

AV0015

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15<sup>3/4</sup>  
Anniversary  
Edition



The Dufay Collective  
A L'Estampida  
MIEVEAL DANCE MUSIC



This recording was our first, made in London in June 1991. We feel that after twelve years it still stands up to scrutiny, and contains some really exciting and vibrant playing - proper dance music.

The music comes from the 12th to the 14th centuries and largely consists of variants upon what appears to have been the dance form par excellence of the Middle Ages, the estampie. Other pieces include a rare English example simply entitled the English Dance, and a keyboard piece in Franco-Italian style from an English source.

The surviving music of medieval minstrelsy gives very few clues as to how it would have been performed. All that is on the page is the single melodic line, often in a notation that can be open to a variety of rhythmic and pitch interpretations. Whilst this can be frustrating, it also allows the modern day performer a certain amount of freedom. We know more today of the practices of minstrels, but along with historically informed performance comes the need to provide variety for latter day audiences. Thus, the arrangements on this recording are very much our own, but based firmly on available research. You will hear soft ensembles of plucked harps and psaltery, vielles and flutes as well as the loud band of shawms, bagpipes and trumpets. As inspiration for the Italian istanpittas and salterellos we drew from extant playing traditions predominantly from southern Europe and north Africa. For the northern European music we looked at styles and instruments from celtic and gallic folk traditions. Contemporary accounts of practical music making and playing styles are scant, so these living links to the past are vital in our attempts to recreate the lost art of the medieval instrumentalist.

Nothing survives to indicate how these dances were performed, so tempi and repetition are largely conjectural. Despite the paucity of primary evidence, we feel that the spirit of the performances is what matters most, and this most varied first disc certainly achieves that.



## The Dufay Collective are:

<b>Paul Bevan</b>	whistle, slide trumpet, pipe & tabor, percussion
<b>Giles Lewin</b>	vielle, rebec, bagpipes, shawm, pipe & tabor
<b>William Lyons</b>	flute, shawm, recorders, bagpipes, symphony, pipe & tabor, percussion
<b>Susanna Pell</b>	vielle, percussion
<b>Peter Skuce</b>	organ, harp, percussion

with  
**Raphael Mizraki** oud, vielle, dulcimer,  
gittern, percussion

Recorded in June 1991 at St. Michael's Church,  
Blackheath, London, by John Whiting using  
a single Calrec Soundfield Microphone

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and members of The Dufay Collective.  
Museum guard appears courtesy of  
Stevenson Security Services, Letsby Avenue, London



nce upon a time there was a "humble lutenist" (Hong Kong Times) called William who, after three years of medieval studies at Exeter University, found himself dreaming of the life of a wandering minstrel.

'For sothe' quod Bill 'and by my fey God woot,  
I wol to London town wyth humble loot.  
And ther shal giv a counceerte as I myte,  
of Musyke fro the Corte of Snowe Whyte'.

Equipped as he was in those days with three chords, young Bill felt sure that fame and fortune were bound to follow his London debut, and so, as he had dreamed, close to the close of 1986 he put on a concert of Christmas music entitled Music from the Court of Snow White. On arrival in London Bill had met the perfect Snow White in the form of the singer Julia Gooding, as well as a significant number of fellow 'instruminstrelists', some of whom had mastered four or more chords but were nevertheless struggling to find employment and therefore only too delighted to join the throng of dwarfs Bill needed for his concert. Looking back on the event, none of the dwarfs was quite sure how we got through the concert, especially as Grumpy had failed to make it to most of the rehearsal, but a good deal of naïve enthusiasm, coupled with continued unemployment

found "Seven instrumentalists and a singer...", by now known as the Dufay Collective, practising in a basement in Pimlico for our first ever tour - Hong Kong and Western Australia - early in 1987.

The group are young and this inexperience showed in the more difficult pieces.

pointed out the Hong Kong Times, adding, in their keenness to lend expert advice to the youngsters:

Perhaps more rosin on the bows would have helped

Luckily the audiences, and several papers without the incisive technical know-how of the Hong Kong Times, greeted the concerts with great enthusiasm which, along with a sizeable pay cheque, encouraged the group to start to build a Collective career. Our next tour took us to Denmark and Belgium in a beaten-up ambulance rescued from Lambeth Council. Despite the freezing weather, several performances to difficult school children and a significant PR blunder from Peter - who chose to bellow at an audience member for talking loudly throughout the music, only to learn later that it was the concert promoter - the group survived the experience and came back with a significant collection of 'in-jokes' which have served us, and irritated guest singers, ever since.

Not long after conquering Belgium the group was booked for a tour in Russia where we found ourselves cowering outside our hotel when, in an astonishing display of military might, hundreds of tanks and gigantic missile launchers converged on us from all sides, roaring across the cobbles of Red Square. Despite such efforts, political commentators now believe that a blatant display of decadent western commercialism on the part of Zan and Bill was probably the key moment in the total collapse of the Soviet Block, which took place just days later.

The night before our departure a number of new Russian friends decided to throw a party for us. Dispensing with the effeminate niceties of music, dance or polite conversation, they rapidly knocked back a long series of very large vodkas, each one confiding in us that all of the others were in the KGB - after which one of them ate his glass! Giles, always keen to celebrate local customs to the full and obviously determined to make it a night to remember, had nevertheless forgotten most of the details the following morning as he lay slumped over the instrument cases at Moscow airport. Asked how he was feeling, he turned even greener and groaned, with diagnostic succinctness, "Oh \*\*\*\* me, I'm \*\*\*\*ing \*\*\*\*ed". Now, twelve years later, he occasionally finds himself wondering whether those oft quoted words might outlive his liver.



The fall of the Soviet Empire saw South Yemen reunified with the North. After spending most of the century cut-off from any contact with Western culture, the first outside entertainment seen in the ancient capital of Seyun was a concert given in the grounds of the Sultan's Palace by the Dufay Collective. With no tradition of concert-going it seemed to the director of the British Council that the best way to publicise the event and draw a crowd was to fly in a week before and start a rumour: "the English musicians are coming". Hundreds of tribesmen, having heard that the British were known for their punctuality, turned up an hour early to sit on the ground in the desert dust to see the show. Between items they showed their

appreciation and interest by talking animatedly about what they were hearing, employing clapping strictly as a rhythmical device with which to join in with the music. The antiphonal effects of the fast alternating patterns they used were unforgettable and made the average Wigmore Hall audience seem very dull by comparison!

The people of Yemen spend a significant percentage of the gross national product on qat. Wandering through the streets or sitting in the markets, they can be seen, at regular intervals throughout the morning, carefully checking, airing and re-arranging the several large



branches of what looks like privet hedge, which most of them carry wrapped in plastic. In the afternoon begins the lengthy business of selecting the best leaves and one by one chewing them and pushing them into the cheek they reserve for that function, until it takes on anything up to the size of a cricket ball. As a way to

relax whilst whiling away the afternoon chatting to friends, it seemed to Zan no more ridiculous than the mysterious western practice of rolling chopped leaves up in paper, putting the result in your mouth and setting light to it, so she bravely gave it a go.

Touring the Middle East was an ideal opportunity to expand our collection of ethnic instruments. In Yemen the Minister of Culture presented us with an Oud on behalf of the Yemeni people and in Upper Egypt, having improvised a welcome song (which we learned later spoke mainly of the attractions of the female members of our party), some local musicians proceeded to sell us the instruments they had just performed on. What they failed to sell us was the instruction manual on how to get a beautiful, resonant and evocative sound out of a coconut shell tied to a chair leg. Meanwhile, in a concert in Cairo, Peter tried to explain that, following a dance played on the Pipe & Tabor, the audience would hear a piece that was found in Coventry Cathedral jotted on the fly-leaf of a Psalter. The following day all this was duly reported in the Cairo Times:

The piece was played upon the pipe and paper, so called because it's played on a pipe and the drum is made of paper. This dance was found written down on the back of a saucer.

As is well known Paul, whenever travelling south of Belsize Park, lives in perpetual fear of contracting Denghi Fever. It was therefore a



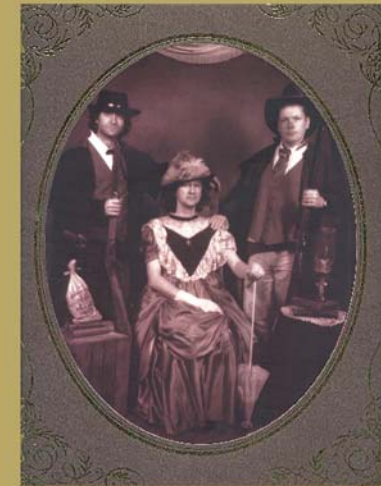
surprise to us all when he agreed to join us in a piece of medieval exploration beyond what is normally required – a trip to India in the height of an outbreak of the Plague.

We had come to expect some of our tours in the East to feel a little like stepping back in time but Paul, Peter and Bill were entirely unprepared, when travelling firmly on the more lunatic side of the Iron Curtain, to discover what seemed to be an old and faded photograph, in a store in the Wild West of San Diego. The picture must have dated back to the 19th century and appeared to depict a couple of young cow-pokes and their much loved mom. But there was something horribly familiar about the portrait which we could never quite put our finger on.

It was early in the 1990s that we recorded our first commercial release - the disc you are probably listening to now. Although our performance of this dance programme was described by

the Independent as "a medieval 'jam' session as brilliantly sophisticated as anything you're likely to hear at Ronnie Scott's", even we were a little surprised when an improvisation in a 14th century Italian dance seemed to segue quite naturally into an extended quote from the Ian Dury song 'Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll'. Until, that is, years later when one of us heard Ian Dury in a radio interview where he said he felt he should finally own up to having stolen that famous theme from an African musician. Perhaps it's just one of those tunes that has a timeless, cross-culture inevitability...

We hope you enjoy it.





THEIR VERY FIRST RECORDING – MADE IN 1991  
 '...these dances will set feet tapping,  
 arms moving and even hips swaying.'  
 CD REVIEW



The Dufay Collective  
**A L'Estampida**  
 MEDIEVAL DANCE MUSIC



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For more information visit: [www.dufay.com](http://www.dufay.com)

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