

THE MUSICAL NOTATION AND RHYTHM  
OF THE ITALIAN LAUDE\*

*The Typical Italian Character of the Laude.*

When we study the musical repertoire of the Medieval laude<sup>1</sup>, we find a situation quite different from that of Provençal, French, or Spanish lyric poetry and from that of the German minnesingers. In Italy, there existed a repertoire of religious songs in the vernacular language dedicated to Christ, Our Lady, and the various Saints, generally anonymous, and composed for the use of the faithful of the *confraternita* — something unknown in other countries. By virtue of the literary subjects of their texts, by their melodies, and by their musical notation, these laude became, in the eyes of the world, a manifestation of a very pronounced Italian artistic individuality.

In the repertoire of lyric monody of other European countries, we find certain melodies of a traditional, popular vein which remind us of others — international ones. In the laude, on the other hand, this similarity to international tunes is absent; they are exclusively national in character. It is, in fact, remarkable that the laude reflect no melodic analogies with either international folklore or with the profane or religious lyric poetry of other European countries.

In examining the Italian lauda repertoire, the first things to claim our attention in the music are its simple style and its popular charac-

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From the same author see also *Las Laudi italianas de los siglos XIII y XIV. Su notación y su ritmo*, in *Cantigas*, III, 483-516; *Die alte spanische Mensuralnotation*, in Nr. 14 of the present volume.

1. This study is limited to the music of the laude composed before the fifteenth century. No investigation is made of the *Laude spirituali* of the middle of that century, which, to a certain extent, gave birth to the English carols of the same epoch.

ter, even in the most melismatic melodies. We must bear this in mind if we are to grasp the real aesthetic value and religious spirit which these works possess. Furthermore, the laude are set in variants of the *ballata* form. Now among medieval lyric forms, the French *virelai*, known in Italy as the *ballata*, was one of the most appropriate for group singing. The form is composed of a refrain or *ripresa*, performed by the people, and stanzas rendered by a soloist, to whom the people replied with the repetition of the *ripresa* at the end of every strophe. From this we may infer that, if the texts and the melodies, at least those of the *ripresa*, had to be simple and appropriate for group singing, then their musical notation was bound to be free of complication.

When comparing the repertoire of the laude with the religious and profane lyric poetry of Medieval Europe, we see that the latter bespoke an elevated tone of refined culture. The French and Provençal *chansonniers*, the collections of the minnesingers, and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of King Alphonso the Wise were composed and copied for the service of royal or princely courts. An examination of this repertoire shows that, on the whole, the art of improvisation, characteristic of the laude, was beneath the dignity of refined society, and that the works which they cultivated were highly perfected with regard to the texts as well as the music. The laude, on the other hand, were intended to foster a devout and pious attitude during the religious services of the *confraternità*. This means that the laude were written with the common people in mind, and that the art of improvisation was much practiced among the lower social classes. This fact, in turn, explains why the texts and the melodies as they appear in the handwritten laudaries do not exhibit the same accuracy and perfection which characterize the collections of court music from the other European countries. The laude preserved with music are not always as polished as the monodic lyric poetry, and their musical structure often departs from the logical, established schemes which characterize these repertoires. However, only very few lauda collections with musical notation have come down to us. We cannot therefore be absolutely certain that they contain the entire range of melodies. Perhaps we have knowledge of only a small portion and perhaps not of the best part.

In the Italian repertoire, there are many very simple tunes, while others are quite melismatic. Some of the former suffer, perhaps,

from an excess of simplicity, but other convey an enchanting popular lyricism. There are some very fine melodies with deep religious feeling; others breathe penitence and an exceptionally severe tone — something very infrequent in the lyric monody of the courts.

The musical form of the laude resembles, generally speaking, that of the Alphonsine Cantigas. Whereas the composition and copying of the latter were entrusted to experts, in the laudaries some elements are often either wanting or supernumerary. This leads us to conclude that some of the composers and copyists were specialists neither in poetry nor in music. By and large, copies of the repertoire reflect the natural shortcomings of a popular, oral tradition. But there are exceptions. The laudary of Florence, with its lavish miniatures, shows that a refined state in artistic matters had penetrated everywhere in Italy and was no longer the exclusive hallmark of a royal or princely manuscript.

We know of a great many collections of lauda texts, but for texts with music our knowledge is limited to the laudaries of Cortona, Biblioteca Publica 91 (=C), and of Florence, Magl. II, I, 122 (=F), and to some fragments of manuscripts now preserved in repositories outside Italy<sup>1</sup>. It has been suggested that these laude were sung in the streets and in the public penitential exercises in which the *flagellantes* took part. But in view of the deep religious feeling which some of them express, we are convinced that this repertoire was created for the indoor religious services of the associations rather than for those held out-doors — that is to say, for performance in the church, not in the streets and squares of the town.

The popular character of the laude may be inferred from the many texts preserved without musical notation for which melodies of popular tunes are prescribed<sup>2</sup>. This situation reappeared in fifteenth-century Spain, where the text of a religious song in Spanish or Catalan was often copied without music but with an indication of the title of the popular song melody which was to be used with it<sup>3</sup>. All this indicates that the art of the *contrafactum* was

1. Cf. F. Liuzzi, *La Lauda e i primordi della melodia italiana*, 2 vols. (Roma, 1935) I, 223, where partial reproductions of the non-Italian manuscripts are given.

2. Cf. H. Anglès, *Cantigas*, III, 508 ff.

3. Cf. R. Foulché-Delbosch, *Cancionero castellano del siglo XV*, 2 vols.

well known in Italy and practiced in the repertoire of the *confraternità*.

#### *Existing Studies.*

The melodies and the musical notation of the laude have been known since the eighteenth century, but not until the beginning of our century, as far as I know, were they investigated by experts in Medieval music<sup>2</sup>. The first to make a study of this subject in modern times was Friedrich Ludwig. During his sojourn in Italy while still a youth, he copied the music of the laude from the manuscripts C and F, and later he studied these melodies with deep interest and penetration. Although he began to mention the subject between the years 1902 and 1907<sup>3</sup>, he did not publish the results of his research until much later, in «Die Quellen der Motetten ältesten Stils»<sup>4</sup> of 1923 and «Die geistliche nichtliturgische Musik des Mittelalters»<sup>5</sup> of 1924. In the latter study, he transcribed three laude, freely following Riemann's principle of *Vierhebigkeit*. During my studies with Ludwig at the University of Göttingen in 1924 and 1928, I had the opportunity of copying the lauda melodies in their original notation from Ludwig's copies of C and F. Under his guidance, I transcribed a large portion of them. Later I did the same for the entire repertoire and included the results of my investigation in *La música de las cantigas del rey Alfonso el Sabio*, where I also published the melodies of six laude from C and seven from F.<sup>6</sup> The tables contained in that publication, showing the musical scheme and notation of the laude, may be instructive; the interested reader is referred to this source.

It is only just to speak of the edition of the laudaries C and F by Fernando Liuzzi, published in two luxurious volumes containing transcriptions of the music, facsimiles of the manuscripts, and critical commentary<sup>7</sup>. This was an epoch-making event in mo-

(Madrid, 1912 and 1915) and J. Romeu, *Cançons nadenques del segle XV, Els nostres clàssics*, LXV (Barcelona, 1949); cf. also Anglès, *op. cit.*, III, 85 ff.

2. Cf. Anglès, *op. cit.*, III, 603 ff., where a bibliography is given.

3. *Sammelbände der internationalen Musikgesellschaft* IV (1902-1903), 31 ff.

4. *AfMw* V (1923) 298 ff.

5. Guido Adler, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (Frankfurt a. M., 1924) 127 ff.

6. Cf. Anglès, *op. cit.*, III, 483-516.

7. Cf. note 2.

dern musicology. The opportunity of having at one's disposal this magnificent facsimile edition has provided an enormous impetus to the study of the subject. Liuzzi was, however, greatly mistaken in his rigorous application of Riemann's theory to the lauda melodies. When these melodies are syllabic, it is indeed often possible to render them in four-measure groups, but the problems involved in this method of transcription become difficult, even insoluble, when the tunes are melismatic. Liuzzi was somewhat stubborn in preserving, at all costs, the principle of four measures for every phrase and in not paying attention to the musical aesthetic of the melodies. He was intent, moreover, on preserving the natural accent (stress) of the words in the first strophe (he failed to notice that the accents change with every strophe), instead of restricting himself to saving the caesuras, where they appear, and the rhyme. But one thing more: Liuzzi sometimes transcribed the melodies with mistakes because he fails to observe that the copyists of the laudaries often disregarded a change of clef within a composition<sup>1</sup>.

#### *The Notation of the Laude.*

Until the present time, it has been held that the square notation of the Italian laude conveys no clear indication of rhythmic values. The study of the notation of the Cantigas of King Alphonso and of the other European schools of the thirteenth century has, however, made me aware of melodies which closely resemble those of the laude. This, in turn, has led me to conclude that the notation of the laude is a mensural notation, but one which has nothing in common with modal rhythm. Therefore, whereas the greater part of the Cantigas is executed in modal notation, this is not so in the case of the laude. There are, on the other hand, some sixty-five pieces in the Cantiga repertoire which are copied in a notation *ex omnibus longis* or the equivalent *ex omnibus brevis*, in the sense that the simple notes are to be taken as either *virgae* or *puncta* these are just the ones which will serve us here because their notation, although more highly developed, corresponds to that of the laude.

Without this clue from thirteenth-century Spain, it would be

1. Cf. Anglès, *op. cit.*, III, 502 ff.

exceedingly difficult to interpret the rhythm of the laude. A comparison of the non-modal, mensural notation of the Cantigas and the other repertoires with the Italian notation, however, now allows us to offer a new solution to this problem, perhaps better founded than any proposed hitherto. In the laudary C, as in part of the Spanish notation discussed above, the single notes invariably appears as a series of *longae*, although sometimes the *caudae* have faded almost to the point of invisibility. The *plicae*, when really intended as such, generally sound better when sung with the interval of a major third than with one of a second — just the reverse of the Cantigas. The *plicae* of the Italian repertoire are equivalent to the *plicae longae*<sup>1</sup>. The simple notes always have the same value, whether or not they occur with a *cauda*.

The dividing lines of phrases or verses in C and F often appear to be drawn without logic or significance. The opposite is true in the Alphonsine Cantigas and the other Medieval repertoires, where these lines are used only at the end of a musical phrase — that is to say, at the end of a verse. In these laudaries (C and F), the scribe often failed to indicate a change of clef within a composition. This same peculiarity is found in other collections (notably in the Provençal *chansonnier* Paris, B. N., fr. 22543), and scholars working with these sources must exercise the utmost care that this idiosyncrasy is not overlooked.

In the manuscript C, there are, besides the simple notes, *ligaturae binariae*, *ternariae*, sometimes *plicatae*; also *ligaturae quaternariae*, *quinariae*, and others of six, seven, eight, and nine notes. The same obtains in the laudary F, which is even richer in melismas and in the variety of ligatures employed. The ligatures of more than ten notes which appear in this source rarely occur in other European collections. It would seem that musicologists, except for Ludwig, abandoned the detailed study of the lauda notation partly because of the difficulties posed by these ligatures. In actuality, however, it was impossible to transcribe them either in modal rhythm or according to Riemann's principle of *Vierhebigkeit*.

In my interpretation of the rhythm, I do nothing more than

1. Cf. H. Anglès, *Die Bedeutung der Plica in der mittelalterlichen Musik und ihre Transkription*, in *Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer* (Regensburg, 1962) 28-39, and number 46 of this series.

follow the solution suggested by the musical notation of the Cantigas and of similar melodies contained in some French repertoires. The thirteenth-century theorists do not come to our aid, for they discuss only the modal notation of the Notre-Dame polyphony; none of them treat nonmodal notation.

For want of theoretical elucidations, therefore, we are obliged to study, *a parte post*, the peculiarities of this notation — a notation which is, in itself, quite simple<sup>1</sup>. A single note generally occupies one beat; a *ligatura binaria*, one beat, that is, two eighths; the *ternaria*, one beat forming an eighth-note triplet; the *quaternaria* corresponds to two beats or four eighths; the *quinaria* also corresponds to two beats, the first composed of an eighth-note triplet and the second of two simple eighths, and so on. If, therefore, a ligature contains an even number of notes, all of them can be transcribed as eighths; if, on the other hand, an odd number of notes make up the ligature, the transcription will contain a triplet. The following table illustrates our thesis:

1. The reader wishing to follow up the question may see the complete tables of the musical notation employed in C and F published in Anglès, *Cantigas*, III, 491 ff.

A notation with these rhythmic implications — and sung in this way the melodies take on a charming lyricism — is obviously not modal; but neither can it be considered « Roman » or « Gregorian » because the liturgical chant of the Roman Church is performed in free rhythm.

In the laude, modal, mensural notation (composed, according to the theory of the six rhythmic modes, of long and short notes and their corresponding ligatures) never appears. It is most important to realize this if we are to avoid destroying the significance and value of the lauda notation. Modal notation, invented by Leoninus in the second half of the twelfth century to express the rhythmic values in Notre-Dame polyphony, further developed by Perotinus, and expounded by the theorists of the thirteenth century, was a later development than the non-modal notation used for earlier polyphony and a large part of Medieval court monody<sup>1</sup>. Although it was well known by the time the laudaries C and F were copied, it did not affect them.

#### *The Musical Transcription.*

The Medieval modal notation, if well copied, indicates exactly the rhythm and meter of a piece; non-modal notation, well copied, indicates a defined rhythm but not meter. Until now, the lauda melodies have been transcribed not according to the indications of the notation itself, but by following, to a greater or lesser extent, either of two preconceived theories, that of *Vierhebigkeit* (binary measure) or that of modal notation (ternary measure). Octosyllables, in syllabic melodies, can often be sung very in accordance with Riemann's theory because, with regard to rhyme and accent, it is often appropriate to sing four measures for every couplet.

1. Cf. H. Anglès, *Die Mehrstimmigkeit des Codex Calixtinus von Compostela und seine Rhythmik*, in *Festschrift Heinrich Bessler* (Leipzig, 1962), and *La danza sacra y su música en el templo durante el Medioevo*, in *Festschrift für Hans Rheinfelder* (Munich, 1963). In the first study, the polyphony before Notre Dame is transcribed in a non-modal rhythm; in the second, monodic conductus of the last fascicle of the Codex Florence, Bibl. Laur., Plut. 29.1, are transcribed more or less according to the system I apply to the transcription of the laude.

But to make a point of rendering melismatic melodies according to this system, as was done by Liuzzi, without attending to their style, spells the end of their artistic beauty.

The fact that we find so many melismas in the laude indicates that these tunes are not suitable to interpretation in modal rhythm; nor can the laude with neumatic and semisyllabic melodies be performed in modal rhythm. The problem of the proper rhythmic interpretation of this corpus of music is one which I have tried to resolve since my youth and, until now, invariably with negative results.

Liuzzi, in speaking of lauda XVIII of F, proposes as hypothetical a version with the modal rhythm of modes I and VI combined. It is interesting to observe, however, that, rendered in binary measure, the melody emerges with a much more noble and forceful character. As far as I know, J. A. Westrup is, to the present, the only one who has published transcriptions of lauda melodies in modal rhythm<sup>1</sup>, although this rhythm obviously does not fit the Italian tunes well.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, we may now say that the musical notation of the Italian laude is, in itself, sufficiently clear to suggest an appropriate rhythm. This means that in transcribing these melodies, we need not rely on preconceived systems more or less founded in history, but that we will do much better to follow the indications of the notation itself. Although the copyists of the laudaries were not experts in musical notation and were even less adept in the mensural notation of their own epoch, the repertoire which they recorded is, as a rule, uniform and sensibly ordered and can be transcribed without difficulty. Such transcriptions offer a rhythm which surely more nearly approximates the authentic one than any previously suggested.

In 1946, A. T. Davison and W. Apel<sup>2</sup> edited three lauda melodies from codex F: number VI, « Gloria in cielo », according to the version offered by Liuzzi; and numbers LXXXI, « A tutta gente », and LVII, « Santo Lorenzo », in a more natural rhythm. It is noteworthy that Apel, unaware of my recent studies, followed, in

1. Cf. *The New Oxford History of Music* (London, 1954) II, 266 ff.

2. Cf. A. T. Davison and W. Apel, *Historical Anthology of Music* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946) I, 19.

his transcription of the lauda «Santo Lorenzo», a system closely approximating that which I suggest. I mention this fact because it induced me to study once more this problem which so strongly attracts the attention of our venerable master, the outstanding expert on the ancient mensural notation in our day.

The notation of the laude closely resembles that of the *chansonniers* of the Provençal troubadours. It exhibits binary or ternary measure, depending on the circumstances. The question of how to transcribe a rhythm which avoids the coupling of long and short notes and the stereotyped, mathematical forms proper to modal rhythm is often raised. Comparing the Italian and Spanish notations *ex omnibus longis* and *ex omnibus brevibus* with the non-modal, mensural notation of the Latin monodic conductus of Notre Dame, preserved in the last fascicle of the Codex Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Plut 29. 1, it becomes at once clear that the two notations are similar. The same holds true with the non-modal variety employed in the Codex of Soissons (which contains the *Miracles de Notre Dame* by Gautier de Coinci). If we compare, moreover, the significance of the single notes and of the ligatures with the notation of the Las Huelgas sequences and that used in the French *chansonniers*, etc., we uncover very strong analogies. It is evident, therefore, that the rhythmic interpretation of monodic music was not a question of chance, but was rather a practice everywhere accepted in the repertoire of Medieval lyric poetry.

As I have already indicated, I am convinced that this non-modal notation is reminiscent of a system older than modal notation — a system which evolved through different degrees or stages of development. It would seem that the Italian notation of the laude belonged to the first stage (that is, to the simplest non-modal mensural notation), which represented, perhaps, the most ancient among the known systems. This is yet another glory and singularity of the medieval notation of the Italian laude.

We present below some examples of lauda melodies, transcribed according to the system we have set forth.

*Cortona 2.*

lau-de no-rel-la si-a car-ta-ta a l'al-te do-na on-co-ro-na-ta  
 tras-ce ver-ga-ne don-cel-la pri-mo fier-ro-sa no-rel-la tut-to-  
 mon-do a te a-pal-la; nob-la ho-nor-fo-ti-na-ta

*Cortona 13*

et-ve, ver-gi-ne gau-den-te, ma-dre de l'on-ni-po-ten-te,  
 Le-si-gnor per-mar-a-ve-gla de te fui-ce ma-dre fil-la,  
 ro-sa bi-anch'e ver-me-gla sav'agl'i al-tro fo-reau-len-te.

*Florence 6*

Glo-ri-a in cie-lo e pa-ce in ter-ra, nat'e il no-vo Sal-va-to-re.

*Mit' e Cris-to glo-ri- o- si, l'al-to<sup>18</sup> Dio ma- re- vi- glo- so*  
*fac-to è om de- si- den- ro- so lo ba- ni- gro<sup>21</sup> cre- a- to- re.*

*Florence 57*

*San-cto Lo- ren- co, mar- tyr dia- mo- re, a*  
*Cris-to fos- ti gran- de ser- vi- to- re*  
*Con hu- mil- ta- de al San-cto Pa- dre fos- ti u-<sup>20</sup>*  
*bi- di- en- te, per cio lau- da- re san- pre de fa- re tut-*  
*ta li- ma- na- gen- te per te, mar- tin va- len- te, el di- va-*  
*lo- re; al ni- po- ter te se au- len- te flo- re.*

## PARS QUARTA

## DE MUSICA LYRICA HISPANA MEDII Aevi