

The Musical World of a Medieval Monk

*Adémar de Chabannes in
Eleventh-century Aquitaine*

JAMES GRIER



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THE MUSICAL WORLD OF A MEDIEVAL MONK

James Grier documents the musical activities of Adémar de Chabannes, eleventh-century monk, historian, homilist and tireless polemicist for the apostolic status of Saint Martial, patron saint of the abbey that bore his name in Limoges. Adémar left behind some 451 folios of music with notation in his autograph hand, a musical resource without equal before the seventeenth century. He introduced, at strategic moments, pieces familiar from the standard liturgy for an apostle and items of his own composition. These reveal Adémar to be a supremely able designer of liturgies and a highly original composer. This study analyses his accomplishments as a musical scribe, compiler of liturgies, editor of existing musical works and composer; it also offers a speculative consideration of his abilities as a singer; and, finally, it places Adémar's musical activities in the context of liturgical, musical and political developments at the abbey of Saint Martial in Limoges.

JAMES GRIER is Professor of Music History at the University of Western Ontario. He is the author of *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method, and Practice* (Cambridge, 1996), and his work has appeared in many journals including *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Early Music History*, *Acta Musicologica*, *Revue d'Histoire des Textes*, *Speculum* and *Scriptorium*.

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For Sally

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Preface

“Working on Ademar has been like discovering a lost continent.” So Richard Landes begins the Acknowledgments of his book *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034*. From Richard’s research and that of other scholars, we knew that Adémar had made distinguished contributions to the fields of history, literature (homilies in particular) and computus. His musical activities had received attention from Léopold Delisle, Paul Hooreman, John A. Emerson and Michel Huglo, but these accomplishments were largely perceived as a footnote to his better-known literary achievements. So, the topography of Richard’s lost continent was principally literary and historical.

If Richard’s research discovered a lost continent, then that which led to this book on Adémar’s musical accomplishments and the companion edition of his music has resulted in the discovery of a veritable subcontinent that significantly enlarges it. When Richard published his book in 1995, scholars had identified approximately 1,000 folios of autograph manuscript in Adémar’s hand, already a staggering amount of material, of which some seventy-five contained music, or less than 10 per cent, perhaps in some part justifying the footnote status of his musical activities. My discoveries of Adémar’s music hand in the first layers of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS latin 909 (in 1992, in which Richard collaborated, as well as Gunilla Iversen of the Corpus Troporum in Stockholm, published in *Scriptorium* 1997) and 1121 (in 1999, published in *Early Music History* 2005) raised the total of Adémar’s autograph corpus to roughly 1,400 folios (an expansion of 40 per cent) of which 451 contain music, or about one-third of the whole.

Thus, the continent that Richard discovered is not only far larger now, but very different in nature too, with music playing a much larger role than previously thought, particularly during the crucial period 1027–29. For at this time, Adémar turned his attention to the production of music manuscripts in the scriptorium of Saint Martial in Limoges, initially in

the second half of 1027, in the aftermath of his disappointment at not securing the office of abbot at his home abbey of Saint Cybard in Angoulême, and then again a year later, after the death of Count William of Angoulême under mysterious circumstances in April 1028 and the subsequent deterioration of the political situation there. During this second working visit to Limoges, Adémar decided to throw caution to the winds and embrace the flagrantly fraudulent tales of the apostolic status of Martial, patron saint of the abbey that bore his name in Limoges. His principal vehicle for the promulgation of the campaign to secure official acceptance of Martial's apostolicity was a newly composed liturgy, with its constituent music, for the saint that acknowledged his apostolic status.

And so, for his most overt attempt to shape public opinion regarding Martial's apostolicity, Adémar chose music and the liturgy as his means. In so doing, he created documents that afford us an unprecedented glimpse into the working world of a highly professional monastic musician of the central Middle Ages for whom musical literacy formed an integral part of music-making. What follows is an account of that musical world and the extraordinary accomplishments that constitute it. Here, I name just two of them: his introduction of accurate heighting to the Aquitanian notational dialect for the purpose of inscribing precise intervallic information; and his significant creative output in some 100 preserved original compositions. Either achievement would be adequate to justify detailed study of his musical activities, but, taken in the context of his other accomplishments in the field of music, they show Adémar to be a musician of singular ability, deserving of a full assessment of his musical achievements.

It is impossible to undertake research of this scope without incurring many debts. First and foremost, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the inspiration of my dear friend Richard Landes, who introduced me to Adémar and the complexities of his biography, invited me to collaborate on the Collected Edition of Adémar's works, shared with me much valuable material, and has functioned as an ongoing sounding board for my theories and ideas. Thank you, Richard; this book would simply not exist were it not for you.

Many other scholars have generously offered support and shared materials over the years, including Charles M. Atkinson, Gunilla Björkvall, Pascale Bourgain, Daniel F. Callahan, the late John A. Emerson, Bryan Gillingham, Michel Huglo, Gunilla Iversen, Ritva Jacobsson, Thomas Forrest Kelly, Kenneth Levy, Alejandro Enrique Planchart, Anne Walters Robertson, Leo Treitler and Craig Wright. My colleagues and friends

John Check, Susan Rankin, Paul Saenger and David Schulenberg all read portions of the book that considered matters close to their research interests, and I thank them for their thoughtful responses.

My colleagues at Queen's University, Yale and the University of Western Ontario listened patiently over the many years of gestation this project has required and I thank them for their interest. Among the graduate students in musicology at Yale and Western, I found a sophisticated audience for this material both inside the classroom and out. I am grateful for their penetrating questions and insightful reactions. I am particularly appreciative of the efforts of Shannon Benson, now completing a dissertation in musicology at Western, who has worked untiringly on the Adémar material for over half a decade now, and whose meticulous labours have improved the final product in many ways. Any errors that remain can be laid squarely at my door.

I owe a special debt to Keith Hamel, School of Music, University of British Columbia, who has very generously provided me with updated copies of Notewriter, the musicprocessor he authored, over the years since we were colleagues at Queen's. All the musical examples in this book were created with it, as was all the music in the edition of Adémar's music.

An equally special debt is owed Frederick Renz and New York's Ensemble for Early Music. An invitation from Richard Landes to participate in a conference on the millennium at Boston University in October 1996 generated an extraordinary opportunity to hear Adémar's music. Richard thought it would be a good idea to open the conference with a performance of the troped Mass that Adémar had prepared to promote the apostolic status of Martial. My readers can imagine the alacrity and enthusiasm with which I concurred. Fred and the Ensemble, with whom I had collaborated the previous spring on a concert of Aquitanian music at the Cloisters and the Metropolitan Museum in New York in conjunction with the exhibit of enamels from Limoges at the Met, shared my enthusiasm. And so they prepared the concert from my edition, and gave life to this music, most of which had not been heard since 1029, breaking almost a millennium of silence. I was especially moved by Paul Shipper's expressive performance of sections of the Mass I now believe, not least because of Paul's wonderful singing, were written by Adémar to be sung by himself. The Ensemble continued to programme the Mass, and I was privileged to give pre-concert lectures at Saint John the Divine in New York when they performed it on their subscription series in November 1998. They subsequently released a splendid recording of it for which I provided the liner notes.

No medievalist has to be told that research of this type could not be completed without the support and close collaboration of many libraries and librarians, but it is a pleasure and a privilege to acknowledge the debts I have accrued. My principal debt, naturally, goes to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, repository of the bulk of Adémar's autograph manuscripts and all of the musical ones known to me. I am especially grateful to M. François Avril and Mme Marie-Pierre Laffitte of the Département des Manuscrits for allowing me generous access to the Aquitanian manuscripts in the fonds latin; and to M. Avril and Mme Monique Cohen, Conservateur général, for graciously permitting me to reproduce photographs of manuscripts in their care. I am equally grateful to the Archives Départementales de la Haute-Vienne and the Musée Municipale de l'Évêché, both in Limoges, and particularly to their respective directors, M. Robert Chanaud and Mme Véronique Notin, for access to their collections and permission to reproduce photographs. I also thank Mme Geneviève Contamine of the Section Latine, Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, for many kindnesses.

In North America, I was very fortunate to have access to several wonderful research libraries. Naturally my greatest debt is to the libraries at the institutions where I worked or enjoyed prolonged visits, to their staffs and especially their inter-library loan departments: Queen's, Yale, Western, the Institute for Advanced Study and the University of Windsor. Ken Crilly of Yale's music library deserves special thanks for procuring many items including microfilms of several Aquitanian manuscripts that greatly facilitated early phases of the study. I spent a very productive semester at the University of California, Berkeley, where members of the music department warmly welcomed me and John Roberts opened the riches of the music library. Thanks, also, to the libraries of the University of Michigan, the University of Toronto and especially the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto for generous access to their collections.

Visits to Paris and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France started in earnest in the summer of 1989, initially with the support of grants from the Principal's Development Fund and the Advisory Research Committee of Queen's University. Since then, I have been awarded three major research grants by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for the periods 1989–90, 1998–2001 and 2002–5. The first and the last of these included Research Time Stipends that provided time free from teaching, and each gave the research significant impetus.

During my tenure at Yale, I was fortunate to receive several A. Whitney Griswold Faculty Research Grants, the John F. Enders Research Assistance

Grant on one occasion and the Morse Fellowship in 1994–95; these permitted me to continue summer research trips to Paris and free time for writing and research. Finally, the Office of Research Services at the University of Western Ontario has also been generous in this regard, awarding me two grants for summer travel. To all these agencies, I am extremely grateful. They enabled the prolonged and repeated visits to Paris that have resulted in the detailed observations and analysis offered below. During the period 2003–5, I was a Visiting Humanities Fellow in the Humanities Research Group, University of Windsor, in whose hospitable setting I was able to continue my work on Adémar.

I gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, its School of Historical Studies and especially the late Professor Edward T. Cone of Princeton University whose gift enabled me to hold the membership in music studies at the School of Historical Studies named in his honour during the academic year 2002–3. The time I spent at the Institute was extraordinarily productive and a testament to the intellectual environment there. It was a great pleasure to meet Professor Cone, whose work I had long admired, and his partner George Proctor, who welcomed my wife and me into their home, and shared much stimulating conversation with us. I am particularly grateful for having had the opportunity to exchange views with the permanent faculty, including Glen Bowersock, Caroline Walker Bynum, Giles Constable, the late Kirk Varnedoe, Heinrich von Staden and Morton White.

I was also very glad to be able to renew acquaintance with two very distinguished scholars whose paths I had crossed before and whose scholarship has been a constant inspiration to me since my earliest undergraduate days, Elizabeth A. R. Brown and C. P. Jones. Peggy Brown, in nearby New York, taught medieval history as a visiting professor at Yale when I was a member of the Department of Music there, and Christopher Jones, a frequent visitor to the Institute, was one of my first instructors in Latin literature at the University of Toronto. The time I spent with them during my year at the Institute profoundly enriched my experience there and added to what was already a significant long-term debt.

The editorial staff at Cambridge University Press has made many important contributions to the successful completion of this book, especially Dr Victoria L. Cooper, music editor. Vicki continued to believe in the book through its many metamorphoses, as she did with *The Critical Editing of Music* before it, and any success these titles might have can be attributed in no small way to her vision and perseverance. It is a pleasure

not frequently met to deal with someone so dedicated to scholarship and its promulgation.

On a personal note, I would make the observation that this book is infused with the spirit of the late Rev. Leonard E. Boyle, OP, sometime professor of palaeography and codicology at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, where I had the very fortunate opportunity to study palaeography with him, and later Prefect of the Vatican Library. Father Boyle's painstaking approach to all aspects of manuscripts studies and his insistence that manuscripts are not mere repositories of texts but artifacts that have important histories of their own (what he called the "archaeology of the book") have guided my steps in uncovering Adémar's musical career from the documents he left behind. Although we exchanged a good deal of correspondence on Adémar, I regret that he did not live to see the completion of this book.

To my dear friends Claire Harrison and Peter Jarrett I extend a warm thanks for their wonderful hospitality in Paris, where their home served as a base for many research trips to the BNF and a refuge for writing. And finally, I acknowledge the support of my wife and daughter. Adémar was already well established as a family member when our daughter Bianca entered the world. He has not been much of a surrogate father for her but he has been an entertaining, if somewhat obstreperous, companion. My wife Sally Bick, as ever my closest collaborator and most outspoken critic, has continuously offered extraordinary support for the time and attention I have lavished on him. She has attended every step of the journey with good humour, boundless affection and love. The dedication is small repayment indeed.

WINDSOR, ONTARIO

January 2006

A note on the musical examples and the edition

The musical examples in this book use transcriptional and editorial principles developed in my edition of Adémar's music forthcoming in the series *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, where it will form part of the *Collected Works of Adémar*. A full explanation of those principles will appear there, and they are adumbrated in the first Epilogue of *The Critical Editing of Music*. Here I give a brief summary.

As I discuss below in Chapter 2, Aquitanian notation primarily employs individual symbols for individual notes, most often *puncta* and *uirgae*. Scribes group these symbols to indicate which notes are to be sung to which syllables of the literary text. The groupings are sometimes supplemented by ligation, principally in two neumes, the *clivis*, a binary neume in which the first note is higher than the second, and the *porrectus*, a ternary neume in which the middle note is lower than the first and last. Groups are defined differently for ascending and descending melodic motion in the original notation. Ascending groups always end in a *uirga*, while descending ones are aligned vertically. The individual notes are represented in my transcriptions and editions by stemless noteheads, grouping and ligation by slurs.

Two special neumes receive special slurring. The *quilisma* is denoted by a slur over two notes below a longer slur; the *pes stratus*, which indicates two repeated notes at the same pitch, uses a slur that begins with the *punctum* or *puncta* that invariably precede the *pes stratus* and continues over the repeated notes. Liquescence is expressed by the *cephalicus* (downwards motion) and the *epiphonus* (upwards motion). The liquescent note in my transcriptions is represented by a smaller notehead. I do not slur the *oriscus*, which denotes a repeated note on the same pitch without a change of syllable, to its preceding *punctum* because I do not suspect that it represents a performance nuance, but may instead be a visual indication that two immediately adjacent notes on the same pitch are to be sung consecutively.

Because I refer the reader many times to the edition of Adémar's music that I am preparing, I give a brief overview of its contents here. Each piece is identified by the section (roman numeral), subsection (arabic numeral) and item within the subsection (capital letter). So, the Gradual *Principes populorum* is designated II.9.B: it falls in section II, Office for the Feast of Saint Martial, subsection 9, Untroped Mass, item B. Information about each item occurs in several parts of the edition: edition of the music with literary text, separate edition of the literary text with critical apparatus, critical apparatus of the music, and commentary. Each time, the piece retains the same alphanumeric designation (e.g., II.9.B for *Principes populorum*), and so a reference to a particular piece should take the reader to all parts of the edition where information is to be found on it with equal facility. Here are the sections of the edition.

- I. Tropes of the Proper of the Mass
- II. Office for the Feast of Saint Martial
- III. Prosae
- IV. Seventy-Two Verses about Saint Martial
- V. Alleluias
- VI. Office for the Feast of Saint Valérie
- VII. Office for the Feast of Saint Austriclinian
- VIII. Office for the Feast of Saint Cybard
- IXA. Sequentiary
- IXB. Appendix to the Sequentiary
- Appendix A. Pieces Unique to Pa 1978
- Appendix B. Erased Responsorial Chants in the Untroped Mass for Saint Martial
- Appendix C. Alleluia Incipits
- Appendix D. *Simile est*
- Appendix E. Tonary
- Appendix F. Twelfth Lesson for the Feast of Saint Cybard, Verses and Hymns
- Appendix G. Liturgical Texts for the Feasts of Saint Martial
- Appendix H. Offices for the Feasts of Saints Martial and Valérie in Pa 1085

*Introduction: Adémar de Chabannes and
Saint Martial de Limoges*

We know more about the musical activities of Adémar de Chabannes than of any other medieval musician, with the possible exception of Guillaume de Machaut. This knowledge derives from a bizarre series of historical accidents that caused the abbey of Saint Martial de Limoges to become the setting for the strange drama that became the latter phase of Adémar's life. First, Adémar turned to Saint Martial, initially as the place of his advanced education but later and more than once as a refuge from a difficult situation at his home abbey of Saint Cybard in Angoulême, about a hundred kilometres distant from Limoges. Second, his choice of Saint Martial for these purposes was hardly providential: an ancestor on his father's side of the family, Aimo, had been abbot there in the first half of the tenth century (while his brother Turpio simultaneously held the office of bishop of Limoges), and his father's two older brothers, Adalbertus and Roger, were monks at the abbey. Adalbertus, the oldest, became deacon, while Roger, the middle brother, filled the post of cantor and tutored his nephew Adémar during his advanced studies.

Third, Adémar was also drawn to Saint Martial because the abbey enjoyed considerable prestige, and, perhaps most important for a scholar of wide-ranging interests like Adémar, it possessed an outstanding library. Fourth, it was home to the cult of its patron saint, Martial, a cult centred on his relics and the tomb on whose site the abbey was founded and to which hordes of pilgrims continually thronged. In the aftermath of the spectacular dedication of a new abbatial basilica on 18 November 1028, Martial's cult served as the pretext for Adémar's promulgation of his apostolic status, supported by the elaborate liturgy he devised, which became the centrepiece of his musical accomplishment.

Fifth, after Adémar, disgraced by the fiasco of his attempted inauguration of the apostolic liturgy on 3 August 1029, returned in bitter defeat to Angoulême, he continued producing forgeries in support of Martial's apostolicity. On his departure for pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1033 or

early 1034, he deposited this material in the abbey library at Saint Martial. There, it was safeguarded by those monks sympathetic to the apostolic programme, who would eventually use Adémar's documents to justify a return to the apostolic cult. And sixth, perhaps strangest of all, the monks at Saint Martial preserved virtually all the musical documents produced or acquired by the abbey from the tenth century through at least the end of the eleventh, including, therefore, those to which Adémar contributed. These manuscripts formed part of the abbey library, which, after prolonged negotiations, was purchased by King Louis XV in 1730 for his royal library. Thus, Adémar's manuscripts avoided destruction during the revolution when, in 1791, the abbey was dissolved.

So, by this fortuitous combination of historical flukes, we possess some 451 manuscript folios with music written in Adémar's autograph hand, an "embarrassment of riches," as Richard Landes termed Adémar's autograph corpus as a whole.¹ The bulk of these constitute the earliest layers of the troper-prosers Pa 1121 and 909, in which Adémar functioned as the music scribe in subordination to the principal scribe of the manuscript, who would have selected the pieces and determined their order. But, for some seventy-seven folios in these two codices, Adémar served as both principal and music scribe, and these document his considerable musical achievements as compiler, editor and, above all, composer. The majority of these folios preserve the core materials of the apostolic cult: principally the apostolic liturgy for Martial, consisting of a troped Mass and a complete cycle of Offices for the full liturgical day; but also Offices for his companions Valérie and Austriclinian, and tropes for Austriclinian and Justinian, another companion.

This prodigious production took place within the walls of the abbey of Saint Martial. By Adémar's time, the abbey had become one of the two most important ecclesiastical institutions in Limoges, equal in stature to the urban cathedral of Saint Stephen. The tomb of Martial, the site of the abbey itself, attracted large numbers of pilgrims and the abbey played a prominent role in urban ceremonies like the election of the city's bishop. It also assumed a position of importance in ecclesiastical affairs within the larger context of Aquitaine, sending representatives to the most significant gatherings of clerics, such as the ceremony that acknowledged the skull found at Angély in 1016 as an authentic relic of John the Baptist.²

¹ The title of Chapter 1 in Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits*, p. 3.

² See Chapter 6 below.