

GCD P32302

New release information

December 2008

L'Arbre de Jessé

Ensemble Gilles Binchois



L'Arbre de Jessé

Gregorian chant and medieval polyphony

Ensemble Gilles Binchois Dominique Vellard

 Anne Delafosse, soprano
 Anne-Marie Lablaude, soprano
 Gerd Türk, tenor
 Dominique Vellard, tenor
 Josep Cabré, baritone

**Glossa Platinum
GCD P32302**

Programme

- 01 Vox in Rama
- 02 Benedictus es
- 03 Cantemus Domino
- 04 Submersus jacet Pharao
- 05 Balaam inquit
- 06 Alleluia In exitu Israel
- 07 Vir erat
- 08 Salve mater
- 09 Peccavimus
- 10 Lectio Jonæ prophetæ cum cantico
- 11 Qui pro nobis
- 12 Rex Salomon
- 13 Sequencia sancti evangelii secundum Lucam
- 14 Stirps Jesse florigeram

Production details

Playing time: 68'35

 Recorded at Église de Mont-Saint-Vincent,
 France, in June and July 2008
 Engineered by Robert Verguet
 Mastered by Pierre de Champs
 Produced by Etienne Meyer
 Executive producer: Carlos Céster

 Design: Valentín Iglesias
 Booklet essay: Marie-Noël Colette
 English Français Deutsch Español


NOTES (ENG)

With a rich display of medieval polyphonic works and Gregorian chant illustrating the theme of the Tree of Jesse, Dominique Vellard and the Ensemble Gilles Binchois turn their attention to biblical texts with a clarity that calls to mind the intricacy of illuminated manuscripts, the vitality of stained-glass windows and the bold colours of both. Brought to life here are stories of characters from the Bible such as Job, Jonah, Solomon, Rachel, Balaam and Moses alongside the New Testament genealogy of Christ, the recording made in a beautiful church in the South of Burgundy.

Dominique Vellard's own vocal prowess, steeped in oral as well as written traditions from both East and West shines out anew in a much-awaited recording set to delight the legion of fans of the Ensemble Gilles Binchois. The redoubled enthusiasm and energy of the Ensemble Gilles Binchois, so audible on *L'Arbre de Jessé*, along with the group's exploration of the beauty and naturalness of sound are set to form a highlight of Glossa's releases over coming years with promised forays into the early Baroque and the great polyphony of the 16th century.

NOTES (FRA)

C'est un riche recueil d'œuvres polyphoniques médiévales et de chant grégorien illustrant la thématique de l'arbre de Jessé, que nous offrent Dominique Vellard et son Ensemble Gilles Binchois : les musiciens transmettent les textes bibliques avec une clarté qui évoque la complexité et les couleurs resplendissantes des manuscrits et de leurs enluminures, et la vigueur et la ferveur du vitrail gothique. Les personnages de la Bible acquièrent une vie nouvelle : Job, Jonas, Salomon, Rachel, Balaam ou Moïse, s'inscrivent dans la généalogie du Christ contenue dans le Nouveau Testament. L'enregistrement a été réalisé dans une merveilleuse église du sud de la Bourgogne.

Les qualités vocales de Dominique Vellard, inspirées des traditions orales et écrites d'Orient et d'Occident, brillent une fois encore dans cet enregistrement si attendu, qui fera très certainement les délices des très nombreux admirateurs de l'Ensemble Gilles Binchois. L'enthousiasme renouvelé et la grande énergie de l'ensemble, flagrantes dans cet *Arbre de Jessé* (où l'on apprécie l'exploration de la beauté naturelle du son), seront l'un des piliers du catalogue de Glossa des prochaines années ; les musiciens nous ont promis de faire des incursions dans la grande polyphonie du XVIIe siècle, allant jusqu'au début du répertoire baroque.

NOTAS (ESP)

A través de una rica selección de obras polifónicas medievales y de canto gregoriano que ilustran la temática del Árbol de Jesé, Dominique Vellard y su Ensemble Gilles Binchois transmiten los textos bíblicos con una claridad que recuerda la complejidad de los manuscritos iluminados, la vitalidad de las vidrieras góticas y los fuertes colores de ambos. Así, adquieren nueva vida las historias de personajes de la Biblia como Job, Jonás, Salomón, Raquel, Balaam o Moisés, al lado de la genealogía de Cristo incluida en el Nuevo Testamento, en una grabación realizada en una hermosa iglesia situada en el sur de Borgoña.

Las cualidades vocales del propio Dominique Vellard, ancladas en tradiciones orales y escritas de Oriente y Occidente, destacan de nuevo en esta esperadísima grabación que sin duda hará las delicias de los muchísimos admiradores del Ensemble Gilles Binchois. El renovado entusiasmo y la gran energía del conjunto, tan audibles en este *L'Arbre de Jessé* en el que además se aprecia el esfuerzo realizado por explorar la belleza natural del sonido, formarán uno de los focos principales del catálogo de Glossa a lo largo de los próximos años, con incursiones prometidas en la gran polifonía del siglo XVI e incluso en el primer Barroco.

NOTIZEN (DEU)

Mit einer reichen Auswahl mittelalterlicher polyphoner Werke und gregorianischer Choräle, die sich mit dem Thema der Wurzel Jesse beschäftigen, lenken Dominique Vellard und das Ensemble Gilles Binchois ihre Aufmerksamkeit auf biblische Texte. Dies geschieht mit einer Durchsichtigkeit, die an die Komplexität illuminierter Handschriften, die Lebendigkeit von Kirchenfenstern und die lebhaften Farben beider erinnert. Hier werden die Geschichten biblischer Personen wie Hiob, Jona, Salomon, Rachel, Bileam und Mose zu neuem Leben erweckt, ebenso wie die Genealogie Christi aus dem Neuen Testament. Die Aufnahme entstand in einer schönen Kirche im Süden von Burgund.

Dominique Vellard, der sich sowohl in den mündlich als auch in den schriftlich überlieferten Traditionen aus Ost und West bestens auskennt, glänzt mit seinen überragenden vokalen Fähigkeiten abermals in einer sehnsüchtig erwarteten Aufnahme, zur großen Freude der zahlreichen Bewunderer des Ensembles Gilles Binchois. Durch die noch verstärkte Begeisterung und den gesteigerten Elan – auf der CD *L'Arbre de Jessé* überdeutlich hörbar – und durch die Erkundung der Schönheit und Natürlichkeit des Klanges dieses Ensembles stellt die Aufnahme jetzt schon einen Höhepunkt der von Glossa für die nächsten Jahre angekündigten Einspielungen dar, die sich auch in die Musik des Frühbarock und in die große Polyphonie des 16. Jahrhunderts vorwagen werden.

An interview with Dominique Vellard

"It is the same effect as when you see the sun shining through stained-glass windows in a church: suddenly all the colours are singing."



After nearly three decades of carving out a niche (as rich as Romanesque statuary found in the Burgundy where he lives and works), Dominique Vellard has returned with a new vigour for performing (and recording), whether it is with his colleagues from the Ensemble Gilles Binchois or as a solo singer. The tenor voice of this deeply-thinking musician has the capacity to explore and explain the messages and subtleties of liturgical traditions that range far beyond the Western tradition.

Glossa has already welcomed Dominique Vellard and his ensemble with a recording devoted to his own compositions – Vox nostra resonet – but now has had the opportunity to capture the sound and interpretations of the group in repertory that they have made their own: the bringing together of the earliest polyphony, including pieces from the Ecole de Notre-Dame de Paris and the École de Saint-Martial de Limoges alongside Gregorian chant; all as a means to express the Biblical messages. The recording comes with an informed article by another of Vellard's long-term collaborators, the scholar Marie-Noël Colette.

Despite – perhaps because of – this depth of experience L'Arbre de Jessé is neither a reflection of show virtuosity nor of a tightly-drilled choral ensemble, as Dominique Vellard explains in describing – for him – the importance of text and music.

You have been performing medieval music over the ensemble's history, but how has this developed recently?

I have been putting much effort into trying to understand what the music represents, working alongside musicologists such as Marie-Noël Colette, learning from her knowledge of the repertory and its notation, so that progressively the music becomes more and more part of me. Increasingly I can use all this as though it had been taught to me in an oral way – as though I had learnt it as a child and now can do it without having to think about it. It is like being part of a living tradition and I have also spent time listening to oral music traditions such as from India, Islamic countries, Coptic and Jewish music. Now, I think that our performances are stronger because I can ask my colleagues to perform the music in a much more natural way, not as a form of historical reconstruction. Thus we have a new conception of this music – involving a more integrated and matured *affekt* and attitude to sound – and I am very happy to be able to express it for the first time with the recording *L'Arbre de Jessé*.

The Tree of Jesse is an unusual theme for a CD. Why did you become interested in it?

I was interested in all these Old Testament characters who each in their own way provided a foreshadowing of the figure of Christ. But it was also an opportunity to present compositions that we have been defending for a long time and strongly connected with my musical life. And they are works which I believe have a very strong musical and artistic effect, such as the *Benedictus es* – the Canticle of the Three Young Men (a long but very strong piece) or *Cantemus Domino* or the genealogy (*Sequencia sancti evangelii secundum Lucam*).

Why are the texts of the chants and polyphonic works on this recording so important for you?

The reason is that Biblical texts such as these involved stories from a saint or a prophet (or an invocation or a prayer) that were written down in order to be proclaimed to the people. What is important in the musical pieces when they are sung – and especially so given that they are in Latin – is that they provide more than just the intellectual message of the text. Suddenly the piece takes life: the discourse that is going on has a stronger power, simply because you can hear it. As a parallel, consider the text for Martin Luther King's public speech, "I have a Dream". If you merely read it through, it is a very beautiful text but when you hear this strong man proclaiming his words, the effect is a hundred times stronger. And for me, these musical pieces on this record are like that. It is the same effect as when you see the sun shining through stained-glass windows in a church (whether they are in Chartres Cathedral or even with modern windows): suddenly all the colours are singing.

After 30 years as a group together, how does the Ensemble Gilles Binchois work as a group?

In the past it was as though I was teaching courses in singing and interpretation through my ensemble and the result was not what I am after, because this music – such as on *L'Arbre de Jessé* – needs to represent the power of the people. My role with my colleagues now is to allow them to express their own personality and their own comprehension of the music – they are all independent artists in their own right. Thus, as a director I only get involved if some mistakes are made. My role cannot exist as a product of teaching at the point of giving a concert or making a recording – and in any case this music has no mensuration, so conducting would be somewhat out of place! Whilst I can hand on to them knowledge about the understanding of the music – my own or that of scholars such as Wulf Arlt or Marie-Noël Colette – the delivery of that knowledge expressed artistically must be made by the singers themselves. If you don't allow the instincts of the musicians to work, the music becomes very heavy and you miss the life of the melody, the life of the music itself. Also, on this recording I have purposefully avoided using a large group because the pieces can only be sung by one, two or three people; no more than that. Otherwise it starts to sound like a "choralization". I believe that such a "chorus mentality" is very dangerous for such medieval music. We do not exist in an oral tradition and what we have to do is to study the notation and understand deeply what the music means. And then let our instincts take over.

And into what other directions are you now taking your music-making?

What is important for me now in all the repertory that I work with – in the court music but especially in music for the church – is to look for and hopefully find the right connections held within the music: what is important as far as questions such as the sound, the phrasing are concerned. To me the beauty and naturalness of the sound are extremely important in church music, because they describe its power. Because of this I no longer perform some music which I used to find interesting but where I cannot find this strength. Now I do not have to prove anything, but what is important for me is to carry on with repertoires that I wish to defend – chants, some aspects of the early polyphonies and some composers from the 15th and 16th centuries. Two important considerations for me are the repertory of the ensemble, whether it is Dufay or Machaut or great polyphony such as by Josquin Desprez or Francisco de Peñalosa, and my own desire to carry on as a solo singer. The next planned recording reflects the latter desire with a programme called *Motets croisés* which features solo motets by Monteverdi, Schütz and by Jean-Pierre Leguay. The idea is to explore the expressivity of the *Kleines Konzert* form with just two performers. Jean-Pierre plays the organ, also adding his own improvisations.