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RECORDINGS
Recent releases of plainchant

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Another reissue of Decca's long series of recordings made at the abbey of Solesmes is good news. Accord is a French reissue label of the Universal group (formerly PolyGram) that earlier had reissued about a dozen CDs that matched each original LP in content. The first five reissues were listed in *A Gregorian Chant Discography*, and five more were reported here in 1994 (nos. 19 to 23). Now, duplicating the contents of at least seven of those earlier discs, a new programme has begun with the cooperation of the monks of Solesmes to arrange the chants according to the liturgical year. Titles have been brought up to date, such as 'Sixth Sunday of Easter' and 'chant d'entrée'. New digital transfers made from the original tapes provide superb sound. The first twelve discs have appeared in eight packages (two or three discs in some cases), and we can expect as many as another dozen discs to come.

The first disc (no. 1 in the list below), the four Sundays of Advent, is substantially the complete contents of two LPs listed in *A Gregorian Chant Discography* as **7555** and **7559**. Only two Sanctus and two Agnus Dei settings on the second LP are omitted. The next set (no. 2) runs from Christmas to the Baptism of Christ, offering two discs assembled from five LPs, including all of **7560** (the Mass at Dawn and the Baptism of Christ) and all of **7529** (the other two Masses of Christmas) except four fillers (miscellaneous chants added to the principal series of selections), along with the Epiphany Mass Propers from **7502** (the hymn *Hostis Herodes* is included, though misidentified). In addition, the side of **20185** devoted to the Christmas Vigil and all but four chants from **20184** are included. The last item was an incomplete set of antiphons and responsories for Christmas Matins, unfortunately made even less complete here. (The first complete set of the twelve responsories was recorded at Montserrat in 1973.)

The next set of two discs (no. 3) offers one side of **174080** devoted to Laetare Sunday, as well as all of **20150** for Palm Sunday and **173904** for Septuagesima (the last issued in 1960, not 1970 as stated). Not credited in the sources are two miscellaneous chants taken from **174047**. The first disc is unusually short; in fact, if Septuagesima and Laetare Sunday were on one disc and Palm Sunday on the other, they would be more evenly balanced, not to mention the more appropriate liturgical sequence.

The next set of three discs (no. 4) combines four LPs of the Triduum, **174029** for Holy Thursday, **174047** and **173903** for Good Friday, and **20103** for the final day of Tenebrae. Logically, the two fillers on the second LP have been moved to the previous set and omitted here. The first and third discs in this set are unusually short, containing no more than the original LPs. On the next disc (no. 5), the Easter Sunday of **7501** is filled out with the two Vigil chants and the Sunday after Easter from **173956**. Then (no. 6), we hear the Third Sunday after Easter from the other side of **173956** and the three remaining Sundays after Easter from **173988**.

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The liturgical year continues (no. 7) with Ascension from **7544**, Pentecost from **7543**, and Vespers of the Holy Trinity, which took up more than half of **7545**. Finally, the disc devoted to the feasts of Our Lady (no. 8) includes the Common Mass and the Immaculate Conception from **173856** (the only mono original in this group), the Annunciation from **174019**, and the Assumption from **7544**. Two chants from the Common are omitted (one that was duplicated on the feast of the Annunciation and one extra Alleluia chant), but this is the fullest CD in the series (even so, nine of the twelve run over an hour). Clearly, the discs were planned to be generous within the framework of logical programming. The packaging is elegant.

Contemporary efforts at Solesmes have provided another disc directed by Dom Richard Gagné (no. 9), following the two listed last year (2003, nos. 1 and 2). The programme is similar to the first collection of popular chants from *Liber Cantualis*. The two sprinkling chants for Sunday Mass are alternatives to the more familiar ones, the Ordinary is Mass VIII (there were two cycles on the earlier disc), and two of the final antiphons of Our Lady are sung in the simple tone (the other two were on the earlier disc). As a note in the earlier disc booklet made clear, the chants most beloved by the laity and deemed worthy of perpetuating in the era of vernacular worship are not the ancient Mass Propers that are so interesting to scholars but the later chants for occasional use. Every schoolchild knew *Stabat mater*, composed by Dom Paul Jausions and included on this disc. Each disc includes a set of Benediction hymns. It seems odd to treat brief responsories as beloved by the laity, for while they are simple to sing they were never used outside the Office. The singing is superb, and Dom Gagné is a worthy successor to a great line of choir directors at Solesmes.

The set of discs on the life of Christ that began last year (2003, no. 6) has now been completed (nos. 10 and 11) with a total of ninety-two chants, most of them antiphons, perhaps as many as eighteen of them (on these two discs) not recorded previously. The format is similar to two LPs recorded at Argentan, 'L'Histoire du Salut', which included twelve of these chants (not surprising, given some obvious choices). The men and women alternate, joining in octaves in climactic passages, and solo voices are used in verses as appropriate. The only divergence from the long list of brief chants is the complete St John Passion, which leads off the third disc. Three solo men sing the familiar chant, as first recorded at Solesmes, but there is no small schola singing the Turba sections here. Another notable selection on the final disc is the Offertory *Angelus Domini* with both verses, sung by women's voices, even if this has been recorded three times already. Organ pieces by Gerald Near and Jean Langlais are added.

Among new recordings devoted to particular liturgical observances, the most impressive comes from Jaan-Eik Tulve, already familiar from several recordings that he made with the Choeur Grégorien de Paris. Now that he has founded a chant schola in his native Estonia, he has given us a set of nine lamentations and their responsories for Tenebrae (no. 12). The programme is framed by *Deus Deus meus*, the complete Tract for Palm Sunday, and *Christus factus est* (sung in RVR format). The lamentations (each one shortened almost by half for a single disc still well filled) are chosen from Toledo, Silos and León sources as published by Germain Prado in 1934 (the final

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lamentation is found in LU 721). The responsories follow Dominique Crochu's recent revision of the melodies. The chanting is uniformly excellent. This disc should be a primary choice for anyone who wants sets of chants in liturgical format.

Directing the Paris choir, Tulve had earlier made a thematic collection of chants on divine and human love (no. 13). Appreciating the sequence of chants depends on the explanatory note. Some use is made of octaves and drones to vary the texture.

Another disc (no. 14) offers Cistercian chant for the First Sunday of Lent, notably the complete Tract *Qui habitat*, once recorded (almost unchanged in the Gregorian version) at St Ottilien. Lauds includes the antiphon and canticle, the Mass includes Ordinary and Proper, Vespers again has the antiphon and canticle, and the disc concludes with a complete Compline, in addition to the hymns of all three hours. Like the other disc, and highly appropriate this time, the recording was made at the former Cistercian abbey of Fontfroide.

Benedictine nuns in Bouches-du-Rhône made a thematic programme of chants a decade ago, but this Italian reissue (no. 15) is the first time I have seen it. It is the fourth disc in a series, but there is no indication of the contents of the other three discs. The singing is exquisite, reminiscent of the nuns of Argentan. Three antiphons seem to be first recordings.

Nuns of a Benedictine abbey in Québec have made their first recording, as far as I know (no. 16). The nuns originally came from Wisques (Pas de Calais) in 1936. The basis of the programme is chants that refer to the angels in some way. A setting of *Panis angelicus* found in *Cantus Selecti* and *Liber Hymnarius* is heard for the first time, though the melody is slightly varied from those editions. *Exsultemus et laetemur* is sung as on Dom Claire's recording of Easter (S 822), a version found on a loose leaf printed by Desclée in 1910. Unfortunately, the texts of nine of the selections are not printed in the booklet, including all of the pieces taken from less familiar books. It is curious to see one word, *moniales*, carried over untranslated to the English version of the notes.

Another disc from Québec offers a mix of Beneventan and Gregorian chants (no. 17). The men's schola sings extremely well. Nine chants are Beneventan, only one of them found in either of the two previous recordings (1992, no. 8; 1994, no. 29), but that piece, *Tunc hi tres . . . Benedictus es*, is preceded by the lesson from Daniel. Hence this is a useful expansion of the recorded repertoire. All of the Gregorian chants are also found in the familiar Beneventan sources. Drones are used in a couple of pieces.

Benevento is featured on another disc (no. 18), a more inventive approach to chant interpretation than the rest of this year's group of discs, but saved by the high level of scholarship and execution. Two pieces of Beneventan chant are clearly identifiable, the *Doxa . . . Gloria* and *Tunc hi tres . . . Benedictus es*, both recorded earlier, but other chants from Monte Cassino 542 and Vatican, Urb. lat. 602 are related to the region. Two unusual texts are given reconstructed melodies. The singing is very fine, though drones occur in several pieces. The booklet is well done, though the ethnic term Aryan is confused with the Arian heretics. A phrase of text, *Piscium vernulae*, is translated 'the slaves with fish', though Leofranc Holford-Strevens is surely right to suggest that metaphorically 'slaves of ICHTHUS' are Christians.

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We may still remember the overwhelming commercial success of EMI's CD reissue of four Hispavox recordings from Silos. About the time the first of those recordings was made, Hispavox also made two recordings at Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caïdos, the monastery and choir school established on the site of the cemetery for all who died in the Spanish Civil War, the Valley of the Fallen, outside Madrid. (One graduate of the choir school is the chant scholar Juan Carlos Asensio.) The first of the two recordings has already been reissued, though I never saw a copy, but now I have acquired the second (no. 19), listed in my book as **10424**. In a crowded field of records focused on the period from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, this includes some of the most familiar chants. The choirboys are remarkably full-voiced without forcing the tone. They alternate with the monks in sensible patterns.

Two discs that combine chant with polyphony in a liturgical setting are worth noting. Three lamentations for the third day of Tenebrae by Cristóbal de Morales (no. 20) are followed by their chant responsories, sung in the style of the composer's time. The disc is filled out by several of the composer's motets with relevant chants. Another disc offers a complete Mass using music from fifteenth-century Liège (no. 21). The Ordinary is Arnold de Lantins's *Missa Verbum incarnatum*, once recorded by Kees van Otten without intervening chants. The chants for the Immaculate Conception (including epistle, gospel and preface) do not correspond to any familiar cycle, but they are taken from a gradual of the same period belonging to the collegiate church of Notre Dame in Tongres, sung in the style of time and place. Motets of Brassart and Cesaris broaden the focus on the Liège area.

Two more discs of a similar nature couple chant with contemporary composers without achieving a liturgical unity. A companion disc to no. 12 above offers four works of Arvo Pärt that occupy half the playing time of the disc (no. 22). Pärt's music contrasts with chants and a polyphonic *Kyrie Cunctipotens*, including what may be the first recording of the Communion *Inclina*. The Offertory *Super flumina* is sung with all three verses, a useful addition to Brigitte Lesne's version with prosulas added. Similarly, the latest disc from Anonymous 4 (no. 23) offers four pieces of John Tavener that likewise occupy half of the playing time. The chants are mostly lessons and hymns, notably *Inventor rutili* for Easter (the melody previously recorded by Schola Hungarica, no. 1002 in *Monumenta Monodica*).

Finally, in the Greek tradition of Byzantine chant, Ted Alevisos has recorded chants of Christmas (no. 24) and Holy Week and Easter (no. 25). Unlike many recordings of Eastern chant, which follow later polyphonic traditions, Alevisos uses the earliest manuscript sources, dating from the ninth to thirteenth centuries, representing what has survived from oral tradition dating back to the fifth to eighth centuries. He has worked with Oliver Strunk and Kenneth Levy, and has used transcriptions of Egon Wellesz and H. J. W. Tillyard, so his scholarship is dependable. The results are reminiscent of Richard Crocker's similar effort to sing Gregorian chant from the oldest traditions. Both singers have the advantage of rendering their interpretations as solos, balanced against the desirability of choral singing in much of the repertoire. The first disc is very short, but the other is nearly an hour long.

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Discography

I have begun preparations for the Second Edition of *A Gregorian Chant Discography*. The new publication will include the complete contents of the first edition (1990), in addition to all recordings released from that time to the date of publication of the new edition. Readers of the journal are earnestly requested to advise me (jfweber@dreamscape.com) of any recordings that have not been listed in *PMM* since 1992. I am interested both in acquiring those recordings that are available commercially and in finding those that can be auditioned only in libraries. Advice on improving the content and usefulness of the discography would also be welcome.

All record numbers in the following list refer to the compact disc format unless otherwise noted; record retailers will be able to advise about the availability of other carriers. 'T' indicates that the accompanying booklet includes full texts of vocal works in the original language. Where translations are also supplied, these are indicated as follows: e English; f French; g German; i Italian

1 L'Avent (1)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Jean Claire
Accord 472173-2. (Recorded 1975 and 1976) Tef

2 Noël (2-3)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Joseph Gajard, Dom Jean Claire
Accord 472439-2 (2 discs). (Recorded 1966, 1969, 1970, 1976) Tef

3 Carême, Rameaux (4)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Joseph Gajard
Accord 472814-2 (2 discs). (Recorded 1959, 1963, 1964, 1965) Tef

4 Jours Saints (5)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Joseph Gajard
Accord 472810-2 (3 discs). (Recorded 1959, 1962, 1963, 1964) Tef

5 Pâques (6)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Joseph Gajard
Accord 472176-2. (Recorded 1960 and 1969) Tef

6 Dimanches du Temps Paschal (7)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Joseph Gajard
Accord 472817-2. (Recorded 1960 and 1961) Tef

7 Ascension, Pentecôte, Trinité (8)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Jean Claire
Accord 472177-2. (Recorded 1972) Tef

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8 Vierge Marie (11)
Choeur des moines de l'Abbaye de Solesmes, dir. Dom Joseph Gajard, Dom Jean Claire
Accord 472178-2. (Recorded 1958, 1962, 1972) Tef

9 Chants populaires de la liturgie latine, vol. 2
Monks of the abbey of St Pierre de Solesmes, dir. Dom Richard Gagné
Solesmes/Paraclete S 845. (Issued 2003) Tef

10 The Beloved Son
Gloriae Dei Cantores Schola, cond. Mary Berry
Gloriae Dei GDCD 032. (Recorded 2001) Te

11 I Am With You
Gloriae Dei Cantores Schola, cond. Mary Berry
Gloriae Dei GDCD 034. (Recorded 2001) Te

12 Ieremias
Vox Clamantis, cond. Jaan-Eik Tulve
Arion ARN 68602. (Recorded 2002) Tef

13 Amor et Caritas
Choeur Grégorien de Paris, cond. Jaan-Eik Tulve
Pierre Verany PV 700027. (Recorded 2001) Tef

14 Chant Cistercien
Choeur Grégorien de Paris, cond. Jaan-Eik Tulve
Pierre Verany PV 700032. (Recorded 2001) Tef

15 Dives in Misericordia (Medioevalia vol. 4)
Choir of Nuns of Notre Dame Fidélité, Jouques (Bouches-du-Rhône)
New Sounds MED 004. (Recorded 1991)

16 Cantus Angelicus
Choir of Benedictine Nuns of Sainte-Marie des Deux-Montagnes
Analekta AN 2 8104. (Recorded 2002) Tef

17 Chant Bénéventain de la Pentecôte
Schola Saint Grégoire, cond. Jean-Pierre Noiseux
Schola Saint Grégoire SSG 001. (Recorded 2003) Tf

18 Lombards & Barbares
Dialogos, dir. Katarina Livljanic
Arcana A 319. (Recorded 2002) Tefgi

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19 Semana Santa y Pascua
Escolania y Schola of Santa Cruz del Valle de los Caïdos, dir. Laurentino Sáenz de Buruaga
EMI Classics 5 67091 2. (Issued 1974; reissued 1999)

20 Office des Ténèbres
Doulce Mémoire, cond. Denis Raisin Dadre
Astrée E 8878. (recorded 2002) Tef

21 Missa Verbum incarnatum
Capilla Flamenca, cond. Dirk Snellings
Ricercar RIC 207. (Recorded 2001) T

22 Annum per annum
Vox Clamantis, cond. Jaan-Eik Tulve
Arion ARN 68595. (Recorded 2002) Tef

23 Darkness into Light
Anonymous 4
Harmonia Mundi France HMU 907274. (Recorded 2002) Tefg

24 A Greek Byzantine Christmas
Ted Alevizos
Gnision TA 1451. (Issued 2000) Te

25 A Greek Byzantine Easter
Ted Alevizos
Gnision TA 6518. (Issued 2002) Te

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