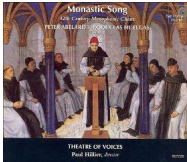


### Peter Abelard & Codex Las Huelgas - Monastic Songs 12th Century (1998)



Peter Abelard: 1. *O quanta qualia* 2. *Virgines caste* 3. *Planctus cigne "Clangam filii"* Anon.,  
Codex Las Huelgas:

4. *Quis dabit* 5. *O monialis* 6. *Rex obiit* 7. *Plange, Castella*

Peter Abelard:

8. *De profundis* 9. *Epithalamica* 10. *Planctus David "Dolorum solatium"*

Theatre of Voices Paul Hillier (Conductor)

While many people are familiar with the story of doomed love between 12th-century teacher and theologian Peter Abelard and his lover Heloise, few are aware that Abelard was also a musician. Among his works are numerous love songs for Heloise, a book of hymns, and a number of planctus (laments). This recording features six of Abelard's surviving religious pieces, including his famous hymn, "O quanta qualia," the text of which still appears in modern hymnals. Also on the program are four planctus taken from the magnificent Codex Las Huelgas. This lovely, atmospheric recording uses both men's and women's voices and occasionally an instrumental drone-played on a vielle, an ancient bowed instrument, to lend variety and authenticity (the music from Las Huelgas originally would have been sung by women). The performances consistently invoke a sense of the music's meditative, spiritual nature; the sound perfectly complements the flowing melodic lines. --David Vernier, amazon.com

There is much to commend here but first a warning: this is a repackaging of two albums previously released under different titles, namely 'The Age Of Cathedrals' from 1996 and 'Hoquetus' from 1999. Both are worth hearing but if we are to be strictly accurate there is not a great amount of what can technically be labelled monastic chant. CD One, 'The Age Of Cathedrals' is subtitled 'Music From The Magnus Liber Organi' and takes us from anonymous

compositions sung in the great abbey of St Martial in Limoges to the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The vast space of the new cathedral needed to be filled with light from the stained glass windows and with sound from the increasingly professional choirs with, for the first time, credited composers such as Leoninus, Petrotinus and Philip the Chancellor. Whether the music was for the glory of God or the aggrandisement of the cathedral and its bishop is debatable but the end result is magnificent and beautifully sung by the male octet Theatre Of Voices under Paul Hillier. 'Hoquetus', subtitled 'Medieval European Vocal Music', takes us a century forward and further afield than just France. Theatre Of Voices remains an octet although some of the singers have changed in the three years between recordings and here are supplemented by Christoph Bowers-Broadbent on a suitably antique-sounding organ for four solos that break up the recital of 25 songs. A hocket, to use its Old English spelling, is a two-part vocal style dating back to the 12th century where it was popularised by Perotin. The songs on this CD sound more like early folk songs than the more obviously religious songs of CD One although, if my Latin serves me, some have religious titles. As a contrast to the more exalted music from 'The Age Of Cathedrals' this is interesting and I can imagine using it as an audio aid in a history or music lesson, even if I do not return to it as an aid to meditation or relaxation which I anticipate doing with CD One. If we take 'The Age Of Cathedrals' as a recommended purchase we can happily accept 'Hoquetus' as a bonus, particularly when we see the generous price for this well presented set. –Stephen Whitehead, crossrhythms.co.uk

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