

Sequence workshop with Leah Stuttard

Medieval Music in the Dales

12 September 2020

5pm

Objectives

- Learn about the widespread (and pretty interesting) genre of the sequence and how it relates to other medieval genres: the lai, the planctus and the estampie
- Listen to some examples for tips on different approaches to performance
- Look at the sequence's English context in the MS Harley 978 (which is the same manuscript that has "Sumer is icumen in")
- Start to learn together a sacred sequence from that manuscript

I hope this workshop will give you some new ideas about repertoire that might be interesting to learn and perform, where to find it and how to develop a performance!

If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact me:

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I'd love to hear from you!!!

Manuscript - London, British Library, Harley 978

- 79 Samson dux fortissime
- 80 Regina clemencie, Maria vocata
- 81 Dum Maria credit
- 82 Ave gloriosa virginum regina
- 83a Ave gloriosa mater salvatoris
- 83b Duce creature
- 84 Felix sanctorum chorus
- 85a Sumer is icumen in
- 85b Perspice christicola
- 86 Eterni numinis mater et filia
- 87 Ante thronum regentis omnia
- 88 Gaude salutata virgo

Only 83 and 85 are not sequences

83 is in 3 parts

87 is written in a different hand, could be intended as rhythmic notation

The numbers refer to the number of the piece in the edition by Helen Deeming (see the first book in the Bibliography)

LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, HARLEY MS 978 (SONGS 79–88)

CONTENTS

Mainly literary contents consisting of Marie de France's Lais and Fables, Latin 'Goliardic' verse, the 'Song of Lewes', brief historical texts, a calendar of Reading Abbey, and a well-known list of (now lost) polyphonic music.⁶³ The Latin, French and English songs appear in the first gathering and are followed by music-theory materials that open the second.⁶⁴

SIZE, CONSTRUCTION, DATING

190 x 130 mm; several hands, many changes of layout, some self-contained booklets, lost leaves and sections. s.xiii^{3/4}, possibly between 1261 and 1265 (*BLCIM*, following Taylor and Coates).⁶⁵

OMITTED MUSIC

ff.8v–9r, three textless estampies (*PMFC*, xiv, nos.16–18); ff.14r–15r, music-theory materials, including a didactic piece teaching the names of the musical intervals, 'Est tonus sic' (ed. Bryan Gillingham, *Secular Medieval Latin Song: An Anthology* (Ottawa, 1993), 448).⁶⁶

NOTATION

As has often been noted before, the notation of many of the songs in this MS has been revised by a later scribe (possibly working in the later thirteenth or early fourteenth century). Many of the notational revisions have involved replacing the original neume with the same neume, written an alternative way: for example, the traditional climacus form is altered in every case to the so-called 'English conjunctura'. Though some have speculated that the revisions may have been intended to render originally unmeasured notation rhythmic, detailed analysis of all the songs in which it occurs make it more likely that the reviser merely replaced some less familiar forms with equivalent ones that were more current in his own day. As discussed below, the case in **85a–b** is slightly different, in that this notation probably did have rhythmic indications from the outset, and the reviser's alterations serve to make these rhythms more explicit. It is likely, too, that the notation of **87** was also rhythmic from the start; see facs. 3 and the notes to this song below.

⁶³ Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and their Readers* (Philadelphia, 2002); C. L. Kingsford, *The Song of Lewes* (Oxford, 1890, repr. 1963); Jacques Handschin, 'The Summer Canon and Its Background', *Musica Disciplina* 3 (1949), 55–94, and 5 (1951), 65–113; Christopher Hohler, 'Reflections on Some Manuscripts Containing Thirteenth-Century Polyphony', *Journal of the Plain-song and Mediaeval Music Society* 1 (1978), 2–38.

⁶⁴ Stevens 1996.

⁶⁵ Andrew Taylor and Alan Coates, 'The Dates of the Reading Calendar and the Summer Canon', *Notes and Queries* 243 (1998), 22–4.

⁶⁶ Concordances of this didactic piece are in *F-EV* lat. 2 and the Hereford Breviary (see the description of the Évreux MS above for references).

Discography for sequences in Harley 978

“Samson dux fortissime”

1. SdFM
Frühe Musik I
Recorded May 1962
2. Sequentia – twice
On *Spielmann und Kleriker*
Their first album, released 1981
And on *Visions from the book*
Released 1996
3. Schola Gregoriana of Cambridge, dir Mary Berry
Abelard: hymns and sequences for Heloise
Recorded 1993

“Ante thronum regentis omnia”

1. Accademia Monteverdiana & Trinity Boys' Choir - Denis Stevens, dir.
On *Music in honor of St. Thomas of Canterbury*
Released 1974

Some performance ideas for sequences

“Nenbressete”

Cantiga de Santa Maria (CSM 421) with an unusual form and history, probably a contrafactum of a troped offertory “Recordare virgo mater”, 2 voice version in Las Huelgas manuscript

Micrologus were inspired by 2 voice version in the Las Huelgas manuscript to create a 2 voice version in the same style of this cantiga

Accompanied by bells and an organistrum based on Portico de la Gloria in Santiago di Compostela

“Ar ne kuth ich sorghe non”

<https://youtu.be/Kp2EzHAgLTk>

Grace Newcombe and Baptiste Romain

Also on Spotify playlist – classic voice plus one instrument accompaniment.

“Lai nom par”

Spotify

Provençal lai

In manuscript at the BNF, f fr 844 fol 213v-214v

John Wright and the group Porque trobar

Fantastic diverse rendering, like going on a journey, using rhythm and non-metrical performance as well as great instrumental interventions and accompaniments

Recorded 1998

“Dolorum solatium”: Peter Abelard

Studio der Frühen Musik

Peter Abelard

Released 1974

See ‘Side 1’ alias (right click and show original)

A masterwork, lasting over 21 minutes

At the time it was absolutely at the forefront of musicology – an article had only just been published with a musical edition of this for the very first time!

Interestingly, the piece also appears in an English manuscript (and is in the Helen Deeming edition in the bibliography).

Long composed preludes and interludes, wide variety of contrasts in spite of there only being 4 performers, use of an Arabo-Andalusian piece as an interlude, hugely emotional.

“Victime paschali laudes”

Live 2017

One of the few sequences which is still condoned by the catholic church after many were banned during the Councils of Trent during the counter reformation movement; this is the sequence for Easter day recounting the story of the resurrection.

I perform it with my colleague Agnethe Christensen – she sings the first versicle and I join in with a different vocal line from the Las Huelgas manuscript in the repeat of the versicle.

“Lai des pucelles”

Spotify

Sequentia

Philippe le Chancelier

Recorded in 1986 and released in 1990

A colourful instrumental version – let your imagination run riot!

“Samson dux fortissime”

Spotify

Sequentia

Visions from the book

Released in 1996

Vocal version, using contrasts of different voices in various combinations

VERY MANY OTHER POSSIBILITIES

Don't be afraid to try things – check out all the sequences in the spotify playlist for more inspiration! Compare different versions of the same piece, it can be very edifying 😊

Link to the song in the manuscript online

“Regina clemencie” fol 4v-6r
Harley 978

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_978_f004v

Bibliography

Deeming, Helen, ed., *Songs in British sources, c.1150-1300*, Musica Britannica, 95 (London: Stainer and Bell, 2013)

This should be available in a lot of music libraries, but also in university libraries and the British Library and places like that; includes translations of texts which is SOOOO important for this repertoire.

Dobson, E. J., and Frank Llewellyn Harrison, *Medieval English Songs* (Faber, 1979)

This is more easily accessible, but has very old fashioned editions that have been orchestrated and stuff... however, the guide to English pronunciation is very useful.

Jeanroy, Alfred, Louis Maurice Brandin, and Pierre Aubry, eds., *Lais et descorts français du 13e siècle. Texte et musique*, Mélange de musicologie critique (Paris: H. Welter, 1901)

<<http://archive.org/details/laisetdescortsfr00jean>>

A nice and accessible edition available for download at the webpage I've given a link for; it's in French and doesn't have translations unfortunately, but it has the music in a decent diplomatic version which is a good start. For translations you might need to try to find a recent recording and hope it's in the booklet! Or make your own!!!!

McGee, Timothy J., *Medieval Instrumental Dances* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989)

Sure you all know this, but thought I'd include it just in case. There are other editions too of course.

Stevens, John, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050-1350*, Cambridge Studies in Music (Cambridge London New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

This is a beautifully written book and gives a really excellent intro to the whole 'complex' of Sequence-Planctus-Lai – I highly recommend it!

Tischler, Hans, *Trouvère lyrics with melodies: Complete comparative edition*, Corpus mensurabilis musicae, 107, 15 vols (Neuhausen: Hänssler-Verlag for American Institute of Musicology, 1997)

The two interesting provençal lais are edited in here – probably only available though in a big academic library as it's a really monstrously huge collected edition (very wasteful in its typesetting too which I find really annoying....) Again, no translations so good luck with that ;)

Fassler, Margot E., 'Women and Their Sequences: An Overview and a Case Study', *Speculum*, 94.3 (2019), 625–73

I include this just in case you have access to academic journals; she gives a good overview of the sequence and the angle of thinking about which sequences women sang I found fascinating too.

New Grove articles on "Lai", "Sequence" and "Planctus" – very useful starting points.

Some weblinks

A sequence for St John the Baptist

<https://www.leahstuttard.com/?p=1942>

Another sequence, this time for St John of Beverley, sung by Vivien Ellis (if you follow the link at the bottom of the page)

<https://www.leahstuttard.com/?p=1957>

And one for St Margaret

<https://youtu.be/bigO7mBWSfQ>

(if you read French, I wrote something for my friends at Les Prieurales in Le Havre about this sequence: <https://francois77.wixsite.com/francoismontaufray/les-prieurales>)

One of Machaut's lais

<https://www.facebook.com/agnethe.christensen/videos/10158431509978739>

performed by my friend Agnethe Christensen during lockdown live on Facebook (you don't need an account to listen, just ignore the site's insistence that you log on!)
with recorded sounds by the fiddle player Elizabeth Gaver

I've also made a spotify playlist

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6NWI7kHKaKC6PRXJWUWnQI?si=0KfbePjySd2agaIWB8es-w>

And if you're interested in Piæ Cantiones, which has a few very rarely performed sequences in it, this webpage has downloadable scores:

http://www.spiellect.de/facs_piae_cantiones.htm