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***The Pleasures of Love & Libation***

Airs by Julie Pinel & other Paris Women

La Donna Musicale, Laury Gutiérrez,  
viola da gamba and director

La Donna Musicale 2004

(available at [www.ladm.org](http://www.ladm.org))

65:36 minutes

La Donna Musicale is a group of vocalists and instrumentalists based in Boston, devoted to the discovery and promotion of music by women composers of the baroque era. Its pioneering championship of Antonia Padoani Bembo is discussed above. Here, in the group's most recent release on its own label, they delve into an almost totally forgotten realm of music-making by French women in the last years of the 17th Century and early years of the 18th.

Of the 19 selections here, two are instrumental pieces (including a lovely violin sonata) by the only familiar name here, Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre (1665-1729). She is, in point of fact, also the only one of the nine ladies represented here for whom we have precise dates. The main one (six pieces) is a certain Julie Pinel, vaguely known as a member of a prominent family of lutenists. She flourished 1710-1737. The latter year is actually the year of her own publication of a collection of her songs. The only other vaguely dated composer is Anne (or Marguerite) Bocquet (fl. 1650). In between are found others identified only as Milles Herault, Herville, Denis, and Bataille, or just "Mlle B\*\*\*" or even "Mlle \*\*\*"—one song for each.

Their creations follow in the line of the airs—songs for one or more singers, on either romantic or boisterous subjects—going back to the late 16th Century. The songs by these scarcely identified ladies were picked up and published monthly from the 1690's to 1715 by Christophe Ballard in his printings titled *Recueil d'airs Sérieux et à Boire* (Collection of Serious and Drinking Songs).

The songs range from solo (soprano) pieces, through dialogs, to little ensembles, with varying instrumental support. Their character ranges from quite simple to intricately expressive. The texts are rich in coded eroticism. But there is certainly enjoyable variety in them, as well as a good deal of beauty.

The forces mustered here include four women (Sherezade Panthaki, Yulia Van Doren, Lydia H. Knutson, Daniela Tošić) plus two men (the indispensable early-music tenor, Aaron Sheehan, and bass David Olsen) and eight instrumentalists, led by the group's artistic director, gambist Laury Gutiérrez. Their work is of top quality, with particularly fine attention to French diction and stylistic feeling. The sound is strong and vivid. The booklet includes full texts with translations, plus excellent notes.

This might seem a venture into a minor byway, but it is really an altogether outstanding release that collectors of baroque vocal music should definitely investigate.

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