

'ARGONAUTICS' -The Quest for the Golden Fleece, Philip the Good-

The underlying reason for the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good's desire to become a Crusader was most likely his memories of the defeat in Nikopolos in 1396, of his father John "the Fearless" being held hostage as a twenty-year old man during the Crusades and of the large ransom that his grandfather Philip the Bold had to pay for his father's release.

After marrying for the third time in 1430, Philip formed (the still-active) "order of the Golden Fleece" in Bruges to "defend the Christina faith and the church," as well as to revive the knightly ideal. Two allegorical alchemistic stories, the symbolic myth of Jason and the Argonauts' journey to Colchis to retrieve the magical golden ram's fleece and the Old Testament story of Gideon, who must catch the Holy dew on the fleece, combined to point to the future redemptive power of Christ. Finally Mary's mystical conception also became part of this symbolism.

In "Argonautics," we will be exploring the musical links between these various ideals. Exact information about the music cannot be found in the archives of the Order, and only a few historians provide various clues. We will present a memorial for the murdered John the Fearless with music written by singers who worked at the court of his father Philip the Bold. Philip the Good took these singers back into service and made the vocal chapel once again one of the best in Europe.

We will perform *Pour une fois*, one of the few remaining pieces by Cardot, who later worked in Leuven and Brussels and is buried there in the St. Goedela Cathedral. *La plus jolie et la plus belle'* by Nicolas Grenon, the singing master of Cambrai, represents the surrender to the "Lady" as a pure connection with the heavenly.

Impressive trumpets and kettle drums announce the entrance of the Duke and his knights of the Golden Fleece. A portative organ, vedels, flute, an intimate harp and the best singers perform the finest chansons to express their love for our "Lady." Fontaine and Binchois were two singers in the chapel, and Binchois was one of the leading chanson composers and a 'bon père'.

In the church services for the Knights of the Golden Fleece, Binchois' expression of steadfast belief in Mary, the Holy Ghost and the Christian church - 3 pillars of the order - was performed. The sweet, three-voiced faux-bourdon technique is also heard. Dufay most likely wrote the isorhythmic motet *Moribus et genere* for the chapel in Dijon, where singers and slide trumpeters performed in honor of St. John and the Virgin. The *Ave Regina* by Frye is one of the most imitated motets from this time, in contrast to the virtuosic and melancholy *Quant de la belle* by Guilhelmus van Maelbeke.

After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Christian Europe was in upheaval. According to Dufay, he wrote his 4-voice lamentations as a result, but only the *O tres piteulx* survives from this collection. The following year, during the Banquet of the Pheasant - one of the largest festivities for Philip and his 'Golden Knights' - Binchois' *Je ne vis onques pareille* was certainly heard. A never before seen spectacle was witnessed, and Philip explained his crusade oath, which he was never able to fulfill.

In conclusion, we perform Caron's instrumental *Hélas m'amour* (1487) from the time of Charles, Philip's successor. In honor of the famous and still mysterious "Golden Fleece," one hears the *Toison-officium* from 1458, the *Lauda Syon, roris vellus* text sung on Regis' magistrale *Lauda Syon* motet.



PLUTO - ensemble

Marnix De Cat	countertenor, organetto, nacer & artistic direction
Kevin Skelton	tenor
Romain Bockler	baritone
Harry van der Kamp	bass
Thomas Baeté	fiddle
Romina Lischka	fiddle
Claire Piganiol	harp, flute, organetto
Floris De Reycker	lute
Simen Van Mechelen	Slide trumpet & busine
Nathaniel Wood	Slide trumpet & busine



