



■ ALIENOR'S BOOK

An exceptional program between sacred and profane that pays tribute to two great female figures of history: Eleanor of Brittany and Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Gradual of Aliénor of Brittany (XIIIrd and XIVth centuries)
The song of William of Aquitaine, Philippe Hersant (1948-)

Programme for 5 singers and *organetto*

Duration : 1h15

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Monophonic and polyphonic parts of the Gradual of Eleanor of Brittany (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) precedes «The song of William of Aquitaine», piece of the composer Philippe Hersant, inspired by a poem by William IX, grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine (ordered by the Fontevraud Abbey).

Two women, two books, one place

We have chosen to link two Eleanors, two books and one place: Fontevraud. A double abbey run by women and founded in 1101 on the edge of the provinces of Poitou, Anjou and Touraine, Fontevraud owed its power to the Plantagenets and to its close links with Eleanor of Aquitaine. Eleanor of Aquitaine's recumbent statue in the abbey church shows her holding a stone book, one of the first representations of a woman reading. The second Eleanor is Eleanor of Brittany, Fontevraud's sixteenth abbess, associated with a Gradual, a book containing chants for use in the Mass.

Musicology is in the habit of strictly compartmentalising developments chronologically. We, however, have tried to understand movements, influences and perhaps the relationships between the 12th and 14th centuries and between these two women, both of whom possessed power and knowledge. For music that was mainly transmitted orally, a certain degree of stability can be observed; chants were transmitted from generation to generation without any radical changes. The girls and women of Fontevraud were of diverse origins and brought their own language, culture

and chants into the cloisters of the monastery with them. Less than a century separates the death of the first Eleanor and the birth of the second.

We have chosen to proceed via concentric movements whose epicentre is located in 12th century Aquitaine. Like a pebble cast into the water, the waves have rippled outwards to reach us in the shape of a work by Philippe Hersant, a setting of a poem by William IX: the Song of William of Aquitaine.

The Song of William of Aquitaine by Philippe Hersant

"Eleanor of Aquitaine's recumbent statue depicts her holding a stone book. What does it contain?" This is what the Oulipo tried to imagine in a little book published in 2014... Perhaps the Song of Pure Nothingness (« Farai un vers de dreit nien ») by her grandfather William, one of the first troubadours? Eight extraordinary, exhilarating verses about Nothingness that I have set to music with next to nothing, as is only right: three insistent, omnipresent notes (AG-B) – a little motif that runs through the entire piece. Commissioned by the Royal Abbey of Fontevraud, this piece is dedicated to the De Caelis Ensemble, who gave it its first performance in September 2015."

Main pieces sources :

Gradual of Fontevraud, known as "of Eleanor", <http://www.bm-limoges.fr/graduel>

Paris BN Fr. Latin collection 3549 (Saint Martial Abbey, Lilium and Arce siderea)

Paris BN Fr. 22543 adn 20050

Oxford Bodleian Library 143 fol 1v-2,

The song of William of Aquitaine, Philippe Hersant 2015, commissioned by Fontevraud Abbey, translated from the Occitan by Katy Bernard



Of this program arises a CD which was recorded in the Royal Abbey of Fontevraud within the framework of a residence of creation of De Caelis in November, 2016.

Bayard Musique - Réf. 308497.2

Diffusion Harmonia Mundi

Download MP3 on www.adf-bayardmusique.com

> Listen to some extracts of the CD : [click here](#)

PRESS

Some critics on the disk of the program:

DIAPASON - 07/2017

« The approach of De Caelis shines with its will of musical historicity: a pronunciation of the Latin «French-style», a rhythmic work on the late plain chant (more moderate and more composed than the Gregorian of the origins) and a research on the ornamentation. » Jacques Meegens

ZÉLIE - 07/2017

« Aerial, the airs of this disk stop the time and caress the eternity. » S.P.

CLASSIQUENEWS - 07/2017

« In Alienor's Book, new cd appeared in the beginning of May, 2017, De Caelis signs one of its most beautiful albums... 5 magicians sing 2 Alienor of Fontevraud. Drunkenness, ecstasy, visions of the embodied verb. »

« Between intensity and presence of a story in the human scale and abstract singing which targets and expresses the concept, De Caelis finds a median, ideally well-balanced way, between evocativeness and individuality; natural equation which still strengthens the meaning impact of every section. »

Classiquenews, Philippe Alexandre-Pham

DE CAELIS



Five a cappella women's voices

Formed in 1998 by its artistic director Laurence Brisset, the De Caelis Ensemble specialises in the performance of unaccompanied vocal works of the Middle Ages. The Ensemble's passion for this little-known repertoire has resulted in a body of work that is based upon knowledge of original sources, of systems of notation and of the context of the works concerned.

The Ensemble likes to spur unlikely encounters between the masters of the past and those of today. It places early music in a living and creative process, shedding new light on our heritage.

Ground of experimentation and research into timbre, ornamentation and improvisation, De Caelis invites every season composers to discover the specificities of its directory. The Ensemble is committed to the creation and performance of contemporary works and presents them in programmes intended to create resonances between two periods of great creative innovation: the Middle Ages and the present day.

De Caelis explores spaces: the art of the singing a cappella offers a singular experience which takes shape as well in old places as in current rooms. The desire to transmit these past and present writings by the naked voice, at the same time fragile and powerful, remains the ambition of the Ensemble.

The De Caelis Ensemble enjoys the support of the DRAC Normandie, and the Normandy Region and receives the aid of ADAMI, SPEDIDAM, the Musique Nouvelle en Liberté and the Institut Français. It was awarded the Prix Liliane Bettencourt for choral singing (2016), and that Foundation will be supporting the Ensemble in the years to come. The Ensemble's primary sponsor is Mécénat Musical Société Générale. De Caelis is a member of Profedim, the Federation of Specialized Vocal and Instrumental Ensembles (FEVIS) and the Futurs composés network.

PHILIPPE HERSANT



Born in 1948 in Rome, Philippe Hersant studied at the Paris Conservatoire, notably in André Jolivet's composition class before becoming a resident at the Casa Velasquez from 1970 to 1972 then at the Villa Médicis from 1978 to 1980. With around eighty compositions to his name, Philippe Hersant is a widely recognised figure on the current music scene. In 2016, he won the Victoire de la Musique Classique 2016 as Composer of the Year.