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# Gothic Voices

## Selected Reviews

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"...sustenance for the soul, a short-cut to bliss..."

- **The Times**

"Gothic Voices' flair and accuracy brought this music vividly to life"

- **The Scotsman**

"...their tuning, intonation and tone control were perfect..."

- **Early Music Review**

"...with intonation and ensemble of this consistency, it is possible to revel...in sheer sonority..."

- **The Gramophone**

"...King's mezzo rose with the sun to a central ecstasy for which not even the beauty of earlier pieces had prepared us..."

- **The Gramophone**

"Nothing is overstated but at the same time nothing is allowed to pass without a burning musical conviction in the performances. Everything – words, intervals, decorations – has a crystalline audibility."

- **The Gramophone**

### Louth Contemporary Music Society, June 2018

"The exquisite Gothic Voices built new music out of old: 13th-century troubadour songs leading to sweet-sour music by Karen Tanaka and Linda Buckley." – **Kate Molleson, The Guardian**

### "The Dufay Spectacle" – Linn Records (Released April 2018)

"Voices and instruments alike swiftly entice the listener with their excellence and evocative atmosphere, Gothic Voices magnificently transporting us to their 15<sup>th</sup>-century sound world." - **Martin Cullingford, Gramophone (Editor's Choice)**

"The take-away [from this disc] is that Gothic Voices fill this music with life. For all the clarity of the presentation – and this is exemplary, even when instruments are added – the expression always comes first." - **Detlef Krengel, BR Klassik**

"Exquisite French chansons (in the formes fixes of rondeau and ballade) sit alongside richly textured Latin motets and arrangements. The four singers of Gothic Voices, the mezzo Clare Wilkinson and a quartet of instrumentalists seem perfectly attuned to Dufay's intoxicatingly elegant, graceful style." – **Stephen Pettitt, The Sunday Times**

"Their beautiful renditions of motets and chansons by Guillaume Dufay sound as if in the time of our great composer." - **Stemband**

"The four members of "Gothic Voices" and their five guests present with this CD a magisterial, atmospheric evocation of the immense, poetic and musical richness of the era of the Burgundians, the Hussite, the Council of Basel (1431) and the time of the counterpauses (eg Amadeus of Savoy as Pope Felix V). The beautiful performance, both vocal and instrumental, has an unparalleled technical and expressive perfection. Magisterial! Cannot be missed!" - **Michel Dutrieue, Stretto**

"What a pleasure, then, to be able to welcome this Dufay recording as matching all the qualities that made Gothic Voices absolute leaders in the field. This time it looks very much as though Julian Podger is the presiding genius; and he has chosen the repertory very well [...] To mention all the glorious details here would break the banks of this review but I cannot avoid mentioning the marvellously experienced singing of Catherine King and her duetting with Steven Harrold: that is seriously classy." - **David Fallows, Gramophone**

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#### York Early Music Christmas Festival, December 2016

"During its 30 years, the distinguished vocal group Gothic Voices have built up quite a following. The National Centre for Early Music was full for their evening of late medieval music for Advent and Christmas last Friday. Their authority in this repertoire was obvious, and made for characterful and convincing performances. Close harmonies in the 12th-13th century *Verbum Patris Humanatur* sounded both ancient and curiously modern, while *In Natali Novi Regis* was touchingly intimate. The 13th-century *Dou Way Robin/Sancta Mater Gratiae* exuded seemingly humility, and *Alleluia Psallat* brought a joyfully energetic close to the first half; its solo verse interlude showed mezzo-soprano Catherine King at her vibrant, intense best, with power in reserve. Rhythms crackled in the anonymous 15th-century carol *Alleluia: A Newe Werk*, while the anonymous narrative *Nowell, Nowell, Nowell* had an engaging rusticity. *Ther Is No Rose Of Swych Virtu* displayed the rich yet peaceful sonic purity of three perfectly blended voices.

Care and artistry were also lavished on liturgical items, including Dunstaple's resonant *Magnificat* and the magnificent *Gloria* from the 15th-century *Missa Caput*. Queldryk's contrasting setting of the *Gloria* seemed to revel gleefully in its text's sheer wordiness... this was a thoroughly enjoyable concert, presented with scholarly authenticity." **– The York Press**

"York early music Christmas festival created an opportunity to hear how the words of the Magnificat flowered in the minds of composers over some 250 years. The earliest, by the 15th-century English composer John Dunstaple was a sublimely minimal three-part setting sung by medieval specialists Gothic Voices" **– The Guardian**

#### Spitalfields Winter Festival, December 2016

"Across town, Spitalfields Music, celebrating 40 years of Festivals, launched its latest winter edition... The vocal quartet of Gothic Voices unfolded an imaginative Marian sequence of 12th – 15th century settings, with modern interpolations by Joanne Metcalf and Andrew Smith, in the beautiful little history-soaked Chapel Royal of St Peter ad Vincula at the Tower of London". **– Paul Driver, The Sunday Times**

#### "Mary Star of the Sea" – Linn Records (released August 2016)

"Ancient and modern often sit alongside in sacred music. In putting together a musical portrait of Mary, mother of Jesus, Gothic Voices have turned to composers medieval and contemporary. The mood throughout is one of serenity and grace. In new works by Joanne Metcalf and Andrew Smith, American and English respectively, the old reverence takes on a subtly distinctive modern tone. The membership of Gothic Voices has changed over the years, but the present four singers have lost nothing of the group's original purity and fine sense of balance." **– Richard Fairman, Financial Times**

"the beauty and security of the a capella singing...is a sheer joy throughout...The effect of the ambience of Boxgrove Priory gives a wonderful sense of background silence and timelessness. There are glories throughout...just lovely!" **– Michael Wilkinson, MusicWeb International "Recording of the Month"**

"Just four voices, often only one or two at a time, but singing with a clarity of focus and keen beauty that's always affecting, in musical territory they seem able to inhabit like few other ensembles." **– Andrew McGregor, BBC Radio 3 Record Review**

"This welcome revitalisation of an iconic group is characterised by warmth of tone and beautiful blend. Their selection of Marian medieval monody and polyphony, arranged with the greatest care and taste into two parts expressing her heavenly and human attributes, includes Latin and old English texts, offering differently intimate sound worlds. Alongside glorious, delicately

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nanced new works by the brilliant American Joanne Metcalf, including the magical 'Music for the Star of the Sea', and the affectionately sonorous 'Stond wel Moder, under rode' from Andrew Smith, here is a thoroughly engaging recording of impeccable clarity."

- **Rebecca Taverner, Choir and Organ**

"The four singers of Gothic Voices produce an exceptionally good consort sound as well as impressing in their various solo roles...[a] beautiful recording."

- **Andrew Benson-Wilson**

"A fascinating release... Gothic Voices are still a formidable force."

- **Gary Higginson, MusicWeb International**

## Choral at Cadogan, Cadogan Hall, April 2015

"stunning performances... mesmeric stage presence... superbly devised and slickly presented... reminding us that here is a corner of late-medieval repertoire in which Gothic Voices are supreme"

- **Edward Breen, Early Music Today**

"Stylish vigour... a stunning performance from the singers"

- **Robert Hugill, Planet Hugill**

## "A Laurel for Landini - 14th Century Italy's Greatest Composer" – Avie Records (released autumn '08)

"There could be no better introduction to the delights of late-medieval music...enjoyably intriguing...Gothic Voices make imaginative use of varied scorings, and their lively, expressive performances are first class."

- **Elizabeth Roche, Daily Telegraph**

"This CD is a delight. It contains music which is focused; intimate without being breathily urgent; lightly melodious and shot through with clean, expressive singing... Gothic Voices have the gift of being able to bring such music to life so effortlessly...This is an exciting, profound and excellently executed CD."

- **Mark Sealey, MusicWeb International**

"superbly blended Gothic Voices... the performances capture Landini's almost jazzy, syncopated rhythms, lively counterpoint and melodic flourishes to perfection."

- **Robert Levett, International Record Review**

"Taking intelligent and tasteful programming to even greater heights, Gothic Voices in 'A Laurel for Landini' showcase the 14th century maestro in an ideal balance...exceptionally fine and virtuosic performance."

- **Rebecca Taverner, Choir and Organ**

## "The Unknown Lover – songs by Solage and Machaut" - Avie Records (released autumn '06)

"Over the last 25 years the ensemble has delighted listeners with performances of the utmost clarity and beauty. Those contained on the latest release are no exception: listen to tenor Steven Harrold in the opening track, Solage's *Le Basile* ('The Basilisk') as he bewails the effects of envy and deceit while his three companions negotiate the accompaniment with great precision and a real feel for the highly syncopated rhythms; or the same composer's astonishingly modern-sounding *Fumeux fume par fume* ('From dreams the dreamer dreams') in which descending motifs explore distant tonalities, the low tessitura further adding to the hypnotic effect; or mezzo Catherine King's affecting simplicity in Machaut's monophonic *Se je soupir parfondement* ('If I sigh deeply')...the music itself is allowed to impact upon the listener, such is the pristine balance and intonation of the singers."

- **Robert Levett - International Record Review**

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"The performance triumphantly affirms the ensemble's claim to fame, and establishes that of Solage. Gothic Voices continue to exude vitality while masterfully controlling the most complex structures. Solage's output brings out their distinctive strengths: precision (of intonation, voice exchange and blend), edginess (of tempos and line), and clarity (of timbre and pronunciation). Perhaps most impressive is their facility for making highly esoteric music, including the vocalised accompaniment, engaging without compromising it's sophistication."

- **Berta Joncus, BBC Music Magazine**

"The singers manage with perfect ease the long vocalisations and rhythmic complexities of some of the ballades, for example *S'aincy estoit*: their performance flows as naturally as a gentle stream"

- **Mary Berry, The Gramophone**

"After a quarter of a century as mainstays of Hyperion's catalogue, Gothic Voices go it alone with their debut Avie release. The intricate poetic art and refined music of Guillaume de Machaut, servant to the king of Bohemia, and a shrewd politician, supplies part of their mouth-watering medieval programme. The balance holds the complete surviving works of Solage, best known for his *Fumeux, fume par fume*, probably written for an eccentric literary clique in the 1380's. Gothic Voices catch hold of the extravagant weirdness of works written with highly educated connoisseurs in mind, propelling them into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with irresistible dash and enthusiasm."

- **Andrew Stewart, Classic FM Magazine**