

3è Atelier de musique ancienne (Gruyères, 21-28.08.2005)

Duo
Crawford Young (USA)
Margit Uebellacker (Autriche)

25.08.2005



Le duo de ce soir associe les cordes pincées (avec une plume d'autruche) du luth et de la guiterne, et les cordes frappées du "dulce melos" (forme de hackbrett de poche médiéval), un instrument décrit dans le Traité de Paulus Paulirinus (1460) comme "le plus beau parmi tous les instruments de musique".

Les deux instruments sont bien adaptés à l'accompagnement de la danse, rôle central de la musique de cour médiévale, et le programme de ce soir contient plusieurs "Balleti", "Pizochara", "Petits Riens" à danser.

Crawford Young et Margit Uebellacker nous emmènent en première partie de soirée à la Cour des Visconti (Pavie, 1400), puis à la Cour de Charles le Téméraire à Dijon (où brille Guillaume Dufay) et un peu plus tard à la Cour de Nuremberg. Outre les danses virtuoses, ils interprètent les mises en tablature savantes de chansons et motet célèbres de ce temps, de Francesco Landini, de Johannes Ciconia ou de Walter Frye.

Notes sur le programme

Program notes :

Tonight's program of fifteenth-century arrangements for gittern/ lute solos and, with dulce melos, duos, consists of three focal points of musical culture, the Visconti court (Pavia/ Milan ca. 1400), the court of Charles the Bold (Burgundy ca. 1460 - 70) and the art music circle of Nürnberg around 1500.

Writing in the late 1470's, music theorist Johannes Tinctoris divided lutenists into two groups, those who play polyphonic music in an ensemble (most typically as a string duo), and those who play polyphony on solo lute. The string duo heard tonight is made up of lute or gittern and dulce melos (later called "hammered dulcimer"), an instrument that was described by Paulus Paulirinus in his musical instrument treatise ca. 1460 as his favorite instrument among all instruments. While the Visconti music in the first half of the program concentrates on instrumental arrangements of songs of court favorites like Johannes Ciconia and Philipoctus da Caserta, the German - Burgundian half includes works by the Englishman Walter Frye, here arranged for lute/ dulce melos duo. Although he may never have visited the Continent, his compositions enjoyed great popularity within the exalted circles of both Charles the Bold and Edward IV. Less well-known than Frye was Ugolino d'Orvieto, who sang in the papal choir in 1413 and who carried on the musical tradition of Caserta and Ciconia, so carefully cultivated within the Visconti sphere.

Remarking in his solo lute intabulation treatise "Il Fronimo" of 1568, Vincenzo Galilei seemed unaware of how far back the art of intabulating pieces for the lute really went: "...I myself have often marvelled that there has been no one (among the many who in the profession of the lute have become almost godlike) who has taught us the art and the rules of intabulating songs for the lute, which, however, of all the instruments that we play is the least imperfect." Unlike his northern colleagues Sebastian Virdung, Hans Judenkünig and Hans Gerle, Galilei made no attempt at briefly outlining the history of lute tablature. And although he included a short discussion on 'ancient music', if he and his contemporaries knew something of the repertoire of lutenists three, four or five generations earlier, the information was apparently not considered worthy of print.

Four-and-a-half centuries after Galilei, we know that the art of polyphonic playing was being cultivated at the latest by the middle decades of the fifteenth century by such practitioners as the renowned multi-instrumentalist Conrad Paumann of Nürnberg. Paumann's legacy was carried on by an equally illustrious lutenist, Adolph Blindhammer,

whose works turn up in a manuscript auctioned at Sotheby's in 1996 and currently owned by the Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek in Wien. Blindhammer may be considered something of a "missing link" leading to the Gerle / Neusidler generation of prominent Nürnberg lutenists of the 1530s.

Central to courtly entertainment of all periods were various forms of dancing, both social and professional, and string instruments such as lute and dulce melos were well-suited to accompany dance music, here represented with ballo tunes "Pizochara" and "Petit riens".

Crawford Young