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Recent recordings of plainchant

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Three continuing series of recordings are represented by new releases this year. The systematic coverage of Mass Propers in *Graduale Novum* begun by Johannes Berchmans Göschl continues with the participation of three other directors, including his pupil Stephan Zippe, mentioned last year. Alexander M. Schweitzer, who was Göschl's associate choir director earlier and has made several recordings with his Oslo ensemble, has grouped Masses for the Easter vigil, Easter day, Easter Monday, and the second and third Sundays of Easter (no. 1 in the following list). Göschl grouped the first five Sundays in Ordinary Time with the thirty-third Sunday (no. 2). Franz Karl Prassl directed his female ensemble in five Mass Propers of the Christmas season: Holy Family, Mary Mother of God, Second Sunday after Christmas, Baptism of the Lord and Presentation of the Lord (no. 3). All carry on the fine chant interpretations that represent these melodic restitutions to full advantage.

The parallel series of melodic restitutions that Alberto Turco is editing as *Liber Gradualis* continues with the fifth booklet of Mass Proper chants edited from the sources (no. 4). As before, recordings of the entire booklet are included: the Mass Propers of the Easter vigil, Easter day, the six weekdays of Easter, the second to seventh Sundays after Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. Turco uses three soloists from his chant scholas to render the chants with great beauty. Turco earlier devoted five CDs to the entire Kyriale (nos. 5 to 9), which also includes many troped Kyries. This series rivals Bernard Lorber's comparable coverage of the same chants on three discs without the tropes.

A new issue in Bernard Lorber's traversal of the traditional chant repertoire offers Matins of Tenebrae, omitting Lauds (no. 10). The psalms (three verses of each with discreet organ accompaniment) with their antiphons and all the responsories are sung; the lessons of the second and third nocturns are omitted, but the lamentations are sung, four from the *Liber Usualis*, four from Germán Prado's edition of Hispanic chants, and *Recordare Domine* (which is printed in both). The canticle *Benedictus* with its antiphon is included each day with *Christus factus est*; the St John Passion is also included. The schola is made up of Lorber, the prominent professional singer Hervé Lamy, and two other men. A comparable recording of Tenebrae was made by the monks of Solesmes, the last three discs directed by Dom Jean Claire. They included Lauds but omitted the Lamentations; Solesmes had recorded the St John Passion much earlier under Dom Gajard.

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László Dobszay's last two recordings with the prolific Schola Hungarica have appeared. *Post-Tridentine Gregorian Chant in Hungary* (no. 11) takes a group of Mass Propers from a Pauline antiphoner written in Hungary in 1623. Included are the second Mass of Christmas, Epiphany, five varied Sundays, and the feast of the patron St Paul the Hermit. As a manuscript, it does not figure in Theodore Karp's invaluable list of printed graduals of the period. *Crux Gloriosa* (no. 12) presents chant and polyphony on the Holy Cross from an unusually wide range of sources. Included are Old Roman, Milanese and Beneventan chants; Aquitanian, Sarum and Ravenna sources; and several Hungarian sources, along with four composers of polyphony. This was the last recording involving Dobszay and Szendrei together, issued late, after the schola's final recording, before it was disbanded in 2011.

The Institute of Christ the Sovereign King and Priest, a religious community devoted to traditional liturgy, has made a series of recordings at their seminary in Tuscany, the latest of which has a complete Mass for the feast of Christ the King and Propers of the old Lenten Mass of the Passion, now a votive Mass in Eastertide (no. 13). The singing of the seminarians is excellent in the Gajard manner.

Seven students of Franz Karl Prassl in Graz make up the women's ensemble Graces & Voices (no. 14). The theme of this disc is derived from the chants of the two feasts of the Holy Cross, but only three Mass Propers are duplicated from the Schola Hungarica programme.

Stefan Morent's ensemble, Orto Virtutum, has made a series of four recordings centred on the Lake of Constance. The first was *Sanguis Jesu Christi* (2010, no. 6), chants for the relic of the Precious Blood that was venerated at Reichenau and other places, notably Weingarten. The third was *Notker Balbulus* (2012, no. 31), which presented tropes of the celebrated monk-composer of St Gall. Now we have two more, *Insula Felix* (no. 15) and *The Miracle of the Century* (no. 16). 'Fortunate island' was Walafried Strabo's description of the island monastery of Reichenau, where the music on this disc originated. Chants by Berno of Reichenau, Hermannus Contractus and Walafried Strabo are heard. With the manuscripts subsequently scattered, only extensive research has made it possible to reconstruct this picture. For the other disc, the miracle is, of course, the intelligence of Hermannus Contractus constrained in his crippled body. (I thank David Hiley for this clarification, which is lacking in the booklet.) This latest disc, issued to mark the 900th anniversary of his birth, was recorded at Sts Peter and Paul on Reichenau, as *Sanguis Jesu Christi* was, while *Notker Balbulus* was recorded at St George on the same island. *Miracle* includes Offices of St Wolfgang (who went from the monastery to become bishop of Regensburg), St Afra and St Magnus, all composed by Hermannus. Other chants are also included, and if Hermannus's authorship of *Alma redemptoris mater* is not certain, the sequence *Grates honos ierarchia* is certainly his work.

The third chant recording made by Damien Poisblaud and his ensemble (no. 17) offers the hymn and some responsories for Matins on the feasts of Ascension and Pentecost as well as the invitatory of the latter feast, all in the Cistercian rite. The recording was made at the former Cistercian abbey of Thoronet, where the ensemble sings every Sunday. In some of his earliest recordings, Iégor Reznikoff captured the

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resonant acoustics of this Romanesque church. The hymns are sung in metrical rhythm (Konrad Ruhland was a proponent of this rendering of hymns and sequences).

The early music ensemble Amarcord has included chant on several previous recordings, but their newest issue (no. 18) presents the Ordinary and Proper of Masses for the Dedication of a Church and the feast of St Thomas the Apostle from the Gradual of the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, where the recording was made. (A facsimile of the source was published in 1967.) The feast, of course, commemorates the patron saint of the church, and the manuscript (*c*.1300) is important as a witness to the chant that formed the underpinning of J.S. Bach's masterpieces of church music. The notes consist of an interesting interview with Godehard Joppich, who has guided the ensemble in all of its chant recordings.

Since the venerable firm Studio S.M. was acquired by Ateliers du Fresne in 2007, some familiar monks' choirs have been heard again. The monks of Ligugé have compiled a group of chants around a notion of Plato, Boethius, St Benedict, Aurelian of Réôme and even Teilhard de Chardin that a 'hymn of the universe' is nature praising God (no. 19). One will recognise both offertories *Jubilate Deo* fulfilling this theme, and the other chants fit equally well. The monks of Kergonan directed by Jaan-Eik Tulve, who trained with Choeur Grégorien de Paris, have assembled a programme of chants that have their origin in Eastern chant (no. 20). Good Friday chants and the antiphons for the octave of the Epiphany come to mind, as well as *Lumen hilare*, Dom Lucien David's adaptation of Φως ἱλάρον, the ancient evening hymn, which he published in 1923. This label was run by its founders and then their daughter for almost fifty years, followed by two or three changes of ownership before 2007. The label was prolific, but it has been extremely difficult to establish correct dates of recording for their work, and reissues have more often consisted of compilations than original programmes.

The most important group of chant LPs not reissued on CD is the series made for Decca by the nuns of Argentan. They are especially significant because the first fifteen of the twenty-four records were directed by Dom Joseph Gajard. Only three of these, *The Mysteries of the Rosary* (**20225** in my print discography) and the pair of *L'Histoire du Salut* discs (**7506** and **7507**), seem to have been reissued on CD. While the nuns have since made many recordings for several labels, the Decca series remains of great interest and deserves to be restored to circulation. The most recent recording to appear here is a collection of sixty chants on the life of the Blessed Virgin (no. 21). Almost all of the chants have been recorded somewhere, and there are short spoken introductions to the main events in the life of the Blessed Virgin. The singing is as fine as ever. Mary Berry expressed the highest praise for these nuns.

Before the monks of Santo Domingo de Silos recorded four LPs for Hispavox, later reissued in a series of best-selling CDs on Odeon and Angel, the monks made a series of recordings for Pax around 1956 to 1960 (**304**, **305**, **306**, **307**); not all the chants as recorded were ever issued on that label. The director was Julio Lopéz, the singing was mostly organ-accompanied, and the Latin pronunciation was Castilian. Most of this material was remastered for CD by Jade, reordering the content to fill up the discs. Now a Spanish firm has recently reissued the first six LPs in their original format (nos. 22 to 26), though the sixth one, *Kyrial* (Pax 303, not in my print discography) is

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not at hand at the moment. While the timing is short, half of *Tiempo Pascual* and some other chants were not included on Jade, so this set has some value. There are no notes or texts, just a list of contents.

In the 1950s, the most important recordings of chant came from Solesmes and Beuron. Reissues of the latter have recently appeared from two sources. Archiv has packaged four well-filled CDs combining familiar and unfamiliar issues (no. 27). Second Vespers and Compline of Christmas (**14110**), the First Mass of Christmas (**14153**) and the Mass of Easter Sunday (**14017**) are the familiar programmes on three LPs. The Marian final antiphons (**37168**), Mass VIII with Credo III (**37112**), a *Missa brevis* (181193), *Laudes Solemnes* (**37111**) and *Exsequiarum Ordo* (**37139**) were all issued only in Germany on five 45 rpm discs. The Palm Sunday procession chants (**13041**) appeared on a ten-inch LP, likewise issued only in Germany. Additionally, the Mass of the Ascension (**14164**), one of two complete Masses made by the nuns of Varensell, is included. The *Laudes Solemnes* (a *Te Deum* and *Christus vincit*), and the Palm Sunday procession were especially valuable discs that were never widely available. The *Missa brevis* is an oddity. The notes describe it as EPA **37123**, recorded in 1956, but in fact the chants are taken from a similar *Missa brevis*, SEPA 181193 (not listed in my print discography), recorded in stereo in 1959. Each disc has seven chants, but the Kyrie XVI and Gloria XV were re-recorded for the later programme. Chantdiscography.com sorts it all out.

Earlier, an English engineer working in France issued the First and Third Masses and Second Vespers and Compline of Christmas, transferred very cleanly from LP pressings (no. 28). The Masses had both been issued on Deutsche Grammophon CDs some years ago, and two of the three programmes have since been issued on the Archiv set above, so all of this is on other CDs. An earlier set (no. 29) was a reissue of *Liturgia Paschalis*, **14104/05** and **14017** in my print discography or ARC 3088–90 in the United States. Two LPs offered significant parts of the Easter vigil, new at the time, with a reissue of the Easter Sunday Mass recorded four years earlier (the latter now included in the new Archiv boxed set). This may have been passed over for reissue on Archiv because the liturgical format lasted only nineteen years, from its experimental and optional introduction in 1951 and its inclusion in the restored Order of Holy Week in 1956 to its replacement by a significantly altered format in 1970. Still not available on CD are excerpts from the Good Friday service (**14034**), a disc that has what is virtually the only complete recording of the Improperia or *Populе meus* (the only other, directed by Jan Boogaarts, inserted some polyphony by Lassus in his version).

Godehard Joppich made recordings of Tenebrae responsories some years ago. The first (no. 30) used the modern editions of eleven responsories for the most part, strung on a series of spoken readings of the Passion from Luther's Bible. Two years later, with a different schola (no. 31), he recorded twelve responsories, including the same eleven, sung according to the readings of Hartker 390–1 (many of the verses are different), with the connective thread chanted in a compilation from all four gospels, much in the manner that each Passion account was chanted during Holy Week. The third issue (no. 32) borrowed the recording of the responsories from the first issue

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along with three more recorded but not issued at that time (as a note in the booklet acknowledges), and the connecting thread is a new narrative in German read by the same speaker but departing (halfway through) from the original choice of gospel texts. Hence the recording date of 1998 of this set must refer only to the spoken passages.

When *Gregorian Chant–Early Recordings* was produced (2001, no. 15), virtually none of the chants that had been recorded contemporaneous with the first Solesmes album of 1930 had ever been reissued in any format. The CD collection included two chants of St Benedict from Maria Laach in 1928 (the abbey was also pictured on the cover). Now Motette has reissued the entire group of fifteen chants made that year (no. 33), at the time the first project by the Berlin-based label Christschall. The director and organist were not named on the original labels, but Dom Adélard Bouvilliers identified them (incorrectly) in his 1935 chant discography and I copied the names into the reissue. I was informed of the correct names on a visit to the abbey a few years ago, as cited below, but the latest reissue remains anonymous. Very few chant recordings of the shellac era have ever been reissued, so this is an interesting relic of the past.

Another monastery whose shellac recordings have recently been reissued all at once is Saint-Benoît-du-Lac (no. 34), where recording has continued into the LP and CD eras. A boxed set of four CDs includes every recording made there in the 78-rpm era, as listed in my book. The first set, a series of singing lessons concluding with eight antiphons in as many modes on the final disc, is complete, and a complete Mass of Corpus Christi is issued for the first time. Dom Mercure is identified as the director of all the recordings (his name appeared only in the two 1936 albums), although Dom André Saint-Cyr informed me during a visit some years ago that the Requiem Mass of 1944 was actually directed by Dom Gaston Bergeron without credit on the labels. The singing of the chants reflects the abbey's origin as a daughter house of Saint-Wandrille.

The *Vespro della Beata Vergine* of Monteverdi has been furnished with chant antiphons before the psalms and canticle on nearly half of all recorded versions. The twenty-fourth such recording is unique (no. 35), for, rather than six liturgically inappropriate antiphons that match Monteverdi's modes or six antiphons drawn from a single festal Vespers that mostly fail to match his modes, the twenty-fourth such recording uses the antiphon texts for the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin newly set to centonised chant melodies matching the modes of the psalms (the authentic Magnificat antiphon matching mode 1 is retained). So, while unique and interesting, this may not satisfy the desire for genuine antiphons of the period.

It must be reiterated (as noted last year) that the continuing addition of literally hundreds of newly discovered chant recordings to the database on Chantdiscography.com only proves that the effort to account for all new recordings in this annual summary has been woefully incomplete. The new discoveries are evenly distributed over the last twenty-five years, so only the more recent issues have been cited here. The database on that website is now becoming an increasingly thorough guide to the historical development of chant interpretation on records. Data already entered is being further refined for accuracy and consistency.

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As an addendum, we must mention a collection of early Renaissance polyphony recorded from a 'new' (or newly collated) manuscript from Veneto (no. 36). Composers include Guillaume Du Fay, Arnold de Lantins, Johannes de Quadris and others. Fragments in Munich and Vienna were found to be parts of an original *c*.1440 source. Margaret Bent and Robert Klugseder presented the discovery in 2012 with the publication of a facsimile edition. The ensemble that sang at that event later recorded music from the source.

Discography

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; m Magyar.

1 Resurrexi
Consortium Vocale Oslo, dir. Alexander M. Schweitzer
EOS EOSCD 7542. (Recorded 2011.) Teg

2 In Excelso Throno
Schola Gregoriana Monacensis, dir. Johannes Berchmans Göschl
EOS EOSCD 7637. (Recorded 2013.) Teg

3 Lumen ad Revelationem Gentium
Ensemble Graces & Voices, dir. Franz Karl Prassl
EOS EOSCD 7638. (Recorded 2013.) Teg

4 Liber Gradualis V – Tempus Paschale
soloists, dir. Alberto Turco
Edizioni Melosantiqua LG V/1–2–3–4 (four discs). (Recorded 2012.) T

5 Kyriale, vol. I
Nova Schola Gregoriana, dir. Alberto Turco
Melos Antiqua MA 01. (Issued 2006.) Ti

6 Kyriale, vol. II
Nova Schola Gregoriana, dir. Alberto Turco
Melos Antiqua MA 03. (Issued 2006.) Ti

7 Kyriale, vol. III
Nova Schola Gregoriana, dir. Alberto Turco
Melos Antiqua MA 06. (Issued 2008.) Ti

8 Kyriale, vol. IV
Nova Schola Gregoriana, dir. Alberto Turco
Melos Antiqua MA 09. (Issued 2010.) Ti

9 Kyriale, vol. V
Nova Schola Gregoriana, dir. Alberto Turco
Melos Antiqua MA 12. (Issued 2011.) Ti

10 Matines du Triduum Sacré
Schola Bellarmina, dir. Bernard Lorber
L'Année Liturgique ALGC 14 (three discs). (Recorded 2012.) -

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11 Post-Tridentine Gregorian Chant in Hungary
Schola Hungarica, dir. László Dobszay and Judith Fehér
Budapest BMC CD 193. (Recorded 2010.) Tem
12 Crux Gloriosa
Schola Hungarica, dir. Janka Szendrei and László Dobszay
Budapest BMC CD 206. (Recorded 2009, issued 2013.) Tem
13 Passio Domini
St Philip Neri Seminary Choir, dir. Wulfran Lebocq
Institut du Christ Roi Souverain Prêtre ICRSP 5. (Recorded 2012.) Tef
14 Mysterium Crucis
Graces & Voices
Rondeau ROP 6067. (Recorded 2012.) Teg
15 Insula Felix
Ordo virtutum, dir. Stefan Johannes Morent
Christophorus CHR 77328. (Recorded 2009.) Tg(ef)
16 The Miracle of the Century
Ordo virtutum, dir. Stefan Johannes Morent
Raum Klang RK 3205. (Recorded 2012.) Teg
17 Le Chant des Moines
Les Chantres du Thoronet, dir. Damien Poisblaud
Psalmus PSAL 021. (Recorded 2013.) Tef
18 Zu S. Thomas
Amarcord
Raum Klang ap 10112. (Recorded 2011 and 2012.) Tefg
19 Hymne de l'univers
Monks of Ligugé
Studio S.M. D3138. (Recorded 2012.) Tef
20 Orientale Lumen
Monks of Sainte Anne, Kergonan, dir. Jaan-Eik Tulve
Studio S.M. D3128. (Recorded 2011 and 2012.) Tef
21 Marie Étoile de l'Espérance
Nuns of Argentan, dir. Claude Pateau
Art & Musique AM/CD 107 30806. (Recorded 2008.) Tef
22 Marial
Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos, dir. Julio Lopéz
efen EFE 13153. (Recorded 1958.) –
23 Adviento y Navidad
Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos, dir. Julio Lopéz
efen EFE 13222. (Recorded 1958.) –
24 Cuaresima y Semana Santa
Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos, dir. Julio Lopéz
efen EFE 13223. (Recorded 1959.) –
25 Tiempo Pascual
Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos, dir. Julio Lopéz
efen EFE 13316. (Recorded 1959.) –

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26 Difuntos
Monks of Santo Domingo de Silos, dir. Julio Lopéz
efen EFE 13105. (Recorded 1959.) –
27 The Office – The Mass – Varia
Monks of Beuron, dir. Maurus Pfaff; Nuns of Varensell
Archiv 00289 479 2593 (four discs). (Recorded 1953 to 1960.) Tefg
28 Christmas
Monks of Beuron, dir. Maurus Pfaff
Pristine PACO 066 (two discs). (Recorded 1957 and 1959.)
29 Liturgia Paschalis
Monks of Beuron, dir. Maurus Pfaff
Pristine PACO 056 (two discs). Recorded 1953 and 1957.)
30 Ecce Homo
Gert Westphal, speaker; Schola Gregoriana Berlin, dir. Godehard Joppich
Christophorus CHR 77161. (Recorded 1993.) Tg
31 Passio Domini
Die Singphoniker, dir. Godehard Joppich
CPO 999 111–2 (two discs). (Recorded 1995.) Te(fg)
32 Durch den Tod zum Leben
Gert Westphal, speaker; Die Singphoniker, dir. Godehard Joppich
Vier-Türme-Verlag VT 501 (two discs). (Issued 1998.) Tg
33 Maria Laach
Monks of Maria Laach [dir. Ambrosius Stock; Willibrord Ballmann, organ]
Motette MOT 50871. (Recorded 1928; reissued 2012.) T
34 Rythmique Grégorienne
Monks of Saint-Benoît-du-Lac, dir. Georges Mercure
XXI CD 12 1696 (four discs). (Recorded 1936 to 1948; reissued 2011.) Tf
35 Claudio Monteverdi: Vespro della Beata Vergine (1610)
Choeur de Chambre de Namur, Cappella Mediterranea, dir. Leonard García Alarcón
Ambronay AMY 042 (two discs). (Recorded 2013.) Tefg
36 Veneto 1440
Ascoli Ensemble, dir. Sasha Zamler-Carhart
ÖAW PHA CD 36. (Recorded 2013.) Te

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