

CONCORDIAN DAWN

Ensemble for Medieval Music

Clifton Massey, countertenor
David Dickey, countertenor and recorder
Andrew Padgett, bass
Niccolo Seligmann, vielle

Christopher Preston Thompson, tenor and medieval harp
Founding Artistic Director

Presents:

FORTUNA ANTIQUA ET ULTRA

- “La Septime Estampie Real” – F-Pn 844, 104v
“Tribum que/Quoniam secta/Merito hec patimur” (*Le Roman de Fauvel*) –
Philippe de Vitry (1291-1361), F-Pn fr. 146, 41v-42r
- “O varium fortune lubricum” – Carmina Burana MS 14 and I-Fl Plut. 29.1, 351v
“Thalamus puerpere/Quomodo cantabimus” (*Le Roman de Fauvel*) – F-Pn fr. 146, 32r
- “De monte lapis” – St. Martial MS D24
“Ypocritae, pseudopontifices/Velut stellae firmamenti/Et gaudebit” – I-Fl Plut. 29.1, 411v
- “Qui de Fortune atende asses avoir” – I-Tn J.II.9, f.111
“De ma haulte et bonne aventure” – Guillaume DuFay (1397-1474)
“Fine amours en Esperance” – Audefrois le Bastart (trouvère, fl. early 13th c.), F-Pn fr. 846, 55v-56r
- “Dame, de qui toute ma joye vient” (*Le Remède de Fortune*, no. 5, ballade) –
Guillaume de Machaut (1300-77), F-Pn Machaut MS C 1586, 47v-48r
- “L’amour dont sui espriz” – Blondel de Nesles (trouvère, c. 1155-1202), F-Pn fr. 846, 79r
“Procurans odium” – Carmina Burana MS 12 and I-Fl Plut 29.1, 193r
- “Je n’ai autre retenance” – Adam de la Halle (trouvère, c. 1220-88), F-Pn fr. 846, 66v-67r
“Dame, mon cuer en vous remaint” (*Le Remède de Fortune*, no. 7, rondelet) –
Guillaume de Machaut (1300-77), F-Pn Machaut MS C 1586, 57r
- “Quant voi la fleur boutener” – Gace Brulé (trouvère, c. 1160-1213), F-Pn fr. 846, 108v

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

In anticipation of their forthcoming album release, Concordian Dawn shares this timely program, *Fortuna Antiqua et Ultra*, with the Lehman College community. The last year has given us all ample time to reflect on the quality of our own lives and the turbulent peaks and valleys fortune brings. While the pandemic at hand has presented many of us with such large-scale difficulty for the first time in our lives, individuals living in the Middle Ages were no strangers to trying times, and this is well-documented in primary source material. Manipulating every aspect of life and love, Goddess Fortuna has provided poet, composer, and artist alike with subject matter for ages. Fortune's iconic wheel, lifting the fallen and casting down the mighty based on nothing more than an ever-changing whim, is a familiar trope—no less relevant today than it was in the Middle Ages. *Fortuna Antiqua et Ultra* centers around texts that depict struggle, coping, and resilience during life's trying times viewed through a medieval lens.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, troubadours and trouvères composed songs of *fin amors*, depicting a spiritual transcendence born of one's desire for and complete devotion to the subject of their affection, even though blocked by insurmountable circumstances. This transcendence vis a vis *fin amors* became a poetic mantra by which the lover ascends to a higher plane of existence. Fortune often appears in troubadour and trouvère lyrics as the active force—whether a help or a hinderance—on the lover's path. Respite from fickle Fortune's vacillating intervention comes by way of Hope; the only way to combat Fortune's ups and downs is to remain hopeful for the subversion of Desire en route to a higher plane of existence. These three elements—the inexplicable actions of Fortune, an underpinning of Desire, and the consolation of Hope—provide the bulk of the thematic content of this program. Of course, many turned to religious institutions for comfort during life's ups and downs, as is often described in medieval lyrics, and for those living outside of courtly (which is to say, privileged) culture, the ups were often fewer and farther between than the downs, especially during the long thirteenth century. But even the church didn't always provide solace in misfortune. These themes are self-evident in many of the lyrics presented on this program, all of which are drawn from the period spanning the musical *ars antiqua*, *ars nova*, and *ars subtilior*, with one late medieval/early renaissance example from fifteenth-century composer, Guillaume DuFay.

It seems humankind has always searched for an answer to the question: How do we deal with the unpredictable hardships *Fortuna* presents? Can true love for another carry us through? Or, is it faith in a deity and a church that provides a sense of strength and comfort? If that doesn't hold up, perhaps an unrelenting and optimistic sense of hope will do. And if that still doesn't do the trick, maybe all we can do is accept our fate and relinquish control. It's an ever-present question, then and now. So, why take time out of our busy lives to think about this music and these texts? With all that is going on in our country and in our world—global pandemic, corrupt political landscape, a failed relationship, any valley one experiences in personal or professional life—we must remain hopeful no matter what uncontrollable circumstances Fortune presents. Without hope for a better future, we allow ourselves to be defeated by the inevitable downturns of life. But, if we remain hopeful we empower ourselves to find the strength to continue on our individual paths; to fight, to grow, to love, to improve, to simply go on living each day as it comes. This is a message I find fundamentally crucial these days.

— Christopher Preston Thompson

ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE

Concordian Dawn, ensemble for medieval music, specializes in twelfth- through fourteenth-century vocal repertoire, drawing on primary source material and focusing on socio-philosophical similarities between texts from centuries ago and the mindset of modern society. In so doing, Concordian Dawn produces a musical experience accessible to contemporary audiences, relating the human condition of the past to the familiar experiences of the present. Founded in 2012, the ensemble performs regularly on the east coast, and has performed annually with Gotham Early Music Scene, NYC. The ensemble was featured at the 2018 University of Pennsylvania Gothic Arts Interdisciplinary Symposium and the Music in the Pavilion concert series, performing their adventurous program, *Fortuna Antiqua et Ultra*, and it was the recipient of a 2020 Ensemble Forward Award from Chamber Music America. Concordian Dawn and its artistic director, Christopher Preston Thompson, have given performances and led workshops and lectures for Princeton University, New York University, the University of Pennsylvania, the Modern Language Association, the CUNY Graduate Center, and the Medieval Academy of America, among others. Upcoming releases include their debut studio album, *Fortuna Antiqua et Ultra* (MSR Classics, Fall 2021) and a joint publication/recording project with acclaimed scholar, Sarah Kay for her forthcoming monograph, *Medieval Song, from Aristotle to Opera* (Cornell University Press and MSR Classics, 2022).

TRANSLATIONS

“Tribum que/Quoniam secta/Merito hec patimur”

Triplum – Furious Fortune did not fear to turn quickly against the tribe that did not recoil from a shameless rise [to power] when she did not spare the governing leader of the tribe from the pillory, to be established as an eternal public example. Therefore let future generations know that someone who ascends through fear may perhaps fall, as such a tribe has fallen. As for him whose prosperity has sunk to the depths: Winter coming after warm west winds hurts all the more; after rejoicing, lamentation is the more painful, whence there is nothing better than to have had no success.

Motetus – Since with the plots of thieves and the den of shady dealers the fox, which gnawed at the cocks in the time when the blind lion reigned, has suddenly been hurled down to his reward in death and deprived of property, the cock sings the sayings of Ovid which hammer home the point: All human things hang on a fine thread, and when it breaks suddenly, they collapse.

Tenor – We suffered this deservedly.

“O varium Fortune lubricum”

O variable, slippery Fortune, unstable are your tribunal judges. You prepare huge gifts for him who you would tickle with favors as he arrives at the top of your preposterously high wheel. But your gifts are unsure, and eventually everything is reversed; you raise the poor man from the dung, and the rhetorician becomes consul. Fortune edifies and ruins; she throws down the one she earlier honored, and protects the one she had rejected before. She contradicts her own decrees, and her gifts cannot be held. Hers is a fragile alliance: It oppresses the nobles and makes them poor, while making the poor noble and rich.

“Thalamus puerpere/Quomodo cantabimus”

Triplum – The wedding bed of confinement, the throne of Solomon, is stamped by the symbol of the new Babylon. The royal church reigns in sadness. The King guards the palace like a strong soldier. The senate goes into the exile of the saints. In this furnace, the purest gold will be purged, and the broken, the most just, will flourish.

Motetus – How can we sing under an unjust law? Sheep, what are we paying attention to? The wolf is in the flock. Our little rags having been cut off, Jesus splits the seamless tunic, the humble judge bears his load. Oh, when will He scatter this den of thieves; whence will come the tremendous God of vengeance?

Tenor – untexted

“De monte lapis”

A stone is broken off from the mountain but no helping hand is introduced. A fountain springs from the earth; the father and creator of all things is born from his mother. Protected by the hand of a man according to the divine will, God is born of a virgin without human seed.

“Ypocritae, pseudopontifices/Velut stellae firmamenti/Et gaudebit”

Triplum – The hypocrites, false prelates, hardened killers of the church, clink their goblets in their boozy orgies. They sow the seeds of profit with tears; on their thrones they bellow like thunder; as judges and avengers they dishonestly accuse innocent supplicants, but they are false who give judgement. They give orders from their seats; they gloat over their treasures and purses in separate lurking-places. They offer their bitter sting as honey; they tell lies and make up errors in books and hide away their faces. Practitioners of lust and crime, they debase the coinage; they bear down on the poor with their judgements, making mud bricks out of straw. They destroy the good old pathways. O miserable state of those in high place! So many spectral heads cast a shadow over their ashes. A pallor shows on the face of the sad decadent Sabbath, and the plainness of emaciation; dishonesty lurks in the soul. O truth, that lies hidden under a cloud! O goodness, let terror grip the hypocrites, lest deceitful wickedness and deceitful falsehood harm you. O love, you avoid the hidden paths; you teach us to know what is right, for that is where you dwell.

Motetus – The deeds of the prelates shine forth like the stars in the heavens. They are the basis of the holy edifice, the fount of virtues, the way of rectitude, a graceful ornament, clouds yielding honey, winds making fruitful the earth, and the vine of the fields, rooting out worm, thorns and weed, sowing the lily in the hearts of the faithful. They separate the pure grain from the chaff; they reject earthly things for those of heaven. They bring illumination with the key of knowledge; they avenge crimes; they free the condemned with the key of their power. They do not cast a net for rewards, or turn their eyes towards purses. They pick out the tracks of the gentle lamb and direct the flock to the sweet pastures of life and glory. Their lamps not empty, they lead us to the royal marriage. May their pious prayers lift up our hearts.

Tenor – And [your heart] shall rejoice.

“Qui de Fortune atende asses avoir”

Whoever expects much from Fortune and relies in any way on her gifts may most frequently fall from on high, for she is a very great enemy of constancy, which is why I say it is a bad alliance for whoever wishes to believe her blandishments, because the end holds most bitter torments.

“De ma haulte et bonne aventure”

Of my high and good fortune, by which my grief has ceased, I with my princess thank Love, who from pure pity on me opened his store of riches. After the annoyance of long waiting with feeble hope, this pleasure feeds and contents me without deceiving. I have sweet comfort in place of harsh sorrow, a choice of mistress, and the aid of charming Youth, where the good things of grace and nature are without measure scattered by his extravagant generosity.

“Fine amours en esperance”

Gentle love has given me Hope and the desire to sing. And thus to free me of the bonds of the pain she causes me, the lady in whose power it stands to ease the burden that I bear. But I tremble, full of fear that she'll believe the liars' tales, and that she might decide my death.

It pleases me so much to see her loveliness and her very sweet countenance, that I would gladly receive that which makes me suffer so. So, I always remember that fair service and suffering make lovers to be true and their honor and dignity increase.

Reason is my teacher and my guide, and this I know without a doubt, for he who loveth honestly may expect a fair reward if he loves a worthy one. So I have placed my love right well for I have set it in such a place that I never could believe that I have served so long for naught.

“Dame, de qui toute ma joie vient”

Lady, from whom all my joy comes, I cannot love or cherish you too much, or praise you enough, or serve, fear, honor, and obey you as is fitting; for the pleasing hope, sweet lady, that I have of seeing you brings me a hundred times more joy and good than I could deserve in a hundred thousand years.

This sweet Hope keeps me alive and nourishes me with amorous desire, and places within me everything that is needed to comfort and bring joy to my heart; nor does it abandon me morning or evening, but rather induces me to receive sweetly more of the sweet goods that Love sends her own than I could deserve in a hundred thousand years.

And since Hope who is fixed in my heart causes such joy within me when I'm far from you, my lady, if I were to see your beauty that I desire so much, no one could imagine, comprehend, or conceive my joy, I believe, for I would have more than I could deserve in a hundred thousand years.

“L'amour dont sui espris”

The love that has captured me commands me now to sing. I act like a man taken by surprise, who cannot resist. And yet, I have won enough that I may freely boast that long ago I learned how to love honestly. My thoughts are of her, so they forever will remain. I will never seek to transfer them.

“Procurans odium”

The slanderer's plot to engender discord hasn't worked out as planned. Evil rumors only solidify the lovers' hearts. And so the tables are turned: the unsuspecting enemy becomes a helper, thus confirming the happy status of those who love truly. The insults of gossips, I know, can be useful; thanks to them I had the luck to avoid being fed up with love. With malicious intent they thwart joy, but delay only compounds desire. With such a remedy, I harvest grapes from the thorns of my enemies.

“Je n'ai autre retenance”

I have no other happiness from love, save for my song, and for a sweet hopefulness which sometimes comes over me, as I recall that beauty which struck me so, with a sweet enticing smile, and a fair and shapely face, smooth and smiling, with which anyone at a glance might fall in love.

There is no suffering so sweet as to live ever in hope. Hence I can receive no hurt, though I suffer, from my love. The very sight of her face is such a joy, if any were to cleave to her of those who have reproached me for it, with burning love he would desire her when he had heard her speech so wise.

“Dame, mon cuer en vous remain”

My lady, my heart stays with you, although I myself must leave you. With true love I bear within, my lady, my heart stays with you. Now I pray God that your heart will love me, without being shared with any other. My lady, my heart stays with you, although I myself must leave you.

“Quant voi la fleur boutener”

When I see the budding flower, when the riverbanks turn bright, and I hear the skylark sing that pleasant weather’s come again, alas, there’s no help for me, for love wills my despair. Love makes me think upon her who is so harsh to me. Ah, fin amor, I’ll die, it seems to be. I’ll not escape alive. I’m overcome.

CREDITS

Concordian Dawn is a project of Gotham Early Music Scene, Inc. This video production was made possible with the support of New York Early Music Central, a Service Project of the Early Music Foundation, Inc., and was recorded by Dongsok Shin at the First Church of Christ, Scientist, New York City on June 7th, 2021. Additional support for this project’s development came from Lehman College of the City University of New York, a 2020 Ensemble Forward Grant from Chamber Music America, and contributions from the JQW Foundation.

THANK YOU