

26TH SEASON / 2024-2025

Scott Metcalfe, Artistic Director

# BLUEHERON



## A more subtle art

The late 14th-century *Ars subtilior*

FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 1, 2025

# A more subtle art

## The late 14th-century *Ars subtilior*

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27 • FIRST PARISH IN WAYLAND

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28 • EDWARDS CHURCH, NORTHAMPTON

SATURDAY, MARCH 1 • FIRST CHURCH IN CAMBRIDGE, CONGREGATIONAL

### I

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En un vergier  
Anonymous

Pres du soloil (instrumental)  
Matteo da Perugia (fl. 1400–16)

De toutes flours  
Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300–1377)

De tout flors (instrumental)  
Anonymous (Faenza codex, c. 1410–20)

### II

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Ce rondelet / Le dieu d'amours  
Johannes Rezon (fl. c. 1425–35)

Venés oir, vrais amoureux  
Anonymous

Sans vous ne puis, tres douce creature  
Matheus de Sancto Johanne (d. 1391)



### BLUE HERON

Sophie Michaux, *voice*  
Jason McStoots, *voice*  
Aaron Sheehan, *voice*  
Ori Harmelin, *lute*  
Debra Nagy, *voice, recorder & douçaine*  
Scott Metcalfe, *fiddle & harp*

### III

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Andray soulet (instrumental)  
Matteo da Perugia, arr. DN

Puis que la mort tres cruelment a pris  
? Matteo da Perugia

### IV

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Fumeux fume par fume (instrumental)  
Solage (fl. late 14th century)

La harpe de mellodie  
Jacob de Senlechès (fl. 1380s)

Mal vi loyauté (instrumental)  
Anonymous

### V

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De ce que foul pense souvent remaynt  
P. des Molins (fl. mid 14th century)

De ce que fol pense (instrumental)  
Anonymous (Faenza codex)

### VI

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Hé tres doulz roussignol joly  
Borlet (fl. c. 1400)

A l'arme, a l'arme  
Grimace (fl. mid-to late 14th century)

# Texts & Translations

## En un vergier clos par mesure

Say une flour de lis moult gente ;  
Li vergier est fort de closure  
Et la flour nasqui de bone ente :  
Au plus noble estoit en parente  
Et riche d'avoir et d'amys.  
Dites moi, selonc vostre entente,  
*Qui cuellera la flour de lis?*

In a garden enclosed and sealed  
I know of a most noble lily;  
the garden is strongly locked  
and the flower was born of good stock,  
from noblest parentage  
and rich in goods and friends.  
Tell me, in your opinion,  
*Who shall pluck the fleur de lis?*

## Pres du soloil (instrumental)

### De toutes fleurs n'avoit et de tous fruits

En mon vergier fors une seule rose:  
Gastés estois li surplus et destruis  
Par Fortune, qui durement s'opose  
Contre ceste douce flour  
Pour amatir sa coulour et s'odour.  
Mais se cueillir la voy ou tresbuchier,  
*Autre apres li ja mais avoir ne quier.*

Of all flowers and of all fruits I had none  
in my garden except a single rose;  
the rest was spoiled and destroyed  
by Fortune who cruelly sets herself  
against this sweet flower  
to despoil its color and its perfume.  
But if I see her cut or fallen,  
*I shall never again have or desire another.*

Mais vraiment ymaginez ne puis  
Que la vertus, ou ma rose est enclose,  
Viengne par toy et par tes faus conduis,  
Ains est drois dons natureus; si suppose  
Que tu n'auras ja vigour  
[Pour] amanrir son pris et sa valour.  
Lay la moy donc, qu'ailleurs n'en mon vergier  
*Autre apres li ja mais avoir ne quier.*

But truly I cannot imagine  
that the virtue within which my rose is enclosed  
derives from you and your false actions;  
rather it is a true gift of nature; thus I believe  
that you will never have the power  
to reduce her value or worth.  
Leave her to me then, for neither in my orchard nor elsewhere  
*Shall I ever again have or desire another.*

Hés Fortune, qui es gouffres et puis  
Pour engloutir tout homme qui croire ose  
Ta fausse loy, ou riens de bien ne truis  
Ne de seur, trop est decevans chose;  
Ton ris, ta joie, t'onnour  
Ne sont que plour, tristeece et deshonnour.  
Se ty faus tour font ma rose sechier,  
*Autre apres li ja mais avoir ne quier.*

Ah, Fortune, you are an abyss and a well  
which swallows up every man who dares believe  
your false law, in which I find nothing good  
nor certain, too deceptive a thing it is;  
your smile, your pleasure, your honor  
are nothing but tears, sadness, and dishonor.  
If your false deeds make my rose wither,  
*I shall never again have or desire another.*

CANTUS I

**Ce rondelet je vous envoie**

Pour consolation de joye,  
En esperance d'avoir mieulx,  
Cenque vous desirés le mieulx.

CANTUS II

**Le dieu d'amours si vous l'otroye**

Et vous en doint parfaite joye  
En accroissant de bien en mieulx  
En ce mois present gracieux.

**Venés oir, vrais amoureux,**

Venés oir je vous supplye,  
Venés oir la melodie  
Dou doulx rossignol gratieux.

En avril, en may son sy geus,  
Quant la belle branche est florie—

*Venés oir, vrais amoureux,  
Venés oir je vous supplye—*

Pour faire doel as envieux  
Qui des amans ne font partie,  
Pour l'amoureux qui a amy  
Faire amer d'un cuer gratieux.

*Venés oir, vrais amoureux ...*

**Sans vous ne puis, tres douce creature,**

Plaisir avoir qui moy puist agreer,  
Car quant ne suis pres de vostre figure  
En la quele est tout doulz ymaginer,  
Si grant paour ay que moy hors geter  
Ne me vuelliez de vostre gouvernance,  
*Car vraiment fors qu'en vous n'ay fiance.*

Car en servir vo gent gent corps a droiture,  
Et en tous lieux doubter et honnourer,  
Si ay mis, bien say com deusse, ma cure ;  
Si ne say voye trouver qui excuser  
Me puist vers vous, mez qu'en plourant aler  
De mes meffais requerir penitence,  
*Car vraiment fors qu'en vous n'ay fiance.*

Si vous promez, tant que ma vie dure,  
Qu'obeir vueill a vostre commander,

This little rondeau I send to you  
as a joyful consolation,  
in hopes of having better,  
insofar as you desire the best.

May the God of Love grant you this,  
and with it give you perfect joy,  
increasing from good to better  
in this present, gracious month.

Come, hear, true lovers,  
come, hear, I beg you,  
come hear the melody  
of the sweet and gracious nightingale.

In April, in May they perch here  
when the lovely branch is in flower—

*Come hear, true lovers,  
come, hear, I beg you—*

to cause pain to the envious  
who don't belong among those in love,  
but to make a lover with a love  
love with a gracious heart.

*Come, hear, true lovers ...*

Without you, sweetest creature, I cannot  
find any pleasure that can soothe me,  
for when I am not close to your person,  
in which is everything sweet imaginable,  
I am greatly fearful that you will wish  
to eject me from your affairs,  
*For truly, I have no faith in anything but you.*

For to serve your noble person rightly  
and to fear and honor you in all places  
I have put my effort, as I must, I know well;  
yet I cannot find a way to excuse myself  
towards you, save to come, weeping,  
to beg chastisement for my misdeeds,  
*For truly, I have no faith in anything but you.*

And so I promise you that as long as I shall live  
I shall endeavor to obey your command,

Car fours de vous n'ist joye qui seure  
Soit, ce m'est vis, ne que gaires durer  
Puist ; si vous pri ne daignez refuser  
Moy, que suy vostre a tout jour sanz doubtaunce,  
*Car vraiment fors qu'en vous n'ay fiance.*

### **Andray soulet** (instrumental)

#### **Puis que la mort tres cruelment a pris**

Le noble corps gracieux, doulz, attrayant,  
Pour faultz constraint d'aspre Fortune a tort,  
Gemir devons, hélas! trestous amis,  
Et sans demy dolouser tristement  
Com gens bannis de l'amoureux deport,  
Car partie est la belle en qui confort  
Gissoit d'amans, pour finement amer  
La plus plaisant, la plus gent et jolie.  
*Nulz la porroit entierement retrer  
En jugier l'ame a gloriose vie ;  
Hé, douche dame ! hé Diex, soyés d'acort !*

Plourés, amans, la grant beauté de pris !  
Plourés du monde le soloil reluissant !  
Plourés la flour de toutes dames, mort :  
L'accolir gay, la colour du cler vis,  
Son poli chief, sa bouchette riant,  
Ses beaux regars, son doulz parler accort.  
Ha, fiere ville, en qui Pitié se dort,  
Bien dois tel perte durement plourer,  
Quant perdue as la haultayne compagnie.  
*Nulz la porroit entierement retrer  
En jugier l'ame a gloriose vie ;  
Hé, douche dame ! hé Diex, soyés d'acort !*

Hémy ! Amours, ton hault valoureux pris,  
Ta renomee, tes loues, ta force grant  
Mayne a la mort, la mort que a tous cuers mort ;  
Soupire toy, car selonc mon avis,  
Sans fin sur tous estre en dois languissant,  
Ploureux, dolant, chetis par desconfort.  
Orrible, amere Mort, or te remort  
Se, pour fierté de tel dame tuer,  
Seras au siecle adés traître maudie.  
*Nulz la porroit entierement retrer.  
En jugier l'ame a gloriose vie ;  
Hé, douche dame ! hé Diex, soyés d'acort !*

for nowhere but with you is there joy that is sure,  
so I believe, nor that can endure  
at all; and so I pray you not to refuse  
me, for I am yours always, without fail,  
*For truly, I have no faith in anything but you.*

Since death has most cruelly taken  
that body—noble, gracious, and pleasing—  
due to the perfidious intervention of bitter Fortune,  
we must weep, alas! every last friend,  
and dolorously lament without restraint,  
like people banished from amorous sport,  
for gone is the beauty in whom the comfort  
of lovers lay, in courtly love  
the most pleasing, the most noble and delightful.  
*None could in any way refrain  
From judging her soul worthy of glorious life:  
Ah, sweet lady! ah, God, grant your assent!*

Weep, lovers, for the great, noble beauty!  
Weep for the the world's shining sun!  
Weep for the flower of womanhood, dead:  
her gay embrace, her bright, clear face,  
her elegant head, her smiling mouth,  
her beaming glances, her sweet, wise speech.  
Ah, vile beast, in whom Pity sleeps,  
well should you loudly bewail such a loss,  
when you have lost her elevated company.  
*None could in any way refrain  
From judging her soul worthy of glorious life:  
Ah, sweet lady! ah, God, grant your assent!*

Alas! Love, your most valorous nobility,  
your fame, your glory, your great strength  
all lead to death, the death which bites at all hearts;  
you should sigh and lament, for (so it seems to me)  
you above all ought to suffer without end from this,  
weeping, lamenting, miserable and disconsolate.  
Horrible, bitter Death, may remorse now consume you  
since, for implacably killing such a lady,  
you shall be forever and always accursed as a traitor.  
*None could in any way refrain  
From judging her soul worthy of glorious life:  
Ah, sweet lady! ah, God, grant your assent!*

## Fumeux fume par fume (instrumental)

### La harpe de melodie

Fayte sans merancolie  
Per plaisir,  
Doit bien chascun resjoir  
Pour l'armonie  
Ouir, sonner et veir.

Et pour ce je suy d'acort,  
Pour le gracios deport  
De son dolcz son,

De favre, sans nul discort  
Dedens li, de bon acort,  
Une chanson,

Pour plaire une companie,  
Pour avoir plaisance lie,  
De medir,  
Pour desplaysance fuir,  
Qui trop anuie  
A ceulz qui plaist a oir.

*La harpe de melodie ...*

### Mal vi loyauté (instrumental)

#### De ce que foul pense souvent remaynt :

Helas, je le puis bien par moy prouver,  
Car par penser et cuidier me destraint  
Amours le corps et fayt mon cuer crever.  
Ensy m'estuet les griefs maulz endurer  
Celeement pour vous, dame honouree,  
*D'ainsy languir en estrange contree.*

Autre bien n'ay, n'autre bien en moy maynt  
Fors souvenir, douce dame sanz per,  
Qui me mordrist en mon povre vis taint.  
Ce n'est desir que m'a fayt comander,  
Qu'esper en riens ne me voelle aviser,  
Par paour qu'ay de longue demouree  
*D'ainsy languir en estrange contree.*

Mais sur ma foy, dame que mon cuer craint  
Et que ie voeill sur toutez honnourer,  
Si durement ce las cuer se complaint  
Y n'en puet mais, car il ne puet durer

The harp of melody,  
created without melancholy,  
from pleasure,  
must surely please all  
by the harmony  
which one can hear, play, and see.

And thus I intend,  
for the courtly pleasure  
of its sweet sound,

to make upon it,  
without discord,  
a well-tuned song,

to please the company,  
to have merry pleasure,  
to soothe,  
in order to flee displeasure  
which is too vexing  
to those whom it pleases to listen.

*The harp of melody ...*

“Much that a fool imagines does not come to pass”:  
Alas, I can well prove it with my own case,  
for with fancy and imagination  
Love tortures my body and makes my heart break.  
Thus I must endure my grievous woes  
in silence, for you, honored lady,  
*and languish thus in a strange land.*

No other good do I have, nothing more remains to me  
but memory, sweet lady without peer,  
which gnaws at my poor, pallid face.  
It is none but Desire that has ruled me,  
for Hope does not wish to counsel me in anything,  
for fear that I must long sojourn  
*and languish thus in a strange land.*

But by my faith, lady whom my heart fears  
and whom I would honor above all,  
so sorely my weary heart grieves  
that it cannot do more, for it cannot endure

Sans veoir vo tres doulz viaire cler ;  
Mais grant ioie ay, dame, si vous agree  
*D'ainsy languir en estrange contree.*

**Hé tres doulz roussignol joly**

Qui dit occy occy occy,  
Je te deprie  
Que sans detry  
Voisses a ma dame jolie  
Et dy de par moy et affye  
Que ocy ocy ocy ocy  
M'a, se son dur cuer n'amoulie.

Alouete que vas voulant  
Si tres haut et si cler chantant  
Douce chançon,  
Lire lire lire liron,  
Tout voletant :

A ma dame seras errant,  
Or a li va tantost disant  
Par ma chançon  
Lire lire lire que mon  
Cuer va sentant.

Hé dame puis qu'il est ainsy  
Qu'à vo merci merci merci  
Ay mis ma vie,  
Je vous supli  
De mon povre cuer, que mendie  
Que vous tenés en vo baillie,  
Que ayés merci merci mercy  
Ayés mercy, ma vraye aye !

*Hé tres doulz roussignol joly ...*

TENOR

Roussignoulet du bois joly,  
dounés au vilain le mal matin  
et puis la mort.

without seeing your sweetest, bright face;  
yet I have great joy, Lady, if it pleases you  
*that I languish thus in a strange land.*

Ah, most lovely, sweetest nightingale,  
who cries "occy occy occy,"  
I pray you  
that without delay  
you fly to my fair lady  
and tell her from me and swear  
that she has killed killed *killed*  
me, if her hard heart does not soften.

Lark, who goes flying  
so high, so brightly singing  
a sweet song,  
"lire lire lire liron,"  
fitting all about:

To my lady you will wander,  
now go to her right away, saying,  
through my song,  
"lire lire lire," that my heart  
is full of love.

Ah, lady, since so it is  
that I have placed my life  
at your mercy, mercy, mercy,  
I implore you  
from my poor heart—which I beg  
you to keep guard over—  
to have mercy, mercy, mercy,  
have mercy, my true help!

*Ah, most lovely, sweet nightingale ...*

Pretty nightingale of the woods,  
you give the peasant a bad morning  
and then death.

**A l'arme, a l'arme sans sejour**

Et sanz demour,  
Car mon las cuer si est en plour.  
A l'arme tost, douce figure,  
A l'arme,  
Car navrés suy de tel pointure  
Que mors suy sans nul retour :  
Dieus en ait l'arme !

Si vous suppli, necte et pure,  
Pour qui tant de mal endure,  
Qu'armer vous voeilliés pour moy

Contre ma douleur obscure  
Que me tient en grief ardure,  
Dont souvent ploure en requoy.

Vuacarme, vuacarme ! quel dolour  
Et quel langour  
Suefre, dame, pour vostre amour !  
Vuacarme, douce creature,  
Vuacarme ;  
Me larez en tel aventure  
De mourir en grief tristour  
Sans confort, dame ?

*A l'arme, a l'arme sans sejour ...*

To arms, to arms, without delay  
and without restraint,  
for my weary heart is grieving.  
To arms right away, sweet beauty,  
to arms,  
for I am pierced by such a wound  
that I am dead, without recourse:  
may God shed a tear for me!

So I implore you, pure, proper lady,  
for whom I endure such woe,  
to consent to take up arms on my behalf

against my dark dolour,  
which keeps me in burning pain,  
on account of which I weep in secret.

To battle, to battle! what pain  
and misery  
do I suffer, Lady, for your love!  
To battle, sweet creature,  
to battle:  
will you abandon me in such risk  
of dying from grievous sadness  
without comfort, Lady?

*To arms, to arms, without delay ...*



# A more subtle art

The history of music records several great turnings of the wheel of fashion from simplicity to complexity and back again. In a period of relative simplicity, composers and performers begin to add ornament, glosses, harmonic and rhythmic counterpoint, and musical style becomes more and more complicated. At first the complex seems wonderfully appealing, sophisticated, and stimulating; eventually ears tire of it and long once more for the simple. Complexity now seems overwrought, “gothic,” “baroque.” Style is purified, clarified, classicised, renovated and renewed. Until simplicity again begins to bore ...

How many clashes between “ancients” and “moderns,” how many “new” musics are found scattered across the centuries?—the *Ars nova* of the early fourteenth century, Adrian Willaert’s *Musica nova* of 1559, the *seconda pratica* and *Nuove musiche* of circa 1600, and many, many more, right up to the twelve-tone system of the twentieth century (which did not replace functional harmony after all) and beyond. In 1477 Johannes Tinctoris asserted that “Although it seems beyond belief, there does not exist a single piece of music not composed within the last forty years that is regarded by the learned as worth hearing.” I doubt that many of us now share this opinion, which would apply to all of the music we will perform today.

Our program presents music by composers from about three generations, across one long cycle of stylistic change, beginning with the greatest poet and musician of the fourteenth century, Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300–1377). As an anonymous fifteenth-century writer put it, Machaut “originated all manner of new forms”: he wrote, and set to music, ballades, virelais, and rondeaus, establishing these three distinct but related refrain forms, the *formes fixes*, as standard for lyric poetry and music—a standard that would endure until the years around 1500. Machaut’s poetry and music, too, remained in circulation long after his death, and his influence can be perceived in many of the works on this program. The ballade *De toutes fleurs*—from relatively late in his life, probably from the 1460s—was written for three parts: you will hear one or two of its three stanzas that way, before we add a fourth part, called a triplum, which was composed as a supplement to Machaut’s cantus, tenor, and contratenor and is found without ascription in a manuscript compiled after his death. We then perform an elaborate instrumental setting of the piece from the Faenza codex, copied in northern Italy more than forty years after the original song was conceived.

The rhythms of the “new art” practiced by Machaut were notated in the system of four prolations (mensurations, or time signatures) whose invention and description, codified in a treatise of c. 1320 entitled *Ars nova*, was attributed to the slightly older Philippe de Vitry (1291–1361). Although in some ways the new rhythmic system represents a simplification of the improvisationally free rhythms of the thirteenth-century troubadours and trouvères—just as the three *formes fixes* are simpler than the earlier lai, each of whose many stanzas was cast in a unique metrical form and rhyme scheme—at the same time it enabled the creation of polyphonic musical works of enormous complexity, and Machaut’s music is indeed dazzlingly complex and subtle. Nevertheless, composers after Machaut cultivated the complex to such an extraordinary degree that music history now refers to their style as an *Ars subtilior*, an art even more subtle than Vitry and Machaut’s *Ars nova*. Much of the music of the *Ars subtilior* is transmitted by two important sources of



*De ce que fould pense* in a 15th-century tapestry: detail of Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, inventory number Pe602.

French secular music of the late fourteenth century, the famous Chantilly codex (perhaps copied in Florence in the 1410s, according to the most recent and detailed study of the manuscript, by Yolanda Plumley and Anne Stone) and the manuscript known as *ModA* (Modena, Biblioteca Estense, MS  $\alpha$ .M.5.24, probably compiled in the first two decades of the fifteenth century in Bologna and Milan). Both manuscripts contain a large and chronologically wide-ranging repertory, extending from Machaut through musicians born two or more generations later and including French-texted works by somewhat younger Italian musicians such as Matteo da Perugia alongside the French masters of the *Ars subtilior* like Solage (first name unknown), Jacob de Senleches, and Matheus de Sancto Johanne.

What made the *Ars subtilior* more subtle? The innovations of these composers include an expansion of the rhythmic possibilities offered by the *Ars nova*—subdividing notes into three in the time of two, four (or more) in the time of three, thus complicating the metric surface of the counterpoint. They took delight in displaced rhythms as well, shifting notes off the beat to create syncopation both metric and harmonic. You can hear this sort of rhythmic complexity in Matheus de Sancto Johanne's *Sans vous ne puis*, Senleches's *La harpe de mellodie*, Matteo da Perugia's *Pres du solois*, and the anonymous *En un vergier*. Many of these results were achieved by playful manipulation of the tools of the mensural system reputedly devised by Philippe de Vitry. Such notational play is almost as much visual as audible. The visual games might extend beyond conventional staff notation to ornamental, ostentatiously self-referential notation—in a circle for a canon, in the shape of a heart for a love song “inscribed in my heart,” or written using the strings of a harp for staff lines, as in the copy of *La harpe de mellodie* in a manuscript now in Chicago's Newberry Library, reproduced on our program's cover.

Another sort of compositional virtuosity characterizes Solage's *Fumeux fume par fume*. Part of a family of poems and songs on the subject of mystical smoke, or smoky mysticism, connected to the informal speculations of *fumeurs* in French royal circles, the disorienting smokiness of the song derives from its wandering unpredictably from one chromatically inflected harmony to another as it sinks through the circle of fifths as far as G flat. Lucy Cross's loose, rhyming translation has never been bettered at evoking the original's sense of play.

Fumeux fume par fume,	Smokey conjures up in smoke
Fumeuse speculation.	His smoky speculations.
Qu'antre fummet sa pensee,	You mustn't take it as a joke,
Fumeux fume par fume.	What Smokey conjures up in smoke.
Quar fumer molt li agree,	He thinks it helps to take a toke
Tant qu'il ait son entencion.	For deeper ruminations.
Fumeux fume par fume,	Smokey conjures up in smoke
Fumeuse speculation.	His smoky speculations.

We perform *Fumeux fume* in an intabulation for solo lute.

Another game beloved of the fourteenth century was that of citation, both musical and verbal. Poets borrowed refrains and phrases for reuse in new lyrics, weaving their work into a texture of cross-reference in which one song's meaning is enhanced by its relation to others. Thus the text of *De ce que foul pense* by P. des Molins begins by citing a proverbial saying and the refrain alludes to the incipit of a ballade by Machaut, *J'aim miex languir en estrange contree*. (The P stood for Pierre, if this is the Perotus de Molyno who was a musician in the chapel of King Jean II of France in the late 1350s.) The song also appears in a tapestry, written on a scroll held by a man who stands beside a lady playing a harp. Some later sources of *De ce que foul pense* include a triplum, like that added to *De toutes flours*; and this song, too, served as the basis for an instrumental version found in the Faenza codex. (Much, much later, an uncanny echo of the proverb and the sentiments expressed in the first stanza of *De ce que foul pense* may be heard in a late twentieth-century lyric by Kenny Loggins and Michael McDonald: "But what a fool believes he sees / No wise man has the power to reason away / What seems to be / Is always better than nothing.")

The songs of birds seemed to convey meanings to human listeners beyond those intended for avian ears. The cuckoo is named for its song, in English rendered "cuckoo, cuckoo," in French, "cocu, cocu," which mocks the listener by repeating "cuckold, cuckold." Nightingales in France sang "occy, occy, occy," which is also the past participle of the verb *occir*, to kill; the gentle *alouette* or lark might carry a less fatal message to one's lover.

Inevitably, the beguiling complexities of the *Ars subtilior* eventually gave way (once again) to a more easily apprehended, melodious, sweet and graceful style, exemplified by the songs of Gilles Binchois and Guillaume Du Fay from the 1420s; Rezon's charming little two-voice, two text "rondelet" *Ce rondelet je vous envoie / Le dieu d'amours si vous l'otroye* sits alongside Binchois and Du Fay in its unique source, copied in the Veneto, and the anonymous, two-voice *Venés oir* is from the same period. In the midst of our program's banquet, they may refresh the palate, a course of single-fruit sorbets served between savory dishes rich in flavor and redolent of many spices.

—Scott Metcalfe

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# BLUE HERON

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**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, the University of Chicago, and the University of California, Davis; in Cleveland, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Montreal, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Providence, St. Louis, San Luis Obispo, Seattle, and Vancouver; and in England, Germany, and Belgium. 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* (available as a set entitled *The Lost Music of Canterbury*), including many world premiere recordings of works copied around 1540 for Canterbury Cathedral and restored by Nick Sandon; the fifth CD in the series was awarded the 2018 Gramophone Classical Music Award for Early Music. Jessie Ann Owens and Blue Heron won the 2015 Noah Greenberg Award from the American Musicological Society to support the world premiere



photo: Liz Linder

recording of Cipriano de Rore's *I madrigali a cinque voci*, released in 2019. Between 2015 and 2023 Blue Heron celebrated the circa-600th birthday of Johannes Okeghem (c. 1420-1497) by performing his complete works in a multi-season project entitled *Okeghem@600* and recorded all of his songs for a two-CD set, *Johannes Ockeghem: Complete Songs*. Volume I of the set was named to the *Bestenliste* of the *Preis der deutschen Schallplattenkritik*. Blue Heron's recordings also include a CD accompanying Thomas Forrest Kelly's book *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*, the live recording *Christmas in Medieval England*, a compilation of medieval songs entitled *A 14th-Century Salmagundi*, and (in collaboration with Les Délices) a live recording of a concert production of Guillaume de Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*. A new recording, *Christmas & New Year's in 15th-Century France & Burgundy*, has just been released.



The lute player **Ori Harmelin** was born in 1981 in Haifa, Israel. His fascination with early music led him to studies at the Early Music Institute in Trossingen, Germany, under the tutelage of Rolf Lislevand and Kees Boeke, followed by studies in the Zurich University of the

Arts with Eduardo Egüez. Ori is a co-founder of the ensemble Santenay (2004–2017) and the house lutenist of the ensembles Profeti della Quinta and Voces Suaves. After having appeared on numerous albums with various ensembles, in 2021 Ori released his debut solo album *NESHIMA*, featuring his own compositions and arrangements of Renaissance and early Baroque vocal music. Ori performs regularly in Europe, North America, and Asia. In addition to his passion for music, Ori is a Gestalt Therapist and hosts the podcast “the curious case of freedom.” He lives in Basel, Switzerland.



Reviewers have praised **Jason McStoots** as having an “alluring tenor voice” (*ArtsFuse*) and as “the consummate artist, wielding not just a sweet tone but also incredible technique and impeccable pronunciation” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*). In 2015 he won a Grammy award in

Opera with the Boston Early Music Festival (BEMF) for their recording of works by Charpentier. His recent stage appearances in period-style baroque opera with BEMF include *Le Jeu* in *Les plaisirs de Versailles* by Charpentier, *Apollo* in Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*, and *Eumete and Giove* in Monteverdi’s *Il ritorno d’Ulisse in patria*. Other recent solo performances include *Pedrillo* in Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio*, Bach’s Christmas Oratorio and *St. Mark Passion* with Emmanuel Music, and Monteverdi’s *Vespers of 1610* with the Green Mountain Project. He has appeared with Boston Lyric Opera, Pacific Music Works, Boston Camerata, TENET, San Juan Symphony, The

Bach Ensemble, Pablo Casals Festival, Early Music Guild of Seattle, Tragicomedia, and the Tanglewood Music Center. He is a core member of Blue Heron and can be heard on all of the ensemble’s recordings. With BEMF, he appears on recordings of Lully’s *Psyché* (nominated for a Grammy), Handel’s *Acis and Galatea* (as Damon), John Blow’s *Venus and Adonis* (soloist), and Charpentier’s *Actéon* (as Orphée).



PHOTO: ANNA 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 from 2010–19 and has been guest director of TENET (New York), the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), Emmanuel Music (Boston), the Toronto Consort, The Tudor Choir and Seattle Baroque, Pacific Baroque Orchestra (Vancouver, BC), Quire Cleveland, and the Dryden Ensemble (Princeton, NJ), in music ranging from Machaut to Bach and Handel. He 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. Metcalfe’s scholarly work, centered on the historical performance practice of medieval and Renaissance vocal music, has been published in numerous program and recording notes, and he is the author of two essays in an endlessly-forthcoming book on the Peterhouse partbooks and two articles (one published in 2022 and another forthcoming in 2025) in the *Journal of the Alamire Foundation*. He has edited music by Francisco de Peñalosa for Antico Edition (UK) and songs from the Leuven chansonnier for the Alamire Foundation (Belgium); other editions are in the works, including a new edition of the songs of Gilles Binchois (c. 1400–1460). He has taught at Boston University and Harvard University, served as director of the baroque orchestra at Oberlin Conservatory, and been a visiting member of the faculty of Music History at the New England Conservatory; last fall he taught at the Peabody

Institute and this spring is teaching again at NEC. He 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).



Praised for her “warm, colorful mezzo” (*Opera News*) and her “astonishing range and flexibility” (*Boston Musical Intelligencer*),

**Sophie Michaux** has become one of New England's most versatile and compelling vocalists. Born in London and raised in the French Alps, Sophie's

unique background informs her artistic identity, making her feel at home in an eclectic span of repertoire ranging from grand opera to French cabaret songs. Recent solo engagements include the roles of Alcina in Caccini's *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* (Haymarket Opera), Olofernes in Scarlatti's *La Giuditta* (Haymarket Opera), Ceres in Lalande's *Les Fontaines de Versailles* (Boston Early Music Festival), and Clorinda in Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (A Far Cry), as well as soloist in the world premiere of Kevin Siegfried's arrangement of *Three Shaker Songs* (Boston Symphony Chamber Players), in Handel's *Dixit Dominus* (Upper Valley Baroque), and in De Falla's *El Amor Brujo* (Lowell Chamber Orchestra). She is thrilled to collaborate with Blue Heron, Lorelei Ensemble, Roomful of Teeth, A Far Cry, Palaver Strings, Les Délices, Bach Collegium San Diego, Ruckus, Upper Valley Baroque, and other ensembles performing across the US.



**Debra Nagy** has been deemed an artist “of consummate taste and expressivity” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*). She is the founder of the Cleveland-based ensemble Les Délices and plays principal oboe with the Handel & Haydn Society, Apollo's Fire, and many other ensembles. Inspired by

a creative process that brings together research, composition in historical styles, improvisation, and artistic collaboration, Debra creates programs that “can't help but get one listening and thinking in fresh ways” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*). Recent projects have included a multimedia productions of Machaut's *Remede de Fortune* created in collaboration with Blue Heron, a critically-acclaimed CD combining jazz and French Baroque airs called *Songs without Words*, and *The White Cat*, a pastiche Baroque opera with puppetry and projections based on Marie Catherine d'Aulnoy's 1690s feminist fairytale. Debra was recently recognized with a 2022 Cleveland Arts Prize and received the 2022 Laurette Goldberg Prize from Early Music America for her community outreach work with Les Délices on the web series SalonEra. Debra has recorded over 40 CDs with repertoire ranging from 1300–1800 and has had live performances featured on CBC Radio Canada, Klara (Belgium), NPR's Performance Today, WQXR, and WGBH. When not rehearsing, performing, or dreaming up new projects, Debra can be found cooking up a storm in her kitchen or commuting by bike from her home in Cleveland's historic Ohio City neighborhood.



Tenor **Aaron Sheehan**, recognized internationally as a leading interpreter of baroque repertoire, is equally at home on the concert platform and the opera stage. He made his professional operatic debut with the Boston Early Music Festival in the world premiere staging of

Mattheson's *Boris Gudenow*, winning praise from *Opera News* for his "sinous and supple" voice, and went on to further roles with BEMF in Lully's *Psyché*, Charpentier's *Actéon*, Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. He sang the title role in BEMF's recording of Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers*, which won Best Opera Recording at the 2015 Grammy Awards. Aaron has appeared worldwide at venues including the Tanglewood Festival, Lincoln Center, Concertgebouw, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Gran Teatro Nacional del Perú, Beethoven Festival Warsaw, Boston Symphony Hall, Musikfestspiele Postdam Sanssouci, Royal Opera at Versailles, Washington National Cathedral, and the early music festivals of Boston, San Francisco, Vancouver, Houston, Tucson, Washington, DC, and Regensburg,

Germany. He has performed with Seattle Symphony, American Bach Soloists, Handel & Haydn Society, Boston Early Music Festival, Boston Baroque, Tafelmusik, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional del Perú, Philharmonia Baroque, North Carolina Symphony, New York Collegium, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Charlotte Symphony, Musica Angelica, Charleston Bach Festival, Baltimore Handel Choir, Les Voix Baroques, Pacific Chorale, Tempesta di Mare, Aston Magna Festival, Bach Collegium San Diego, Pacific Music Works, Boston Museum Trio, Tragicomedia, and Concerto Palatino. He has sung with Blue Heron for twenty years and appears on many of the ensemble's CDs, from its first (music of Guillaume Du Fay) to its recent recordings of all the songs of Johannes Ockeghem and *Christmas & New Year's in 15th-Century France & Burgundy*.



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Fan vault of Bell Harry Tower, Canterbury Cathedral. (Tobias Vonderhaarö CC BY-SA 3.0)

### Christmas in 15th-Century France & Burgundy

Follower of Jan Joest of Kalkar, *The Adoration of the Christ Child*, c. 1515. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City (Public Domain)

### The Armed Archangel

Hans Memling, *Triptych with the Last Judgment* (center panel, detail), 1467-71. Muzeum Narodowe, Gdansk (Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons)

### A More Subtle Art

Jacob Senleches, *La harpe de melodie*, Newberry Library MS 54.1, f. 10

### Song of Songs / Songs of Love

Mirador de Lindaraja, Palacio de los Leones, Alhambra, Granada (Javier Carro, CC BY-CA 3.0)

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BLUE HERON exists thanks to the devotion, hard work, and financial support of a large community of musicians, staff, board members, volunteers, donors, and concertgoers. We are grateful to everyone who joins us in creating, nurturing, and sustaining an organization dedicated to making vocal ensemble music live in the twenty-first century.

We are extraordinarily fortunate to work with a slate of talented and skilled designers, engineers, videographers, and photographers. Our concerts and CDs are recorded by Joel Gordon. Kathy Wittman (Ball Square Films) is our videographer. Our programs, printed publicity materials, and CDs were designed by Melanie Germond until 2019 and by John Kramer from 2019 to 2023; John continues to design our CDs; the new designer of our

programs and all other material is Shawn Keener. FlashPrint in Harvard Square prints our programs, as they have since 1999. Erik Bertrand built our website and keeps it functioning properly. Liz Linder is our photographer. Our debt to these wonderful people who have shaped our look and sound is impossible to overstate.

Many thanks to our board and to all our dedicated volunteers for their help in person, at this concert, and always.

Special thanks to the hosts of our out-of-town concerts this week: Charlie Anderson and the Wayland Concert Series (Thursday) and Adam Simon and Music at the Crossroads (Friday).

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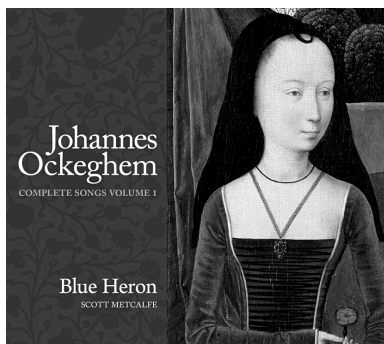
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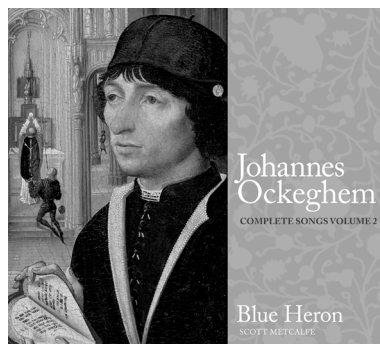
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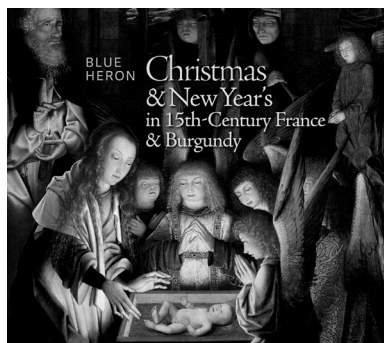
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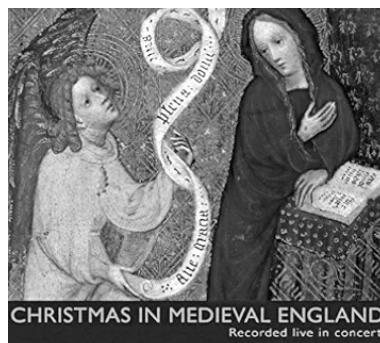
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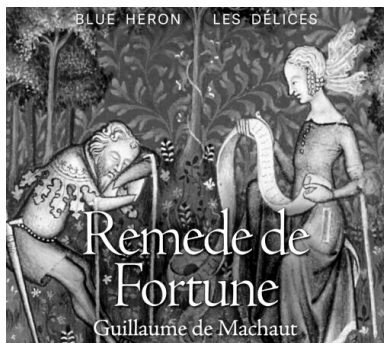
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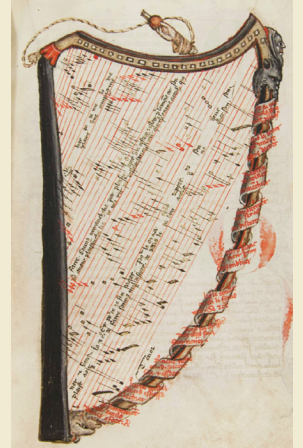
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2024-2025



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FEBRUARY 1

The Armed Archangel

MARCH 1

A More Subtle Art

APRIL 5

*Song of Songs* / Songs of Love