# Guillaume Du Fay

Opera Omnia 01/21

## Lamentatio Sanctae Matris Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae

Edited by Alejandro Enrique Planchart



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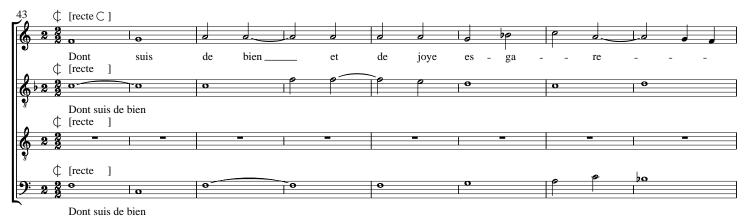
# Opera Omnia

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### Sources

MC, pp. 378-79 (no. 102), some text in the cantus, more complete text in the tenor. "Duffay."

Ricc, fols. 34v-36r (no. 30), headed "Lamentacio sancte matris ecclesie Constaninopolitane." Text in the cantus and the tenor.

### Clefs and mensurations

		1	43
Cantus	c1	O, MC, Ricc	¢, MC, Ricc
Contratenor	c4	O, MC, Ricc	¢, MC, Ricc
Tenor	c3	O, MC, Ricc	¢, MC, Ricc
Bassus	F4	O, MC, Ricc	¢, MC, Ricc

### Text

Cantus		
1	O tres piteulx de tout espoir fontaine,	O most merciful one, fountain of all hope,
	Pere du filz don't suis mere esploree,	Father of the son of whom I am the tearful mother,
	Plaindre me viens a ta court souveraine	I come to lay my complaint at your sovereign court
	De ta puissance et de nature humaine,	That your power and human nature
	Qui on souffert telle durté villaine	Have allowed such villainous harm
	Faire a mon filz, qui tant m'a honouree.	To be done to my son, who has honored me so much.
2	Don't suis de bien et de joye esgaree,	Thus I am bereft of goodness and joy,
	Sans que vivant veulle entendre mes plains.	Without anyone living willing to hear my complaints.
	A toy, seul Dieu, du forfeit me complains,	To you, only God, I complain of the crime,
	Du gref tourment et doleureulx oultrage,	Of the grave torment and painful outrage,
	Que voy souffrir au plus bel des humains	That I see the most noble of men suffer
	Sans nul confort de tout humain lignage.	Without any comfort from the whole human lineage.
Tenor	Omnes amici eius spreverunt eam.	All her friends have dealt treacherously with her.
	Non est qui consoletur eam ex omnibus caris eius.	Among all her lovers she has none to comfort her.

This cannot be the lament of the Holy Church at the Feast of the Pheasant in Lille on 17 February 1454, since the Burgundian chroniclers give the complete text of that lamentation, which is entirely different, and furthermore they do not indicate that it was sung. But this is surely one of the four laments for the fall of Constantinople mentioned in Du Fay's letter to the Medici dated 22 February [1456], as having texts supplied from Naples and having been composed the previous year. Therefore the piece was written during Du Fay's sojourn at the court of Savoy.

Virtually all the literature on this piece misunderstands the *persona* of the speaker or the court referred to in the text,<sup>3</sup> because the title makes use of a rare double genitive. It should be translated as "Lamentation of the mother of the Constantinopolitan church." The speaker is then the Virgin Mary, and her complaint is directly addressed to God the Father. Du Fay's use of a tenor from the Lamentation of Jeremiah, 1:2, as sung during Holy Week (cf. LU, 631), but with the two phrases reversed, should be read as a direct rebuke to all European powers, who failed to help

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> David Fallows, *Dufay*, rev. ed. (London: Dent, 1987), 71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Florence, Archivio di Stato, Mediceo avanti il Principato, MS VI 765. Cf. Frank D'Accone, "The Singers of San Giovanni in Florence During the 15th Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 14 (1961), 318-19. See also <a href="http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/nuovosito">http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/nuovosito</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Cf. David Fallows, *The Songs of Guillaume Dufay. Critical Commentary to the Revisions of Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae, Ser I, vol. VI*, Musicological Studies and Documents 47 (Stuttgart: American Institute of Musicology, Hänssler, 1995), 55.

the Byzantine empire. In this respect this is Du Fay's most overtly "political" work, telling the European princes (including his patrons): "where were you when she needed your help?"

The piece follows the formal pattern of a number of English works that Du Fay probably came to know well in the 1440s and 1450s, with a first section in perfect time and a second in imperfect time. Both sources use the mensurations  $\bigcirc$  and  $\updownarrow$  for perfect and imperfect time respectively. I have let the second sign stand, but it probably represents an editorial translation of Du Fay's original sign which was most likely English  $\bigcirc$ , where three semibreves in  $\bigcirc$  equal four in  $\bigcirc$ . Italian scribes usually used  $\updownarrow$  to indicate this same tempo relationship and changed Du Fay's signs accordingly. The tempos of the piece are in some ways determined by its status as a formal motet rather than a song. I would suggest MM 90 for the semibreve (half-note) in  $\bigcirc$  and MM 120 in  $\updownarrow$ .

The musical text largely follows MC, which has fewer errors than Ricc, but neither source is very good, and a number of conflated readings have been included. On measure 78 I propose a tentative emendation of the contratenor. It is possible that Du Fay wrote the C to force the performers *not* to use any *musica ficta* in the other voices, but the C is the kind of contrapuntal solecism that is largely absent from Du Fay's music otherwise.