Leading Notes

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Leading Notes

Editor: Tess Knighton

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Contents

Editorial

Leading Notes is the new journal of the National Early Music Association; it will appear twice a year in January and July. We hope to fill a rather different function from other early music publications by presenting a number of regular items which will offer anyone interested in whatever aspect of early music thought-provoking ideas, information and insight into various areas of the repertory.

In this first issue, Christopher Page provides an introductory guide to one of the richest – and most tantalising – of these areas: the songs of the trobadors. Bruno Turner explores the uncharted territory of the Spanish polychoral idiom and presents his edition of Guerrero's *Duo Seraphim*: an edition of a piece and a brief guide to its background and performance will be a constant feature of *Leading Notes*. Other regular items will include informal interviews with leading performers and specialists in early music, and a 'think piece': here Clifford Bartlett airs his views on early music on the air.

If you have thoughts on this subject, or any other topic raised in *Leading Notes*, please write in to NEMA: letters of interest will be published in future issues in the hope that the journal can provide a published outlet for discussion. In future issues there will also be selected reviews of books, editions and recordings, though here the aim is less to offer a comprehensive survey of everything that appears – an impossible task in a journal of this size – but rather to raise 'live' or pressing questions of the interpretation and understanding of early music today. Whatever your involvement with early music, as listener, performer, instrument-maker, amateur or professional, we all share one thing: a fascination with the music of the past. I hope you will find something in *Leading Notes* that perhaps you didn't know before, or something that makes you think again, but most of all, I hope you will enjoy reading it.

Tess Knighton

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Nema
NATIONAL EARLY MUSIC ASSOCIATION

Leading questions

Michelene Wandor talks to Christopher Page, University Lecturer in Middle English at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge; founder and director of Gothic Voices; and Chairman of NEMA until 1992.

MW You were born and brought up in Walthamstow; not the most likely environment in which to discover medieval music, I would have thought.

CP William Morris lived in Walthamstow! I was lucky to go to a good school where I had a schoolmaster who had read English at Oxford and who specialised in the Middle Ages. The day I first heard him read Chaucer was also the day when somebody played me my first record of medieval music. I was pulled towards the past by the ear.

MW Did you have a musical background?

CP No, but I had a medieval one. When I was four years old my father took me to the British Museum and had to lift me up to show me the manuscripts. I think I owe a good deal to that. Then there was Michael Morrow, still my hero, and his concerts with Musica Reservata on the South Bank in the late 1960s and early '70s. I also had a schoolmaster who had made a cittern; even now I don't think I can entirely disentangle the pleasure I feel in early music from the smell of sawdust and the ritual of handling wood, making boxes with perforated lids and stringing them up.

MW What happened after school?

CP I read English at Balliol College. You could (and still can) do an exclusively medieval degree at Oxford, which I did...an English degree with no Shakespeare! The ability to say 'Hrafnkel rode home and spoke these tidings' in Old Icelandic has stood me in good stead ever since. In one sense I was very unlucky: I went up to Oxford the year that Andrew Parrott and Bernard Thomas went down. Just as there was a great Cambridge generation of comedy, there was a great Oxford generation of early music – and I missed it.

MW So do you have any formal musical training?

CP No.

MW Would it be fair to say that your involvement in music has always been closely linked to the study of texts?

CP Yes. Although I love the music of the Middle Ages, the kind of engagement with medieval life and thought which I want can only really be found in medieval literature, where so much of the depth and strangeness of the period is displayed. To investigate the ways in which medieval music was performed is to explore the ways in which medieval people were human. I have come to feel more and more that we have much to learn about *harmony* in the music. Many of the textbooks will tell you that the ideal thing is to have contrasting sounds in medieval polyphony – a lute on one line and a fiddle on another for example. That can sound very well, but I am much more interested in a homogeneous sound that brings out the harmony, and a good deal of evidence seems to suggest that performances by voices only were quite common.

MW Is that how Gothic Voices came into being?

CP In 1979, I suggested to Hugh Keyte at Radio 3 that I should explain these ideas in the much-lamented programme 'Early Music Forum'. Some singers were duly booked, among them Margaret Philpot and Rogers Covey-Crump, and they went on to become the core of the ensemble. The sound they make together has always been the essence of Gothic Voices. I used to think that a group could be like a Hoover: you clip on appliances according to the job. But over the years, as we have been joined by Leigh Nixon, John Mark Ainsley and Andrew Tusa, I have come to learn the value of working with a fixed and small band of singers.

MW You've moved away from your starting point – an involvement with instruments.

CP Yes. All that really happened was that I began to realise that the voices available to me were much more musical than any reconstructed medieval instruments I had encountered. Performers of the David Munrow generation – no disrespect to a great man – made differences between pieces by 'orchestrating' them, and that is, in a sense, the easy way out. You can make two pieces sound different if you perform one with recorders and another with shawms; but if you have three singers then you must discover what is distinctive about each. We have found that you can lead an audience through a long piece without any conspicuous variety or arbitrary changes of sonority, and they will listen. Audiences are now prepared to listen to medieval works with the intensity of concentration that the pieces deserve. It really is gratifying to find that Wigmore Hall audienced, for example, will listen intently to five minutes of intricate polyphony from the 14th century. That is everything I could wish: that people should view medieval art – and the Middle Ages – with a lively interest and a certain compassion. A flattering comparison to use would be to think of Gothic Voices like a string quartet in the sense that there are few resources, intensely used and (we hope) drawing concentrated, serious listening.

MW Talking about audiences, do you see your involvement with NEMA as an extension of that relationship?

CP I've had ten years of subsidised research and I owe something to people who have not. I've learned things that I can pass on, and I feel that my

involvement with NEMA is one way to do it.

MW Do you feel drawn to any one of NEMA's activities in particular?

CP I feel very strongly that one of NEMA's principal strengths should be the journal. There is obviously scope for a publication that can give everybody interested in early music information about the music they love, but which is not a scholarly journal in the narrow sense, nor yet completely ephemeral. I hope that *Leading Notes* can fill that gap, and become a full partner to the Register, which is one of NEMA's triumphs.

Early music on the air

Clifford Bartlett, music publisher, editor and reviewer, airs his views about the often vexed question of broadcasting early music.

When I joined the BBC Music Library in 1970, it was still full of orchestral sets of Bach and Handel with parts to satisfy a symphony orchestra with 30 violins or more. Such performances survived at least until 1961: I still remember my shock at the sight of a row of eight double basses the first time I heard the B minor Mass (at a BBC concert at the Royal Festival Hall). The expectation that Bach be played by the same size of orchestra as Elgar was normal until the 1960s, but the BBC[1] had long accepted that its educational role included extending the repertory backwards. A series of operas in the late 1920s (with translations specially printed and purchasable in advance) included *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse*, and there was a long-running series of Bach cantatas – one cantata every Sunday afternoon. Unfortunately, the performances did not always live up to the noble ambitions of those early days.

The Third Programme period was particularly concerned with spreading the range of music, while, after the war, a generation of musicologists appeared who were also concerned with performance practice. Anthony Lewis and Denis Stevens worked for the BBC; others such as Thurston Dart were frequent broadcasters. A wide range of early music that had never been heard before was broadcast, much of it at the BBC's instigation (rather than, as later, performers persuading producers to record music they were intending or hoping to perform anyway). Most of my musical education came through radio rather than records, and a sudden encounter with the wealth of continental recordings at the end of the 1960s showed that the BBC was too introspective and was ignoring exciting developments elsewhere. It was still reluctant to take the initiative in the 1970s and accept the new approaches on the grounds that the performers were not technically good enough. There was some truth in this, but in retrospect, it seems odd that the BBC preferred defective performances in the older manner to others that may also have had defects but which made some attempt to bring the music to life.

The trend was thus to a large extent set by the record companies and the festivals rather than the BBC, and many major events were broadcast from concerts which were financed and organised outside the Corporation. The most lavish large-scale event was probably the Florentine Intermedii (originally an EBU concert in 1979, much later a Prom, a CD and a television presentation). There were satisfying series: Byrd's *Gradualia*; From Plainsong to Polyphony; the Bavarian Royal Wedding of 1668 (an imaginative celebration for Diana and Charles); and The Octave of the Nativity. But in the main, the BBC seemed to follow developments rather than to lead the way.

Let's take a few examples. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, by far the most pervasive type of music was liturgical chant. Everybody went to church. Even in the major ecclesiastical establishments, plainsong was never entirely replaced by polyphony, and much of that polyphony was itself based on chant. But how often does one hear chant on radio or television, apart for the odd snatch to set the scene for a drama or documentary? The fact that there have been several major series to remedy that situation only emphasises the absence of chant from the regular schedules. Yet were there any serious attempt to give a balanced view of the repertory, surely chant is as important as Beethoven symphonies or Haydn quartets? I can think of nothing better to start or close a day's listening than one of the chants from that day's liturgy: it could be Radio Three's answer to the platitudinous 'thought for the day' on Radio Four! Occasionally, early vocal music is presented in a liturgical context (the Taverner Choir's Machaut Mass, later recorded by EMI, began as a BBC recording at St. Bartholomew-the-Great in London), but it has always been something special, never part of the normal day's broadcasting. A liturgical reconstruction in one of our cathedrals would also make fascinating television: a full medieval mass and procession in Salisbury Cathedral would bring the whole place to life and show that the grandiose architecture has clear, practical functions.

The value of such magnificent liturgical reconstructions as The Octave of the Nativity has been to give music a sense of space, scale and context. But, however much we may wish to have music performed as it might have been in its own time, we are modern listeners with a belief in the intrinsic value of a musical composition, and may at times wish to listen to it for its own sake. If we go to a concert, we enjoy a programme contrived by the performers, the prime unifying factor being the identity of the participants themselves: orchestral programmes rarely include string quartets or piano solos (though 200 years ago concerts were much more flexible, as Haydn's London programmes testify). As performers and instruments have become more and more specialised, the scope of concerts has become correspondingly more restricted. When I first went to concerts, the Brandenburg Concertos were part of the standard symphony orchestra repertory. Then they were confined to chamber orchestras, but one might still hear Bach and Bartók together; I particularly remember a concert 30 years ago with Vivaldi's Op. 3 no. 11, the six-part Ricercar from Bach's *Musical Offering* and Bartók's *Divertimento*, the baroque part of the concert being played as 'authentically' as was then possible. But now, such a mixture is looked at askance: the best players of Bach will not have the skills to play Bartók, and vice versa (though one player of that 1960 concert, Francis Baines, is now a

[1] I have not discussed commercial radio here; even if any commercial channel does devote time to early music, it is likely to be almost entirely dependent on what is available on disc.

regular 'authentic' player). But on the radio, there is no reason why such a programme cannot be broadcast using the best ensembles for each: a small orchestra for the Vivaldi, a harpsichord for the Bach and a modern string orchestra for the Bartók.

There are two problems, however. The first is the way broadcasters are tied to the conventions of the concert. This partly comes from their commendable desire to avoid providing aural wallpaper (despite pressures from senior management to do just that). But broadcasters are also obsessively concerned (in a way that I suspect is shared by few listeners) with the importance of the live concert: when presenting studio recordings, they seem to feel obliged to make them as near to a live broadcast as possible. There are, of course, enormous economic advantages in this: the listener will accept the odd fluff and there is no need for the interminable retakes that go to make up a record, but the result is that most radio programmes are constructed like concert programmes. Only rarely (most regularly in the Week's Composers, usually compiled from commercial records) do we hear programmes where the primary unifying means is not the performing ensemble itself. The BBC, therefore, fails to use its resources to the full where it can do what live concerts and records cannot.

There are many ways in which radio could break out of the strait jacket of imitating concerts. I have already suggested that very different types of music can give stimulation by contrast. Sometimes there can be a closer relationship, although I would be suspicious of too frequent a presentation of pieces all using the same tune or with 'blue' in their title. But the shorter the piece (and much of early music is short), the greater the care is needed to find a suitable presentation, and the less interesting it is to present programmes merely of groups of the same type. Often speech is required to break the sequence, to stop a programme degenerating into aural wallpaper.

If I buy a CD of Monteverdi's madrigals, I will have a translation at hand and can understand how Monteverdi is reacting to the poets he is setting. The broadcaster needs to consider how he is to make up for this. How can I understand a madrigal unless I am told what it is about in some detail? My concentration will be held better if I am forewarned (tactfully) of the occasional musical landmark. It would be sensible to give me some hints on the circumstances in which it might originally been sung, so that my imagination can provide a context other than my sitting room, or perhaps a motorway, for the musical experience. I might well not have followed everything first time: perhaps more could be said about the piece, based on what I would have noticed first time, leading to a repeat performance which I would enjoy all the more. It might even be possible to go further and follow the example of an Italian academy, with discussion of a madrigal between poet, composer, performers and listeners before hearing it again. Alternatively, another poem from the period, perhaps on the same theme, or a contemporary description of life in Mantua, could be read. These and other devices could be used to enliven the performance and to prevent a string of one madrigal after another. At present, the standard BBC contract makes mixing programmes difficult: but the BBC has not, I believe, tried very seriously to change this.

The breakthough for early music on television in Britain was the use of early wind instruments for a musical finale by The Two Ronnies; most documentaries, however, are still happy to have music several centuries out, in contrast with the meticulous care they take in getting the costumes right. Many opportunities are lost by using grossly anachronistic music in programmes on history, art or architecture. Nor is television particularly kind to normal concert music: close-ups of players can distract, and singers rarely follow 'early' advice on visual decorum. Televised rehearsals and master classes can be fascinating, and a handful of programmes have shown that the relationship of research and performance can be of wide interest. Television is good at showing how things are done, and music programmes could do well to concentrate more on this aspect than on merely presenting the finished product.

Having said all this, I must add that while the historical balance of music on Radio 3 my leave something to be desired, and early music is still often something to fill in the cracks in the schedules, at least when it is broadcast, it is usually done by people who know what they are doing. There are, however, signs of financial pressure. The vast commitment to the large symphony orchestras (playing mostly 19th- and 20th-century music) means that, when economies are required, it is easier to cut back on early music events, since it is mostly performed by musicians not on the BBC pay-roll. And the output expected from each producer is such that there is now much less time to create exciting new programmes afresh. I certainly have no desire to criticise those who are currently producing early music programmes at the BBC: they are doing an excellent job with the constraints imposed on them. They suffer from the abysmal critical coverage of radio output by the British press (including the specialist early music publications). Informed criticism would not only encourage them: it would put them in a stronger position when trying to secure approval for more ambitious programmes. We in Britain are most fortunate to have Radio 3; but it does seem curious that, despite the absence of commercial pressures, it is not generating as much excitement as the commercial record industry.

Raising the Spanish treasure, or who on earth was Aniceto Baylón?

Bruno Turner

Bruno Turner is well known as an editor, writer and broadcaster as well as for his performances and recordings as director of Pro Cantione Antiqua. Here he provides a glimpse into the fascinating but little-known Spanish polychoral repertory by way of an introduction to his edition of Guerrero's Duo Seraphim.

The evolution of double-choir and multi-voiced polychoral music has been well documented in Anthony Carver's *Cori Spezzati* (CUP, 1988), which deals with the Italian and Flemish origins, culminating in a Venetian climax and a German craze. It is not to disparage Carver's lucid guide, nor is it to take away some of the glory from the Gabrielis, from Lassus or Schütz, to enter a protest that the Hispanic world is barely treated. For there is an enormous treasure of Spanish polychoral music – now, at last, being investigated systematically – which survives from the late 16th century to about the middle of the 18th. This Hispanic heritage is to be found almost entirely in manuscript sources, often in loose parts only (*particelas* done up in bundles, or in folders, *legajos*) and distributed throughout Spain and its dominions, in Peru at Lima and Cuzco, in Bolivia, Colombia, Guatemala and above all Puebla and Mexico City. In Spain itself, despite the ravages of the Peninsula Wars, the suppression of the orders and monasteries in the 1830s, the Civil War, and despite theft and ignorance, there remain huge quantities of splendid music (and plenty that's boring) for multi-choirs, only now being sorted and catalogued. From Cádiz to Santiago de Compostela, from the great cathedrals of Andalucía, Castile and Catalonia, the hoard is vast.

Guerrero's *Duo Seraphim* (1597) was produced at the end of a long life in the service of Seville Cathedral. In it the most typical Spanish composer of renaissance polyphony, normally a writer of long, flowing melodies interwoven in deft and expressive counterpoint, displays his new skill but keeps his old reserve. The year before Guerrero published this piece, a young man of genius died at 35 years of age, then *maestro* of the royal choir of Flemish-born musicians, the *capilla flamenca:* Philippe Rogier, who came to Madrid as a boy, published just one double-choir piece but left in manuscript a number of works for triple-choir. The *capilla* at El Escorial had a great unimpeded space in which to sing, and no less than eight organs, mostly movable, were available. On more than one occasion, several choirs sang together in that awesome place, combining the royal chapels and the singers of several Castilian cathedrals including Toledo. The year after Guerrero died, Victoria brought out a collection that included double- and triple-choir pieces (Madrid, 1600). Music for double-choirs by Guerrero and Victoria had been included in their various prints from 1570 onwards, and occasionally men such as Raval and Bernardo Clavijo put one or two similar pieces into their printed collections. There are also some fine examples in the unpublished music of Alonso de Tejeda (the modern edition has not yet reached the double-choir music). Then, from 1600, it seems as though 'baroque' (a quite modern word) struck Spain and a floodgate opened.

Victoria's younger contemporaries could almost be divided into 'old style' and 'new style'. Alonso Lobo and Esquivel seem to have continued with the dignified polyphony, often very expressive but sometimes (with Esquivel) a little crabbed, that was inherited from Guerrero and Navarro in a development directly from Peñalosa through Morales. Vivanco, at Salamanca, was more adventurous. At Valencia Cathedral and at the then new Real Colegio (the 'Patriarca'), Juan Bautista Comes poured out a stream of double-, triple- and quadruple-choir music, largely homophonic, harmonically modern, massive one moment, dance-like the next. Slow solemn entries alternate with rapid, *parlando* bursts of short notes, syncopations, swinging triple times (*sesquialtera*) sometimes even subdivided to make for rapid *tripla*, as in the Christmas *Hodie nobis coelorum Rex*. Instruments were used far beyond the simple accompaniments of organ and *bajón* (curtal, bass dulcian) that were already ubiquitous in Spain, Portugal and the colonies (the Spanish Netherlands as well as the Americas). The harp was now frequently specified; it was used so enthusiastically for the next 125 years that in the 18th century the bishops of Spain tried to ban harpists from liturgical music. Comes specified with his different choirs a little organ, a 'clavicordio', *órgano grande* and that the fourth choir in his Compline *Cum invocarem* should be played (not sung) by *los ministriles*. His *Miserere* à 16 is for SATB + SSAT + SSAB + SATB choirs positioned on the Gospel side of the High Altar, by the great organ, by the Epistle side of the altar and the fourth in the *coro* by the *órgano pequeño*, three 'choirs' being of solo voices and the fourth the whole of the rest of the choir.

Carlos Patiño (born at Cuenca in 1600) was brought up in a similar tradition. Almost completely unknown composers such as Irizar (Segovia), Aniceto Baylón (Valencia), Humanes Aldana (Córdoba, etc.), Miguel Navarro (Pamplona), Juan García de Salazar (Zamora) are all noteworthy, but the great names of the 17th century include the Catalan Joan Cererols of Montserrat, Sebastián López de Velasco (published 1628), Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla of Puebla, Mexico...but where is one to stop? Hardly any of their works have been transcribed, let alone published and studied. To allow Comes and Cererols the palm is to be too hasty: Morales and Victoria, Guerrero, Lobo and Vivanco were hard acts to follow. But the spectacular and dramatic, the colourful and grandiloquent were the new manners of baroque Spain in music as in

architecture. Gone were the sober dignity and devotion, the sublime austerity of Victoria. Two, three or four choirs with organs, harps, *bajones* and *violones* in support, were joined or replaced by groups of *chirimías* (shawms) *sacabuches, flautas, bajoncillos* and, yes, even drums (*cajas, atabales*). Even the supposed ban on the organ in Holy Week was 'overcome' by using the 'clavicordio' or *espineta* instead! Thoroughly idiomatic instrumental writing for *corneta, sacabuche* and *baxon* accompanying a solo tenor voice is written for Choir 2 in Gabriel Díaz's *Lauda Jerusalem* (à 12). The examples could all be multiplied a hundredfold. Indeed, just to list 17th-century composers with surviving polychoral music on mainland Spain would take up the whole of this article: Juan del Vado, Jacinto de Mesa, José de Torres y Martínez Bravo...etc.

The subject is inexhaustible, but to end, I make these observations: if ever there was a repertory to engage and entertain good amateur (as well as professional) choirs and at the same time allow participation of wind and string players plus various keyboard and plucked instruments (there is evidence for *arpa, archilaud, tiorbo, lira*), then this Hispanic music is it. If ever there was a buried treasure of music, easily singable and playable, that awaits transcription into hireable scores and parts, this is it, this music that comes between Victoria's wonderful double-choir *Salva Regina* (Chester Music) and Francisco Valls's *Missa Scala Aretina* (Novello). Try some Vivanco, Padilla or Comes (Mapa Mundi), and don't do it in purely vocal black and white, do it with varied instrumental colour. Hispanic polychoralism was nothing if not polychrome!

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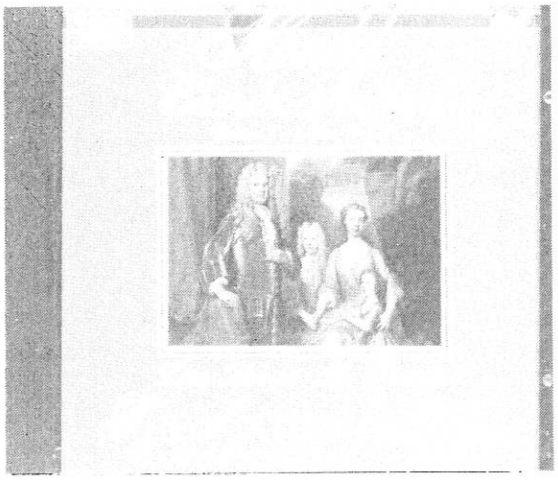

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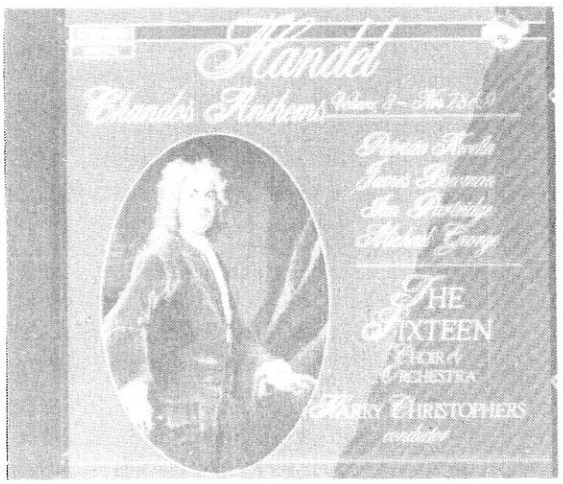

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Introduction to the repertory: the trobadors

Christopher Page presents the first in a series of discussions on specific areas of the repertory.

> Awakening up, he took her hollow lute, –
> Tumultuous – and, in chords that tenderest be,
> He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
> In Provence call'd, 'La belle dame sans mercy'.
> —John Keats, *The Eve of St. Agnes*

The *Eve of St. Agnes* is set in the Middle Ages of the Romantic poets: a world of winding stairways, luxurious textiles and flaming torches. At the centre of the poem, when the two lovers meet, there is an ancient trobador song, *La belle dame sans mercy*, sung to the gentle sounds of a lute. Today, almost two centuries after John Keats, the trobadors are still swathed in a romantic mystique, and with good reason: they stand at the fountainhead of European love-lyric and they make one of the most characterful and eccentric bands of poet-musicians in history. Most music-lovers have heard of them, but many people still have a vague and romanticised picture of the trobadors as wandering minstrels who sang love-songs to a wealth of antique instruments – especially the lute – beneath castle windows. So what is the truth behind this romantic imagery? How can we make a start with these marvellous poets and their songs?

Let us begin with the trobadors themselves, where legend and history have become intertwined. The modern legend is that the trobadors were 'generally of high birth' or (depending upon the book which you consult) 'generally of low birth'. Now you can decide this question for yourself with the help of the original sources, for M. Egan has recently translated the biographies of about a hundred trobadors, the *Vidas* or 'Lives', that were mostly composed around 1300 (*The Vidas of the Troubadours*, New York and London, 1984). There you will find that Guillem Figueira, for example, was the son of a tailor in Toulouse; Uc de Saint Circ was a student who neglected his studies at Montpellier and began to write songs; Guillame Ademar was a poor knight. You will also find stories in the *Vidas* that, for sheer romance, rival anything by John Keats; try the biography of Jaufre Rudel, for example, who loved a distant countess he had never met and finally died in her arms.

Trobador poems are mostly written in a special literary form of Old Occitan, a language of great beauty which is descended from Latin but is distinct from French. Old Occitan was once spoken over the whole of what is now Southern France, and it is still spoken there today by the oldest generation. When a chill wind blows you may still hear someone exclaim, in words that any trobador would have understood, *'fai pas caut!'* ('it's not warm'; compare French *fait pas chaud*). Old Occitan, with its crisp consonants and rolled r's, is a fine language for singing, and singers who wish to learn it can get excellent help from *Bele buche e bele parleure* by B. Jeffery and J. Alton (London, 1976), a singers' guide to early forms of French and Old Occitan. The usefulness of this book is greatly increased if you buy the accompanying cassette; there you will find *Be m'an perdut lai enves Ventadorn* – a song by one of the most famous trobadors, Bernart de Ventadorn – read in full. It also helps to hear people from Southern France today speaking French, for their accents will help you find a tone and timbre for your own version of Old Occitan (and, in the end, singers must make their own version of a 'dead' language; the rules in the primers and grammar books will only take you so far). If you have a chance to hear modern Occitan being sung by any of the 'revivalist' folk-singers now active in Southern France, that is also a great help (the recordings by Marti are particularly striking; his diction is magnificent). For those who want to go further and have a crack at learning Old Occitan (something which no singer will regret doing) there is R.T. Hill and T.G. Bergin, *Anthology of the Provençal Troubadours*, Yale Romanic Studies, Second Series, 23 (New Haven, 1973). This has everything you need to make a beginning.

Where do we find the songs of the trobadors? The first answer to that question is that we find them in a number of manuscripts, all of which are 'late' in that they were copied after *c*1250 and therefore more than a century after the period when some of the earliest trobadors were active. Given the time lag, are the melodies in the manuscripts authentic? When a melody survives in more than one manuscript and the versions differ, which is the correct version? Is there a 'correct' version? These questions have their interest for singers today, for it may well have been singers in the first place who transmitted the melodies without writing for a century or more and who introduced the variations. To what extent do the different versions of a melody reflect ornaments introduced by singers in performance? I incline to the view that there is no correct version of a trobador song and that a modern performer is at liberty to move between the 'competing' versions of a single song (all printed in the two modern editions, of which more below) to find idiomatic ornaments and many other kinds of ideas about the song. H. Van der Werf's *The Chansons of the Troubadours and Trouvères* (Utrecht, 1972) is a good place to start if you want to do more than sing straight out of an edition; there, in addition to a detailed but approachable study, you will find several trobador songs edited with English translation and commentary.

A trobador lyric invariably consists of a poem in Old Occitan and a melody, often of great beauty. The musical settings are invariably monophonic and there is no call for accompaniment nor indeed is there any rubric of any kind concerned with performance. As a rule, only the first verse is set out below the music. In the great majority of cases the musical notation is virtually identical to the square notation which is still used for liturgical chant in the *Liber Usualis* and other modern printed chanted books. The standard (if now rather old) book by C. Parrish, *The*

Notation of Medieval Music (New York, 1957), gives a useful summary of the notation used in the sources (Parrish is principally concerned with French songs, but no matter), together with a few facsimiles. Parrish also gives an overview of the problems presented by this notation, the overwhelming one being the problem of rhythm.

Here we must pause. Since the notation in the vast majority of the sources does not indicate the relative duration of the notes, but only defines their pitch, there has been much argument about the interpretation of these songs. Here and there, certain sources *do* give measured versions of songs; should all the songs be interpreted in that measured fashion (in so-called 'modal' rhythm)? Parrish discusses this problem concisely with the aid of a few well-chosen facsimiles. The answer which many scholars and musicians would now give to that question is that the sources which contain the measured versions are highly suspect and that something much more flexible than a measured rhythm is required (and that is why trobador songs offer such an exhilarating challenge to the modern performer). The seminal book on this topic, a crucial one for performers, is Van der Werf's study mentioned above; there he argues for a 'declamatory' style in which the singer declaims the words through the music, and performance thus becomes a heightened form of recitation. This idea has proved very controversial, and Van der Werf has recently restated his position in an article that has much to offer to performers ('The "Not so precisely measured music" of the Middle Ages', *Performance Practice Review*, I (1988), pp 42–60). My own feeling is that Van der Werf's argument assigns too much importance to the words of a trobador song (a mistake which musicologists are often inclined to make; those who approach the trobadors from the literary side often think differently). John Stevens is surely right to argue that the relationship between words and music in most medieval song was essentially a cool one and that the singer's prime task today is to reveal the form of the song with the utmost clarity. In his magisterial study entitled *Words and Music in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1986), Stevens argues that trobador songs (and many other kinds of medieval monophonic song) should be sung in an 'isosyllabic' way. This means that each syllable takes roughly the same amount of time to sing and the singer accordingly hurries or protracts the notes according to the number over each syllable. Crudely speaking, when there is one note, sing a crotchet; when there are two notes then sing a pair of quavers; when there are three notes then sing three quavers as a triplet, and so on. This method – which should by no means be slavishly followed – can produce delightful results and is well worth a try. An alternative solution, of course, is to sing all the notes of equal length as has become customary in plainchant.

There are two main editions of the trobador repertory. Ismael Fernández de la Cuesta, in *Las Cançons dels Trobadors* (Toulouse, 1979), gives the first edition of the repertory to emerge from the trobador's own homeland, since the volume hails from Toulouse and is published by the Institut d'Estudis Occitans. It is a large, handsome book, and it is a joy to see trobador songs presented with barely a word of German in sight. De la Cuesta edits the complete corpus, including the pieces which are on the margin of the trobador repertory in terms of both their form and their language (the *danzas*, for example). Of the two recent editions this is the only one that offers this comprehensive treatment of the repertory. In accordance with general practice in recent years, de la Cuesta does not impose a rhythmic interpretation upon the unmeasured neumes of the original sources, but transcribes the melodies using black, stemless note-heads, indicating ligatures with a slur. When there is more than one source for a song, de la Cuesta transcribes the variant versions together; he gives only the first stanza of each poem (i.e. enough to draw out one full statement of the musical material), but that is excusable since his edition is already a massive book of 834 pages, and he makes up for it by offering a translation (in Spanish, French, English and German) of the first stanzas. You will find these translations extremely useful as a quick way of finding out how any individual trobador poem gets going. Anyone who wishes to perform the full poem (and there seems to be no historical justification for singing only one or two stanzas) can seek it out in one of the scholarly editions listed by de la Cuesta. Most of these will only be available in university or copyright libraries, but no persistent singer in Britain will fail to find them nearby. Since the whole question of rhythm in trobador song is so controversial, de la Cuesta gives a quasi-facsimile of the original notational symbols above each note and note-group of the transcription. Beware of these: they are certainly useful, but I have found errors (which is hardly surprising given the immense difficulty of printing them).

The second modern edition is by Van der Werf, entitled *The Extant Troubadour Melodies* (Rochester, New York, 1984). Once again, the melodies are transcribed in black, stemless note heads and variant melodies are laid out one above the other, stave by stave. In comparison with the de la Cuesta edition, Van der Werf's has several disadvantages for the performer; it omits the *danzas* and the *lais*, it does not have the facsimiles of the original notational symbols, and it offers no translation of the first stanzas. Its advantages over de la Cuesta, however, make it, on balance, the better edition to use, for it is more accurate and it is supplied with a long and informative introduction.

How to begin? Perhaps I may be allowed to point you towards *The Owl and the Nightingale* (London, 1990), pp. 46ff, where I have tried to give an account of the performing contexts of trobador song (it can be frustrating to perform music from the past if you cannot imagine the milieu in which it was originally sung). Next, choose your songs from Van der Werf or de la Cuesta. You may find it helpful to explore what was already recognised by the 13th century as the 'classic' period of the trobador's art, roughly 1180–1200. Major figures from that period include Bernart de Ventadorn (whose 20 songs can all be strongly recommended), Folquet de Marselha (13 songs) and Giraut de Bornelh (four songs). The trobador repertory has its

greatest hits, of course, among which are *Can vei la lauzeta mover* ('When I see the lark move...') by Bernart de Ventadorn, a sublime song that was clearly very much appreciated in the 13th century, and *Lanquan li jorn sont lonc en Mai* ('When the days are long in May...') by Jaufre Rudel, Count of Blaye. My own favourites include two songs by Marcabru which, taken together, provide an insight into the delicate contrasts of musical style which we can begin to discover when we explore this repertory: *Bel m'es quan sunt li frui madur* ('I love the seasons when the fruits ripen...'), with a magnificently liquid melody; and *L'autrier just'una sebissa/Trobey pastora* ('The other day, by a hedge, I found a shepherdess...'), a much more informal melody and one that matches the pastoral subject of the poem.

As for the rhythmic style, John Stevens's isosyllabic solution can be strongly recommended – but there is no need to be mechanical about it: remember that it will always be worth trying the alternative of making each note (rather than each syllable) the same length. And what of instruments? They were undoubtedly used, but I suspect that they were employed selectively to underline the differences between different kinds of songs: the more informal and dance-like the song, the more likely that instruments would have accompanied it – I have tried to explain this idea in *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages* (London, 1987).

Events

NEMA Annual General Meeting (17 November 1990)

Andrew Parrott, director of the various Taverners, Bruno Turner, director of Pro Cantione Antique, John Milsom, who conducts the Nonesuch Consort, and Christopher Page, director of Gothic Voices, bravely placed themselves in the firing line at November's well-attended NEMA meeting. The main areas of discussion were vibrato, tempo and concert performance. The general feeling about vibrato was that it could be (and was) used to colour individual notes, but should be avoided as a general sound. However, it is recognised that vibrato can be used to project sound and can be a useful tool when there is a need to battle through surrounding decibels, such as with a large orchestra. The main argument against it, of course, is that it upsets tuning, and the effectiveness of a pure sound. From medieval times through Monteverdi's era, the awareness of tuning was acute and use was made of wide and narrow intervals to create different aural flavours. Precise intonation is essential for this, especially in large acoustics which blur sound even further if there is any wavering of pitch.

The question of tempo led to a rather nebulous discussion, and the only thing that all agreed on was that tempo could never be a definite quantity, despite metronome markings – and several examples were given of modern day composers not adhering to their own indicated times, being influenced by factors such as the type of occasion, the acoustics and the size of the performing group.

John Milson put forward some very interesting ideas about concert-giving. He suggests that the size of the concert hall should not exceed that for which the music was written, and since his group concentrates on early music written for domestic performance, he feels that financially viable concerts are impossible. He has made some recordings for radio – one way of getting a very large audience into his small room – but shies away from commercial recordings because he feels that any real performance would have its imperfections which would be unsatisfactory for repeated listening. While the other members of the panel took John's points, they are prepared to give concerts as well as make recordings, and as an ardent listener I for one am very grateful.

Jennie Cassidy

NEMA International Conference 'The Marriage of Music and Dance', 9–11 August 1991

The title of NEMA's summer conference is borrowed from Guillaume Dumanoir's treatise, compiled in 1664. It was written as an argument against the recently established Académie Royale de la Danse in Paris. Up to 1661, dancers had been members of the performers' guild, the Confrérie St. Julien, but a number of senior dancing masters were determined to have their own organisation from which to establish their authority and lay down rules of choreography which would safeguard their position – *plus ça change*! Dumanoir argued that, as dance cannot exist without music, it should not be separated from it. Unfortunately, his argument was not heeded, and a gap between the two arts was created which has been widening gradually ever since. Even today there is a distinct 'them and us' atmosphere of distrust in the ballet world, while contemporary dance has moved so far that some choreographers have dispensed with music entirely!

Early music and dance are surely ideal fields for trying to close this gap, because the relationship between musicians and dancers before 1700 was so much closer than it is now. Perhaps by examining the attitudes, ideals and aims of those early musicians and dancers we can appreciate the value of a closer collaboration.

NEMA has therefore made a bold step in organising this conference aimed at both arts. It will run for three days and will cover aspects of dance and dance music from the late 15th to the early 19th centuries. A wide and ambitious subject area indeed, but we have already had offers of many stimulating papers, and maybe we shall find at the end that we have material for several other conferences in the future! The proposed papers cover such topics as: ways of solving the problems of interpreting 15th century *basse danse* and *balli* tenors; music and dance forms in the works of Caroso and Negri; and theatrical presentations in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. A particularly exciting paper will be given by Vladimir Ivanoff: 'Venice and the art of dance in Turkey – 16th to 18th centuries'. Other speakers from overseas will hopefully include: Andrea Francalanci, Barbara Sparti and Veronique Daniels-Schröder on 15th century topics; Julia Sutton and Yvonne Kendall on the 16th century; and Ann Jacoby, Christine Bayle, Régine Astier and Sandra Hammond on the 18th and early 19th centuries. Among home-grown contributors we hope to include Ian Gatiss, Lewis Jones and Jeremy Barlow.

The conference will be held at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama in the Barbican – probably in the theatre, so that speakers can include demonstrations where appropriate.

Madeleine Inglehearn

Notices

A vanload of instruments to Prague, June 1991

In April 1990 I was in Prague, performing with and teaching some of the many excellent Czech performers of early music who are as yet virtually unknown in the West. They told me that it has been very hard for them to keep in touch with current Western performance practice – they haven't had access to recordings, books or decent instruments. In spite of these disadvantages, they were so good that I played them on Radio Three's 'Mainly for Pleasure', and they have been invited to perform in several British music festivals. I'm going back in June 1991 (with financial help from the British Council) to do some more teaching and performing.

Rather than just fly to Prague, do the sessions and go home, I'd like to use this opportunity to offer practical help to Czech musicians. I'm planning to put the British Council's award of £200 towards the cost of hiring a van and driving it to Prague with a harpsichord and whatever other gifts we from the West can send.

Can you help?

Please can you help by donating supplies? Czech early music performers need instruments and up-to-date research concerning performance practice. Recordings of recent performances of early music (CDs, LPs or cassettes) would be welcome, as would gifts of books, sheet music and musical journals. Czech instrument makers need instrument plans and information about recent research, and tools and materials.

If you'd like to help but can't offer any of the above, gifts of money would be very useful, since all expenses (e.g. the van, petrol, import taxes) will have to come from my own pocket. This is a non profit-making enterprise, and any surplus will be distributed pragmatically – if there's much money left over, I'll contact the donors before taking further action.

Radio Three will be lending recording equipment so that I can make a programme about the trip for Music Weekly, and I'll be trying to arrange other publicity.

If you can help in any way, please contact me at 109 Grove Hill, London E18 2HY, tel. 081-530 5404.

Poppy Holden

The Register of Early Music

The original Register of Early Music was launched in 1971 by Christopher Monk and Eric Hedger as a means of bringing together the increasing number of amateur musicians involved in early music, as well as providing them with a source of information on their new interest. The first issue included articles such as 'Starting your own early music group', 'What is a sackbut?', and 'Music hunting', as well as a register of people and a register of instruments, the latter compiled by Carl Willetts.

A second issue appeared in 1972, but when Oxford University Press launched *Early Music* in 1973, the Register was incorporated as an integral part of that journal. The Register continued to appear in conjunction with *Early Music* for several years, with its content remaining in the control of the original editors. However, it was eventually thought that the Register had served its purpose, and it was discontinued by OUP.

In the intervening years, many people have voiced the need for the re-appearance of the Register, and NEMA's own Education Report of 1985 stressed the desirability of its revival as a resource list for early music in education. Hence, in 1987, the revived Register of Early Music was published by NEMA under the editorship of Carl Willetts and Simon Hill. It contained over 400 entries, with subdivisions by activity and by county/country, as well as a substantial directory of useful addresses. The following year added a further 50% of entries as well as a Buyer's Guide to early music instruments and their makers.

The current fourth issue, recently published, sees the number of Register entries approaching 1400, while the Buyer's Guide now contains details of over 600 makers worldwide and the instruments they offer for sale. The main Register lists both amateurs and professionals, individuals, ensembles, performers, makers and teachers, and the computer database enables us to extract details both by activity and by location, whether broadly (by county/country) or more specifically by town or even postcode. Since our records are continually being updated, such details will always be the latest available.

There are still a number of individuals and ensembles, both amateur and professional, who are not yet included in the Register. A registration form is included with this issue of *Leading Notes*, and we would urge all those not yet registered to do so, and also to persuade their friends and colleagues to do likewise. Copies of the latest edition of the Register can be obtained from NEMA, 8 Covent Garden, Cambridge CB1 2HR, price £6. Finally, anyone wishing to find, say, a viol teacher within 20 miles of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, should contact Simon Hill on 081-995 2757.

What is NEMA?

The National Early Music Association is the coordinating organisation for all those concerned with early music, whether professional or amateur – performers, teachers, researchers, instrument makers, promoters or listeners.

Aims and activities

Education: following the report of a two-year investigation into the provision for early music throughout our education system, NEMA's education sub-committee has combined with the Early Music Centre to press for further provision for early music within examination syllabuses. One result has been the Early Music Centre's production of an Early Music Study pack for GCSE.

Conferences: since its inauguration, NEMA has promoted six very successful conferences – Early Music and the Critics (1982); La Guitarre Royale (1985); Early Music in Education (1985); Calligraphy and Music (1987); Early Keyboard Music and Instruments (1988); and Taking Early Music into the Classroom (1990). Plans for future conferences include a major international conference on early dance and music this year.

Register of Early Music: NEMA has revived this important reference work. It now contains the Register of individuals and ensembles (sub-listed by activity and location); the Directory of useful addresses; and the Buyer's Guide to instrument makers, detailing types of instruments offered for sale.

Other activities: as an umbrella organisation seeking to represent the general interests of the early music world in this country, NEMA has made representations to the Arts Council in support of the Early Music Centre and to the British Council on behalf of early music exchanges with Czechoslovakia. In 1989 NEMA organised a visit to the UK by the eminent Czech harpsichordist, Zuzana Růžičková, including concerts and lectures in London, Birmingham, Cambridge and Norwich. NEMA has also given financial and other support to the work of the regional Early Music Forums.

Publications

- *Leading Notes*, a twice-yearly journal (ISSN 0960-6297) containing features, news and guides to the repertory for both performers and listeners.
- A quarterly newsletter.
- The annual Register of Early Music (ISSN 0307-0816).
- Early Music in Education (1985), originally circulated to all LEA music advisers, and now out of print.
- Papers from the 1987 Calligraphy Conference.

Membership

NEMA's membership covers the broad spectrum of early music in this country, cutting across the traditional divisions in music. It includes performers, teachers, instrument-makers dancers, scholars and general enthusiasts. Its corporate members include universities and colleges, specialist early music organisations, the Early Music Centre and the nine regional Early Music Forums, as well as early music organisations from abroad.

Following the historic 1977 conference *The Future of Early Music in Britain*, a standing committee continued to organise further conferences, and in 1981 it became formally constituted into an Association, to work alongside the Early Music Centre and the Forums for the support of early music in this country. Since its inception, the running of the Association has been on an entirely voluntary basis.

Funding

NEMA's main source of income is the annual subscription of its members, both individual and corporate. Income is also generated by the sale of its publications and of advertising space. Grants have been received for specific projects, including conferences and publications, notably from: The Worshipful Company of Musicians; The Harley Foundation; Macmillan Publishers Ltd.; N.P. Mander Ltd.; The British Council; The John S. Cohen Foundation.

NEMA also receives valuable assistance from Turner Wallcoverings, as well as occasional private donations, and is a registered charity (No. 297300). Enquiries and applications for membership should be addressed to the Information Officer, Annette Heilbron, 8 Covent Garden, Cambridge CB1 2HR.