

« Quelques chants extraordinaires »

☞ Program Notes ☛

PROGRAMME

Vous qui voyez couler mes larmes	Abbé Simon-Joseph Pellegrin (1663-1745) Cantique sur un air de l' <i>Europe Gallante</i> d'André Campra (1660-1744)
Ave Maris Stella	Hymne, archives CND (1763)
Salve sancta parens	Introït pour la Fête de la Visitation, archives CND
Kyrie :	<i>Messe Royale du Premier Ton</i> d'Henri Du Mont (1610-1684), archives CND Pièces d'orgue de la <i>Messe du Premier Ton du Livre d'Orgue</i> d'André Raison (1650-1719)
Benedicta et venerabilis es	Graduel pour la Fête de la Visitation, archives CND
Alleluia /Felix es sacra virgo Maria	Alleluia pour la Fête de la Visitation, archives CND
Te Deum	Hymne, archives CND
Salve Regina	Antienne, archives CND
Salve, salve, salve Regina [1,2]	Petit Motet de Nicolas Bernier (1664-1734)

☞ P A U S E ☛

Prélude du 2^e ton	Premier livre de <i>Pièces d'orgue</i> de Nicolas Lebègue (1631-1702)
Pange Linga et Tantum ergo [2]	Petit motet de Nicolas Lebègue
Beata es virgo Maria	Offertoire pour la Fête de la Visitation, archives CND
Sanctus & Agnus Dei :	<i>Messe Royale du Premier Ton</i> d'Henri Du Mont Pièces d'orgue de la <i>Messe du Premier Ton du Livre d'Orgue</i> d'André Raison
Beata viscera Mariae virginis	Communion pour la Fête de la Visitation, archives CND
Ut audivit et Psaume 21	Antienne (archives CND) et psaume pour la Fête de la Visitation
Beata es Maria et Magnificat	Archives des Ursulines (v.1700)
Ave, ave Filia	Petit motet anonyme, archives CND
Suivons Jésus, c'est lui qui nous mène	Abbé Simon-Joseph Pellegrin Cantique sur un air de l' <i>Amadis</i> de Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687)

☞ Ensemble Scholastica ☛

Rebecca Bain, direction	Cynthia Gates [1]	Carole LeDez
Elizabeth Ekholm	Marie-Josée Goyette	Micheline Racicot, luth
Jody Freeman	Catherine Herrmann	Angèle Trudeau [2]

avec Dorothea Ventura, orgue

☞ Merci / Thanks ☛

La Congrégation Notre-Dame de Montréal	Père Yvon Cousineau et la Paroisse St-Laurent
Josée Sarazin et les archives de la CND	Bruno Cognyl-Fournier
Élisabeth Gallat-Morin	

The 375th anniversary of the City of Montreal presents a unique opportunity to ponder the past and our connection to it. As a women's vocal ensemble that specializes in historical music, Ensemble Scholastica felt compelled to explore a largely forgotten part of our city's musical heritage: the songs of women living in religious communities that were so integral to the society of New France. We were delighted to discover that manuscripts from these communities are still preserved in local archives. Though our main focus has been medieval repertoires, we soon realized that our experience interpreting much older manuscripts from similar communities in Europe has given us a certain familiarity with material from New France.

As a group based in Montreal, Ensemble Scholastica has chosen to pay special tribute to the city's Congrégation Notre-Dame (CND). Founded in 1658 by Marguerite Bourgeoys as a teaching institution, it quickly became New France's largest women's community. Though Marguerite Bourgeoys herself felt that singing had the potential to distract the sisters from their mission, during the course of the 18th century, musical expression became an increasingly integral part of CND services. The singing of "*quelques chants extraordinaires*" ("several extraordinary songs" – as noted in a 1720 letter written by Sister Sainte Henriette) was particularly encouraged on special occasions, such as that of the community's principle feast day, the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was celebrated every year on July 2nd.

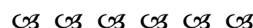
For this program, we present music for this very occasion. Although most of the plainchant is from a much older tradition, we will sing the versions found in the most important surviving source of CND music from this period. This manuscript was prepared in or before 1763 and was mostly copied by the Sulpician Jean Girard (1685-1765), whom eminent musicologist Elisabeth Gallat-Morin refers to as Montreal's first professional musician. The first 22 pages of this manuscript contain the chant for the entire Visitation mass. Today's program contains all of the propers from this mass: **Salve sancta parens**, **Benedicta et venerabilis es**, **Alleluia/Felix es**, **Beata es virgo** and **Beata viscera**. Their texts all praise Mary, "bearer of the Creator". Our **Kyrie**, **Sanctus** and **Agnus Dei** are also taken from these pages. They are part of the famous *Messe Royale* by Flemish composer Henri Du Mont which Girard appears to have copied into this manuscript for the use of the Congrégation Notre-Dame. These three parts of the mass were typically performed with alternating organ and plainchant, as we do in this program. For the organ interludes, we have chosen works of a contemporary of Du Mont, André Raison, taken from his *Livre d'Orgue*. The hymn **Ave Maris Stella** and the antiphon **Salve regina** have been sung for various Marian feasts since the Middle Ages. The plainchant melodies which we sing here are variants of the older versions and are also taken from the manuscript of 1763.

Since the Feast of the Visitation was not only celebrated at Mass but during the various offices throughout the day, we have included one of Christianity's oldest office hymns, the **Te Deum**. Once again, our plainchant is the setting from the CND manuscript. On alternating verses we apply the French "faux-bourdon" technique that was also used in New France. This was a simple way of adding harmony to certain types of plainchant, most often applied to psalm singing. We have thus also used it here to sing **Psalm 21**. For the Feast of the Visitation this psalm was paired with the antiphon **Ut audivit**, which speaks of the baby John the Baptist leaping with joy in his mother Elizabeth's womb as she greets Mary. The **Magnificat** is still sung at Vespers and is paired with different antiphons,

depending on the occasion. Its text are the words with which Mary greets her pregnant cousin Elizabeth. In homage to another of New France's female communities, the Ursulines of Quebec City, we have chosen a Magnificat setting from their archives. Here, alternate verses are set to melodies in the baroque French style and sung by soloists. The antiphon appropriate to the Feast of the Visitation, **Beata es Maria**, completes the piece.

Today's program also contains several accompanied songs. Period CND archives do not offer much of this type of material, but period sources containing motets by well-known French composers can be found in other Quebec archives. *Petit motets*, usually solos or duos accompanied at the organ, were an important part of festive church services throughout New France, including at the CND. **Salve, salve Regina** by Nicolas Bernier is based on the Salve Regina plainchant described above. **Pange Lingua** and **Tantum ergo** were included in a variety of services; here we have chosen a petit motet setting by Nicolas Lebègue.

Our program is bookended by music that was not necessarily intended for use in church. The *cantique spirituel* was a religious text in French (as opposed to Latin) written to be sung to a well-known secular tune. In fact, many of these tunes were from popular operas by famous composers! In New and "old" France, cantiques were often performed informally by the laity and, since it was a popular accompanying instrument among amateur musicians of the period, the lute may have been used in just such a context. We have chosen **Vous qui voyez coulez mes larmes** and **Suivons Jésus, c'est lui qui nous mène** from an 18th-century collection of cantiques by French librettist Abbé Simon-Joseph Pellegrin that was in circulation amongst the clergy and possibly also the laity of New France. *Suivons Jésus*, our last piece, will be preceded by a small gem of a motet, **Ave, ave Filia**. This final and unaccompanied song to Mary was copied by an anonymous hand on the back pages of our main CND manuscript.



Founded in 2008 by musicologist Pascale Duhamel, **Ensemble Scholastica** is a female vocal ensemble based in Montréal, the only one that specializes in the performance of medieval plainchant and polyphony. The ensemble is comprised of a selection of talented and dedicated vocalists from Montréal's thriving early music community. We are currently directed by leading medieval music specialist Rebecca Bain. To follow our activities, please visit our website or Facebook page.

www.ensemblescholastica.ca

Dorothea Ventura

Singer, dancer, actress, harpsichordist, vocal coach and choir director, Dorothea Ventura is very active in the artistic community in Quebec. She has performed in over 350 productions, is cofounder of ensembles *ALKEMIA* and *Sonate 1704*, and is professor of harpsichord at the Trois-Rivières CEGEP. Dorothea has recorded over 15 CDs, several of which earned Juno awards and the *Prix Opus*.

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Musique à la Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Montréal au 18^e siècle
18th-century music from the Congrégation de Notre-Dame in Montreal



Archives CND, Montréal



Ensemble de voix de femmes spécialisé en musiques anciennes
Women's vocal ensemble for early music
Direction : Rebecca Bain ; avec/with Dorothea Ventura, orgue /organ

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