

Formed in 1988 by the Early Music Centre of Great Britain, the Orlando Consort has achieved a reputation as one of the most expert and consistently challenging groups performing repertoire spanning the years 1050 to 1600. Working with leading academics on music that has often never been performed in modern times, the ensemble's four singers have set new standards of performance, particularly with regard to the pronunciation and tuning of this fascinating repertoire. Much more than a simple early music group, the Orlando Consort has also garnered praise for its imaginative presentation of contemporary music, jazz, and education projects, while delighting audiences with an uncanny ability to present old music with an inspiring and fresh approach.

The group has made many recordings for Saydisc, Metronome, Linn, and Deutsche Grammophon, and since 2001 for Harmonia Mundi USA. *The Mystery of Notre Dame* (works by Perotin and others) was nominated for an Edison Award, while *Loysset Compère, 1445-1518, Popes and Antipopes* (Papal music from the 14th and 15th centuries), *Passiontide* (15th Century Flemish Easter music), the *Missa De plus en plus* (Ockeghem), *The Saracen and the Dove* (music for the courts of Padua and Pavia), and *Motets by Josquin Desprez* have all been short-listed for Gramophone Awards. *The Works of John Dunstaple* was chosen as the 1996 Gramophone Early Music CD of the Year, an honor repeated in 2003 by *The Call of the Phoenix* (English 15th century motets). Their two CD-book collections, *Food, Wine and Song* and *Medieval Gardens*, included critically acclaimed feature articles from leading chefs and horticulturalists such as Clarissa Dickson Wright, Jean-Christophe Novelli, and Sir Roy Strong. The year 2008 saw the release of a recording pairing Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame* with *Scattered Rhymes*, a new work by the young British composer Tarik O'Regan performed with the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir.

The Consort made their debut at the BBC Proms in the 1997 season, and at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1998. Regular performers at London's Wigmore Hall and the South Bank Centre, the Consort has also sung in festivals in Spain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Greece, Estonia, France, Poland, the Czech Republic, Russia, Italy, Portugal, and Sweden, as well as the Spitalfields, Bury St. Edmunds, Aldeburgh, St. David's, Cheltenham, and Chester Festivals, the Manchester Early Music Series, the City of London Festival, the St. Magnus Festival in Orkney, the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, and the Beverley and York Early Music Festivals.

The Consort first performed in North America in November 1992 at the University of Notre Dame at a conference held in honor of the 500th anniversary of the death of Busnoys. Recent American tours have included performances many early music series, such as the Boston Early Music Festival; the Seattle Early Music Guild; the Houston, San Francisco, and San Diego Early Music Societies; the Renaissance & Baroque Society (Pittsburgh); Early Music Now (Milwaukee); and Early Music Vancouver. College and university performances have taken place at Stanford University, Columbia University, Dartmouth College, Cornell University, Haverford College, the Eastman School of Music, the University of Maryland, the University of Vermont, and Penn State University. They have also performed at Spivey Hall (Atlanta), the Da Camera Society (Los Angeles), the Dumbarton Concert Series (Washington), and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They make their Carnegie Hall debut in a performance for the hall's Early Music series in February 2011.

The work of the Orlando Consort extends well beyond conventional early music presentation. They frequently perform with choirs and with actors of the caliber of Robert Hardy and Prunella Scales. They appear regularly with The Calefax Reed Quintet and in collaboration with the jazz quartet Perfect Houseplants. They have just begun touring a new project, "Mantra," with the tabla artist Kuljit Bhamra, which explores a musical dialogue developed in Portuguese Goa in the early 16th century.

[September 2010]