

‘Ey-m’ acá!’***Cantigas* Performance Practice in Non-Specialist Settings:
An Ethnomusicologist-Performer-Educator Perspective****Judith Cohen****Resumo**

A familiaridade da autora com as tradições orais, através da sua formação e actividade etnomusicológicas, fez com que, ao longo dos muitos anos de actuação profissional enquanto intérprete, levantasse questões e consolidasse convicções quanto à forma de abordar, na actualidade, as *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Os problemas levantados incluem a relação com os ouvintes; o desfasamento acentual entre música e texto; as opções estilísticas a tomar, e seus referentes culturais; a integridade dos poemas e o papel dos refrães; o uso de instrumentos; e as múltiplas apropriações contemporâneas no âmbito mercantil das ‘Músicas do Mundo’ ou da ‘Música de Fusão’. Algumas das respostas que a experiência da autora sugere para o presente poderão ter igualmente o condão de iluminar as possibilidades de execução musical imagináveis para o passado medieval.

Palavras-chave

Cantigas de Santa Maria; Interpretação musical; Refrão; Audiências; Tradição oral.

Abstract

Educated as an ethnomusicologist, the author gained much familiarity with oral traditions; this in turn influenced her approach to the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* as a long-standing professional performer. Beliefs were formed, and questions raised regarding contemporary performance practice. Problems confronted include the relationship with audiences; conflicts between musical and textual accents; stylistic options and their cultural associations; the integrity of the song and the role of the refrain; the use of instruments; and contemporary appropriations under the ‘World Music’ or ‘Fusion’ labels. Some of the responses suggested by contemporary experience might also illuminate imagined performance practice in the medieval past.

Keywords

Cantigas de Santa Maria; Performance practice; Refrain; Audiences; Oral tradition.

AFTER PROLONGED MUSING over how to begin this paper, it occurred to me to start by stating the obvious: these are great songs. Not many repertoires of 400-plus songs can claim so many fine stories, together with splendid, mostly very singable, melodies. However, the very fact that they are such great songs means it can be very frustrating to find the best way or ways to perform them.

My perspective here is a triple one: ethnomusicologist, performer, and educator, operating in a primarily Anglophone world, and, a few months a year, in Hispanophone contexts. As a performer and educator, I have many questions, while as an ethnomusicologist, I worry about whether it is possible to answer them, and to what extent these answers may be reliable. Ethnomusicology is now looking more toward historical musicology than it has in the past, but still has quite a different perspective. The ethnomusicologists' creed, at least, as I understand it, includes such commandments as, 'thou shall not make value judgments', 'thou shall not utter the word "authenticity"', indeed nor think the thought', 'thou shall not consider music separately from culture', and 'thou shall privilege change and hybridity, for stagnancy is death and music is live'.

Some of the main issues which occur to me are the following:

- the audience: specialists, aficionados, general public, students, folk, children, languages understood;
- the songs: length, melody, rhythm, tuning;
- the words: pronunciation, text underlay, themes and issues;
- the performers: instruments, soloists, groups;
- style: vocal timbre, refrains.

Within these, or adjacent to them, are questions such as the influence of the Jewish and Muslim musicians in the miniatures, and the question of oral, written, or mixed transmission.

The audience

For performers, the audience is always present: like the refrain of *Cantiga 200*, '*loei, loo, loarei*,' the audience is there in the past, in the present, and in the future. It influences, among other things: the choice of songs, the number of stanzas to perform, the volume of sound production, and the kind of extra-musical communication offered. One wants to perform the material as best as possible, and to please the audience, with the minimum of musical or historical compromises, or, ideally, none at all.

Some stories appeal more to certain audiences, and some melodies as well. As a performer, I want to entertain; as an ethnomusicologist and educator, I also want to open new musical and narrative perspectives to audiences who might not normally gravitate toward them. Lively melodies with obvious refrains can be combined with more complex melodies. Refrains are a way of communicating with audiences, who can be invited to sing them, or to listen for their recurrence, and are discussed further on in more detail.

Some *CSM* stories may be problematic for certain audiences. Elementary school teachers object to certain narrative themes, such as pregnant or otherwise errant nuns, but the children themselves usually have no problems with these: it is the adults who imagine that children have no knowledge

of sexual relations outside 'sex ed' classes. In one Portuguese neighbourhood school in Toronto, I sang *Cantiga 7*, about the pregnant abbess, for a group of 12-13-year-olds. I deliberately did not summarize the story for them in English, but soon noticed they had started to listen intensely. After the workshop, several came up to me and said things such as: 'Hey, miss, cool story! Do you know more like that one?' One member of an early music discussion listserv,¹ with little formal music education, wrote: (cited with permission) 'I'm not in the least bit put off by the churchy content of their lyrics [though] normally [...] proselytising lyrics of any kind give me the creeps.' [sic; Early Music listserv] On different grounds, communities might object to narratives involving negative treatment of Muslims or Jews; in these cases, as a performer and ethnomusicologist, I explain the context, pointing out that, at least in this situation, the medium may indeed be the message, but the messenger is not.

In the Medieval Music Ensemble course I have taught for some years at university level, most of the students have no experience with any medieval music, except for vague notions that it might involve 'Gregorian chant' and music associated with 'medieval' films. This past year one of my ensemble students wanted to bring a large group of eight-year-olds from her practice teaching school to the ensemble's final concert. I suggested that she teach them a refrain ahead of time, and we chose *CSM 147*, about the stolen lamb ('A Madre, do que a bestia...'). The children sang the refrain perfectly, and one of them had practiced waving a toy lamb in the air while shouting 'Ey m'acà!' at exactly the right place—meanwhile, my university students had practiced stopping right there so he could be clearly heard. It was a great hit with the audience, the small children loved being introduced as the chorus, while my university students had to work seriously on the text and music to know when to stop.

Performing the manuscript

Performance issues include, but are not restricted to, the following: the melody—notes, tuning, and rhythmic patterns; the words—pronunciation, text underlay; the structure—strophes, refrains, the vexed refrain issue. My colleagues at the Round-Table 'Confluências culturais na música de Alfonso X' (Lisbon, 14/6/2007) are dealing with several technical issues far more competently than I can, so here I will just mention one: accentuation of syllables. While it can be dangerous to apply observations of oral tradition to past centuries, it is, I think, useful to reflect on approaches to accentuation and phrasing in oral tradition. For text underlay, scholars often posit a non-metrical delivery to ensure the flow of the words. But in fact there is no reason to assume that conflicts

¹ Early Music listserv, e-mail conversations with Bill Kilpatrick, March-April 2007; also interviewed but not cited here: Chris Elmes, whom I thank for facilitating some relevant recent MP3 tracks.

between musical and textual accents defeat communication. On the contrary, deliberately altering the usual word accent is a frequent device in traditional singing and, if anything, it focusses attention on the words so that communication is enhanced rather than compromised. One example is a traditional song from Extremadura, not far from the Portuguese border (Example 1).²

① Zaragata (Cáceres)

u - na ro - sa en - tró_en la_i - glesia____

u - na ro - sa en - tró_en la_i - glesia____

to - da lle - na____ de ro - ci - o,

en - tra li - bre____ y sa - lió pre - sa

ca - sa - da con____ su ma - ri - do
u - na ro - sa____ en - tró_en la_i - glesia____

Example 1. *Zaragata* (Cáceres): Text underlay and deliberately misplacing word accents.

The style

Trying to reconstruct a sound, especially a vocal sound, several centuries later, is, obviously fraught with pitfalls. We can look at some of the parameters mentioned earlier; we can try to imagine aesthetic values; we can look for types of sound, which relevant cultures may share, but naturally we can never assume that we have captured sounds as they were.

Joseph SNOW (1999) brings to our attention the singing and dancing described in *CSM* 409 ('cantando e con dança [...] SNOW 1999, 65, 68), in which, as in 'Stella Splendens' of the *Llibre Vermell*, all kinds of people, transcending socio-economic divisions, are described. Snow also notes the singing in *Cantiga* 270: 'todos con alegria cantand'e en bon son', and interprets the reference to the nuns' singing at the end of *CSM* 59, 'todas faz a faz e cantando ben as[s]az' as a suggestion of forcefulness ('singing loud and strong': SNOW 1999, 70). Leaving aside the question of whether to take descriptions in the *CSM* literally or not, it seems that according to Snow, there is at least some loud, forceful, and jubilant singing. This does not necessarily imply that this was a style used for

² Thanks to William Cooley for the musical notations.

other *Cantigas*, or even perhaps that it really was used for these, but at least it is a reasonable possibility.

Yet, this does not seem to be a style favoured by most musicians who perform the *CSM*. Medieval music has gone through all sorts of phases and fads, all too often a rather bland approach: very serious, and rather reminiscent of sliced white bread, with whole wheat germ kernels discarded and some enriching vitamins added, or what I called many years ago the 'castrated angel sound.' As one reviewer of Gothic Voices put it, 'The women sounded as if they were wearing wimples, and the men as if they respected this fact. The time for rape was over. It was all very English, and also very Hildegard of Bingen' (FENTON 2003).

Even when the instrumental approach is based on North African and Middle Eastern music, the vocal style rarely follows suit. And rarely does it sound as if the performers are actually enjoying themselves. Communication, when it exists, often consists of stylized facial expressions and gestures delivered with seeming indifference to whether an audience is present, much less whether they actually are receiving the message.

The question of how many people are singing also arises, and is probably different for different *CSM*. Can we assume that a soloist always sang the stanzas and/or that more than one person always sang the refrains? One might be tempted to posit that for the more difficult melodies, a soloist would be the obvious performer. Manuel Pedro Ferreira has experimented with antiphonal alternating lines, based on a Trás-os-Montes ballad singing model, which is one feasible possibility (FERREIRA 2000b) a village in the same area of northern Portugal I was struck by how people sang melodies with glissandi in unison, and when I asked about this, they told me that, for them, a song sung by one person alone 'não tem graça' (fieldwork, Moimenta de Vinhais, 1996-7).

Muslim and Jewish musicians

There is a tendency to perform the *CSM* with, as Page puts it, 'what sleeve-note writers generally (and unhelpfully) call an "Oriental", "Arabic", or "Islamic" flavour'. The Muslim and Jewish musicians in Alfonso's court do not seem to have been very numerous, and we do not know how much they mixed with the Christian musicians, how much music they shared, and, if they did so, in what way. Also, as Ferreira points out, 'the adoption of an instrument does not always imply the adoption of the functions associated with it, the appropriation of its repertory or the imitation of its original playing techniques' (FERREIRA 2004, 129, n. 3). Can we really assume that musicians of these three religions cheerfully traded tunes and techniques on a daily basis, living a utopian musical *convivência*? If a Jewish musician was invited to play in Alfonso's court, did s/he say: 'Cool! I finally get into the inner circle, to hear Muslims, and teach them some of my music?' or

‘Hmmm, better be as much like the Christians as possible [...]’. Did a Christian musician say, ‘Cool! I get to learn Jewish & Muslim music!’ or, perhaps, ‘Hmmm, well we’ll teach them what music really is, they’re here to praise the Virgin after all’. Were Jewish and Muslim musicians excited, angry, resigned, or otherwise, about playing at court? Did they mentally excuse themselves when accompanying songs about the Virgin rewarding Jews and Muslims who moved over to Christianity? How did they feel about the negative portraits of Jews and Muslims who refused to convert to Christianity? There are only about fifty songs mentioning Muslims and forty mentioning Jews (CARPENTER 1998, 31-4)—who accompanied and sang what, and who decided? Did they have some sort of reaction code only each other could decipher? Did they go home and make up wicked parodies?

Transmission

Some years ago, a reader of a paper I submitted berated me for applying oral tradition to ‘something that was performed by musicians looking at it’. This, to me, was an astonishing statement, for how do we know that the *CSM*, or indeed any medieval songs, were performed by people ‘looking at’ them? Having dispensed with eurocentricity, orientalism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and a host of other moral disorders; surely we need not fall prey to either WAM³-centricity or litero-centricity. How the *cantigas* were learned, and performed in different contexts, may never be adequately understood. But I have no problems teaching short refrains to primary school children and general folk audiences who rarely understand anything related to medieval Galician-Portuguese. If it is not a problem for them, surely those who spoke and understood the language, were familiar with some of the stories, and were accustomed to oral transmission would have even fewer problems not only learning refrains but also remembering whole songs or at least parts of them. Songs as long or longer are composed, remembered, and learned without written texts in many cultures.

Length

In performance and education settings, the length of many *CSM* is problematic, even for listeners who understand the language. In my experience, even native Gallego speakers often have a hard time understanding the words without explanation. One school of performers insists on integrity and would rather perform fewer songs and not omit any stanzas. Some ensembles opt for long renditions made even longer by instrumental improvisations. Others dispense with the story altogether, offering instrumental versions, or, as in the case of Canadian singer Loreena McKinnett, singing

³ WAM: Western Art Music.

syllables only (MCKINNETT 1994). Another device which has been used by several performers is reciting part of the song. This, I think, is a matter of personal taste: my own preference is not to ruin a perfectly good song by suddenly injecting a recited section, especially if the intruding recitation is delivered with solemnly meaningful facial expressions. Others, however, appear to find this practice acceptable or even appealing. All these approaches—based largely on issues of integrity versus variety and attention span—have both advantages and drawbacks.

Singing only the beginning of a song makes no sense in a story-telling setting, and preparing a 'Readers' Digest' version creates problems: just when one has found a verse to skip without destroying too much of the narrative, one finds that this would entail separating a verb from its auxiliary or separating a noun from its modifier or performing some other unjustifiable surgery. And here, as a performer, I will confess: I have cut. And I have pasted. But I have never omitted a refrain, and I have tried to always deliver a story.

As for the integrity of the song, boring an audience to the point of exasperation, or relying on endless instrumental variations, or inserting a solemn recitation, are no likelier to preserve the song's integrity than is shortening it because no one understands the words. As for extra-musical communication, an audience unfamiliar with the repertoire needs explanations. These audiences are in fact often the most rewarding ones, especially in 'folk music' settings, where they expect the kind of informal, chatty introductions that the western-art-music-trained audience is not used to (but often responds to well enough).

Refrains

When is a refrain not a refrain? When it is not sung.

When my daughter, who has sung medieval and other music with me literally all her life, was asked what she thought of omitting refrains when they cut up sentences or words, she was eight years old, and reacted instantly: 'but Mommy, the refrains are the best part!'

The false refrains pointed out and explained so clearly by Stephen Parkinson (PARKINSON 1987) constitute one kind of issue (PARKINSON 1987; *CSM* 87 needs adjusting, 53ff; *CSM* 406 has a spurious refrain, 48; etc), but omitting refrains just because their placement contradicts our own notions of how to perform a song is quite another. By my reckoning, refrains involve some kind of interruption in over half the *CSM*, and over 200 of these are between stanzas; some are even, as you all know, between words or inside words, and about thirty break up Mary's titles or other sacred names. So, omitting refrains where they seem, to us, badly placed would omit refrains in half the repertoire—and that would still leave many enjambements and other interruptions between

mudanzas and *vuelatas*, or inside sections. Not all of these can be explained away by positing that the words and music were put together only at a late stage.

The problem seems to be not so much with the way the refrains work as with the way we perceive coherence, which in turn often is related to our distance from orality as a lived experience as opposed to a topic for academic discussion. Once one gets used to broken sentences and words, they are fun—in fact the ‘straight’ *cantigas* start to seem almost insipid. Stephen Parkinson uses the apt word ‘teasing’, but why would teasing be ‘over-subtle’? (PARKINSON 1987, 50) Indeed, I have often thought that the dangling words and syllables are a delicious little joke, much like the *CSM* miniatures in which a musician’s elegant toes sneak just outside the miniature’s frame.

③ Diego León - Moroccan Sephardic

1. En la siv - dad de To - le - do,
 en la siv - dad de ____ Gra - na - da,
 allí se_ha cri - a - do_un man - se - vo
 que__Die-go Le - ón__ se lla - ma,__ 2. él e - ra ...

Example 2. (*romances*): *Diego León*. Moroccan Sephardic tradition. See breath mark in last line. This is where women who often sing this romance typically breathe—possibly to avoid having to break up the typical continuity between the end of one stanza and the beginning of the next one.

Performer and audience perspectives also depend largely on the music and the musical world or worlds they are part of. Performers and audiences accustomed to a formal Western Art Music (WAM) concert style often do not have the same expectations or reactions as those accustomed to, say, a folk coffee house, a flamenco bar, an intimate concert of North Indian classical music or, one might think, mid-thirteenth century Iberian audiences in various contexts from court to street. Performers and audiences used to oral—and aural—traditions would likely agree with my daughter that ‘the refrains are the best part’. Refrains are crucial. They add entertainment, balance, a sense of security, of coming back. They cross a barrier between performer and audience: allowing the audience to sing, whether out loud or silently or under their breath. They allow the listener to recoup the information absorbed up till that point. They also allow the singer to think about the next stanza. If other people are singing the refrain, the singer can breathe. (We do not know to what extent there were instrumental interludes.) Among the reasons I have seen advanced for *omitting* certain refrains are that they imply breathing in illogical places, or present difficult intervals. These

are objections of people who perhaps do not regularly sing in informal, traditional circumstances. Traditional singers—I am thinking here of certain Moroccan Sephardic narrative ballads (*romances*: Example 2), French Canadian *complaintes*, and others—regularly breathe in places which seem to be illogical but have their own logic. And what is a totally inopportune moment to breathe? Inopportune for whom?

Cummins says it would be ‘absurd’ for the soloist to break off, but—who says it is a soloist? What is a soloist’s role in Alfonsine terms? And who decides what is ‘absurd’? Cummins further decrees that CSM 225 (*The Priest who Swallowed a Spider*) is ‘grotesque’ if the refrains are all sung, but I have performed it many times, with a professional ensemble and with students—none of them has ever seen it as anything else but fun (Example 3). One legally blind university student, a vocalist and harpist, was delighted when I told her she was part of a long tradition of blind minstrels. It turned out that she had a toy spider collection at home, and, for the ensemble’s final performance in the Music Department, she brought them for all the student musicians to affix to their heads or arms for that song, and a few extras for audience members who wanted to be part of the fun. The *cantiga*’s ‘grotesque’ character, along with the catchy melody and easily recognizable refrain, made it one of the ‘hits’ of the Medieval Ensemble’s performance—it came alive, which, it seems to me, is one of the main functions of the CSM and, indeed, of just about any song.

*Muito bon miragr’ a Virgen | faz estranno e fremoso,
porque a verdade’ entenda | o neicio perfioso.*

E daquest’ un gran miragre | vos será per mi contado,
e d’ oír maravilloso, | pois oíde-o de grado,
que mostrou a Santa Virgen, | de que Deus por nós foi nado,
dentro en Ciudad-Rodrigo. | E é mui maravilloso

*Muito bon miragr’ a Virgen | faz estranno e fremoso,
porque a verdad’ entenda | o neicio perfioso.*

Ontr’ os outros que oístes. | E tenn’ éu que atal este
o que vos contarei ora | que avêo a un preste
que dizia sempre missa | da Madre do Rei celeste;
e porque a ben cantava, | era en mui desejoso

*Muito bon miragr’ a Virgen | faz estranno e fremoso,
porque a verdad’ entenda | o neicio perfioso.*

O poblo de Ila oíren. | Mas un dia, sen falida,
ena gran festa d’ Agosto | desta Sennor mui comprida
[etc.]

Example 3. Beginning of *Cantiga 225*, showing two instances of enjambement between stanzas.

Another obstacle which musicologists have proposed is the ‘difficult interval’. Fernández de la Cuesta has ruled that various ‘difficult’ intervals between *estrofa* and *respuesta* could ‘absolutely not’ be sung by ear or by untrained singers ‘[...] en absoluto podían ser interpretados de oído por personas no preparadas o elegidas especialmente para ello [...]’ (CUESTA 1987, 167). People happily unaware of musicologists’ assumptions, however, often sing such intervals, just as children easily sing melodies which music educators have decided are too complex for them (Example 4). From an ethnomusicologist’s perspective, de la Cuesta’s pronouncement is not only somewhat arrogant, but is also redolent of WAM-centricity. What is a ‘trained’ singer? Someone brainwashed into thinking ‘modern’ Western art music training is equivalent to ‘training’ in general? In most traditional societies I have worked with, most people can sing at least adequately, and most can sing whatever intervals happen to be present in the songs they are familiar with. Fernández de la Cuesta also decides that a leap which introduces the refrain ‘neutralizes’ the intent (CUESTA 1987, 167). Why? How does he know what singers could do and, for that matter, what the intent was, or whether people perceived ‘neutralized’ as he does?

② Coplas de Purim - Moroccan Sephardic

Ha - man, an - tes que mu - rie - ra lla - mó a su pa - ren - te - la

Strophe 1
los pu - so_a su ca - be - çe-ra_el dí - a an - tes de Pu - rim 2.

R: Vivas tu y viva yo, vivan todos los dzhudíos,
viva la reina Ester que tanto placer nos dió.

Example 4. Coplas de Purím. Moroccan Sephardic tradition. Note the interval between the end and the beginning of the next stanza (a seventh).

In any case, since there is never, as far as I can see, a regular pattern of ‘problematic’ refrains, in performance how would one signal which ones were to be omitted? After all, at the time one could hardly hand out photocopies indicating omitted refrains in parentheses or send out emails in advance. It’s hard to imagine a musician announcing ‘refrains after stanzas 3, 7, and 11 will be omitted’. Might one perform it like a ‘Simon says’ game: ‘Simon says—omit refrain between stanzas six and seven!’? But, why not just simplify the matter, and sing them? Instead of being annoyed or shocked or intellectually offended, might it not be more sensible to enjoy both the regularly recurring refrain and the exercise of remembering the interrupted sentence, phrase, word or syllable? At conferences such as this one, one might envision a post-prandial recreational activity—everyone bring a favourite enjambement for all to sing (*CSM* 7; *CSM* 26; *CSM* 159)—presented, learned, and sung by rote.

The very perception of these refrains as problematic seems to be a case of what Menocal calls 'the myth of westernness' (MENOCAŁ 1990, chapter 1), and, I add, presumed preference given to literacy. Perhaps people from a primarily oral culture, with the agile memories oral culture requires, actually missed broken phrases, words and syllables if they were not there. Parkinson finally concludes (PARKINSON 1987, 55), 'a certain number of these enjambements must have been accomodated in some way'—with the exception of mistakes such as those he points out, why not 'all' rather than 'a certain number'?

Instruments

Ferreira and others have suggested that depictions of instruments 'do not allow us to suppose that as a general rule the *Cantigas* and instrumental performance belong together' (FERREIRA 2000a, 154; see also FERREIRA 2005, 216). Why? Because they do not specifically say so. Did they have to? Could it not be taken for granted? Also, would not Alfonso have wanted as impressive a performance as possible at least for himself?

While many scholars decry the use of instruments while singing, the *Cantigas* as unsubstantiated by documentation, others write positively about their use. Daniel LEECH-WILKINSON (1982) praises Esther Lamandier's solo recording, accompanying herself on *vielle* and harp; and Laird admires Jordi Savall's big band approach, even though he might not approve of lesser beings performing the *CSM* with large ensembles. He reverently describes Savall's 'customary grandeur, using 11 singers and 22 instrumentalists', and he finds it 'certainly more interesting than the recent recording by Sequenza [sic], which is mostly vocal'. This is an altogether different approach from Page, reviewing the Clemencic *CSM* recordings: 'All this ingenuity serves not to enhance the songs but positively to undo them; for it is all directed to that end which is the perennial curse of medieval musical performance today—variety. This is a crucial misunderstanding of the repertory'. Is this any less arrogant than non-specialist claims? How can anyone claim to know that medieval society despised variety? Does any audience despise variety? Ever?

Voices from out there; *Cantigas* and World Music, Fusion, etc.

An informal invitation to people on an early music discussion listserv to communicate their ideas and experiences with the *CSM* did not yield many replies. In those I received, accessibility was a frequent theme. Bill wrote to me about the *CSM* (cited with permission, as written): 'speaking as one with very little musical education [...] the first time i heard the cantigas collection i knew i could sing them. i knew nothing about them—[...]—but knew they were easily "do-able" in a way

that gregorian chant, say, is not that was their main appeal for me: the chance to sing “classical” music in the way i used to sing folk songs’ (Early Music listserv).

My own medieval ensemble, a women’s group, operated for about 20 years, from the mid-seventies through the mid-nineties. While we did perform in academic or specialized audience settings, most of our concerts were in coffee-houses, and, in all settings, we regularly taught—often by rote—refrains which non-specialist audiences were far more active in singing than specialist audiences. Often, these non-specialist, folk-oriented audiences sang in organum at the fourth or fifth, convinced that they were singing in unison (but that is a topic for a different conference).

The *CSM* are entering or have entered the wide and wild world of world music and fusion, happily untroubled by scholarly discourse. I have already mentioned my compatriot Loreena McKennitt and her vocables-only rendition of *CSM*. Many performers and aficionados who may never have heard of Julian Ribera, or read Manuel Pedro Ferreira’s articles on Andalusian musical elements in the *CSM*, confidently cite North African, ‘Moorish’, Andalusian, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean aspects of the *CSM* without actually describing, let alone defining these characteristics. One reviewer writes, ‘If you find this music “alien”, it might be because while thinking of it as “European” music, most of us forget that the style, the instruments and the music-writing is [sic] in large part borrowed from the Arabic cultures [...] transverse flute, viela, strumming harp, a chitarra moresca [...] evoking a sunset scene in some Medieval village [...]’ (HAN LEON 1999, on the group *Micrologus*). Loreena McKennitt, listening to recordings of the *Cantigas*, was ‘struck by its Semitic tone’, though she does not explain what a Semitic tone might be (or why she thinks the *Cantigas* are from the 15th century) (MCKENNITT 1994). Most performers have not, as we have done in ethnomusicology and related disciplines, abandoned the a-word: ‘authentic’. One review tells us that the group *Sema* offers ‘an incredible variety of enticing, exotic melodies and rhythms [...] we enter a pretty authentic-sounding world’. (VERNIER) How the writer can establish this authenticity remains unexplained, as is why it is only ‘pretty authentic’—what would have been *really* authentic? Apparently, though, this is in fact authentic because, we soon read, the arrangements ‘draw us fully and believably into the ancient world’; or, as another reviewer puts it (PREISER 2000), ‘create an authoritative atmosphere, accurately capturing the essence of the medieval Spanish court’. How these and other writers come by their knowledge of what is ‘accurate’, ‘authoritative’, and/or ‘authentic’ in the representation of the *CSM* or other medieval songs is an endless source of fascination to me in my various roles of performer, educator and ethnomusicologist.

Another approach does not lay claims to authenticity or accurate evocations of medieval courts. Brigitte Lesne’s voice is described as ‘appropriately melancholy’ (PREISER 2000), but why ‘melancholy’ is ‘appropriate’ to the *CSM* is not explained. The group *Qntal*, whose name was

apparently revealed to the solo vocalist in a vision, is described (NEAL 2006) as ‘one of the more interesting attempts to deconstruct and modernize medieval music’, featuring ‘whispy [sic], sometimes detached vocals’—it is not clear what they are detached from—above a ‘deep, multilayered foundation of keyboards, guitars and insistant [sic] beats that develop and grow beyond the mindless repetition often heard in modern dance music’. In this case, historical accuracy is clearly not a goal: the reviewer recognizes a few unidentified melodies, including CSM 1—with new German lyrics.

As is frequently the case, scholarly and popular approaches to a repertoire may not coincide. To the non-scholarly performer, it often seems that scholars go out of their way to impose restrictions on the performance of a repertoire, and to remove as much fun as possible from it. Performers who base their approach on scholarship often seem to subscribe to the same fun-is-anathema approach, producing often drearily impeccable, solemn renditions. On the other hand, performing the CSM or other early music without scholarship presents entirely different repertoires, based only to a rather limited extent on the manuscripts, but which listeners then are convinced constitute an ‘authentic’ experience. Surely there is a way to use scholarship to enhance performance and reception—without which performance seems pointless—rather than to dehumanize them.

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