

## York Early Music festival review – sublime

★★★★

### Various venues, York

The Early Opera Company gave a thrilling account of Charpentier's *Actéon*, the London Handel Players brought baroque dances to life and the Huelgas Ensemble shone a light on Firminus Caron

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Recovering Renaissance obscurities ... the Huelgas Ensemble

The chief chorister at Amiens cathedral, Firminus Caron, was a mid-15th century one-hit wonder. His most influential chanson, [Hélas que pourra devenir](#), was catchy enough to be copied out in many different manuscripts across Europe; though today his work is known only among the tiniest handful of specialists.

[The Huelgas Ensemble](#), which has been recovering renaissance obscurities since its foundation by Paul Van Nevel 40 years ago, gave a sublime programme in the Quire of York Minster, presenting movements from Caron's five mass settings in chronological order.

The years in which Caron was active coincided with the earliest experiments in polyphony; listening to the harmonic development of his writing was like the aural equivalent of a time-lapse film of a flower opening. Though it is impossible to know how intimate these pieces were intended to sound, it is rare to hear repertoire from this era sung so softly.