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RECORDINGS
Recent releases of plainchant

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The most impressive recent recording is undoubtedly 'Codex Calixtinus' (no. 1 in the list below), a boxed set of four discs that presents virtually the complete music of the manuscript entitled 'Jacobus', still preserved at the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. To be sure, though it has not drawn any comment in this department, the twenty polyphonic pieces that form the appendix to this collection of music have been recorded complete in recent years (Sequentia and Ensemble Venance Fortunat have each devoted a disc to the collection), and the fourth disc of this set duplicates them. Some of these pieces have long been known on records, for they rank with the St Martial sources as the most important examples of polyphony before the Notre Dame period.

The chants found in the main body of this manuscript, however, have been neglected. They comprise the music for the Office and Mass of the vigil (24 July), and the Office (including Matins) and Mass of the feast (25 July). Of ninety-seven chants recorded on the first three discs here, scarcely twenty have ever been recorded before. They are scattered among a number of discs, and only a few of them offered more than one or two selections. Sequentia (on the disc already mentioned) and Anonymous 4 both offered a group of chants, and Le Feu de Jésu, an ensemble at McGill University in Montréal, Canada, sang a complete festal Mass recorded spectacularly in 1990 (1994, no. 8). The only monophonic piece that is familiar at all is not a chant but the pilgrim song 'Ultreia' (*Dum pater familias*), written at the end of the polyphonic appendix.

It is pleasant to report that this production is a striking success. On a superficial level, each disc is housed in a 'digipack', a laminated case with the texts and translations for the disc bound in. The four digipacks are enclosed in a slipcase with a separate ninety-six-page booklet of notes, lavishly furnished with colour photos and facsimiles. ('Jacobus' recently appeared in an expensive colour facsimile of the entire manuscript.) More important, the singing and engineering are on the highest professional level. The choir was founded in Pontevedra (near Santiago) in 1985 after the closing of a seminary left the locality bereft of chant

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performance. The music is sung exactly in the order of the manuscript. One of the less familiar polyphonic pieces, *Jacobe sancte*, is sung with only four of its nine verses. It is fully sung in its two complete recordings, and Anonymous 4 omits only one verse, so this is hardly a crippling omission, but it is regrettable. Of the chants, *Jocundetur et letetur* (the hymn of Matins) is also heard with four of its eight verses (Sequentia sings the complete hymn). Without recourse to the source, I cannot report on the completeness of the other chants, but most of them are not strophic, so they should be complete. In this recording the monophonic versions of the polyphonic pieces are sung as they occur in the manuscript. The music of the appendix of polyphonic music is presented separately.

In about one-fourth of the chants, vocal drones are added to the melody, and in a few cases instrumental drones are heard. Otherwise, the chant is rendered in the old Solesmes style with Castilian pronunciation. It would be rash to think that another recording of the complete manuscript will come along soon, not to say a better one. It would also be rash to let the opportunity to obtain this one go by, given the shelf life of compact discs in today's market. The producer's e-mail address is claverecords@arrakis.es.

The same choir previously recorded two discs of chant. 'Ave Maris Stella' (no. 2) was recorded first under a different director. The Marian chants include several from Dom Pothier's *Cantus Mariales* that seem not to have been recorded before, notably *Imperatrix angelorum*. Some chants are accompanied, others are not. No texts are printed. 'Cum jubilo' (no. 3) is more recent. The only unusual chant on this disc is an elaborate version of *Quomodo sedet sola*, the first lamentation of Tenebrae. The singing is unaccompanied, except for two hymns and Mass IX (even the intonation of the Gloria is accompanied), but the organ is more of a drone than a full accompaniment. The only unusual feature of the singing is the basso profundo octaves in the first two psalms of Tenebrae (following their antiphons). The notes accompanying the recording are more detailed, but again no texts. Still, these are well sung and recorded in a reverberant church.

The Norbertines of Grimbergen have made a number of chant discs over the years, some of them listed in my *A Gregorian Chant Discography*. Their latest (no. 4) is devoted to four Marian feasts: Immaculate Conception, Presentation, Annunciation and Assumption. Each set of Mass propers is followed by one of the final antiphons of the Office. Some of the 1952 chants for the Assumption have been selected. There is nothing new on this disc. Some of the chants are extremely familiar, but they are beautifully rendered in the manner of Dom Gajard, and the Norbertine chant variant is used, closer to Cistercian than Benedictine.

Fr Hubert Dopf recorded a series of discs for Philips a few years ago, of which the first two of the most recent group have been reviewed (1998, nos. 1 and 2). There was every reason to expect that they would be widely circulated, but in fact they have been hard to find. 'Life of Mary' (no. 5) and 'Easter' (no. 6) were borrowed from an inveterate collector for this review, but the fifth disc seems to be unobtainable. 'Life of Mary' contains an assortment of Marian chants

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from Masses and Offices, including the four final antiphons in the solemn tone recorded also by Cuceiro Bueno (no. 2) and van Boesschoten (no. 4). Among first recordings are four hymns from the new *Liber Hymnarius*, some medieval, others new. Also unknown on records is a long medieval gradual, *Deus vitam meam*, restored to the new *Graduale Romanum* for the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. Also for the same feast we hear the first eight verses of the sequence (not the hymn as stated), composed by Dom Paul Jausions, most recently recorded in complete form on the Motette disc of sequences (not yet on CD). Also new is the antiphon *Laudate Dominum Deum* for a proper feast of Our Lady of Einsiedeln (16 July). The melodies, as on the previous discs, incorporate revisions edited by the scholars of Associazione Internationale Studi di Canto Gregoriano. The booklet contains four different essays by David Hiley, Franz Karl Prassl, Jean Gaultier and Claudio Gallico. Gaultier insists that the hymn *Stabat mater* is not to be confused with the sequence (which in fact is sung), but we learn from Prassl what the *Liber Hymnarius* conceals, that Dom Anselmo Lentini (1901–89) of Monte Cassino wrote *Concito gressu* and *O virgo mater*.

The other disc, 'Easter', is broader in content than its title suggests, for it starts with the Fifth Sunday of Lent, a set of Mass propers not recorded since the early series of 45 rpm discs of Sunday propers on Studio SM. The selections include Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Easter and the Fifth Sunday of Easter. The only novelty is a medieval hymn, *Nunc tempus acceptabile*, restored in the *Liber Hymnarius*. Again the booklet contains four essays by the same annotators. These two discs were obtained from a European dealer; when I reviewed the other two discs two years ago, I used copies issued in the USA that contained only Hiley's essay.

A new ensemble, Scriptoria (no. 7), is concerned with semiology. Their first disc is a miscellaneous collection of chants that generally focuses on adoration and veneration. The only unrecorded piece is the communion *Posuisti*. One oddity is the beloved hymn *Ave maris stella*, alternating the solemn and simple Mode 1 settings verse by verse. Another oddity is the complete canticle *Magnificat* sung in the solemn tone with the communion *Beatam me dicent* but without repeating the antiphon after each verse, more like the Office than the Mass. The canticle *Benedictus es* (LU 348) is limited to five verses, typical of recordings of this long piece, which has been recorded complete only by Schola Hungarica.

Another new ensemble on the same label, Calixtinus (no. 8), follows in the footsteps of Pellegrino Ernetti and Marcel Pérès in finding Byzantine-influenced drones, or ison singing, in early medieval Italy, despite the lack of evidence of the ison in Byzantine chant before the fourteenth century. The Office of St Severus, a fourth-century bishop of Ravenna, and Mass chants for the Roman stational liturgy at St Vitalis (another saint from Ravenna) are found in a Ravenna manuscript of the eleventh or twelfth century. But most of the disc consists of Easter Sunday chants from two other manuscripts, only one of them from Ravenna (it includes the Sanctus in Greek), and from two modern liturgical books. Three chants are taken from Vat. lat. 5319, but non-scholars would have benefited from a hint that these are Old Roman chants.

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In a review of this disc, I wrote: 'The ensemble professes to find a style of singing divorced from standard chant interpretation, or, as the notes put it, ''light-years away from the rigidly codified technique of Western singing''. Like Marcel Pérès and others of similar persuasion, these interpreters find it necessary to denigrate what they reject, as if the folk-song techniques of the present day have more validity for sacred music than the carefully researched study of liturgical singing. ''Rigidly codified'' is a term that can be used to denigrate any long-time effort to arrive at understanding of a subject; our study of geometry is rigidly codified, but no one finds that remarkable. Nevertheless, this disc is an interesting departure from most chant recordings, one that will repay close study.'

Godehard Joppich recorded with Die Singphoniker earlier (1995, no. 17; 1996, no. 6). Now, on a new label, he has drawn on two fifteenth-century manuscripts from Hamburg (Theol. 1069 and Catharinen 9) to illustrate devotion to the Blessed Virgin (no. 9). The former source contains Vespers in which antiphons set to familiar texts from the Song of Songs are collected into a new grouping. Oddly, the antiphon at the *Magnificat* is *Alma redemptoris mater* and, in paschal time, *Regina caeli*. The five antiphons are not the same as those in modern books, for the texts are quite a bit longer. From the other source we hear only the Vespers antiphons and the invitatory and three Matins responsories from a rhymed Office for the Conception of the Blessed Virgin (YC51 in Andrew Hughes's index). Joppich favours a more lyrical rendering of chant than he did in his early recordings from Münsterschwarzach.

Collectors will recall that Schola Hungarica's first recordings formed a series titled 'Magyar Gregorianum'. After the first six records, the search for medieval manuscripts reached beyond Hungary and the title was abandoned. Now after dozens of recordings, Magyar Gregorianum 7 has been issued (no. 10). László Dobszay informed us at Cantus Planus 1998 of the intervention of Hungary's president, the chant devotee Dr Árpád Göncz, with the president of Turkey to permit scholarly study of a precious fourteenth-century Office antiphoner that has been kept in Istanbul for over four centuries. The selections are taken from four parts of the temporal cycle and from several feasts of Hungarian saints. The last group includes an Office of St Ann that is unknown in other countries. Several polyphonic cantiones are added from a later source. The skill and charm of the schola, using the children rather more than usual, are undiminished.

The chant choir of Graz, represented here three times recently (1996, no. 20; 1999, nos. 1 and 2), has made four CDs for the Benedictine abbey of Seckau, but only the last has arrived (no. 11). The mixed choir sings from two Seckau manuscripts, Graz, UB Codex 756 and 17. The contents of the disc and the makeup of the choir reflect the history of the monastery, for it had been founded by Augustinian canons from Salzburg cathedral in the twelfth century and was a double monastery for several centuries. Hence we hear Mass propers for the feasts of St Augustine and St Rupert, each with a sequence (the one for the latter feast gives the disc its title). The singing is accomplished on a high level.

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Another rhymed Office (no. 12), preserved in a beautiful manuscript at the Morgan Library in New York, honours St Edmund, a ninth-century Saxon king killed by the Danes in 870, whose remains became a pilgrimage site at Bury St Edmunds. This Office is ED61 in Andrew Hughes's index. The argument of the notes is rather dense, but the singing is beautiful and the instruments are used discreetly.

Two new discs focusing on St Nicholas pass over the much-recorded plays to give us other chants and polyphony honouring the saint. La Reverdie (no. 13) presents a condensed form of Matins that includes antiphons with psalms and lessons with responsories, concluding with the celebrated *Ex ejus tumba* and its prosa *Sospitati*. This is followed by an organum on the last responsory (previously recorded by Ensemble Venance Fortunat, 1994, no. 50) and the canticles for Lauds and Vespers with their antiphons. This exhibits beautiful singing and discreet use of instruments, but the three lessons are unconvincing. While the first is a solo cantillation, the other two are declaimed with exaggerated dramatic intensity, the second adding a psaltery and the third a whole battery of instruments, hardly what we expect to hear in a solo cantillation.

A competing disc arrived from Anonymous 4 at the same time (no. 14). It has less chant, just two responsories (including the famous one) and three hymns, along with two monophonic conducti. But the medieval polyphony, including six more conducti and two motets, is exquisite, and the total effect of this disc makes it even finer than La Reverdie's offering.

Several discs have appeared combining chant and polyphony for Tenebrae. Following their Holy Thursday Tenebrae (1999, no. 27), Musica Contexta offers a similar programme for Good Friday (no. 15). This programme, which combines Palestrina's Book 4 of Lamentations with the appropriate chant responsories, duplicates a similar recording of all three nights of Tenebrae made for the Champeaux label and briefly issued on Jade (1995, no. 29).

One of the most effective abridgements of Tenebrae is the single disc of Good Friday (no. 16). To fit on a single disc, the Taverner Choir sings in chant one antiphon with part of its psalm and three abridged lessons for each nocturn, along with the responsories of Gesualdo. Eric Van Tassel puts the rationale succinctly in his notes: 'Taking in Gesualdo's motets on their own would be like preparing a banquet to consist solely of foie gras and chocolate truffles. . . . The nine motets that make up Gesualdo's contribution to the Good Friday portion of Tenebrae are imbedded within long tracts of simple chanting. Without the steady progression of chant, Gesualdo's music would create an unbearable sense of surfeit. Not that the chant is a mere foil or backdrop for Gesualdo's chromatic polyphony. For the apparently ''simple'' chants of the Tenebrae service distil some of the subtlest musical thought in Western history.' Andrew Parrott has been recording liturgical reconstructions (generally Masses) for many years. The singing is superb.

Still another disc of this kind combines Nicolas Bernier's Lamentations for Holy Thursday with Guillaume-Gabriel Nivers's plain-chant responsories, preceded by

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the first antiphon and psalm (no. 17). As David Hiley has pointed out, Neo-Gallican plain-chant has hardly been studied. But we have had a few recordings, and this one is ideal. Even the Georges de la Tour painting reproduced on the cover fits perfectly. Bernier's lamentations are for soprano solo with cello and organ. Since Champeaux has recorded several complete sets of Tenebrae already, we might hope for two more discs of Bernier-cum-Nivers.

Similar to these but unique in its own way is a recording of Haydn's *Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross* in the quartet arrangement (no. 18). This has been recorded more than a few times with some kind of spoken texts to fill in for the intended sermons on each of Christ's last words. But this is the first recording to supply a Tenebrae responsory before each of the seven movements (Haydn's introduction precedes the first chant). The Carmina Quartet plays Haydn with unusually fast tempos and vigorous attacks. The chant is sung by a choir of men and women, dividing the respond and the verse between the two groups or assigning the entire responsory to one or the other, finally singing the last respond together and giving the verse to the women. They are directed by Fr Roman Bannwart, the octogenarian choir director of Einsiedeln abbey, where the recording of the chants was made.

The second disc to be titled 'Jerusalem' recently (no. 19) is a collection of chants and early polyphony on the subject of the holy city. The chants are six Mass propers, three of them from the fourth Sunday of Lent. Most notable is the offertory *Super flumina Babylonis* with all three verses and two Aquitanian prosulas (from BNF lat. 776). While we have heard single verses of this offertory before (one was nearly the first such recording of a verse), this is the first complete recording. The prosulas were indexed in Roman Hankeln's dissertation on the Aquitanian prosulas and were preceded on records only in Schola Hungarica's 'Gregorian Chant from Aquitaine'. The alleluia *Laetatus sum in* is sung with its second verse, as we have heard on earlier records. We also hear the hymn *Urbs beata Jerusalem* and Hildegard of Bingen's sequence *O Jerusalem*. Among the more interesting polyphonies is a troped *Kyrie Urbs caelestis*. The interpretations are individual, not unlike other attempts at interpreting tenth-century neumes.

Ensemble Venance Fortunat has furnished a steady list of medieval programmes, frequently including chants. The latest (no. 20) is drawn from Cistercian manuscripts and comprises the chant propers for the Dedication of a Church and three responsories from various Offices. Interwoven are polyphonic troped Mass Ordinaries, some found in the Codex Las Huelgas. The interpretations are singular, with drones when the beginning of the chant returns, but this group has earned respect for their efforts.

An unusual programme brings together Gregorian chant, *laude* from Cortona and Glagolitic chant from Croatia (no. 21). Among interesting pieces are a Tenebrae lamentation in Glagolitic chant that is immediately recognizable as a variant of the familiar lesson tone. The only Gregorian chants are a responsory *Dixit Isaac* and an antiphon *Caminus ardebat*, both from Monte Cassino, Badia 542. There is an eleventh-century announcement of the movable feasts quite unlike those we have heard before.

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One of many discs that marked the anniversary of the death of Philip II of Spain attempts to re-create the wedding Mass of Philip II and Mary, Queen of England, in 1554 (no. 22). John Taverner's *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas* is sung to mark the day of the wedding, along with works of Spanish composers. The chants for the feast of the Holy Trinity are sung by Josep Cabré. A similar disc offers Francisco Guerrero's *Missa Puer natus est* along with four of the chants of the third Mass of Christmas (no. 23). This time Cabré directs a mixed choir using a contemporary Spanish version of the chant for the same day. Two contemporary Hungarian Masses are found on another disc (no. 24). László Dobszay's Mass for the Immaculate Conception, set for two voices with organ, dates from 1963, while László Sáry's Mass for Quinquagesima Sunday, set for six voices, was composed in 1990. Shorter works by other Hungarian composers are included, and each Mass includes three proper chants, though the chants selected for Dobszay's Mass are not those of the feast day.

Finally, we note a reissue of two and a half hours' worth of chant recordings made mostly in 1929 and 1930 (no. 25), just as the first Solesmes recordings were being made for RCA Victor and His Master's Voice (1995, nos. 1 and 2). Some of the choirs sing in the Solesmes manner, others do not, and that is what makes these recordings so interesting. The Solesmes recordings were so fine that they became the model for chant singing in parishes everywhere. Apart from two items, the original records have not been reissued before this, and few libraries and archives make these shellac records accessible to listeners. We note for the record that the present writer produced this set at the request of the record company, hoping that scholars will perceive the historical significance of the considerable variety of chant interpretations that were practised earlier in the twentieth century. The rarest tracks on these two discs are some of the recordings made at San Anselmo in Rome about 1933 for the Christschall label. Never encountered during the extensive research for my discography, they include the first recording of an offertory with verse, *Terra tremuit*, made many years earlier than Dom Lucien David's recording of *Super flumina Babylonis*.

Discography

All record numbers 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; s Spanish; d Dutch; m Magyar.

1 Liber Sancti Jacobi
Coro Ultreia, cond. Fernando Olbés Durán
Panteiro 301-CD. (Issued 1999) Tefs

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2 Ave Maris Stella
Coro Ultreia, cond. Vicente P. Couceiro Bueno
Panteiro 9125-CD. (Recorded 1993, issued 1998) –

3 Cum Jubilo
Coro Ultreia, cond. Fernando Olbés Durán
Panteiro 9117-CD. (Recorded 1996) –

4 Maria
Grimbergen Abbey choir, cond. Gereon van Boesschoten
Eufoda 1280. (Issued 1998) Tefd

5 Life of Mary
Choralschola der Wiener Hofburgkapelle, cond. Hubert Dopf
Philips 446658-2. (Recorded 1994) Tefg

6 Easter
Choralschola der Wiener Hofburgkapelle, cond. Hubert Dopf
Philips 446665-2. (Recorded 1995) Tefg

7 Adorate Deum . . . in Sanctis Ejus
Schola Gregoriana Scriptoria, cond. Nicola Bellinazzo
Tactus TC 100002. (Recorded 1999) T

8 Officium Sancti Severi
Ensemble Calixtinus, cond. Gianni de Gennaro
Tactus TC 100001. (Recorded 1998) T

9 Officium
Die Singphoniker, cond. Godehard Joppich
Glissando 779007-2. (Recorded 1999) Teg

10 The Istanbul Antiphonary
Schola Hungarica, cond. László Dobszay and Janka Szendrei
Hungaroton HCD 31816. (Recorded 1998) Tem

11 Summi Regis in Laude
Grazer Choralschola, cond. Franz Karl Prassl
Seckau BASCD 4. (Recorded 1998) Tg

12 Historia Sancti Eadmundi
La Reverdie, cond. Roberto Spremulli
Arcana A 43. (Recorded 1996) Tefgi

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13 La Nuit de Saint Nicholas
La Reverdie and Cantori Gregoriani, cond. Fulvio Rampi
Arcana A 72. (Recorded 1998) Tefgi

14 Legends of St Nicholas
Anonymous 4
Harmonia Mundi France HMU 907232. (Recorded 1998) Tefg

15 Palestrina: Music for Good Friday
Musica Contexta, dir. Simon Ravens
Chandos Chaconne Chan 0652. (Recorded 1999) Tefg

16 Gesualdo: Tenebrae
Taverner Choir, cond. Andrew Parrott
Sony SK 62977. (Recorded 1996) Te

17 Nicolas Bernier
Ensemble Da Pacem, cond. Rafaële Kennedy
Champeaux CSM 0013. (Recorded 1998) Tef

18 Haydn: The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour
Schola Romana Lucernensis, dir. Roman Bannwart, OSB
Claves CD 50-2002. (Recorded 2000) Tefg

19 Jerusalem
Discantus, dir. Brigitte Lesne
Opus 111. OPS 30-291. (Recorded 1999) Tefg

20 Mystic Chants from Cistercian Abbeys
Ensemble Venance Fortunat, dir. Anne-Marie Deschamps
L'Empreinte Digitale ED 13106. (Recorded 1998) Tef

21 Terra Adriatica
Dialogus, dir. Katarina Livljanic
L'Empreinte Digitale ED 13107. (Recorded 1998) Tef

22 The Marriage of England and Spain
Josep Cabré, solo
Glossa GCD 921401. (Recorded 1998) Tefgs

23 Francisco Guerrero
Capilla Peñaflorida, cond. Josep Cabré
Almaviva DS 0126. (Recorded 1998) –

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24 Hungarian Contemporary Music for the Liturgy
Schola Cantorum Budapestiensis, cond. János Mezei and Tamás Bubnó
Hungaroton HCD 31770. (Recorded 1996) Tem

25 Gregorian Chant – Early Recordings
Fifteen choirs
Parnassus PACD 96015/6. (Recorded 1928–1936) Te

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