CENTER FOR THE ARTS AT VIRGINIA TECH

Advance Program Notes

The Orlando Consort
La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc
Friday, April 8, 2016, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

The Orlando Consort

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc

Carl Theodor Dreyer, *director*
Carl Theodor Dreyer, *script*
Pierre Champion, *historical advisor*
Rudolf Maté, *cinematography*
Hermann Warm and Jean Hugo, *art directors*
Valentine Hugo, *costumes*
Paul La Cour and Ralph Holm, *assistant directors*
Renée Maria Falconetti as *Jeanne*
Eugène Silvain as *Pierre Cauchon*
André Berley as *Jean D'Estivet*
Maurice Schutz as *Nicholas Loyseleur*
Antonin Artaud as *Jean Massieu*
Gilbert Dalleu as *Jean Lemaître*
Jean d'Yd as *Guillaume Erard*
Louis Ravet as *Jean Beaupère*

Soundtrack devised and developed by Donald Greig

The Orlando Consort
Matthew Venner, *countertenor*
Mark Dobell, *tenor*
Angus Smith, *tenor*
Donald Greig, *baritone*

with
Robert Macdonald, *bass*

The Orlando Consort will be available after the performance to answer questions and sign any CDs you may care to purchase, including a special soundtrack recording, featuring much of the music heard in tonight's program.

Program Notes

***Voices Appeared: Sound and Visions* by Donald Greig**

'Voices appeared' is Jeanne d'Arc's gnomic explanation of how angels were made manifest to her. It aptly describes the paradox of a silent movie that is essentially a courtroom drama about a woman inspired by the sound of voices. It is also the starting point for our project.

Like many other great works of art, when Carl Theodor Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* was first released its qualities weren't immediately recognised. It opened in Copenhagen in April 1928, though it wasn't until October in that same year that it received its second premiere in Paris, and that only after changes insisted upon by the French church. Across the channel in England it was banned for a year because of its depiction of the brutality of the English soldier, ironic given that their real treatment of Joan was considerably worse. Of the reviewers, only Mordaunt Hall, writing in the *New York Times,* focused on the things for which the film is now known—its startling visual style and the central performance:

> *France can well be proud of ...* The Passion of Jeanne d'Arc, *for while Carl Dreyer, a Dane, is responsible for the conspicuously fine and imaginative use of the camera, it is the gifted performance of Maria Falconetti as the Maid of Orleans that rises above everything in this artistic achievement.*

An historical context informed Dreyer's choice of Joan of Arc as his subject. She was canonised in 1920, and in 1925 Joseph Delteil published a flamboyant biography of the new Saint, the rights to which Dreyer acquired. Ultimately he set Delteil's text aside and instead devoted himself to his more familiar approach—research. His main source was the transcripts of the trial, edited by Jules Quicherat in the 1840s, from which all of the film's dialogue comes. This commitment to authenticity extended to the design, and a staggering one million of the seven million franc budget was given to building the set. The production designer, Hermann Warm, had worked on the German Expressionist classic, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,* but Dreyer eschewed grand vistas of medieval architecture and townscapes in favour of close-ups and fast editing, reducing the art direction to mere details glimpsed in the background. The producers were not best pleased, and one can only assume Warm was considerably more irked.

Much has been written about Dreyer's visual rhetoric. The anachronistic use of irises to mask the image, a refusal to adhere to the conventions of screen direction in looks and movement (well-established since the first decade of the 20th century), the concentration on close-ups to the exclusion of comprehensible spatial logic, and the low camera positions produce paralysing claustrophobia and confusion. Renée Maria Falconetti's appearance is counted as one of the great screen performances, but part of its power is due to an effect first noted by Kuleshov, the Russian film director, who demonstrated that the spectator's reading of an actor's emotion is contingent on the surrounding shots. Falconetti's face here becomes a second screen onto which we project our own psychic discomfort, thereby doubling the heroine's emotional state.

Music, no less than montage, contains the same potential power to construct meaning. With this in mind our initial task was to determine the emotional point of each scene and second-guess Dreyer's intentions. Here we followed the tried and tested method of matching music to image that continues today, where the director and composer "spot" the film, or decide where the music cues should begin and end and their functions. Sometimes the music we chose has a secondary, tangential relation to the scene—textual, historical, liturgical; and we have certainly not eschewed the more obvious clichés of film music—"Mickey-Mousing," as it is pejoratively known—where a dynamic or rhythmic motif coincides with specific action. But our guiding principle is that at all times the performance should serve and ultimately illuminate this extraordinary film.

Program Notes, continued

Exactly what kind of music Dreyer wanted to accompany screenings of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* is unknown, but the notion that he wanted his music to be appreciated in chaste silence is an exaggeration. He made the comment to Eileen Bowers, film curator of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and qualified it: he wasn't happy with the scores that he had thus far heard. One only has to look at his next project, *Vampyr* (1932), a very different film in many ways, not least because it was the first time he worked with sound, to note a preference for a through-composed score.

As the director, he would have had little control over the exhibition of his film, nor did he have any hand in the two scores written for its premieres. His thoughts about the 1951 version, cobbled together by Giuseppe Maria Lo Duca with music by J. S. Bach and Scarlatti, amongst others, are well documented. Aside from what the film historian did to the careful compositions (the added sound strip involved cropping the image), Dreyer's objections were twofold: firstly, the music was from the wrong era; secondly, the dynamic of the music was an ill-fitting fortissimo. But Dreyer went further than this. Why didn't Lo Duca use music from the era of Joan's own life? A further criticism levelled by others at the Lo Duca version was that in using religious music, the soundtrack misrepresented the anti-clerical argument of the film, yet this point was never made by Dreyer and with good reason: Joan's own faith is never in doubt, and Dreyer himself argued that the priests were not so much hypocrites as misguided zealots. Hopefully our approach answers those specific points and might even have met with Dreyer's approval.

Certainly Dreyer makes the would-be composer's task difficult. With no establishing shots at all—obvious moments for musical cues—and an almost schizophrenic alternation between rapid cutting (the film has 1,500 cuts in its 96 minutes) and still contemplation, most notably of Falconetti's face, the rhythm of the film poses specific problems, all of which makes our choice of pre-existing music surprisingly appropriate. The *tactus* (beat) of this music remains broadly organic, as opposed to the enslaved cueing of modern scores (where computers dictate metronome speeds measured to the second decimal place). Our response echoes the practice of original silent-film accompaniment, though in place of a conductor we have an onscreen guide track. Ultimately, though, the film is the emotional prompt, and the fluid flexibility of ensemble singing governs our performance.

All of the music you will hear comes from the early years of the 15th century, the period of Joan's brief life, though whether Joan herself would ever have heard it is an unanswerable question. Charles VII, her king, was so short of money that he could no longer afford his own travelling choir (given such circumstances it is hardly surprising that so many French-born composers took up offers of employment in Italy), whereas Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, was patron to Dufay and Binchois, and the Regent of France, the Duke of Bedford, was patron to John Dunstable. It seems likely that Joan would have encountered at least some of the repertoire. An assiduous attendee of Mass, her travels took her to many large towns and cities, like Orléans, Troyes, and Blois, all of which had choral foundations of one sort of another.

Program Notes, continued

The early 15th century was a transitional period for polyphonic music. The earlier style is rooted in the 14th century, represented here by Richard Loqueville's *Sanctus* (used in the scene in the torture room) and Billart's *Salve Virgo virginum* (for the final hectic crowd scenes). Parallel fifths, fourths, and octaves abound, as do the characteristic stark sixth-to-octave cadences. What will most strike the listener is the rhythmic interest and virtuosic flair in the upper parts which contrasts with the stolid plainchant in the accompanying voices. The later, more melodic style is evinced, not surprisingly, in the secular chansons—Dufay's *Je me complains*, for which we have substituted words from the contemporary chronicler Christine de Pizan's *La Ditié de Jeanne d'Arc,* written a year before Joan's capture, and Gautier Libert's haunting *De Tristesse.* Several other pieces display this sweeter, more consonant approach, such as Johannes De Lymburgia's *Descendi in hortum meum* and several instances of fauxbourdon—an improvised system of parallel first-inversion chords—which display a fondness for thirds and sixths characteristic of English music. For though England, France, and Burgundy were almost constantly at war with each other, musical influence paid no heed to territorial boundaries. Indeed the English style, represented here by the Agincourt Carol and the anonymous *O Redemptor,* initiated the very transition from the earlier to the later styles. It was described by Martin Le Franc as the *Contenance Angloise* in his *Le Champion des Dames,* a work dedicated to Phillip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, which elsewhere in its 24,000 verses made daring reference to Jeanne d'Arc, whom Phillip had sold to the English.

A final note on the performance of the music: it is now generally accepted that all of the music you will hear was performed by voices alone, even where it is untexted. Whatever one's position on this musicological issue, the more intimate medium of five unaccompanied voices is particularly appropriate to the portrayal of a woman whose divine inspiration came in the form of the voices of St. Michael, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret.

For a more detailed scene breakdown, please visit www.orlandoconsort.com/scenebreakdown after the performance.

Biography

THE ORLANDO CONSORT

Formed in 1988 by the Early Music Network of Great Britain, the Orlando Consort rapidly achieved a reputation as one of Europe's most expert and consistently challenging groups performing repertoire from the years 1050 to 1550. Their work successfully combines captivating entertainment and fresh scholarly insight; the unique imagination and originality of their programming, together with their superb vocal skills, has marked the Consort as the outstanding leader of its field. The Consort has performed at many of Britain's top festivals (including the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh International Festival) and has in recent years made visits to France, Holland, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic, Estonia, the USA and Canada, South America, Singapore, Japan, Greece, Russia, Austria, Slovenia, Portugal, and Spain.

The Consort's impressive discography for Saydisc, Metronome, Linn, Deutsche Grammophon and Harmonia Mundi USA includes a collection of music by John Dunstaple and *The Call of the Phoenix,* which were selected as Early Music CDs of the Year by *Gramophone Magazine* in 1996 and 2003, respectively; their CDs of music by Compère, Machaut, Ockeghem, and Josquin; *Popes and Anti-Popes; Saracen and Dove;* and *Passion* have also all been short-listed. Their 2008 release of Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame* and *Scattered Rhymes,* an outstanding new work by the young British composer, Tarik O'Regan, and featuring the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir, was short-listed for a BBC Music Magazine Award. *Dart of Love* (January 2015) is their second recording in a series for Hyperion, exploring the polyphonic songs of Guillaume de Machaut; the first release *(Le Voir Dit)* was selected by *New York Times* critics as one of their favourite classical CD releases of 2013. Their most recent release is their second disk dedicated to the music of Loyset Compère.

The Consort's performances also embrace the spheres of contemporary music and improvisation: to date they have performed over 30 world premieres, and they have created striking collaborations with the jazz group, Perfect Houseplants, and, for a project exploring historic Portuguese and Goan music, the brilliant tabla player, Kuljit Bhamra. The Consort currently holds a residency at Nottingham University, and recent concert highlights include their debut at New York's Carnegie Hall. In addition to presenting the *Voices Appeared* project throughout 2015 and 2016, the Consort will be maintaining its busy schedule of recitals throughout the U.K., Europe, and the U.S.

> "Here is exquisite music from Machaut's 'magnum opus', the *Livre dou Voir Dit,* telling of a romance the composer carried on over great distances in the mid-14th century. The performances by the Orlando Consort are masterly." —*New York Times,* Favourite Classical CDs of 2013
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> "Simultaneously ravishing and reverential." —*Los Angeles Times*
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> "The calibre of the singing and the lucidity of the spoken introductions made this an enthralling evening, illuminating for many of us what had hitherto been rather esoteric history book entries." —*The London Evening Standard*
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> "No one ever goes away from one of their concerts without a smile of happiness at the artistic and human experience." —*San Diego Chronicle*
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> "The Orlando Consort's performances are staggeringly beautiful." —*The Times*

Engagement Activities

Friday, April 8, 2016
VOCAL WORKSHOP WITH ORLANDO CONSORT
Members of the Virginia Tech Chamber Singers will participate in a workshop focused on renaissance vocal music with members of the Orlando Consort.

Friday, April 8, 2016, 6:30 PM
THE USE AND ABUSE OF JOAN OF ARC: MEMORY AND THE CREATION OF THE MIDDLE AGES
Matthew Gabriele, associate professor of Medieval Studies in the Department of Religion & Culture
As a prelude to the evening's performance by the Orlando Consort, Matthew Gabriele offers some thoughts on the creation of *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and the Middle Ages.

Special thanks to Dwight Bigler, Tracy Cowden, and Matthew Gabriele

In the Galleries

Artist Spotlight: Philip Argent
Based in California, Philip Argent composes and generates imagery for his paintings on the computer, then deftly renders it by hand with acrylic on canvas. With their intense, supersaturated colors, ranging from vivid oranges and deep purples to aqua blues and greens that glow like computer components, Argent's paintings hint at the digital ethos of our times.

Let's Talk
How might digital art and technology change how we use and view traditional media, like paint? What possibilities can you imagine?

DATAStream
February 4–May 7, 2016
All galleries

DIANA COOPER: *HIGHWIRE*
On view through spring 2018
Grand Lobby

GALLERY HOURS
Tuesday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.; interesting and free!