

EDITIONS

MOTETS FROM THE CHANSONNIER DE NOAILLES

Recent Researches in the Music of the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance, 42

Edited by Gaël Saint-Cricq with Eglal Doss-Quinby and Samuel N. Rosenberg

lxxxiv + 192pp. \$360.00.

ISBN 978-0-89579-862-6

Non-specialists will, I fear, be terrified by this new edition of early one-, two- and (rarely) three-voice motets, such is the overwhelming amount of information contained in the introduction, the discussions of the words and the critical notes. When it comes to the music itself, it is difficult to know quite where to start; as an extreme example, let's take 26. *Bien doit joie demener / IN DOMINO*. Firstly we have an "unmeasured transcription" which presents the two parts as they appear in the manuscript (which one can see in glorious colour on the gallica.fr website!), the French texted part in C2 clef and the lower part (which just the first two words of the Latin text) in C3. This is followed in the edition by not one but two measured transcriptions, the second of which lengthens the rests between the phrases (there are only two, which are repeated in a varied sequence) and inverts long and short note values, with a knock-on effect upon the stresses of the underlaid words. I spend my life transcribing manuscript sources and consider myself to have quite sharp logical and pattern-discerning eyes, and I also understand that there are often several ways to interpret what one sees, but – try as I might – I just could not see how some of the measured transcriptions could have been extrapolated from the unmeasured ones. I can, however, understand that there are singers who will be terrified by the original notation but who would like to sing the music, so editions like these are necessary to enable that. At \$360 a copy, though, I don't see it tempting many new singers into the field – this is more likely to end up with all its esteemed forebears on a library shelf where it will be invaluable for scholars of both early motet texts and their music.

Brian Clark

.....

RECORDINGS

MACHAUT: FORTUNE'S CHILD

The Orlando Consort

60:40

hyperion CDA68195

This CD features a sequence of secular songs by Machaut on the theme of fortune. Whether you perform your Machaut purely vocally, or – as many younger ensembles do – with a mixture of voices and instruments, the frightening complexity and striking originality of Machaut's music shines through. However, having listened to the Orlando Consort regularly live and on CD, I have puzzled over what it is about their sound that I don't like and struggle to put my finger on it. The sound is a little opaque, the intonation is not consistently true, perhaps due to vibrato, and the overall sound never seems to me entirely comfortable. I have spoken to people who share my opinion and to others who have no idea what I am talking about, and perhaps this is my problem. Anyway, the CD offers the opportunity to judge for yourself, with a wide and varied selection of Machaut's finest *virelais* and *ballades*, sung by various combinations of voices from solo, and duet to trio. On the whole, I preferred the solo *virelais*.

D. James Ross

.....

