

**Sing cuccu nu**

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Sing cuccu nu

## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to prove that an advanced school of music flourished in southwest England in the thirteenth century of which John of Fornsett was an illustrious member and also the probable composer of the Reading Rota.

The thesis opens with a brief survey of the attitude towards music held by medieval scholars, and of music's place in the liberal arts. This is followed by a description of Reading Abbey, most probable place of origin of the rota, a short history of the abbey and its role in the development of music in England.

Following this is an account of existing thirteenth century music, liturgical and secular, particularly of that which originated in southwest England and a summary of the known facts about John of Fornsett.

The thesis ends with a description of the rota, its provenance, its dialectical and paleographical aspect, and the arguments surrounding the question of its authorship.

## Sing cuccu nu

### Résumé

Le mémoire tente de prouver qu'une école avancée de musique fleurissait dans le sud-ouest de l'Angleterre dès le treizième siècle, école qui comptait parmi ses illustres membres, John of Fornsett, l'auteur probable du canon de Reading.

Après l'examen de la perception qu'avaient les érudits du moyen âge de la musique et de sa place dans les arts libéraux, nous donnons une description de l'abbaye de Reading, lieu probable de la création du canon, suivie d'un bref historique de l'abbaye et de son rôle dans le développement de la musique en Angleterre.

Le mémoire consacre ensuite un chapitre à la musique liturgique et profane qui nous est parvenue du XIIIe siècle, plus particulièrement celle qui provient du sud-ouest de l'Angleterre puis relate les faits connus touchant John of Fornsett.

Enfin, la dernière partie du mémoire décrit le canon, discute sa provenance, étudie les aspects dialectiques et paléographiques qui lui sont particuliers et situe le débat qui entoure la question de son attribution.

### **Dedication**

This paper we offer in homage and veneration to the memory of John of Fornsett, monk of Reading Abbey, composer, and one of the greatest musicians in the world.

## Acknowledgments

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I thank them all.

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## Introduction

## Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. First, it is to prove that a flourishing and polished school of music existed in England in the thirteenth century, and secondly, as a part of the larger argument it is to establish the existence of John of Fornsett, monk of Reading Abbey and musician, and his authorship of the "Summer Canon", the music masterpiece of the Middle Ages.

To build up a comprehensive picture of the period, it is necessary to begin with a description of the strange medieval attitude towards music held by the scholars and musicians of those days. In the early Middle Ages, one must understand, music was not accepted as a sensuous and pleasureable auditory diversion as it is today, but rather as an intellectual and quasi-mystical matter of number and ratio and proportion. Indeed, number was believed to be the principle of all things under the sun and particularly in regard to music. Pythagoras taught the mathematics of universal harmony, and his belief was that music was the harmony of the universe in a form perceptible to man. It was even believed that each planet revolved to its own tone, and this was the basis of the quasi-magical phrase: "the music of the spheres".

The fathers of the church valued musical training for its ethical values, and its character-training propensities, and moreover, they believed that the soul was shaped by the attributes of music.<sup>1</sup> The hymn, the threnody, the pæan and the dithyramb all had their special ethos, as did each harmonial or scale.<sup>2</sup> In this way, the Dorian mode was masculine, the Phrygian frenzied, and the Lydian mournful.<sup>3</sup>

According to Plato:

Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward parts of the Soul, in which they impart grace, and because he who has received this true education of the inner being receives into his soul the good.<sup>4</sup>

Pythagorean mathematica (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music) had a common basis in ratio and proportion, and these four subjects composed the quadrivium, which, together with the trivium (grammar, dialectic and rhetoric) made up the tradition of the liberal arts which carried over into the Middle Ages.

In England, three great authorities on music during the Middle Ages were Boethius, Cassiodorus, and Isidore of Seville.

Boethius (481-525) the renowned musical theorist and philosopher said in his treatise, De Institutione Musica

Therefore, the true musician is not the singer or player -- "the mere performer" -- but he who possesses the faculty of judging according to the speculation or reason appropriate to music, of modes and rhythms and the classes of melodies and all those things that pertain to the subject.<sup>5</sup>

The essential idea was that music was the expression of the universal harmony, and it was commonly believed that Gregorian chant, the musical life-line of the Middle Ages was divinely inspired. In the thirteenth century, (and particularly in England which had always maintained a stubborn musical individuality) music began to lose its rigidity, for until even the fourteenth century (except perhaps in England) the conception of divine inspiration has tended to limit the expansion of musical ideas because they were so extremely integrated with plainsong and all of its rigid rules.

Boethius divided music into three categories and for many centuries this arbitrary division was accepted without argument. Highest of all was Musica Mundana, the music of the spheres. Next to it came Musica Humana which was the harmony of the microcosmos or of man's soul. Lastly was Musica Instrumentalis or sounding music. This could be vocal or instrumental and is what we today consider music.

Cassiodorus (480-575) was another great music theorist. He was a Roman aristocrat and a monk. He spent his long life furthering the liberal arts and particularly the study of music, although not for its sweet and pleasant sounds, as he believed, along with Augustine, that it was a science necessary for the study of theology and that theology was the ultimate goal of learning.

The third of these three great savants was the illustrious Isidore of Seville (d. 636). He was archbishop of Seville and the author of Etymologies, an encyclopedia, and a compilation of all the learning considered necessary for a prospective theologian. In this encyclopedia, music was especially emphasized.<sup>6</sup>

All three scholars were highly revered in the monastic schools of the early Middle Ages. These schools were the sources of all the learning of the time, although about the ninth century Musica Practica came to replace Musica Speculativa as the basis of the study of music and of the liturgical chant.

Cassiodorus was a man of broad ideas. He believed that the chief duty of monks was not physical labour or contemplation or perpetual chanting. He believed, rather, that it was the pursuit of knowledge, (with of course the study of theology as the ultimate goal). It was

Cassiodorus in fact who was responsible for the transmission of classical learning in the Middle Ages. His Institutiones<sup>7</sup> became the principal source for the liberal arts in monastic circles, and as late as the tenth century he was extensively quoted. He it was, and not Benedict of Nursia, who was responsible for the transmission of learning and music.

Benedict of Nursia, the founder of the Benedictine order took a more ascetic view. Learning, to him was a secondary thing. He said that although the chief work of monks was not manual labour neither was it the pursuit of literary activities. He held that it was the daily chanting of the Opus Dei, and that nothing else should come before praising God.

Gregory the Great (540-604) was, like Benedict, a stern supporter of the ascetic ideal and as such was opposed to "pagan literature." Here is his letter berating Desiderius, the Bishop of Vienne, for daring to teach grammar, (which Gregory related to paganism).

A report has reached us which we cannot mention without a blush, that thou expoundest grammar to certain friends, whereat we are so offended and filled with scorn that our former opinion of thee is turned into mourning and sorrow. The same mouth singeth not the praises of Jove and the praises of Christ.

However, in spite of what seems to us today to have been a peculiar lack of broad-mindedness, music was very important in Gregory's life, and although he was not himself the founder of Rome's song school, the Schola Cantorum, he promoted it by every means, and it was he who ordered the codification of the entire repertory of the chant, which was henceforth to be called by his name, the Gregorian chant. This was carried to all parts of Christendom and was regarded as something from heaven and divine.

The study of the liberal arts was carried by Christian teachers from Rome to Ireland, and from there Celtic and Anglo-Saxon monks transmitted it to England, to Scotland, and from there to the continent. And here, Irish monks founded monasteries which soon became centres of learning and of music. In Britain these were Iona and Lindisfarne, and on the continent the great monasteries of Bobbio, St. Gall, and Reichenau. The latter produced three great musician monks Hermanus Contractus (Herman the lame), Notker Balbulus (the Stammerer), and Luotillo.<sup>9</sup> Balbulus was noted for his sequences (of which some are still in use, today), Luotillo for his tropes, and in the eleventh century, Hermanus Contractus for those sequences Alma Redemptoris Mater, (quoted by Chaucer in the 'Prioress' Tale) and Salve Regina. Both of these came to be used frequently, not only for themselves but as cantus firmi in polyphonic compositions of that time.<sup>10</sup> It is a certainty that some or all of this music found its way to Reading Abbey and to its cell Leominster Priory where it became familiar to the monks, and to John of Fornsett, the distinguished thirteenth century musician.

The great monasteries flourished in the tenth and the eleventh centuries. In the eleventh a reaction set in against the increasing elaborateness of the liturgy and one branch of the Benedictines, (the Cistercians) underwent a reform movement with a return to the ascetic traditions of Benedict and Gregory. There was less emphasis placed on Musica Speculativa or music as a philosophical discipline but now Musica Practica flourished, mainly, of course, the study of Gregorian chant. This took place particularly in monasteries of the Cluniac order,

where it reached an ardour to the near exclusion of the other two thirds of the Rule of Benedict, labour and meditation.<sup>11</sup> The Cluniac order (a tenth century reformed branch of the Benedictines, and also that with which Reading Abbey was at first affiliated) was, in particular, distinguished by its over-riding emphasis on the liturgy.

The time given to the singing of the office, the number of daily psalms and prayers, the elaborate ceremonies of the masses and public alms-giving of the monks increased far beyond anything contemplated by Benedict in the original founding of the order. At Cluny educational and intellectual pursuits were secondary to its liturgy. It was given wholly to the worship of God, and Reading Abbey was, by its old Cluniac associations in the thick of all of this ceremony and religious pomp.<sup>12</sup>

By the thirteenth century, never before, or since, had so many monks lived and chanted in so many Benedictine convents or monasteries. They were recruited like soldiers. Many, indeed most, came voluntarily, but some may have been compelled by their liege-lords (to serve their masters as useful hot-lines to God).

The fundamental order of worship was continuous praise of God day and night. There was actually shift work in singing. In Cluny Abbey in Burgundy (the mother house), for instance, three choirs of over a hundred monks and with thirty boys each kept up the continual chant.

It was said that Angilbert at Centula and Adalbert of Corbie loved to manoeuvre monks in choral worship like Frankish warriors in knightly exercises.<sup>13</sup>

In 1022, Guido d'Arezzo, concentrating on Musica Practica cultivated the use of lines and spaces in the staff, and established the F and G

clefs, and the scale by means of intervals. This facilitated the learning of music to a tremendous extent and, of course, the transcribing of it.<sup>14</sup> There was still a great vogue for Boethius but, as the thirteenth century approached, scholastics became less engrossed with the Musica Mundana and concentrated more on the harmonic possibilities of polyphony. Ars Antiqua was moving towards Ars Nova, and it was into this new unfolding intellectual and musical atmosphere that John of Fornsett was born.

By the end of the twelfth century, the monastic schools gave way to the cathedral schools in offering scientific disciplines and, from the cathedral schools were born the medieval universities. In the thirteenth century it was the universities that would continue the tradition of the liberal arts, with music as an important part of the quadrivium as an art of its own.

Boethius' Musica was the standard text in Oxford as in Paris, and music was emphasized to a great degree. The colleges were involved in music both sacred and secular, in fact to such an extent that tumultus et strepitus inordinato<sup>15</sup> caused by singing and performing students were forbidden in the halls and dormitories. However, on feast days, when there was a fire in the hall, scholars might join after meals in cantilenis et aliis solatiis honestis.

There seems always to have been a liberal exchange of scholars and of ideas between Paris and Oxford, and there is no doubt but that English musicians were involved in the development of Notre Dame polyphony and influenced Perotin himself.<sup>16</sup>

Robert Grosseteste (1175-1253), Bishop of Lincoln, was at one time a professor at the University of Paris (as was his famous pupil Roger Bacon). Another Englishman, known to history only as Anonymous IV, and studying in Paris, collected the works of the great master of the school of Notre Dame, Perotin, and others, and took them back to Scotland, where, under the manuscript name of Wolfenbüttel 677 they are to be seen today.<sup>17</sup> So, in this way, music and ideas were exchanged back and forth over the Channel, and around the countryside, from castle to castle, from monastery to monastery, through bards, trouvères, pilgrims and minstrels, and even through the soldiery who had picked up foreign lyrics in foreign wars. The thirteenth century was actually a century of song, and music, secular and liturgical, picked up in this way turned up in due time in Winchester, or Worcester or York, and filtered its way to the castles and abbeys. Thus it finally arrived at Reading Abbey where, one can be sure it regaled and delighted the monks of whom one was the keeper of the cartulary, Brother John of Fornsett, musician.

## Chapter I

### The Beginnings

### The Beginnings

A poverty stricken country - your only hope of booty is from slaves. I can hardly suppose that you would expect a Briton to have any knowledge of Music or letters!

In the first century A.D., Agricola came to Britain's unlettered barbarians and instituted schools in which young princes were taught the humanities.<sup>2</sup> Agricola's secretary, Demetrius of Tarsus, was especially interested in religion and religious music, and education got under way so that by the time Augustine arrived in Britain in 596, there was still a tradition of learning, however slight. Among other results of Augustine's teaching was the establishment in Kent of a school of church music. This was in the year 668 and Pope Vitalian sent singers there to teach Gregorian chant. According to Bede, Pope Agatho sent John, the praecentor at St. Peter's in Rome to other parts of the kingdom, including Wearmouth and York to open up still more schools. Thus was established in England the church music that would hold supremacy for nearly a thousand years and came to be known as the Gregorian chant, which was in turn to be the musical life line in England for many hundreds of years.<sup>3</sup>

Bede says:

now, from that time also they then began in all the churches of the English to learn sacred music which had been known only in Kent. And the first singing master of the Northumbrians was Eddi, surnamed Stephen,<sup>4</sup> who was invited from Kent by the most reverend Wilfrid.

So the practice of song and music spread all over England refuting Cicero's caustic statement. The people of the North and West, being Gaelic, were ardently musical, and the Northmen, when they arrived brought their bardic traditions.

The harp was specially revered.<sup>5</sup> The venerable Bede cites the story of St. Aldhelm, Abbot of Malmesbury, who, in order to ingratiate himself with the lower orders and induce them to listen to serious subjects adopted the expedient of dressing up like a minstrel, and singing to them their popular songs.<sup>6</sup>

Bede gives a description of the sacred poet Caedmon's embarrassment when the harp was presented to him in turn that he might sing to it, Bede's words are: "Surgebat a media caena. Et egressus, ad suum domum repedabat."

But apparently he arose for shame implying that in England it was a disgrace to be found ignorant of playing on the harp.<sup>7</sup>

The harp was the common music instrument of Anglo-Saxons and Britons, and the word "harp" or harpa is a word of genuine gothic origin.<sup>8</sup>

By the laws of Wales (Leges Wallicae), a harp was one of the three things necessary to constitute a gentleman or a freeman; and none could pretend to that character who had not one of these instruments or could not play upon it. To prevent slaves from pretending to be gentlemen it was expressly forbidden to permit them to play upon the harp, and none but the King or the King's musicians (and gentlemen) were allowed to have harps in their possession. A gentleman's harp could not be seized for debt; because the want of it would have degraded him from his rank and reduced him to that of serf.

Dr. Charles Burney in his General History of English Music tells of a Welsh manuscript supposed to be of the year 1100, containing pieces for the harp in full harmony, and on the manuscript it explains that this manuscript contains the music of the Britons as settled by a congress or meeting of masters of music, by order of Gryffydd ap Cynan, Prince of Wales. It contains some of the most ancient musical

pieces of the Britons supposed to have been handed down to us by the British bards. The music is written in a notation using letters of the alphabet, somewhat resembling the tablature of a lute but without lines. It is now in the British museum, Add. Mss. 14905.

The practice of secular song was spreading also. The bards in Wales and in Ireland were an honourable class ranking with priests and warriors. In England, after the invasions of the Northmen, they fell into two classes, scops and gleeman. Scops were usually of noble birth and were attached to the court. Alfred the Great was a celebrated minstrel. Another was St. Dunstan, who was born in 924 in Glastonbury and became Bishop of Worcester. Even in the eleventh century, music seemed to be issuing from Worcester. St. Dunstan was to become Archbishop of Canterbury. He was brilliant in the learning of those days but excelled particularly at music and was celebrated as an organist. A great deal of his music came to him when he was serving mass, or in his dreams divinely inspired. In this way, he wrote O Rex gentium dominator dominum and his masterpiece Kyrie Rex Splendens. The full text of the words exists but the music is lost.

Says John Capgrave in his Life of St. Dunstan:

and although he was expert in various branches of learning, however, because of a special inclination he, just like David (sicut David), made the knowledge of instrumental music his own; he used the psalterium (lute), played the cithara, made music on the organ and struck cymbals.<sup>10</sup>

Many consider St. Dunstan to be the greatest English musician before the Conquest, and Sir William Hadow, the musicologist, places him with Dunstable and Taverner and Byrd.<sup>11</sup>

The last important musical work of Anglo-Saxon England is the Winchester Troper, assigned by scholars to the early part of the eleventh century. This is now in the library of Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, and is difficult to read because it is written in neumes without any pitch or measure. The name trope was given to the music or to the words or to both of interpolated religious texts used in the Ordinary of the Mass. Dunstan's Kyrie Rex Splendens was a trope, and the volumes in which they were collected were called "tropers".

The paucity of medieval ecclesiastical music in England was partly due to the fact that music manuscripts and part books were very often at the mercy of some reformist abbot or precentor who objected to their license or elaborateness and had them destroyed or used for book-binding. Strong in his rebukes was Aelred, the Abbot of Rivaux in Yorkshire, in the twelfth century who said:

Whence hath the church so many organs and musically instruments? To what purpose that terrible blowing of belloes, expressing rather the crakes of thunder than the sweetness of a voyce? Sometimes, which is a shame to speake, it is enforced into a horse's neighing and then it is writhed and retorted with a certain artificial circumvolution.<sup>12</sup>

Quite obviously Aelred was no lover of music but his rebuke does serve to illustrate the development of music in England by the twelfth century. This growth also extended to contemporary popular music, as illustrated by the description of the singing of that time by a friend of Aelred's. This was Giraldus Cambrensis; archdeacon of St. David's. He lived in c. 1147-1220 and was a traveller and a raconteur of great charm. In his work Discriptio Cambriae occurs the famous passage on Welsh and English singing so frequently quoted:

They use a kind of symphonious singing in two parts without any instruction, and even the children are proficient in this art. And they sing not in unison but in as many parts as there are singers, uniting these diversities at length in one consonance<sup>13</sup> and organic melody under the soft sweetness of B flat.

Among the manuscripts of music and the fragments that have been found and collected probably the Worcester Fragments are the outstanding.<sup>14</sup> They amount to one hundred and one compositions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and are today in the Chapter Library of Worcester Cathedral. Some were found at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, some in the Bibliothèque Nationale, some come from the British Museum, and some from various monasteries. They are all anonymous, fragmented and diverse. But there is one quite common element among them all. This is the recurrence in the script of the shapes of notes and of rests that is quite definitely English: the longus and the lozenge-shaped breve, and the slightly curved ligature. The voice exchange, and the partiality for thirds and 6/3 chords contributed to the English love for sonority in their music, so different from the School of Notre Dame. Also their wildly divergent styles speak of a considerable eclecticism among English composers of that period.

It cannot help but be noticeable too that the musical output of England at this period seems to have concentrated in one spot which is Southwest England with Worcester as its epicentre. Music in England had developed a long way since Cicero remarked that, although good for the purpose of slavery one could really hardly expect a Briton to have any knowledge of music!

Plate 1



DUNSTAN AT THE FEET OF CHRIST  
 Fol. 1 recto, MS. Auct., F. IV. 32, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 950

Taken from the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. X, p. YZ

## **Chapter II**

### **Reading Abbey**

## Reading Abbey

Under Innocent III, the thirteenth century papacy rose to a pinnacle of power and autocracy that it was never again to attain and all over Christendom the monasteries represented authority and learning. That their supremacy would last forever they never doubted. The most powerful of all were probably those of the order of Benedict - now in worldly pomp far beyond anything ever contemplated by their humble founder - and in all England one of the ten richest and most powerful monasteries of all was Reading Abbey (See plates 2, 3 and 4). Heavily endowed by royalty, it played a powerful political and ecclesiastical role in the country's history.

Today nothing remains of its architectural grandeur, but some sombre piles of ivy-clad stones, like the ghosts of ancient foundations. The Dissolution of Henry VIII, looters, and the depredations of ordinary people needing stone for building purposes have done their damage. Of the formidable precinct walls that were six feet thick and faced with flint and cement in order to withstand the ravages of time there is hardly a trace. Of the church, its nave only fifty feet less in length than that of St. Paul's, and of the great chapter house that could seat two hundred monks and had been the scene of royal assemblies and even of parliament, of the abbot's palace, grand enough to house the King and all of his retinue, there remain today only grey-black stones and broken arches. The black robed monks have vanished forever, the singing has ceased, and today there is only the sound of the wind in the trees and the cawing of rooks where once the Opus Dei rose

continously in praise of the Lord Almighty.

As Reading Abbey plays an important role in the history of England's musical development it is necessary to say something of its history.

### On the Founding of the Abbey

Henry I founded Reading Abbey in 1121. On the site he chose there had been a vill or ancient hamlet of some twenty households around a small Saxon church, and also the ruins of a nunnery that had been destroyed by the Danes long before the coming of the Normans.<sup>1</sup> It is hard to say whether Henry decided to found his new abbey out of pioussness induced by the great spiritual revival of the twelfth century, or from grief at the loss of his eldest son and heir from drowning. In the annals of Waverley, it says:

Hoc anno fundata est abbatia Radinges.<sup>2</sup>  
In this year Reading Abbey was founded.

and Henry wrote that he founded Reading

for the salvation of my soul, and of King William, my Father, and of King William, my Brother, and of William, my Son, and Queen Maud, my Mother, and Queen Maud, my Wife, and of all my ancestors and successors...

Of the site chosen by the King for his abbey, William of Malmesbury says:

Henry built the monastery between the rivers Kennet and Thames, in a spot calculated for the reception of almost all who might have occasion to travel to the most populous cities of England where were placed monks of

the Cluniac order, who are at this day a noble pattern of holiness,<sup>3</sup> and an example of unwearied and delightful hospitality.

The royal family, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were tremendous admirers of the great abbey of Cluny in Burgundy, and so Henry invited to Berkshire seven monks from Cluny and Peter, their prior. Also, from Lewes, the chief Cluniac establishment in England, came a group of twelve monks to help, and to start the observance of the Cluniac order. It took four years to establish the Abbey.<sup>4</sup>

After two years, Prior Peter returned to Cluny, and in 1123 Reading Abbey received an abbot of its own. He was Hugh de Boves, formerly a monk of Cluny in France, and then prior of Lewes in England. He remained six years at Reading and then was elevated to the post of archbishop at Rouen, leaving the monks of Reading Abbey sorrowing greatly at his loss.<sup>5</sup>

In 1125, Reading received its first foundation charter.<sup>6</sup> This covered Reading, Leominster, and Thatcham. It allowed the abbey to have its own mint and made the monks lords of Reading, a situation which would cause friction by the thirteenth century.

Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the abbey continued to receive munificent grants and properties from the royal family and from other donors.<sup>7</sup> It must be mentioned that these donors expected nothing in return but the prayers of the monks during their lives, and in the next world the benefits (which derived from good works in this), because to grant property to monks was considered an efficacious means to salvation. In the words of one historian, "Monasteries were power houses of prayer."<sup>8</sup>

In 1135, Henry died in Caen and was attended in his last illness by the Archbishop of Rouen, his confessor and close friend, formerly Abbot of Reading.

He confessed his sins, beat his breast and laid aside all animosities. He devoutly adored the cross of our Lord, and received His Body and Blood, and was anointed with the Holy Oil. Thus he rested in peace, and may God grant him the peace he always loved.

His body was embalmed and wrapped in bulls' hides, and brought to Reading where the obsequies were celebrated with pomp. King Stephen, the archbishops, the bishops and the nobles of the kingdom were present at the funeral. Adeliza, the royal widow gave one hundred shillings annually to maintain a lamp which burned continuously before the royal tomb on which a splendid effigy was placed.

### The Hand

In medieval times, a religious house, be it monastery or church, acquired prestige in direct proportion to the number of holy relics which it housed; and, it should be added, in the obtaining of these relics no holds were barred, no stratagem left untried. Take, for example, the incident of the saintly Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, who once, at the monastery of Fécamp, tried to obtain a relic by biting off a piece of Mary Magdalene's arm, first with his incisors and then with his molars.

"O! O! pro nefas! pro nefas!"

"For shame! For shame!" wailed the monks as they hopped around scandalized.

But Hugh said: "If I can touch the divine body of Christ, I can use my teeth on Mary's bones!"<sup>10</sup>

This was the general attitude at that time in Christendom, and it helps to explain a part, at least, of the enormous prestige clinging to Reading Abbey because of its vast collection of holy relics, which, through the centuries it had amassed.

After the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, one Dr. John London was appointed to make a report on the abbey's collection of relics. They were as follows: the Hand of St. James and the cloth in which it was wrapped; the Robe of St. Thomas; a tooth of St. Luke the Evangelist; assorted relics of the martyrs, confessors, and holy virgins, etc.<sup>11</sup>

The Abbey's most precious relic in a time when relics were of supreme importance and, in fact, probably one of the most venerated relics in all Christendom, was the left hand of St. James the Apostle, the rest of whose remains lay in the crypt beneath the high altar of the cathedral of Saint James of Compostela in Northern Spain. It had been presented to Henry's daughter, the Empress Matilda (widow of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry V) by the cathedral chapter, and she, on her return from Germany gave it to her father.

He charged Reading Abbey in 1125 to receive the Hand with all veneration and the reverence befitting the remains of the great apostle, and it was placed in a reliquary of solid gold and laid on the high altar. It must be admitted with shame that Richard, on becoming King of England purloined the reliquary, and used the money to go on the Third Crusade. There is no evidence that he ever repaid the money.

John, his brother, replaced the reliquary, and ordered a mark of gold to be paid in perpetuity, annually, to supply candles to burn before the shrine. He did this in reparation for his brother's sacrilegious act.

The Hand mysteriously disappeared for several years but seems to have been returned to the abbey in 1156, at the time of the consecration of the Emperor Frederick by Pope Adrian,<sup>12</sup> the only English pope and formerly Nicholas Brakespeare. It is necessary to write about the Hand at such length because it establishes Reading Abbey's connection with the cathedral of St. James of Compostela, (also a Cluniac establishment) and the source of great polyphonic music in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup>

In 1140, King Stephen visited the abbey and he and Empress Maud, (his cousin), were received with great honour. This episode was followed by the civil wars of Stephen's reign when Matilda tried to seize the throne of England for herself. Then Stephen attempted to erect a fortified castle on the abbey's grounds, but the monks protested greatly and appealed to Pope Eugenius III who sent a bull forbidding the erection of any sort of fortification ever on the grounds of the abbey.<sup>14</sup>

By now Reading Abbey, secure in its position as a royal foundation, was in a truly exalted position among monastic centres. It was a favourite holiday and stopping place for the royal family, and for the entertainment of eminent visitors (mostly, it must be pointed out, at the expense of the monks). It appears to have been a sort of medieval conference centre, or thirteenth century Dumbarton Oaks.

Toutes les misères trouvèrent un soulagement dans cette riche et puissante maison qui devint le type des abbayes clunisiennes en Angleterre.<sup>15</sup>

### The Duel

In reading through the records of Reading Abbey, stuck in among dry accounts of land transactions, council meetings and episcopal visitations, one suddenly comes across the account of a joust that took place on abbey grounds in 1161. One cannot help but wonder why the Abbey, and indeed, the Church would have given its sanction to such an unreligious occurrence?

The thirteenth century, in contrast to the turbulent fourteenth century that was to bring with it the Hundred Years War, the Black Death and other miseries, was a century of comparative peace. Sandwiched in between the savage civil war of Stephen's reign and the Hundred Years War it has been described as "the century in which all medieval civilization was coming into flower."<sup>16</sup> In it, for a while, the gentle arts could flourish, music and painting, the illustration of manuscripts and the like. It was also the golden age of scholarship. Unfortunately medieval man was not a man of peace nor, except for those who followed the monastic life, was he scholarly. His nature was a mixture of superstitious religious credulity and bellicosity and he loved war. Indeed, fighting was an important part of knighthood's state. Thus it was that a combat at arms took place at the command of Henry II in 1161 on the abbey ground. Here follows an account of it by the chronicler Jocelin of Brakelond.

When the abbot came to Reading, and we with him, we were suitably entertained by the monks of that place, among whom we met Henry of Essex, a professed monk who related to the Abbot and ourselves as we all sat together, how he was vanquished in duel! I have reduced his tale into writing by the command of the lord abbot. The aforesaid Henry was in high esteem amongst the great men of the realm, conspicuous by deeds of arms, the king's standard-bearer, and feared by all on account of his power. Then all at once there rose up against him Robert of Montfort, impeaching and accusing him before the princes of the land of treason to the King. For he asserted that Henry, in the war with the Welsh, had traitorously thrown down the standard of our lord the King and had with a loud voice proclaimed his death, and so turned to flight those who were hastening to his assistance. In point of fact, the aforesaid Henry of Essex did believe that the famous King Henry the Second, who had been intercepted by the stratagems of the Welsh, had been killed; and this would indeed have been the case if Roger Earl of Clare had not come up in good time with his Clare men, and raised the standard of our lord the King, to the encouragement of the whole army. Henry absolutely denied the accusation so after a short lapse of time it came to a trial by battle. And they came to Reading to fight hard by the abbey; and thither also came a multitude to see what issue the matter would take.

Now it came to pass, while Robert of Montfort thundered upon him manfully with hard and frequent strokes, and a bold onset had promised the fruit of victory then Henry becoming wholly desperate, and changing reason into violence, he assumed the part of one who attacked, not one who was on the defensive; who, while he struck fiercely, was more fiercely struck; and while he manfully fought, was more manfully attacked in his turn. In short, he fell vanquished.

As he was believed to be dead, upon the petition of the great men of England, it was permitted that the monks of that place should give his body the rites of sepulture. Nevertheless, he afterwards recovered, and now with restored health, he wiped out the blot under the regular habit, and in his endeavour to cleanse the long week of his dissolute life by at least one purifying sabbath, has so cultivated the studies of the virtues, as to bring forth the fruit of happiness.<sup>17</sup>

This true story of an occurrence at Reading Abbey is related from the chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, (a thirteenth century historian),

not for its elevating morals, but because it is all a part of the tapestry of those times of the Abbey's history, and reflects the medieval pageantry which John of Fornsett knew.

In 1191, the Abbot was honoured by Clement III and was given the right to wear the Episcopal mitre, ring, gloves, dalmatic, tunic, and sandals. This made him a Prince of the church, and with Westminster and St. Albans, the other two abbeys so honoured, Reading became one of the three great Benedictine houses in England.

Having been founded under the aegis of Cluny, Reading Abbey was, in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, regarded as a Cluniac house even having reciprocal prayer agreements with Cluny, and with English houses of Cluniac order.<sup>18</sup> However, about the middle of the thirteenth century it began drifting away from the Cluniac sphere and was regarded as a part of the Benedictine world.<sup>19</sup>

#### Reading Abbey and its music

With its Cluniac connections it is evident why the music of Reading Abbey achieved the heights it did. Cluny went in for liturgical music of unparalleled complexity and splendour, putting all of its stress on the performance of the Benedictine Opus Dei, which continued day and night. Consequently, the music of Reading Abbey too, almost from its beginnings attained finish and great polish, as did its subsidiary priory of Leominster, (which in its turn was in that part of the "west country" alluded to by Geraldus Cambrensis (1147-1220) as remarkable for its polyphony).<sup>20</sup> A list of the music of Reading (now lost) exists

in British Museum Harley MS. 978 and indicated how rich in musical composition Reading Abbey and Leominster Priory must have been.

The position of precentor in a large Benedictine establishment was one of great importance. The precentor had charge of the organization of the music and the copying of musical manuscripts, a demanding job when one remembers that the Opus Dei in a great Benedictine house went on from morning until night, and that on special occasions, such as a royal visit or a national assembly, the demands for more involved music must have imposed a heavy strain on the poor precentor.

About the middle of the eleventh century or thereabouts Wulfstan (or "Wulston"), about whom more will be said later, was for a time precentor of Worcester Cathedral. The same post had been held years before by Saint Dunstan who was considered to be a very great musician, and it appears that even at this early pre-conquest date Worcester was a renowned centre of music. Could there be significance in the fact that the road from Reading Abbey to its musically illustrious cell, Leominster Priory, ran right through Worcester? Is it not conceivable that both were in contact and, perhaps influenced by the music of the great cathedral and the precentor who directed it?

Now, in succeeding years pomp and glory and political prominence were heaped on Reading Abbey as it basked in royal favour. In 1164, the abbey church was dedicated by none other than Thomas à Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, in the presence of the king and of ten bishops.<sup>21</sup>

In 1191, Richard I held a great conference at Reading. In 1207, the "Cluniac convent of Reading",<sup>22</sup> under abbot Helias, was granted

concessions and privileges. In 1215, its abbot along with the bishop of Winchester and the papal legate, promulgated sentences of excommunication on the barons who had opposed John at Runnymede.<sup>23</sup> There were great festivities in 1227 when Henry III celebrated Christmas at Reading and it was there, in 1235, that Robert Grosseteste was consecrated bishop of Lincoln. In 1240, (thought by some to be the year in which the Reading rota "Sumer is icūmen in" was likely to have been written) a message came from the Pope ordering archbishops, bishops, chief abbots and nobles to assemble at Reading to hear a demand from the Pope for one fifth part of all their goods. With this he planned to repay injuries inflicted by his arch-enemy Emperor Frederick II. English clergy declined absolutely to help the Pope. Robert de Burgate (formerly the precentor of Reading) was appointed abbot in 1268. (His name appears later on the famous list of music of Harley MS. 978). By now the abbey was heavily in debt, and the shadows were gathering thick and fast. In 1295, the king ordered all monies found in monasteries brought to Lincoln then he extorted further contributions appointing the poor abbot of Reading as collector. Barely ten years later, a new abbot of Reading was summoned to give an account of the money. In 1305, the abbey was discovered to be in debt to the extent of £1227.7.8 which abbot Nicholas of Quapelod tried to reduce by cutting down drastically on servants. In spite of the impecunious situation, in 1337, Edward III "borrowed" jewels, gold chalice, and shrine from the abbey to help pay the expenses of Hundred Years War. There is no record, however, of his ever repaying the debt. Despite the depleted exchequer in 1359, the pomp and panoply of England turned up to celebrate the marriage of

John of Gaunt, celebrated in the abbey church. There was certainly no stinting and the royal festivities lasted for three days. In the following years Reading Abbey was frequently used for the assembly of parliament, which in the Middle Ages had no set place. In 1536, Henry VIII announced the dissolution of the monasteries and offered comfortable pensions to those who surrendered gracefully to the royal will. One who resisted to the end was Hugh Cook Faringdon, the abbot of Reading. Cromwell was unable to persuade him to render up the abbey to the king, and so, in 1539 Hugh Faringdon was tried for treason, and, with two of his clerks, sentenced to be drawn and quartered and their remains to be strung up in chains. Then, the abbey and all its possessions were escheated to the crown, and the monks dispersed for ever. Destroyed, too, was the great library and also the cartulary, which at one time had for keeper the diligent John of Fornsett. Not entirely scattered to the winds though. Lists of the books, music, some of the manuscripts and some of the books themselves have been preserved and kept, the date of many of them coinciding with the period when John of Fornsett was at the abbey. Some of them have this injunction written on them in faded ink!

Hunc librum frater Johannes, Monachus, Radingie, quem  
qui alienvenit vel fraudem de eo violerit Anathema est.  
Fiat. Fiat. Fiat. <sup>24</sup>

So, at last, Reading Abbey came to its tragic end. It is not the purpose of this thesis to enlarge on this, but simply to evoke those long gone years and particularly the thirteenth century and the great abbey in which John of Fornsett, the monk of Reading, lived and wrote his music.

The description of the gold and silver plate and the jewels and the tapestries staggers the imagination.<sup>25</sup> It is proof of the magnificence and the sumptuousness of this abbey which the king of England so frequently honoured with his presence.

Now, all is gone. It has been said that Reading Abbey was built by royal grief and razed by royal vengeance. Now only stones and fragments and desolation stand where it once was, but what has survived is one of the great masterpieces of music, "Sumer is icumen in."

## Plate 2



View of the GATEWAY of the OLD ARMY YARD, READING.

Photocopy of an engraving, courtesy of the Reading Museum

## Plate 3



GRAMMAR SCHOOL AT READING BERKSHIRE

Was the hospice.

Photocopy of an engraving, courtesy of the Reading Museum

## Plate 4



*A South Prospect of the ABBY-GATE at Reading.*

*Published by J. Smith, at the 'Black and White' Press, No. 1, St. Paul's Churchyard, Reading.*

Photocopy of an engraving, courtesy of Reading Museum

## Chapter III

### Medieval Lyrics

## Medieval Lyrics

The thirteenth century was a resplendent period of history which is called by one author, "the Magnificent Century,"<sup>1</sup> and by another "The Age of Faith,"<sup>2</sup> and which is considered by many to be the heyday of the Middle Ages.

It was at once the age of pageantry and credulity, of saints and unicorns, of noise of trumpets, of vibrant colour, of religious ecstasy and of unparalleled cruelty. It witnessed the piety of St. Francis as well as the horrors of the massacre of the Albigensians, the perfidy of King John and the nobility of William the Marshall; the learning of Robert Grosseteste; the intellectual genius of Roger Bacon and the Vision of Dante. It is also believed by many that John of Fornssett, monk of Reading and dominant personality of this paper was born in this period.

From those earliest dark days in England which followed the departure of the Romans, the arts and music - and particularly music - continued to develop. Music in England, was always highly estimated. Great deference was shown the bard with his harp, and in fact he was held equal in rank with the priest and the warrior. Alfred the Great was a notable harpist, Saint Dunstan was an accomplished organist, and Richard I a polished poet and musician, to mention only three examples.

With the passing of time there appeared the scop and the gleeman, the Saxon composers of mystical lays, (Caedmon), then the minstrels, and in liturgical music those great anonymous composers of the Worcester Fragments and the Winchester troper.<sup>3</sup> By the thirteenth century a wave of music, instrumental as well as vocal, seemed to be spilling over the land.

What gave birth to this phenomenon? Was it the fortuitous mingling of the genes of the poetry-loving Gaels with the music-loving Kelts? And with it the zest of the Vikings for dramatic and blood-curdling sagas combined with the Norman's art of the chanson de geste? Recollect that the first Norman to arrive at the Battle of Hastings was not the Duke of Normandy but his favourite minstrel Taillefer, who, mounted on a great horse and waving his sword in time to music, singing, led the Normans into battle.

It is the musical background in particular that we will now try to explore. Long before the Norman Conquest, the people of the mist-cloaked island had acquired a reputation for musical ability.

There is the frequently quoted excerpt by Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales), from his Description of Wales,<sup>4</sup> which establishes the fact that by the twelfth century polyphony was the normal thing in what he calls "west country."<sup>5</sup> He goes on to describe the music that they make in "many notes and phrases," and it certainly sounds like a rondellus. He is also probably describing the provenance of those sources that practised voice exchange, an increasingly notable factor in English medieval music. It is interesting to note that several of the surviving pieces originated in a region no more than twenty or thirty miles to the east of the Welsh border, which therefore covers the area containing Leominster Priory and Worcester. Leominster was a cell of Reading Abbey and so the musical connection here seems to be clearly established. One can also visualize the environment in which John of Fornsett may have been nurtured.

A treatise from Bury St. Edmunds was written by an anonymous Englishman (c. 1272).<sup>6</sup> He was a much travelled man and describes the people of Navarre and the English as being "specially musical." He also gives some useful historical information naming Johannes Filius Dei, Makeblite of Winchester, and one Blakesmit, "a singer in the palace of Our Lord Henry the Last."<sup>7</sup> He makes allusion to the "ditones and semi-ditones", (major and minor thirds), which, he says, are generally reckoned as dissonances but:

... in some places, for instance in that part of England which is called West-country they are thought the best for consonants and are much used by organists.

Thus it appears that pythagorean tuning was not in use in the west of England, although evidently still the norm everywhere else. There is strong reason to think that it is in England that harmony matured, and we can suppose that west-country organists used tuning similar to ours. Now, when thirds were made consonant a harmonic bass was secured, and it is not surprising that the country where this was done should be musically in advance of other countries.

"Among the many glories of England", says Henry Davey, "the creation of artistic music must be reckoned among the highest. Musical historians now admit that the history of English music is longer than that of any other nation."<sup>9</sup>

The most active centres of ~~the~~ cultivation of polyphony until the mid-fourteenth century were undoubtedly the great Benedictine abbeys, and in England there are actual musical remains from Reading, Worcester, and Bury St. Edmunds.

In recent years so many fragments even of religious and secular lyrics have been found that a book compiled by Carleton Brown, contains ninety secular lyrics alone, of which some even have their musical notes.<sup>10</sup>

Edgar H. Sanders says:

How significant a role music played in medieval England is indicated by the large number of scraps - fly leaves, paste-downs and detached fragments of polyphonic music of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that have been discovered in the last twenty years... One realizes that England has a larger number and variety of sources of medieval polyphony than any other area of music.

— Growing familiarity with these ancient lyrical compositions moves us at the depth of feeling and emotion revealed, at the imagery and power of expression of these anonymous authors of the thirteenth century. It is interesting too, to see how the identical lyric turns up in so many places at once, carried no doubt by bards and troubadours jongleurs and pilgrims so that one sometimes suspects the existence of a medieval "hit tune". These would become so popular that bits of their melodies were used again and again as cantus firmi. Probably many of them penetrated monastery and abbey walls and were familiar tunes to John of Fornsett and his brother monks. The most pious of monks must have been glad to get away from the Opus Dei once in a while.

Medieval man, even in his music, was deeply concerned with Doomsday, death and eternal damnation. . Here is a very early religious lyric (c. 1205), short but grief filled. It depicts a lonely forest, gathering evening shadows and then darkness. It is "a realization of suffering and of the coming of death and night to the world, and in it sunset and the death of Christ are made to parallel."<sup>12</sup>

Sunset on Calvary

Now goth sonne under wode  
 Me rewes (pity), Marie, thi faire rode (face)  
 Now goth sonne, under tre  
 Me rewes, Marie, thi sonne and thee.<sup>13</sup>

Says Carleton Brown:

If we had other pieces of similar perfection to place beside "Sunset on Calvary", we should be justified in recognizing the first half of the thirteenth century as the highwater mark of the religious lyric.<sup>14</sup>

Another lyric that can be dated to the first half of the thirteenth century is "A Prisoner's Prayer". This too is sad, a medieval De Profundis. In French it is:

Jhesu Crist veirs dem veirs hom  
 Prenge vus de mei pite  
 Jetez mei de la prisun  
 Vie sui a torte gete.  
 lo e mi autre compaignun  
 deus enset la verite,  
 tut pur autri mesprisun  
 sumes a hunte livere.

and in middle English it is:)

Jesu Christ, sod god sod man,  
 loved, thu rew (pity) upon me;  
 Of prison thar ich in am,  
 bring me out and makye fre.  
 Ich and mine feren sunne  
 God wot ich me lyghe (lie) noct (not)  
 for othere habbet mis nome<sup>15</sup>  
 ben in thys prisun ibroct.

The sad resignation of the "Prisoner's Prayer" is followed by another equally mournful lyric with religious overtones:

I walk with sorrow.  
 Fowles in the frith  
 the fisses in the flod,  
 And I mon waxe wod  
 mulch sorw (sorrow) I walke with  
 For beste of bon and blod.<sup>16</sup>

These are not religious versifyings or tepid conventional rhymes as are so many of those to be found today in the Anglican hymn book. These are really cries from the heart that have come down to us through the years, from brother souls in distress who lived and lamented nearly seven hundred years ago.

The oldest secular lyric with music in the English language, (dated c. 1225) is again somewhat sombre and pessimistic. Death and Judgment Day and repentance were real horrors to the people of the Middle Ages and not just euphemisms or grisly figures of the imagination. They preyed constantly on their minds.

Now Comes the Blast of Winter

Merrie it is while sumer ilast  
 the fugheles (fowls') song  
 Oc (but) nu draws nigh windes blast  
 And y(e) der (weather?) strong.  
 Ej! Ej! that this nycht is long,  
 And ich thidthel muchel (great) wrong.  
 Sorrow & mourne and fast.

The despair in this strikes one's heart even after all these many centuries. F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote in much the same frame of mind:

In the black night of the soul it's always three o'clock  
 in the morning.

One must not omit "Death's Wither Clench." This is a poem full of the grimmest intimations of mortality which is probably one reason why it was preserved. It was in a book compiled in the Cluniac priory of St. Andrews in Northampton, and turns up in various collections so it must have met with the full approval of the Church, (so many lyrics did not and were consequently destroyed). Probably it was familiar to John of Fornsett.

### Death's Wither Clench

Man mei longe him lives wene  
 ac ofte him bryet the wreinch (trick)  
 fair weder ofte him went (turn) to rene, (rain)  
 an ferliche (suddenly) maket is blench. (sunshine)  
 Therefore, man, thu the bithench (consider)  
 Al sel valui (fade) the grene.  
 Wela-vey! Nis (nor) king nis Quene  
 that ne sel drinke of deth - is drench, (draught).  
 Man, er thu falle of thy bench,  
 thou sinne aquench (put an end to).<sup>19</sup>

A typically pessimistic song which points out the inevitability of death and eternal damnation. With relief one turns from the homilies of Death's Wither Clench to a rather charming lyric called "Love's Madness". This song like several of the others had its music notes.

Love is a selkud wodenesse (marvellous madness)  
 That the idel mon ledeth by wildernesse.  
 That thursts of evilfuscyse (willfulness)  
 and  
 drinket sorwenesse. (sorrowfulness)  
 And with lomful sorwees menget  
 (frequent sorrows disturbs)  
 his blithnesse.<sup>20</sup>

The Franciscans came to England early in the thirteenth century, followed the teachings of St. Francis and called themselves "ioculatores dei". They mingled dancing and singing with their preaching and in this way made themselves popular with the music-loving English people. The influence of the Franciscans was widespread and their humanist teachings suited the English peasant with his love of nature. The pessimism and doom of "Death's Wither Clench" could not vanish from their thoughts entirely, but it must have been with understandable relief that the members of the congregation solemnly joined hands in the franciscan-inspired carole and danced "Honnd by Honnd". This was a

round dance and was, like other dances of the sort, performed usually on the vigils of Saints' days and often the venue was the local churchyard. On Christmas Eve the dance might be danced around the holy manger. Round and round slowly paced the dancers, three steps to the right, and dip, then three steps to the left and dip, walk twelve steps, mark time and then repeat. They sang their own accompaniment, although sometimes they might be aided by a small drum and bagpipes.<sup>21</sup> Here are the words to which they danced:

Honnd by honnd we schulle ous take  
 And joye and blisse schulle we make,  
 For the devel of eleman, hath forsake  
 And Godes son us maked our make (consort).<sup>22</sup>

Even in this dance, though, there is a religious undertone. It must have warded off effectively any levity and lascivious behaviour on the part of the members of the dancing congregation. An old drawing extant of "Honnd by Honnd" shows great gravity and a solemn demeanour on the part of the dancers.<sup>23</sup> (See plate 5)

A great many of the semi-religious lyrics of the thirteenth century reveal the deep Marian fervour of those times. Here is one entitled:

Of One that is so Fair and Bright  
 Of one that is so feir and brist Velud Maris Stella  
 Brister than the day is light parens and puella.  
 Ic crie to thee, thou see to me,  
 Levedy (Lady), preye thi sone for me tam pia,  
 that ic mote come to thee, Maria.<sup>24</sup>

Because the collections of lyric poems of the thirteenth century were made by religious orders it is natural that mostly those with a strong religious and moralistic feeling would be included. Sometimes, though, some fragment of parchment, some end paper in a missal escaped monkish observation and has come down to us. Such a one is:

### What Love is Like

Love is the softest thing in herle mai slepe.  
 Love is craft, love is gold with cares to kepe.  
 Love is les (false), love is lef (lovely), love is longinge.  
 Love is fol (foolish), love is fast, love is browring  
 (comfort).

Love is sellich anthing (marvellous a thing), wose shal  
 soth (truth) sing,  
 Love comseth with kare and endeth with tene  
 (wrangling),  
 Mid lovedi (lady), mid wife, mid maide, mid quene.<sup>25</sup>

(This is good sound counsel with an element of caginess. The cautioning monkish finger is apparent.)

Digby MS. 86 contains the most important collection of lyrics in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. Judging from the list of the kings of England appearing on its calender it is safe to place its date around 1272 or even earlier. Based on a study of the language used which is that of South-West England it is believed that the compiler of the Digby MS. came from around Worcester. It is understood that it was compiled in a house of friars and by a friar who was as at home in the French as in the English language. It seems worthy of note once more to mention that Worcester was in direct line from Reading Abbey to Leominster priory. Does it not seem that the heart of English music was here?

Another important music collection to be considered is British Museum Harleian MS. 2253. Because of the occurrence in the manuscript of the Latin Legenda de Sancte Elfrido, presbiterio de Leomenstria it seems reasonable to conclude that the book was compiled at Leominster priory. The first part is written in one hand and contains a great deal of

French religious verse, which is not surprising since it was only later in the fourteenth century that English became the official language of the country.

It contains a curious mixture of lyrics such as "When I think on Jesus' Death"<sup>26</sup> followed by a fairly exhuberant "De Clerico et Puella".<sup>27</sup>

Sir Edmund Chambers asks:

Can such a mélange be regarded as reflecting the experiences of a poet, (later turned monk) during the 'wonderjähre' in which he first heard the songs that he afterwards wrote down among the apple-blossoms of this Hereford priory?<sup>28</sup>

Leominster is only twenty three miles from Worcester and through Worcester runs the road from Reading abbey. Is it not reasonable to suppose that at this time and in this place a mind of musical distinction and intellect was at work compiling and selecting and supervising music? In Harleian 2253 are many secular pieces of distinction, "Alysoun," "The Man in the Moon" and "The Lovliest Lady in the Land" with its burden (that is supposed to have come down from a far older folksong),

Blow, northerne wynd,  
Send thou me my suetyng.  
Blow, northerne wynd,  
blou! blou! blou!<sup>29</sup>

and the tender and amorous

#### A Love Message

When the nythégale singes,  
The wodés waxen grene,  
Left ant gras ant blosmé springes  
In averyl, I wene;  
Ant love is to my herté gon  
with oné spere so keene,  
Nyht ant day my blod hit drynkos,  
Mny herté deth to tene. (vex)  
Ich have loved all this yer  
That I may love hamore;

Ich have sikéd mony syk, (sighs)  
 Lemmon, for thin ore.  
 Me nis love never the ner,  
 And that me reweth sore.  
 Sueté lemmon, thench on me, 30  
 Ich have lovèd thee yore.

This may not be great poetry, perhaps, but it is human and evocative of first love in any age and place. It is followed, (somewhat suggestively), by these verses voicing contrition.

A Prayer for Deliverance

Mayden moder milde,  
 orez cel creysoun!  
 From shame thou me shilde,  
 e de ly malfetoun!  
 For love of thine childe  
 me menez de tresoun!  
 Ich wes wod (mad) & wilde  
 ore su en prisoun!

Possibly in remorse the poet continues:

tho Pilat (Pilate) herde the tydýnge,  
 Molt fu ioyous baroun;  
 he lette byfore him brynge,  
 iesu Nazaround.  
 He was ycrowned kynge  
 Pur nostre redemsioun  
 whose wol me synge 31  
 aura grant pardoun

One has to wonder how it all ended - this sad little romance of the cloister in the thirteenth century?

It seems fairly evident then that this part of England was rich in music and in lyric poetry. In the fragments that have managed to survive time, wars, and the Church's stern destroying hands, we see reflected the same emotions that trouble or delight man today, gloom, gladness, fear and foreboding, and love, sacred and profane. Another

sentiment stands out and that is the love of the English then as now for the countryside and the forest and the ocean. It is a love of nature that has no counterpart in any other country. From:

In sumer when the shawes be sheen,  
and leaves be large and long,  
It is full merry in fayre<sup>32</sup> forest  
to hear the foulës song.

to Byron:-

I have loved thee, ocean.<sup>33</sup>

Down through the ages English nature has not changed much and today the bird-watchers with their binoculars still delight in the foulës song. The Sumer canon is not only the thirteenth century product of a finished poetic talent or a "learned composer's adaptation of a reverdie"<sup>34</sup> it is the supreme expression of mankind to the arrival of "sumer" and the first cuckoo. Here lies its magic.

## Plate 5

4

*Music in the Age of Chaucer**Un a harole d'Amours**Round Dance*

Honnd by Honnd

from Music in the Age of Chaucer,

Nigel Wilkens, (Cambridge, 1979), p. 4

## **Chapter IV**

### **John of Fornsett** **and the Summer Canon**

John of Fornsett  
and the Summer Canon

The opening chapters of the thesis aim at building up a picture of medieval England, showing its gradual development intellectually and musically, from the time of Augustine down to the thirteenth century. By describing the strange and quasi-mystical philosophical approach to music that absorbed scholars and musicians in those times, an attempt is made to suggest a picture of the background against which John of Fornsett moved, and to describe the music with which we believe he would have been familiar.

Adding to the known historical data of his time, and geographical details of the district in which it is believed he lived, (Worcestershire, Berkshire and Herefordshire), together with those fragments of Reading Abbey records which have managed to survive, plus an ordinary understanding of human nature, the idea has been to try to emulate the archeologists in Pompei. By filling in the human-shaped cavities found in the lava they succeeded in recreating the victims of Vêsuvius. By filling in a similar cavity in the first half of the thirteenth century, the hope is to recreate John of Fornsett, and thus defy those of the world of musicology who like to regard the monk of Reading as a nebulous and legendary figure as unsubstantial as, say, King Arthur, because many scholars continue to dispute academically not only the exact century in which the Summer Canon was written, but even whether its composer truly existed!

It would appear that he did exist and that he was born in Fornsett, a village of Norfolk, sometime in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, which puts him into the reigns of King John, Henry III, and perhaps the first two Edwards. This was a splendid and colourful century into which to be born and a mighty musical one.

In his booklet Sumer is icumen in, Jamieson Hurry has tried to give an analysis of the dialect used in the rota in order to provide still more clues as to John's provenance. He suggests that:

The Wessex dialect of the Rota shows a familiarity with Berkshire or Wiltshire, possibly even with Reading itself. Many of the dialect forms show that the composer of the song lived in the South of England. The most decisive is the syncopated 3d person singular Springth which north of the Thames would appear as Springeth.

Other southern forms are icumen, uerteth, (o.e. fortan), with a voiced initial v, and finally the spelling lth for l in lhude, (o.e. hlude). All these only found in manuscripts written in the South of England.

At some time, then, John of Fornsett became a novice, (probably in boyhood as was the custom), then a monk at Reading Abbey. Eventually he rose to be Keeper of the Cartulary. This position, in a great monastery such as Reading Abbey with its powerful social, ecclesiastical and political affiliations, indicates exceptional ability and education. It was a position that required mastery of the quill, a talent he certainly had which can be seen from the beauty of the script of the Rota.

John of Fornsett was no yokel. The Benedictines were not noted for their democracy (which is illustrated by their refusal to accept poor St. Dominic-of-the-Causeways into their order in Spain because he could neither read nor write). They were passionately addicted to music, and this was true particularly of those abbeys of Cluniac connections, (of

which Reading Abbey was one). So John of Fornsett was certain to have had a thorough grounding in all of the music of the time.

It would seem unlikely that he was a recluse. Reading was a great ecclesiastical center, one of the ten wealthiest monasteries in England, and one whose social supremacy was unchallenged. This was also the monarch's favourite abbey where he delighted to come and stay with all his entourage, and where, one can be sure, he was extravagantly entertained. Undoubtedly, John of Fornsett must have rubbed shoulders with England's grandest! And here he would come into contact with the best church and secular music of the time. When Elinor of Aquitaine was in residence at Reading Abbey, one can be sure her train of courtiers included a troubadour or two, (there is evidence that Bertrand de Ventadour, her favourite singer, once visited here),<sup>2</sup> and although this was before John's time, the chansons brought by the Queen's favourite might well have remained in the abbey's repertoire, though perhaps clandestinely. These and many others would have been well-known to our monk.

Now, apart from Berkshire and Worcestershire what did John of Fornsett know of the outside world, of the countries that lay beyond England? It is known that all Cluniac monks had to journey to the Cluniac Mother House in Burgundy to receive the tonsure and it is also a fact that the thirteenth century was the heyday of pilgrimage. It is also known that Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain was one of the three holiest shrines in Christendom. The other two were Rome and Jerusalem. It would be very surprising if a monk at Reading, as highly placed as John and a member of a religious house whose chapel

possessed the hand of St. James, did not attempt at some time in his career to go on pilgrimage to Santiago itself, to the shrine of the great saint whose hand Reading Abbey possessed. This was the holiest relic in England, if not in all Western Europe, and the only thing holier would be the shrine of Santiago itself, where the remains of the Holy Apostle were buried in the crypt of the cathedral. Surely, too, a musician of such polish as the rota's composer would wish to hear and to examine for himself Santiago's other treasure, the great Codex Calixtinus, marvel of early polyphony?<sup>3</sup> This may be conjecture, but is it any more inadmissible than to suppose that an eminent musician today would never have visited Salzburg or Covent Garden?

And now lastly, what can be gleaned of the personality of the composer of the summer canon? Quite a lot. As Sherlock Holmes solved the riddle of one of his cases by pointing out "the dog who didn't bark", so the same method applied in reverse can be applied to the monk of Reading. It is not pure conjecture to state that the author and composer of "Sumer is icumen in" loved spring and the English countryside. Nor is it conjecture to state that he had an ear and a deep appreciation for the lilt of a good folktune and for the rhythm of a sprightly dance. And where would he hear the like? Possibly from the troubadours who visited the abbey or from minstrels overheard as he walked through the medieval market place; or from the songs the pilgrims sang to the accompaniment of hurdy gurdies as they gathered to venerate the Hand. Wherever the English gathered they loved to sing and what his keen ear heard he liked very much - otherwise why bother to set it down in a joyous six-voice rondellus that was more advanced

than most music of his time? Also it can be assumed that he was a fellow of tact and discretion, witness the second text, Perspice Christicola, that he has inserted below the English one of Sumer is Icumen in in order to make the canon palatable to ecclesiastic authorities. (See Plate 6) And it can be seen that he must have been devoted to and an admirer of that great and musical Anglo-Saxon Bishop of Worcester, St. Wulstan, whose blessing he sought.<sup>4</sup> (See Plate 7)

Hugo Riemann, the great German musicologist says: "The Monk of Reading deserves an imperishable crown of glory," and Jamieson Hurry says of him: "He must have been the greatest musician in the world."<sup>5</sup>

We say that he sounds like a monk who loved life, his fellow man, and enjoyed with all his heart the foulës' song."

Sumer si ammen in. Ihude sing cucu. Sumer sed and blong  
 Per spice xpicola que dignacio celicio agrico  
 and and singe p vde nu. Sing cucu are blest after  
 la pro uiti vicio filio — non partens exposit  
 lomb. Ihoup after caluc cu Bulluc stertep. bucke uertep  
 it. mortis exicio — Qui captiuos semitinos  
 agnile sing cucu. Cucu cucu Wel singes pu cucu in hanc  
 a supplicio — Vite donat et secum coronat in de  
 Hanc rotam cantare possunt quatuor socii in  
 ribus autem qm a tribus ut taliam in hanc  
 dica. pzet col qui dicit ptem. Cantus in hanc  
 nls catism in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc  
 d pnam notam pnt cruce in hanc in hanc in hanc  
 singe in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc  
 matre in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc  
 hoc repetit in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc  
 faciens pntationem in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc  
 hoc dicit al pntationem in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc in hanc  
 singe cucu. Sing cucu nu. Sing cucu nu. Sing cucu nu. Sing cucu nu.

Photograph of the Reading Rota, MS. Harleian 978,

courtesy of the British Museum

[illegible]

Photograph of Harleian Calendar, courtesy of British Museum

(The prayer of John of Fornsett is in middle of second column)

## Chapter V

Sing cuccu nu

### Sing cuccu nu

Because of the supreme position occupied by the summer canon in music history, because of its delightful melody, because it has been known longer than any other great work of medieval music, because it is the first Middle English poem set to music for several voices, and finally because of the weight it carries in upholding the hypothesis that a great school of music flourished in England in the thirteenth century, it is necessary to discuss it at length.

First of all, it is contained in the first section of a small (7x5½) wooden-backed volume, known as Harleian 978, and is one of the greatest treasures of the manuscript room of the British Museum. Its brown-mottled vellum pages are so fragile with age that only by inserting a little square of white paper between one's finger and the vellum is one allowed to touch them at all. This is also a precaution against soiling by perspiration and rubbing.

This volume, B.M. Harleian 978,<sup>1</sup> is composed of a collection of miscellaneous contents consisting of music, some goliardic poetry, some laies, medicinalia, and a liturgical calendar. Towards the end of the book is a list of music titles that refers to a lost music codex. Handschin says: "The contents of Harleian 978 could serve for the entertainment of a community like Reading. We must remember that goliardic poetry like the art of the minstrels was favourably admitted at least in the cloister court, sometimes even intruding into the church, and our music collection illustrates by its general character the union of the secular and the spiritual."<sup>2</sup>

The music section is contained in folios 2-15 (of which the Summer canon is folio 11). We have included it in its entirety because it indicates what sort of music a Benedictine monastery in the thirteenth century would consider worth saving for posterity.

fols. 2 - 4

Samson , dux fortissimi. A planctus or Song in measured time extolling the feats of a hero.

fols. 4 - 6

Regina clementiae Maria. A hymn to Mary. Most Benedictine monasteries were dedicated to Mary so that most of their hymns honoured her.

fols. 6 - 7

Dum Maria creditur. A song to Mary, of melodic flavour and containing passages in the mood of a love song.

fols. 7 - 8

Ave gloriosa virginum regina. A widespread celebrated song to Mary by the famous Parisian poet, Phillip the Chancellor.

fols. 8 - 9

Estampies or three pieces of instrumental and secular music in two parts.

fols. 9 - 10

Ave gloriosa Mater Salvatoris. A song to Mary. A polyphonic composition.

fols. 10 - 11

A spiritual song on the twelve apostles.

fol. 11

The famous rota "Sumer is Icumen In".

fol. 12b

Aeterni Numinis mater et filia. A song to Mary in regular sequence form.

fol. 13

A song about St. Thomas of Canterbury, and another song to Mary. All in modal ternary form.

fol. 14

A solmization scheme with musical examples.

fol. 15

Theoretical items - and

fols 15 - 16

the Calendar.

A note at the beginning of the volume written by Sir Frederick Madden, keeper of the manuscripts at the British Museum in 1862, states: "In all probability the earlier part of this volume was written in the abbey of Reading circ. 1240." This date and the book's provenance thus having been established by Madden, his findings were generally accepted by the music world. Then, in 1944, a distinguished professor at the University of California named Dr. Manfred Bukofzer disputed Madden's verdict in an article published in the Music Journal of the University of California. It was entitled "Sumer is Icumen In, A revision".<sup>3</sup> In it he argued that there was no reason to suppose that firstly, there was any connection between the miscellaneous articles contained in the manuscript Harleian 978, secondly, that it was extremely open to doubt that the little volume even came from Reading Abbey at all, and thirdly, that the author of the summer canon was unknown.

We will return to these three arguments presently, and try to refute them, after offering a description of the music and of the famous canon which has aroused so much controversy and which forms the basis of this discussion. It is, as said before, found on folio 11 of Harleian 978. The song is what is known as a reverdie or a joyous spring song. It is sometimes called the "cuckoo" song because of its recurring pes or tenor which imitates the call of the cuckoo.

The composer, whoever he may have been and we believe it to have been Brother John of Fornsett, has managed to convey in his song by means of brisk short lines

"ewe bleteth after lomb  
lhouth after Calve cu",

and so on, and in the racing tumbling metre of the music the joyousness of an April day in England. (In medieval times, there was no word for Spring and "Somer" means April). The feel of things growing and the suggestion of animals frisking merrily in the sunshine is wonderfully evoked and all laced together by the recurrent onomatopoeic pes, "Cuckoo, Sing Cuckoo". This is the work of a finished poetic talent and "a learned composer's adaptation of a reverdie."

Jamieson Hurry, author of a booklet Sumer is Icumen In, has written more analytically about the canon as follows:

As to the melody it has the compass of a ninth. It does not follow the old ecclesiastic modes but is written in the modern key of F major, every diatonic interval of the scale being used. It also supplies the first example of a basso-ostinato or ground bass.

The conformity with many of the rules of modern music, in which the closes are composed of a leading note rising to its proper resolution is very remarkable and indicates an advanced knowledge of musical composition in early Britain.

Within a very short time of the publication of Bukofzer's article which caused an uproar in the world of musicology, a counter-barrage was returned by musicologists and scholars. Leading the counter-attack were Dr. Bernard Schofield, of England, and Dr. Nino Pirrotta, of Italy, internationally known music historians.

Bukofzer's argument was that there was no evidence to show that Harleian 978 came from Reading, and that, in his opinion the book's contents had been collected at random. But Madden's attribution (also that of Dr. Schofield), was based on the calendar which included, among liturgical items, obits of some Reading Abbey abbots, and of its important benefactors. It is hard to imagine why it would have been compiled anywhere else but at Reading. Moreover, similar to this Harleian calendar is a chartulary of Reading, contained in MS Cotton Vespasian E.V. (now in the British Museum), which has the very same obits which are found in the Harleian calendar plus some later ones, of the same house, and it also includes the entry Dedicacio ecclesie Rading, so the idea that the calendar could have emanated from anywhere else than from Reading Abbey seems weakly founded.

In addition, the laies in Harleian 978 are by Marie de France.<sup>5</sup> She was the abbess of a convent near Reading. Her fabliaux are rather on the romantic side, (hardly monkish), and one wonders how they came to be included in a monastery common-place book such as this. Then, one learns that she was half-sister to the king, Henry II, and that therefore he and she shared a common grandfather who was none other than Henry I, Reading Abbey's great royal patron and founder.

To refuse to include the poems of the half-sister of this Norman king and patron would have been an act of incredible tactlessness. However, the inclusion of the poems forges another link in the Reading Abbey chain.

The last part of the music section of Harleian 978 (folio 15, some theoretical items) and the calendar are on the same leaf, a fact which Dr. Bukofzer has overlooked. Indeed, the music is on the recto and the calendar on the verso. Surely, then, argues Dr. Schofield, is it not logical to suppose that the music must have been written in the same place as the calendar and before it? The music must have been right there in the scriptorium of Reading Abbey when the calendar was completed. Does this not argue the same provenance for both? And who, then, but a monk of Reading Abbey could possibly have written them?

Now, let us examine Bukofzer's main case against the generally accepted opinion that Harleian 978 was produced at Reading Abbey. He uses for reference the list that occurs at the very end of the book. This list is actually a table of contents that refers to a lost music codex and here Dr. Bukofzer must be quoted:

This list is valuable not only because it lists the texts of 164 music compositions but reveals in addition the name of W. de Winchester as the composer of tropes and thus points to Winchester as a centre of long standing in English musical life.

Then, from this point on Dr. Bukofzer proceeds to refer to the lost codex (of which this list is a table of contents), as the Winchester Codex, although he admits there is not enough evidence to call "Sumer is Icumen in" a Winchester rota!

He goes on to assert that the Winchester Codex must have come from the fourteenth century because of the "number of concordances and, in its later section, conductus and motets."

But the whole basis of this error in Bukofzer's summing-up stems back to errors made in the translation by one F. Ludwig, who examined the list in 1910, and described it in a book entitled Reportorium Organorum Recentioris et motetorum vestustissimi stili.<sup>7</sup> Under this thundering title he then proceeded to make some errors in transcription, which subsequently misled Dr. Bukofzer. To begin with he transcribed the heading of the list "Ordo, i W. de Wint" as "Ordo i W. de Wincestre" which is not convincing. It should be, says Dr. Schofield,<sup>8</sup> "Ordo libri W. de Winton." Now this Brother de Winton actually was a monk of Leominster Priory (a cell of Reading Abbey), whose name is found in the register of Thomas Cantalupe, Bishop of Hereford, and was among a number of monks examined in Leominster at a visitation on January 11, 1276, (for immoral conduct with a nun of Lingbroke and other women).<sup>9</sup> He seems to have been excommunicated for a while. His name appears also on the fly-leaf of a book in the Bodleian library as Hic est liber Sancte Marie de Rading, ex dono fratris W. de Winton. So now it seems apparent that no "W. de Wincestre" ever existed, and consequently no such thing as the Winchester Codex, a title that should be completely eliminated. Nor, of course, was there ever a center of music at Winchester, and this brings us back to Reading Abbey again.

So there are, in fact, three names mentioned on the list: W. de Winton, "R. de Burg", again transcribed erroneously by Ludwig as "spiritus et alme, R. de Virgine", when it should be "spiritus et alme,

R. de Burg", who was Robert de Burgate, abbot of Reading from 1268 - 1290.

The third and last person indicated in the famous list is one W. de Wic, whose name appears again in Bodleian MS 125 (Summary Catalogue 1988), in a list of musical works written by one W. de Wicambe, in a hand of the second half of the thirteenth century. We learn that he, too, was a monk of Reading who spent four years at Leominster copying and writing music.<sup>10</sup> So we have three monks identified as connected with Reading. Incidentally, besides demonstrating that the list (and consequently Harleian 978) emanated from Reading Abbey, it also gives us a pretty good idea of the immense musical activity going on there and at Leominster, particularly in the second half of the thirteenth century. Combined with what is known of the Worcester Fragments, and another manuscript known as Wolfenbüttel MS 678<sup>11</sup> (and these only a very small percentage of what had once been transcribed) an idea emerges of what must have been an enormous outpouring of melody in the thirteenth century from that part of England.

Another list, in a twelfth century copy of the Collationes of Odo of Cluny, (again written in a hand of the latter part of the thirteenth century) reveals that Reading Abbey possessed even at this early date fifteen graduals, thirty tropers, thirteen processionalists and seven antiphoners, while at Leominster Priory there were, at this same time six graduals, ten processionalists, four antiphoners, ten tropers, and two hymnaries, and this is only a fraction of what must have been lost!<sup>12</sup>

Returning now to the main argument it must be concluded that Schofield has quite clearly established in contradiction to Bukofzer that

there never was a Winchester codex, and that this hypothesis, therefore, must be discarded.

But there was, instead a Reading Codex and therefore Harleian 978 is definitely a Reading manuscript, and on the strength of this it would be extremely odd if "Sumer is Icumen in" were attributed to any but a Reading monk.

Dr. Bukofzer's other argument is that the summer canon was never transcribed in the year 1240 as Madden claims, but rather some seventy years later in 1310. His reasons for this are several. The chief one is that the rota is written in binary rhythm, which could not have been known, he says, to the transcriber as early as 1240. "Binary rhythm was not in use in England until the fourteenth century."<sup>13</sup>

But here Dr. Nino Pirrotta takes up the argument. To quote from his paper "On the Problem of 'Sumer is Icumen in'," he says:

It has not yet been explained what delayed in France the definition of binary rhythm in the frame of the mensuralist system. It may have been its vigorous and rude character. This was in contrast to the concept of sweetness, the ideal of musical beauty embodied, (they thought), in ternary rhythm.<sup>14</sup>

Thus it certainly appears that French music was much less progressive than that of either England or Italy. Pirrotta continues:

I think the lack of French musical sensibility was favoured by a widely spread spirit of aesthetic purism which characterized French music since the second half of the thirteenth century.

French music of this period was dominated by conservatism - perhaps linked to its liturgical function, but soon turned into stylistic exigency, which admits the possibility of development only in the directions admitted by a fixed technical scheme.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to this musical rigidity in France at that time, England and Italy were undergoing a freedom which would give origin to the

styles and forms of the Trecento in Italy, and to the glorious climax of the music of John Dunstable in England. Besides, Pirrotta adds that it is possible that the rota was not the only example of binary rhythm in England in the thirteenth century. There are several pieces in binary rhythm in the Worcester manuscript, particularly the motet O pastor patris.<sup>16</sup>

These are good reasons, says Pirrotta, that considerably weaken Bukofzer's placing the summer canon's date as late as 1310, and that make it reasonable to suppose that Madden's date of 1240 was quite correct. The fact that "Sumer is Icumen in" was written for six voices when on the continent even a four-voiced composition was a rarity, simply points out the preference of English composers for full sonority.

We have tried to give a short summary of the arguments put forth by Dr. Manfred Bukofzer, Dr. Bernard Schofield, and Dr. Ninon Pirrotta on the provenance and the date of the Reading Rota, and one cannot help but think with Dr. Pirrotta that Dr. Bukofzer "was led astray by his own arguments." We conclude that the summer canon was written at Reading Abbey by a Reading Abbey monk, and undoubtedly between 1240-50, 1260 at the very latest and is, consequently, coeval with the great school of music that existed with Worcester as its center.

We now arrive at the question of the authorship of Sumer. First, with regard to the calligraphy one cannot help but remark on the extremely close resemblance between the capital "S" of the rota and those of the cartulary of Cotton Vespasian EV (See Plate 8). It certainly looks as if they had been executed by the same hand. We know that Brother John of Fornsett was keeper of the cartulary!

The rest of the script in Cotton Vespasian resembles very much the hand-writing of the prayer inserted into the margin of the calendar in Harleian 978. Ora Wulfstanus pro nostre fratre Johanne de Fornsete. It seems more than likely that whoever inscribed the prayer in the calendar also was the writer of the Cotton Vespasian cartulary, and let us not forget that John of Fornsett was keeper of the cartulary at Reading Abbey at one time.

The final piece in this medieval music jigsaw is based on the custom of monks preparing a vellum for a manuscript to make a careful lay-out on their page, carefully ruling close lines. Vellum was extremely expensive and not an inch was wasted. The script must therefore fit exactly the space allotted it. The page of the calendar that concerns us is devoted mainly to obits of abbots of Reading Abbey and great benefactors. The Benedictines, not being particularly democratic would hardly admit onto this hallowed page the obit of a monk lower in the hierarchy than they themselves, for instance the keeper of the cartulary. Yet there he is! The prayer is squeezed into the margin almost furtively, one might say. "Saint Wulstan, pray for our brother John of Fornsett." What might the prayer be doing there, like a poor relation at a grand funeral? Bukofzer says it is an obit. We say it is not. In the thirteenth century, on finishing his manuscript, either illuminated or of music, it was the custom of a monk to inscribe a prayer wherever it could be squeezed in beseeching from a saint (or the reader) a prayer in his behalf. And that, we contend, is exactly the purpose of this prayer which he has written on the other side of the leaf that contains his music.

Now this is where some controversy arises. Was this prayer written by John of Fornsett or was it inserted in the calendar by some one who loved him very much? Would John have written "pray for our brother?" We think it very likely that a humble monk would have done so rather than writing an assertive "pray for Brother John." This could be called a "modesty topos" or a "humility topos" and fits in with one's conception of a modest publicity shunning musician. But even if this concept is wrong, it is difficult to see what difference it really makes. It is John of Fornsett's music and someone might have inserted the prayer for him where he thought the prayer should be.

Why, one asks, St. Wulstan? St. Wulstan was the great precentor of Worcester Cathedral, a musician of merit as one would have to be in order to be in charge of the music of a Benedictine cathedral in the eleventh century. He was also one of Worcester's great bishops, and was the only Anglo-Saxon Bishop who was not replaced by a Norman after 1066. In his enthronement address Bishop Gore of Worcester said:

Wulstan stood for the love of his people. He did not like the Norman language and the Norman manners. He was rough with the roughness of the English People. Homely with their homeliness. He knew their faults and their sins. He loved them, His leadership was crucial at a time when<sup>17</sup> the Normans were establishing their rule in the land.

Wulstan was canonized in 1203. He was held in great affection as a pastor, wise counsellor, courageous man of affairs - and musician. After his death affection turned to veneration.

Miracles occurred at his tomb. Monks were rescued from evil thoughts. Sailors were carried safely through the stormy seas to Ireland, and many diseases were cured.<sup>18</sup>

By the end of the twelfth century miracles attributed to the intercession

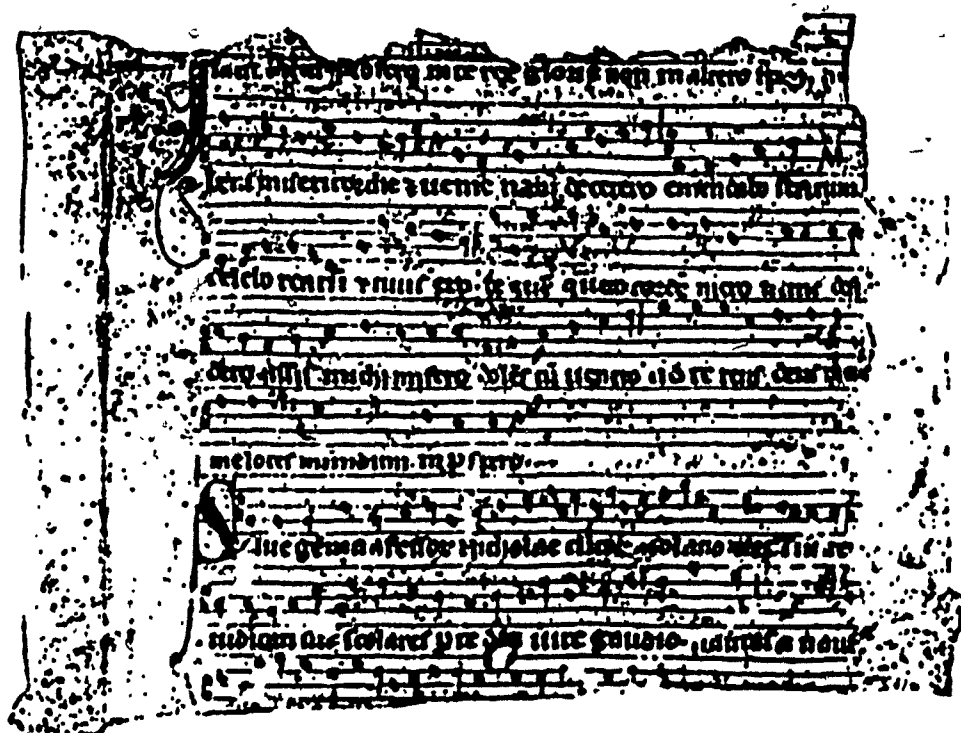
of Wulstan were occurring daily. In May, 1203, Pope Innocent III proclaimed Wulstan a saint. What more fitting saint could John of Fornsett have possibly invoked?

So now, after eight hundred years, invoking St. Wulstan again, we can say

Ora Wulfstanus pro nostre fratre Johanne de Fornsete.

And on this, the evidence rests that in the thirteenth century in the southwestern part of England there existed a great and polished school of music and that Brother John of Fornsett, of Reading Abbey, must have been one of its greatest musicians as demonstrated in his canon "Sumer is Icumen In."

## Plate 8



Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 30. Flyleaf (recto)

Special attention should be paid to the capital *S* of the word *Salve* and the capital *S* in the rota. Although the handwritings of the two manuscripts differ markedly, the ornamental style of the initial *S* agrees so well in both cases that the similarity can hardly be dismissed as mere coincidence. No such coincidence need be assumed if the manuscripts were written at approximately the same date.

MS Hatton 30, Oxford Bodleian Library.

Conclusion

## Conclusion

The so-called "Reading rota" or the "summer canon", whichever one prefers to call it, or, more familiarly, the "cuckoo song", has been the subject of more attention than probably any other song in history, (including the song of Agincourt). This is due not only to its charm and musical appeal but also to its text, which is regarded as a landmark of Middle English poetry, and also because the "cuckoo song" has been known longer than any other masterpiece of medieval music.

Because of all of these things, then, "Sumer is Icumen In" has been the subject of innumerable music analyses and criticisms, of countless music discussions; learned papers have been written on nearly every aspect of it by musicologists of every time and place. Chief among them are Manfred Bukofzer, Bernard Schofield, Nino Pirrotta and Jacques Handschin.

Jamieson Hurry must be included, too, (although strictly speaking he cannot be counted as a musicologist). All of them have had a different form of approach. Dr. Bukofzer, in his "A Re-examination of Previous Evidence" was chiefly concerned with the time factor, and the exact provenance of the canon. He not only disputed the fact that MS. Harleian 978 was even a product of Reading Abbey, but queried the usually accepted year of its composition, moving this from 1240 some seventy years ahead to 1315. He based his convictions on the belief that the canon was written in mensural notation and used duple rhythm. Mensural rhythm, held Dr. Bukofzer, could not possibly have been known to the composer in England as early as 1240 for not until the very end

of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth had it even appeared in France. France, he maintained, in those days was the source and arbiter of all musical learning. Nor did Dr. Bukofzer admit any relationship between the canon itself and the monastic calendar also contained in Harleian 978. His conclusions on this particular point were based on a faulty transcription of a music list contained in the very end of the Harleian volume. This translation was made by Dr. F. Ludwig, an eminent German musicologist and the discovery of these errors, made by Dr. Schofield, appear to weaken Dr. Bukofzer's case considerably.

Schofield tried to reconcile the two dates, but ultimately ended by accepting the earlier one, 1240, (which was first put forward in 1860 by Dr. Madden, keeper of the manuscripts at the British Museum) as the correct one. Schofield also proves conclusively that MS. Harleian 978 (and thus the canon) was indeed a product of Reading Abbey, and Reading Abbey alone, and not (according to Bukofzer) a miscellaneous collection of manuscripts. He arrives at this conclusion by pointing out the unaccountable errors in Dr. Ludwig's translation of the all-important music list. This famous list, (described in Chapter V) and located at the very end of the volume, when correctly translated proves the undoubted existence of three monks of Reading Abbey, all engaged in music, all of the second half of the thirteenth century, thus proving unarguably that Reading Abbey, and no other place, was the venue of Harleian 978, and therefore of the summer canon.

Dr. Pirrotta succeeds in eliminating one by one the reasons that led Dr. Bukofzer to ascribe the summer canon to the fourteenth century,

asserting the existence of binary rhythm in England and in Italy as early as 1240, and points out that the stylistic purism and conservatism of French music were the cause of France musically lagging behind England and Italy. Thus, along with Schofield, Pirrotta reiterates Dr. Madden's original assertion that the rota was, indeed, a product of the year 1240.

Jacques Handschin stresses the paleographical aspect pointing out that the text of the canon is in the same language of an English Charter of 1258, thus establishing the date of the composition with some degree of certainty, (pre-dating the date given by Bukofzer by some fifty years).<sup>1</sup>

Jamieson Hurry is chiefly concerned with the dialect used in the summer canon, and finally the English musicologist Peter Marr, in his paper published in The Musical Times, December, 1967, (No 1498, p. 1104-6) describes and analyses the melodic structure and the internal relationships within the tune.

But strangely enough, the personality and the mystery of the composer and poet himself, who first gave this lovely, polished and mirthful song to the world, seems to have aroused very little interest in the world of musicology. Hence the author, not attempting to emulate the intellectual approaches to the canon of Jacques Handschin or other illustrious musicologists has, with the few scarce items known about John of Fornsett and of his period of serving as keeper of the cartulary at Reading Abbey, attempted to bring him back into the picture and to place him in the music of his time. This attempt has been made by using a common sense approach and knowledge of basic human behaviour, whether it is in the Middle Ages or today.

**Notes**

## Notes to Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> The Fathers of the Church include St. Augustine, St. Gregory, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose.
- <sup>2</sup> A threnody was a lament for the dead;  
a paean was a song of praise; and  
a dithyramb was a song in honour of Dionysius.
- <sup>3</sup> There were eight church modes. They were known as authentic and plagal. The authentic modes on D, E, F, and G were known as the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian. Each one had a plagal which was exactly four tones below it.
- <sup>4</sup> Plato, The Republic, translated by B. Jowett, II ed. (Oxford, 1875), p. 277.
- <sup>5</sup> "Is vero est musicus, qui ratione perpensa canendi scientiam non servitio operis sed imperio speculationis adsumpsit." Boethius, De Institutione Musica, libri quinque. Edited by Godofredus Friedlein (Leipzig, 1867) p. 224 and also translated by Oliver Strunk, Source Readings in Music, (New York, 1950), p. 70.
- <sup>6</sup> Isidore of Seville, Etymologiarum sive originum, libri XX, chapter 15 - 23 of Book 3. W. M. Lindsay, editor. (Oxford, 1911).
- <sup>7</sup> Cassiodorus, Institutiones. Book 2. Ed. R.A.B. Mynors, (Oxford, 1937).
- <sup>8</sup> Gregory's letter to Desiderius referred to by Alban Butler, "St. Desiderius of Vienne", in Lives of the Saints, edited by Herbert Thurston S. J. and Donald Huston. (Westminster, England, 1953). Vol. II, p. 375. "Desiderius, bishop of Vienne, denounced the profligacy of the court, whereat he earned the enmity of Queen Brunhilde, who attempted to discredit him with Pope Gregory by accusing Desiderius of paganism on the grounds of his great liking for the classics."
- <sup>9</sup> Luotillo, a monk of St. Gall, c. 890-920. A noted composer and teacher of music. A skilled performer of string and wind instruments. So many young noblemen came to him for music instruction that a special room had to be set aside for the purpose.  
Nan Cook Carpenter, Music in Medieval and Renaissance Universities. (Oklahoma, 1958), p. xxx.
- <sup>10</sup> Cantus Firmus. The tenor in plainchant. It had longer notes than the other parts and was usually set in isorhythm. It used plainchant melodies in rhythmic pattern generally taken from chants from the Proper of the Office. The New Grove Dictionary of Music, Vol. 3 (London, 1980), pp. 738-41.
- <sup>11</sup> St. Benedict was the founder of Western monachism. The Rule of St. Benedict imposes work, meditation, and the singing of the Divine Office.

12 "Cluny was the monastery the Norman Kings most admired." Henry I so admired Cluny that he brought over from Burgundy seven monks and their prior to start the observance of the Cluniac order at Reading Abbey in 1121.

Lionel Butler and C. Given, Medieval Monasteries in Great Britain, (London, 1979), p. 32.

13 Wolfgang Braunfels, Monasteries of Western Europe. (Princeton, 1972) p. 31.

14 Guido D'Arezzo, important music theorist of the Middle Ages, invented the system of solmization syllables - ut, re, mi, fa, sol, which is still a teaching device. It produced a perfect singer, he said, at the end of a year. The syllables were from the words of Ut Queant Laxis, a hymn to St. John.

Ut queant laxis resonare fibris

Mira gestorum famuli tuorum,

Solve polluti labii reatum, sancte, Johannes.

"That thy servants may freely proclaim the wonders of thy deeds, absolve the sins of their unclean lips, O Holy John."

15 "Tumultus et strepitus inordinato." From the Statutes of New College & All Souls, Oxford, concerning noise; cited in Nan Cook Carpenter, Music in the Medieval and Renaissance Universities. Oklahoma, 1979, p. 81.

16 Leonin and Perotin were early composers of the School of Notre Dame, in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. They were both choir masters at the Church of Notre Dame and their compositions are known collectively as music of the School of Notre Dame.

17 Wolfenbittel 667, a collection of European church music of the thirteenth century whose provenance is now seen to be the Abbey of St. Andrews.

Percy Scholes, The Oxford Companion to Music, ninth edition, (London, 1955), page 941.

## Notes to Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, Ad Atticum, IV, 16. I owe this reference to Sir William Hadow, English Music, (London, 1931), p. 1

<sup>2</sup> "He saw to it that the sons of the tribal rulers were educated in the liberal arts, as a result of which they used to reject the Latin language and began to aspire to rhetoric. The toga came into fashion, and little by little the Britons were seduced into alluring vices, to the lounge, the bath, the well-appointed dinner table." Tacitus, Agricola, translated by Sir William Peterson, (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), page 207.

<sup>3</sup> King Alfred founded professorships in 866 for the cultivation of music as a science. First to fill the chair was Brother John of St. David's who read lectures on music. Music was the only one of the seven sciences that conferred degrees upon its students and England the only country in which those degrees were conferred. W. Chappell, Popular Music of the Olden Times, (London, 1931), p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Saint Wilfrid, Bishop of York, 637 - 709. "He also brought Eddi from Canterbury in 669, whose special work was in connection with the music of the church of York, and he was to teach the Roman method of chant." Bede, Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, edited by C. Plummer. Book IV, 2, (Oxford, 1947), p. 278-79.

<sup>5</sup> The harp appeared early in British history and remained longest in popular use in those parts of the British Isles where descendants of ancient races were least disturbed and where civilization advanced slowly. The earliest depictions in western Europe are eight and tenth centuries. New Grove Dictionary of Music, Vol. 8, (London, 1980), p. 190.

<sup>6</sup> Sir William Hadow, English Music, (London, 1931) p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> "then he arose up from the table from shame and returned home." Venerable Bede, Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, Book IV, chapter 24, p. 597.

<sup>8</sup> W. Chappell, Popular Music of the Olden Times, (London, 1931), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> W. Chappell, Popular Music of the Olden Times, (London, 1931), p. 5 quoting British Museum addition MSS. 14905.

<sup>10</sup> St. Dunstan (924-988), first, bishop of Worcester (also precentor for a time), then archbishop of Canterbury. He was one of the greatest saints of the Anglo-Saxon church. A great musician. At one time, when living the life of a hermit at Glastonbury, he built himself a cell only two and a half feet deep. Here he studied, played the harp and practised his handicrafts. (He is the patron saint of goldsmiths). Here the devil is said to have tempted him and to have been seized by the nose with the saint's tongs.

Life of Saint Dunstan, edited by William Stubbs. (London, 1874), p. 327.

Henry Davey. History of English Music. (London, 1904), p. 19.

William Hunt. History of the English Church. The Monastic Revival. Vol. II. (London, 1901), pp. 349-356.

Dom D. Pontifex. "Memorials of Saint Dunstan", The Downside Review. Vol. 5, (London, 1933), pp. 20-40.

<sup>11</sup> Sir William Hadow, English Music, (London, 1931) p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Henry Davey, History of English Music, (London, 1905), p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, Description of Wales, edited by Thomas Wright, (London, 1863), p. 495.

<sup>14</sup> The Worcester Fragments; made into a record by the Accademia Monteverdiana under the direction of Denis Stephens. A beautiful rendering of the polyphonic elaboration of the liturgy. Edited by Dom Anselm Hughes.

## Notes to Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> Reading Abbey's site was on ruins of ancient nunnery probably destroyed by the Danes. It was built perhaps in reign of King Edgar. Brian Kemp, Reading Abbey, pub. by Reading Museum and Art Gallery, (Swindon, 1968), page 7.

<sup>2</sup> "In this year Reading was founded." Annales de Waverleia, edited by Rev. J. A. Giles (Rolls Series, 1852-54), p. 218 also Foundation Charter granted by King Henry I - (1125). (translated from Cotton MS Vespasian, E.V., Fol. 17.)

<sup>3</sup> William of Malmesbury, d. 1143. Chronicles of the Kings of England, translated by J.A. Giles, Book III, (London, 1847), p. 447.

<sup>4</sup> Lionel Butler and C. Given, Medieval Monasteries of Great Britain, (London, 1979), p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Annales Radinges, in Flores Historiarum, Vol. II, ed. H.R. Luard, (London, 1890), p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> This charter has not survived, and is only known from cartularies. It also gave Reading the right to have a mint.

<sup>7</sup> Brian Kemp, Reading Abbey, pub. by Reading Museum and Art Gallery, (Swindon, Wiltshire, 1968), p. 22. Many bequests state at the close: "to God, to St. Mary of Reading, and to the monks."

<sup>8</sup> Brian Kemp, Reading Abbey, pub. by Reading Museum and Art Gallery, (Swindon, Wiltshire, 1968), page 23.

<sup>9</sup> Jamieson B. Hurry, Reading Abbey, (Reading, 1901) p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Adam of Eynsham, Magna Vita S. Hugonis Episcopi Lincolniensis, ed. by and translated by H. Farmer and D. Douie. 2 vols., (London 1961-2) pp. 169-70.

<sup>11</sup> Relics of Reading. Letters relating to the suppression of the monasteries. (Camden Society), 1843, p. 226. Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Vol. XIII, Part II., no. 377, British Library. Edited by J. S. Brewer, (London, 1862-72).

also Jamieson B. Hurry, Reading Abbey, (London, 1901), pp. 127-138.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew of Westminster, Chronicle, translated by J. A. Giles, Rolls Series, ed. by Henry Richards Luard, (London, 1852-54), p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> At St. James of Compostela the Codex Calixtinus was the first to use three part harmony in "Congaudeant Catholici."

14 Brian Kemp, Reading Abbey, pub. by Reading Museum and Art Gallery, (Swindon, Wiltshire, 1968), p. 18.

15 J. Pignot. Histoire de l'ordre de Cluny, ed. by Sir Ernest Clarke, Vol. X, (Autun, 1868), p. 36.

16 Will Durant, Age of Faith, (New York, 1950), p. 900.

17 Chronicle of Jocelyn of Brakelond, edited by Sir Ernest Clarke, (London, 1903), p. 243.

18 Brian Kemp. Reading Abbey, pub. by Reading Museum and Art Gallery, (Swindon, Wiltshire, 1968), p. 10.

19 Brian Kemp, Reading Abbey, pub. by Reading Museum and Art Gallery, (Swindon, Wiltshire, 1968), p. 10.

20 Giraldus Cambrensis. Description of Wales, p. 498. Percy Scholes, The Oxford Companion to Music, 2nd edition, (Oxford, 1945), p. 1009.

21 This was the last time before the murder of Becket that he and the King appeared together publicly.  
Brian Kemp, Reading Abbey, pub. by Reading Museum and Art Gallery, (Swindon, Wiltshire, 1968), page 18.

22 Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland - Papal Letters. Vol. i, p. 28. Also Jamieson Hurry, Reading Abbey, (London, 1901), p. 32.

23 On the excommunications of the Barons, see Roger of Wendover, Flores Historiarum, translated by J. A. Giles, (London, 1849), pp. 340-44.

24 This curse was written on a fly leaf of a Reading Abbey book in the thirteenth century. "That he who has stolen this book or committed deceit about it be accursed by Brother John, the monk. So be it! So be it! So be it!"

25 Sir John Williams, Monastic treasures confiscated at the Dissolution. Abbotsford Club, 1836, p. 38.

## Notes to Chapter III

- <sup>1</sup> Thomas Costain, The Magnificent Century, (Garden City, N.Y., 1951).
- <sup>2</sup> Walter Levant, The Age of Faith, (New York, 1926).
- <sup>3</sup> Winchester Troper, OB. Bodleian. 775 (990) contains earliest collection of two-part organa. Worcester Fragments are a number of manuscript fragments that point to the existence of a school of music centering at Worcester Cathedral.
- <sup>4</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, Description of Wales, edited by Thomas Wright; translated by Sir Richard Hoare, (London, 1863) pp. 495.
- <sup>5</sup> Wales and West of England, including Herefordshire.
- <sup>6</sup> Cited in Frank Ll. Harrison, Music in Medieval Britain, (London, 1958), p. 113.
- <sup>7</sup> Henry III.
- <sup>8</sup> Henry Davey, The History of English Music, note 3, and Sir John Hawkins, History of Science and Practise of Music, (London, 1875), p. 288.
- <sup>9</sup> Frank Ll. Harrison, Music in Medieval Britain, (London, 1958), p. 113.
- <sup>10</sup> Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932).
- <sup>11</sup> Edgar Sanders, England from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, (London, 1973). p. 256.
- <sup>12</sup> Edmund Reiss, Middle English Lyrics, edited by Maxwell S. Luria, (New York, 1974), p. 318.
- <sup>13</sup> Bodleian MS., Arch. Sheldon supra 74, f 56<sup>b</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 1.
- <sup>14</sup> Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. XIV.
- <sup>15</sup> Liber de antiquis legibus, f 160<sup>b</sup>, Guildhall London, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 11.
- <sup>16</sup> Bodleian Douce MS. 139, f 5<sup>a</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 14.

17 Rawlinson MS. G22 Bodleian Library, f 1<sup>b</sup>, Oxford in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 14. E. W. B. Nicholson, sometime Bodleian librarian says "this one is the oldest known song in the English language." (Summary catalogue of MSS. in the Bodleian Library, V, P. X).

18 F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Crack-up", Essays by F. Scott Fitzgerald, edited by Arthur Mizner. (New York, 1963), p. 411.

19 "Death's Wither-Clench". A. Maidstone MS. A. 13. f 93<sup>b</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 15.

20 Bodleian Douce MS. 139 f 157<sup>a</sup> and Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 14.

21 Richard Greene. Early English Carols, (Oxford, 1977), p. 154.

22 "Honnd by Honnd" is in Bodleian Library MS. Bodley 26, f 202 and Richard Greene, Carols, p. 6.

23 Honnd by Honnd, drawing of Carol from Bodleian Library, Bodley 26, f 202, in Nigel Wilkens, Music in the Age of Chaucer, (Cambridge, 1979), p. 4.

24 Trinity College, Cambridge MS. 323, f 24<sup>b</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 24.

25 MS. Digby, f 200<sup>a</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 107.

26 British Museum MS. Harleian 2253, f 79<sup>b</sup> (col. 2).

27 British Museum MS. Harleian 2253, f 80<sup>b</sup>

28 Sir Edmund Chambers, Early English Lyrics, (Plymouth, England, 1907), p. 276.

29 British Museum MS. Harleian 2253, f 72<sup>b</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 148.

30 British Museum MS. Harleian 2253, f 80<sup>b</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 154.

31 British Museum MS. Harleian 2253, f 83<sup>a</sup>, in Carleton Brown, English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century, (Oxford, 1932), p. 155. Also Chambers & Sidgewick, Early English Lyrics, (Plymouth, England, 1907), p. 500.

32 Henry Davey. "Introduction", The History of English Music, (London, 1904), p. 5.

33 Lord Byron: "An Address to the Ocean", Child's Harold, Canto CLXXXIV, The Works of Lord Byron, ed. by Fitzgreen Halleck, (New York, 1875).

34 A "reverdie" is a song of spring.

## Notes to Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> Jamieson B. Hurry. Sumer is icumen in, (Reading, 1914). Written to commemorate the 800th anniversary of John of Fornsett and the writing of Summer canon. P. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard de Ventadour was the favourite troubadour and eulogizer of Elinor of Aquitaine. Gustave Reese, Music in the Middle Ages, (London, 1940), p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> Codex Calixtinus, a collection of polyphony from Santiago de Compostela in the northwestern Spanish province of Galicia. The Cathedral Library of Santiago preserves the Liber Sancte Jacobi (Book of St. James), which contains the complete services and music for the Vigil and Feast of St. James as they were performed in the middle of the twelfth century. It provides an important collection of twelfth century polyphony.

<sup>4</sup> St. Wulstan. A short biography of the patron saint of Worcester Cathedral written by Canon Jeffery Fenwick to mark the 900th anniversary of the building of the Cathedral, (Aldin Press, Malvern, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> H. Riemann, Geschichte der Musiktheorie, (Leipzig, 1910), p. 151 and Jamieson B. Hurry, Sumer is icumen in, (Reading, 1914). p. 17.

## Notes to Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> MS. Harleian 978 is the shelf-mark given to a bound volume of thirteenth century manuscripts that once belonged to Reading Abbey. It was acquired by Sir Robert Harley, first earl of Oxford, 1661-1724 who formed a great library. The library was bought in 1753 by the nation and forms the Harleian collection in the British Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Handschin, *The Summer Canon and its Background*, Musica Disciplina iii, (1949), pp. 55-94.

<sup>3</sup> Manfred Bukofzer, *Sumer is Icumen In*, a Revision, University of California Publications in Music (Berkeley, 1944), pp. 79-80.

<sup>4</sup> Jamieson Hurry, Sumer is Icumen In, (London, 1914), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Marie de France, abbess of Shaftsbury and half-sister of Henry II. Her laies are a part of Harleian 978. They consist of eight-syllable couplets, and contain twelve stories which were intended to be sung probably to harp accompaniment.

<sup>6</sup> Manfred Bukofzer, *Sumer is Icumen In*, a Revision, University of California Publications in Music (Berkeley, 1944), pp. 94-95.

<sup>7</sup> Index of the Winchester Codex printed in F. Ludwig, Repertorium Organorum Recentioris. Bd. 1. Halle, 1910, pp. 267-278.

<sup>8</sup> B. Schofield: "The Provenance and Date of 'Sumer is Icumen In'", The Music Review, IX (1948), p. 83.

<sup>9</sup> B. Schofield, "The Provenance and Date of 'Sumer is Icumen In'", The Music Review, IX (1948), p. 83 and R.C. Griffiths and W. W. Copps Registrum Thome de Cantilupo, (Canterbury and York Society), (London, 1907), p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> B. Schofield, "The Provenance and Date of 'Sumer is Icumen In'", The Music Review, IX (1948), p. 84.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfenbüttel MS. 677. (Provenance Abbey of St. Andrews, Scotland). A thirteenth century collection of music.

<sup>12</sup> Lost material of Reading Abbey. English Historical Review. S. Barfield. (London, 1888), pp. 117-125.

<sup>13</sup> Manfred Bukofzer, *Sumer is Icumen In*, a Revision, University of California Publications in Music (Berkeley, 1944), pp. 92.

<sup>14</sup> Nino Pirrotta, "On the problem of 'Sumer is Icumen In'", Revista Musicale Italiana, (1946), p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Nino Pirrotta, "On the problem of 'Sumer is Icumen In'", Revista Musicale Italiana, (1946), pp. 209-210.

16 O Pastor Patris. A three-voiced motet in duple time which occurs in No. 59 of the Worcester MSS. Manfred Bukofzer, Sumer is Icumen In, a Revision, University of California Publications in Music (Berkeley, 1944), pp. 90. Also used as flyleaf of MS. Hatton 30, Bodleian, Oxford Library.

17 Bishop Gore was Bishop of Worcester, 1902-1905. A great figure in the English church. Quoted in Fenwick (see note 18, below), p. 24.

18 Jeffery Fenwick, Saint Wulstan of Worcester. (Malvern, 1980) p. 24.

## Note to Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> "The only English Proclamation of Henry III." Transactions of the Philological Society, (London, 1868-69). 1.

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