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## "Doulce memoire': A Study of Performance Practices." By George Houle

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## Reviews of Books

George Houle. *"Doulce memoire": a Study of Performance Practices. With Twenty-four Versions of the Chanson.* Publications of the Early Music Institute, Thomas Binkley, general editor. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990. ix, 131pp.

The sixteenth-century actor-singer-composer Pierre Regnault *dit* Sandrin wrote a number of chansons that, capturing the graceful tone in fashion at the court of Francis I, achieved wide circulation and marked him as a successful colleague of Claudin de Sermisy. Among these pieces *Doulce memoire*, the setting of an eight-line poem attributed in several sources to the king himself, was perhaps the most popular. It was often reprinted after its first appearance in a volume printed by Jacques Moderne in Lyon in 1537-1538; its music was used for noëls and for a Latin paraphrase (*Dulcis memoria*); lute, viol, cittern, and keyboard intabulations of it appeared throughout the century; there were vocal arrangements, paraphrases, and parodies of it for two to six voices; it served Cipriano de Rore and Orlando di Lasso as a basis for Masses; and its music shows up as the final section of a Magnificat by Clemens non Papa.

George Houle has transcribed the chanson and twenty-three of its vocal and instrumental arrangements, prefacing the music with an introduction that deals with such general matters as solmization, ficta, mode, and cadence, and then comments briefly on the music that follows. His introduction is couched in "user-friendly" language, in an apparent effort to reassure performers who might be put off by too much erudition (sixteenth-century writers on music are repeatedly referred to as "learned theorists," different from the likes of us performers, for example). Its content is straightforward and useful and draws on good authority such as Karol Berger on ficta. Some minor points might be raised about this introduction. Advice on how to apply solmization to melodic skips is not

altogether clear; it would have helped to tell readers that students of the Guidonian system memorized the hexachord syllables associated with every pitch (the three *D*'s in the gamut are, for example, known and applied as *d sol re*, *d'la sol re*, and *d" la sol*). In a citation from Zarlino's *Le institutioni harmoniche* on p. 8, the first word on the second line should be *semiditono*, not *semitono*; and in the translation that follows, the phrase "by use of accidentals" should be eliminated since this is not what Zarlino says (curiously, the Italian text is not given for further Zarlino citations). There is some confusion between cadence and mode (see the discussion of "Phrygian" cadences on p. 10), suggesting that the author is mixing modern tonal pedagogy with Renaissance ideas. A general casualness in the prose indicates that little editorial work was done on the introduction (see, for example, p. 11, where it is said that "all-encompassing ornamentation," running from bass to cantus parts, is "less frequently done . . . by a singer"). Other minor points could be cited; but on the whole the introduction is solid and well suited to the volume's purposes.

According to the author there are thirty-six versions of *Doulce memoire* known to him. I was unable to find thirty-six different items in his bibliography, nor are there that many listed in Frank Dobbins's informative study of the chanson.<sup>1</sup> Dobbins, who lists several sources not given by Houle, has a total of thirty arrangements of Sandrin's work. Presumably Houle is counting reprints and manuscript sources for Sandrin's chanson in giving this number, though he does not make use of them in his edition. The bibliography lists modern editions for a few of the pieces cited, but there are more; the chanson itself was published by Robert Eitner.<sup>2</sup> Some of the intabulations have been published in modern editions as well; I shall return to this point later.

There are some idiosyncrasies in presentation of the music. Houle gives Sandrin's piece, and all the vocal arrangements, in unreduced values, in socre with modern clefs, but without barlines or *mensurstrich* (he uses rehearsal letters, placed at cadential points). The music is well spaced and easy enough to read, though for Buus's six-voice version the score is rather an open sea of notes without vertical markers as guides. Having given instructions about application of ficta, the author presents Sandrin's piece without editorial accidentals; but these are added for the other vocal treatments of *Doulce memoire*, an odd inconsistency.

1. "Doulce Mémoire: a Study of the Parody Chanson," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 96 (1969-1970), 85-101.

2. *Publikationen älterer . . . Musikwerke* 23, p. 103; it is, of course, in Albert Seay's collected edition of Sandrin's work (American Institute of Musicology, 1968).

Individual voice parts for the three-to-six voice pieces (but not those for two voices) and for the viol intabulations are given at the back of the book. Since the volume is published in a spiral binding, one could tear out these pages and hand them out to singers, perhaps saving a trip to the xerox machine; but then I don't see why the score could not have had barlines, particularly since the author in his introduction refers to spots in the pieces by tactus numbers, hard to count without such vertical aids.

The lute pieces are given in mensural notation without reproducing the tablature. This strikes me as old-fashioned, and apart from lutenists' preference as to notation it makes the music uncheckable for accuracy. That some checking might be necessary occurred to me as I looked over the tablatures. In Albert de Rippe's version there is a spot (p. 36, one bar before D) where an A is held against a G#; J.-M. Vaccaro's edition (*Oeuvres d'Albert de Rippe*, Paris, 1972-75, vol. 3, p. 136) gives a rest replacing the A. Vreedman's cittern version of *Doulce memoire* has in Houle's edition (pp. 42-43) several spots (three bars after C; one bar before I; one bar before L) with unexpected and inexplicable dissonances not present in Helmut Mönkemeyer's edition (Vreedman, *Intabulatur: Musik für die Cister* [Hofheim am Taunus, 1980-1981], vol. 2, p. 74). Errors aside, I think it would be preferable to give the tablatures along with the transcriptions.

The volume is certainly of interest to scholars concerned with sixteenth-century techniques of arrangement, paraphrase, and parody. For scholarly purposes it would have been preferable to have all extant versions of the piece, not a selection, however generous. For performers I wonder whether having so many *Doulce memoire*'s is as useful or as interesting as would be a volume giving several versions of several popular chansons. Here I am committing the reviewer's sin of complaining that the author wrote the book he did rather than the one I would have had him do, and for this I apologize. I say it chiefly in order to convey my impression that the book falls a bit between categories; it is not quite scholarly enough, in scope or methodology, for the needs of musicologists, a bit insistent on its single theme for what I imagine, perhaps wrongly, the desires of performers of music of this period to be. It is nonetheless interesting, useful, and on the whole well presented; Professor Houle is to be congratulated and thanked for his *Doulce memoire*.

James Haar