

Mp3 Mignarda - Divine Amarillis: Airs De Court 1570-1640

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Mignarda performs historical music for lute and voice with a directness that is at once haunting, mesmerizing and energizing. Their sympathetic and equal pairing of instrument and voice will touch your heart. 20 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Traditional, NEW AGE: Healing Details: PROGRAM NOTES This recording is an exploration of music from the French court of the early 17th century, much of it surviving from the Ballet de cour, which was a lavish courtly entertainment much like the English masque, complete with songs, dances and extravagant costumes and staging. The popular songs extracted from the Ballets were known as airs de cour. Themes in the poetry of most airs seem to dwell upon one of three subjects; unrequited love, the sometimes inexplicable interactions of mythological deities, or idyllic scenes of nymphs and shepherds. Our descriptor, airs de court, is taken from Jean Baptiste Besard's Thesaurus Harmonicus (Cologne, 1603), one of the earliest sources for the airs performed here. While most of the music on this disc was originally published to represent music that was sung and played at the royal courts, the audience for these publications was the merchant class, who were eager to invest their wealth in emulating the trappings of the noble houses. Understanding this crucial link enables us to take the music one step closer from the museum to the present moment by redefining the repertory as domestic music. We also include two psalm settings for voice and lute to emphasize the significant role psalm singing played in domestic life in the 16th and 17th centuries. 'Mignonne allons voir si la rose', a song of seduction from the poetry of Pierre Ronsard, is found only as a single melody line in its original setting (Jehan Chardavoine, Recueil de chansons en forme de voix de ville, 1576). In reconstructing a plausible rendition, we discovered that the tune works perfectly with minor adjustments to Adrian Le Roys Passemeze harmonization. Since LeRoy set several other poems by Ronsard in a similar manner, we feel our setting is historically justifiable and we trust it is eminently listenable. The 'Preludium in d' is from a collection of psalm settings with variations for solo lute by Nicolas Vallet (Regia Pietas, Amsterdam, 1620). Vallet, a Protestant expatriate from France, also published a collection of psalms for lute and voice (Een en twintich Psalmen Davids, Amsterdam, 1615), from which we perform Psalm 137, Estans assis aux rives aquatiques. The psalm tune appears in long note values and was originally intended to be sung

by the lutenist while playing the elaborate filigree of polyphonic decoration. 'Si jamais mon ame blesse' is among the better-known airs de cour attributed to Pierre Gudron. It was first published as a solo air with lute accompaniment by Jean Baptiste Besard in his *Thesaurus Harmonicus* (Cologne, 1603). For our recording, we have chosen a later setting from the series of prints published by Ballard (1615) which, with its more refined rhythmic subtleties, we believe more closely represents the composers original conception of the air than does the slightly more ornamented version found in Besard. The 'Courante' by Jacques Gaultier is a fine example of this delicate dance form with its characteristic broken style variations. Jacques was a more colorful representative of the famous Gaultier family, who produced at least four famous lutenists, and he spent most of his life as an exile in England, apparently on the lam from a murder rap. Our recording of this piece is, to our knowledge, the first. 'Rosette pour un peu d'absence' is a playfully indignant setting of a poem by Philippe Desportes (1546-1606) and the melody may be derived from a four-part setting by Eustache du Caurroy (1549-1609). Our rendition is based on the version published by Besard, 1603. Since the lute accompaniment to Besard's setting of the air largely consists of block harmonies that are not missed when missing, we have chosen a vocal solo performance. The 'Entre de luth' is the second in a collection of nine entres de luth from Robert Ballards *Premier Livre de tablature de luth* (1611), and is employed here as a prelude to 'Soupirant au bord de Seine', a moody air from the first book published by Etienne Moulini in 1624. Of particular note in our program is the pairing of the instrumental 'Campanae Parisiensis' (Bells of Paris, attributed to Jacques Gaultier in a concordance) with the air, 'Divine Amarillis'. These two familiar pieces appear in an orchestrated form mid-way through Ottorino Respighis second *Ancient Airs and Dances* suite (1924). The extensive series of airs published by Ballard between circa 1607-1640 (collectively, approximately 800 airs) includes many examples which clearly exhibit important interpretive information such as mensural changes in time and tempo, as well as many signs and symbols in the lute tablature that give specific information on how to perform the lute accompaniment. We have made an in-depth study of these performance indications and our interpretations are based on an empirical understanding of these sometimes obscure rubrics. 'Soupirs mesls damour' is an example of a carefully crafted recit by Gudron with numerous performance indications in the music, including clearly marked changes in the tempo. 'Cessz, mortels de soupirer', also by Gudron, has indications for rhythmic strumming in the lute accompaniment, which propels the refrain forward with resolve, a perfect melding of dance rhythm and

amorous courtly effusion that exemplifies French music from the early 17th century. 'Quelle divinité', another air from Besard, 1603 later orchestrated by Respighi, is also performed without the lute accompaniment. We think of our interpretation as reverse orchestration, taking the air back to its probable roots as an unharmonized melody. 'Est ce Mars / Courante de Mars' begins with an elegant setting of the air, originally from the Ballet pour Madame and composed by court composer, Pierre Guéron (1563-1621). The setting is taken from an English lute manuscript (ML ms.) from circa 1620. The air was later adapted as a courante by Vallet and published in Secret de Muses, 1615. Our version of the courante, with its elaborate variations, is transposed from the second of two settings by Vallet. (This score is available as a free download from Mignarda Editions) We preface Guéron's lively air, 'Bien qu'un cruel martyre', with an anonymous yet thematically similar 'Courante' from the English lute manuscript owned and partially copied by Lord Herbert of Cherbury. It is difficult to know whether the courante or the air came first since it was common practice to create an instrumental dance tune from popular airs and vice versa. Our program ends with another psalm setting. The stately four-voice setting of the familiar Psalm 23, 'Mon Dieu me paist' (The Lord is my shepherd) is taken from a collection of psalms by Claude Goudimel arranged here by Mignarda for solo voice and lute, followed with a meditative setting of the psalm tune with variations for lute by Nicolas Vallet. The music on this disc represents a personal selection of French airs de court and psalm settings that would most likely have been sung and played for private domestic entertainment 400 years ago. We have chosen pieces that allow us as performers to indulge in the essential Renaissance ideal of moving the passions of the listener. While our interpretations are always historically informed, we choose to make the music accessible to today's listener, in the hope that we might offer a moment of serenity in an otherwise hectic modern world. It is our sincere wish that our music will touch your heart.

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