paris in the years around 1460, but the earliest clear evidence of his existence is in the motet *Omnium bonorum plena*, which opens this record. It must have been composed for performance at Cambrai, perhaps in 1472, naming a large number of other composers and particularly praising the greatest composer of the earlier generation, Guillaume Dufay (who died at Cambrai in 1474). The motet takes its cantus firmus from the song *De tous biens plaine* by the Burgundian court composer Hayne van Ghizeghem, a much younger man whose precocious brilliance Compère acknowledged in several later works.

Soon after that Compère was in Milan, where he sang in the chapel of Galeazzo Maria Sforza from July 1474 until that Duke was assassinated at the end of 1476. During those mere eighteen months Compère appears to have been unusually productive; and it was almost certainly in Milan that he composed his three surviving cycles or *motetti missales* – motets to be performed in place of the movements of the Mass – since there is no other place where this genre is known

to have been cultivated. So this record ends with one of these cycles, the Christmas Mass. These were the years in which composers were exploring methods of Mass composition with special energy, and the *motetti missales* are among the most fascinating solutions to the problem. Freed of the constraints imposed by the very different natures of the Ordinary movements (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, etc), a small group of composers in Milan evolved a more fluid kind of cycle, in which it is possible to hear a consistent evolution of musical materials from one movement to the next. Compère's Christmas Mass is a wonderful example of the genre, giving cause to regret that the scheme seems never to have found favour elsewhere.

The next decade of Compère's life is a blank, though there is a very good chance that he was in Moulins, at the court of Duke Jean II de Bourbon, who had retreated to his home town during those years to keep away from the increasingly unsympathetic court of Louis XI. This would have been the time when Compère composed many of his three-voice songs, among them the three that are newly reconstructed for this record: in the musical sources they have only fragmentary texts, so one must go elsewhere for the full poems. The jovial *Si j'ay parlé* sets a poem by Henri Baude (as first recognized by Mary Beth Winn); the more lyrical *Seray je vostre mieulx amée* and *Ne vous hastez pas* have texts identified by the present writer (in the Chansonier de Rohan and in Paris, f. fr. 1722, respectively).

From 1486 Compère is documented as a singer at the royal court of Charles VIII, and he accompanied Charles on the Italian campaign of 1494. This is presumably when he composed his two known Italian songs, *Che fa la ramacina* and *Scaramella fa la galla*, both of them in four voices and based on popular materials. His four-voice French song *Alons fere nos barbes* must date from about the same time as it too uses popular materials in a similar way. It is also likely that his years at the French royal court saw the composition of the other two motets on this record: the *Ave Maria*, with its gradual evolution from a single-note tenor in the early sections to increasing movement and a closing triple-time section; and the *Asperges me*, with its two top voices in strict canon at the fourth throughout.

The years from 1498 show Compère in administrative posts, as Dean of St Géry in Cambrai, provost of St Pierre in Douai and latterly as a canon of St Quentin, where he died in 1518.

David Fallows

Omnium bonorum plena

Prima Pars

Omnium bonorum plena,
Virgo parensque serena,
quae sedes super sidera,
pulchra prudensque decora.

Assistens a dextris Patris,
Caeli terrae plasmatoris,
in vestitu de aurato
nullius manu formato,

Nullus tibi comparari
potest certe nec aequari,
cui voce angelica
dictum est Ave Maria.

Turbata parum fuisti,
sed consulta respondisti,
ecce ancilla Domini
sicut refers fiat mihi.

Dulcis fuit responsio
data caelesti nuntio,
per quam statim concepisti
natum Dei et portasti

illum nec non peperisti
et post partum permanisti
Virgo pura et nitida,
Virgoque immaculata.

Omnium bonorum plena

The First Part

Full of all good things,
Serene virgin and mother,
Who sits above the stars,
Lovely, wise and gracious.

Seated at the right of the father,
The creator of heaven and earth,
In golden raiment
Not made by hands,

Surely none can be compared
with you, nor equalled,
You to whom the angelic voice
Proclaimed 'Hail Mary'.

Little troubled were you,
But, asked, replied,
Behold the handmaid of the Lord
As you say, so be it with me.

Sweet was this reply
Given to the celestial envoy,
So that you straightway conceived
The son of God and bore him

You did indeed deliver him
and after the birth, remained
Virgin pure and pristine,
And virgin without stain.

Secunda Pars

Omnium bonorum plena
peccatorum medicina,
cuius proprium orare
est atque preces fundare,

Pro miseris peccantibus
a Deo recedentibus
funde preces ad filium
pro salute canentium.

Et primo pro Guillaume Dufay
pro que me mater exaudi,
luna totius musicae,
atque cantorum lumine.

Pro Jo(hannen) Dussart, Busnoys,
Caron, Magistris cantilenarum
Georget de Brelles, Tinctoris,
cimbali tui honoris,

ac Okeghen, Des Pres, Corbet,
Hemart, Faugues et Molinet,
atque Regis omnibusque
canentibus simul et me

Loyset Compère orante
pro magistris puramente,
quorum memor Virgo vale
semper Gabrielis Ave.
Amen.

The Second Part

Full of all good things,
Healer of sinners,
To whom it is proper to offer
Prayers and entreaties,

For poor sinners
Falling away from God
Offer prayers to your son
For the salvation of those who sing.

And first for Guillaume Dufay
For whom, mother, hear me,
You, moon of all music,
Him, light of singers.

For Johannes Dussart, Busnoys,
Caron, masters of the flowing line,
Georget de Brelles, Tinctoris,
With cymbals in your honour,

And Okeghen, Des Pres, Corbet,
Hemart, Faugues and Molinet,
And Regis and all
Who sing, and likewise for me

Loyset Compère, who prays
For these masters with a pure mind,
Remembering whom farewell, o virgin,
Forever her to whom Gabriel said 'Hail'.
Amen.



Charles Daniels, Robert Harre Jones, Angus Smith, Donald Greig
Photograph: Hanya Chlala

The Orlando Consort

The Orlando Consort was formed in 1988 as a result of an invitation from the Early Music Network to the four singers to tour Britain with a programme of newly-researched medieval music. Since then the consort has rapidly achieved a reputation as one of the most expert and consistently challenging groups performing repertoire from the years 1050 to 1500. Working with leading academics on music that has mostly never been performed in modern times, they have set new standards of performance, particularly in regard to the pronunciation and tuning of this fascinating repertoire.

The group has made numerous appearances on BBC Radio 3 and several commercial recordings. In 1990 the Orlando Consort made their first recording with Metronome, *Alleluia Nativitas*, a collection of music and carols for a medieval Christmas including the great Notre Dame school masterpiece by Perotin *Viderunt omnes* (MET 1001-01). The group's concert appearances have included recent tours on the Dutch and British Early Music Networks, and frequent performances at international festivals recently in Utrecht, Padua, Santander, Belfast, Antwerp, Alden Biesen, Spitalfields and Belfast.

Their interest in bringing the discoveries of current musicological research to the attention of contemporary audiences has also resulted in invitations to perform from universities all over the world.