WRITING SOUNDS IN CAROLINGIAN EUROPE

Musical notation has not always existed: in the West, musical traditions have often depended on transmission from mouth to ear, ear to mouth. Although the ancient Greeks had a form of musical notation, it was not passed on to the medieval Latin West. This comprehensive study investigates the breadth of use of musical notation in Carolingian Europe, including many examples previously unknown in studies of notation, to deliver a crucial foundational model for the understanding of later Western notations. An overview of the study of neumatic notations from the French monastic scholar Dom Jean Mabillon (1632-1707) up to the present day precedes an examination of the function and potential of writing in support of a musical practice which continued to depend on trained memory. Later chapters examine passages of notation to reveal those ways in which scripts were shaped by contemporary rationalizations of musical sound. Finally, the new scripts are situated in the cultural and social contexts in which they emerged.

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WRITING SOUNDS IN CAROLINGIAN EUROPE

The Invention of Musical Notation

SUSAN RANKIN
University of Cambridge
gigantibus, quorum umeris insidemus nani

Echoing Bernard of Chartres as reported by John of Salisbury

(Metalogicon III.4)
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Note on Musical Examples

Many of the examples showing passages written in neumatic notations include versions of the same melodies written on staves. These diastematic versions are taken from the Graduale Triplex or the Graduale Novum, whichever appeared more appropriate in each case. It is not intended that these versions on staves should be read as direct transcriptions onto lines of any of the neumatic notations they accompany here: they are provided as guides to melodic direction, to help orientation as the neumes are read. These stave versions also provide labels to allow discussion of the notation of particular passages (note names, A–G, a–g).
Preface

In the Latin West, books of music have been made at least since the eighth century. The earliest examples contain only texts, evidently intended to stimulate the reader into remembering associated melodies. The appearance of music notations in Carolingian books from the second quarter of the ninth century represents a moment of significant change: writing could now be used more intensively to support the process of remembering melody. In this study I have set out to examine the diverse ways in which scripts were used for the writing of musical sound in the period 800 to 900, that is, in that time when Carolingian monks, clerics, scholars and other members of an elite educated class were increasingly engaged in the production of books and profoundly interested in how those books should be made, how their content should be expressed and written, and what kind of visual images they should present to their readers. Surviving notations are used here as a means to observe how scribes understood the possibilities and potential of music scripts and how those scripts were altered and refined in this first period of use.

Writing as art and craft has been in my eyes all my life: whether in frames filled with exquisite calligraphic work and ink decoration, or in more mundane everyday uses, the fine writing of my maternal grandparents, Herbert Lilley and May Stuart – trained by Charles Braithwaite at the Belfast School of Art in the 1910s and 1920s – touched me from my earliest years. An ability to work carefully with their fingers (inherited from generations of weavers) has formed artists, calligraphers, musicians and surgeons in my family. As an undergraduate studying music, I had no idea that my growing fascination with medieval manuscripts – that interest and basis for knowledge that would become the central force in all of my scholarly study – had such deep roots. This influenced my methods so fundamentally that I wanted to consider musical notations and the manuscripts which encased them from the point of view of individual scribes rather than as the typical products of scriptoria; thus, the ways in which scribes thought about what they were doing as they formed traces on the page to record musical sound and their own distinctive or even idiosyncratic approaches to how they could make records should be my starting points.

It was in Michel Huglo’s seminars at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in the late 1970s that I first saw music notations written in neumes, and at his behest I first wrote about neumatic notations in insular forms. Extensive work alongside Wulf Arlt and Leo Treitler in the 1980s developed my knowledge of and interest in the study of neumatic notations, above all in their earliest incarnations. Much time spent discussing ‘Reading and Singing’ as it was drafted gave Leo’s most substantial study of early music writing a key place in my thought,
inspiring ideas and questions that have shaped this whole book. The stimulus for the subject of the present book, however, was more recent: an invitation to give the Lowe lectures in the University of Oxford in 2007 made me think much more precisely about the early history of music scripts and notations. Nothing in this field could be matched to Lowe’s *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, all extant examples being on the wrong side of the year 800. Nevertheless, I reasoned, it ought to be possible to learn more about the invention and development of music writing, about what had happened before the famous Laon Gradual and Sankt Gallen cantatorium were made. By this time I had understood that the immense achievement of Bernhard Bischoff in providing a solid palaeographical framework for studies of ninth-century manuscripts, ways of writing, scriptoria and individual scribes could provide a new basis for study of the earliest manifestations of music writing in the Latin West. Ending the Lowe lectures in 2007 – wonderfully hosted by the president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford – I promised myself to write them up and publish within a year. A wiser head would have uttered ‘know thyself’. In 2009 a semester as Edward T. Cone Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton provided valuable space for thinking. Living during that magical period within a quarter of a mile of Kenneth Levy, I could not only borrow his books and facsimiles but also constantly talk through ideas with him. ‘Look at the Palaeofrankish’ was his unflagging advice: ‘I can’t, because there are not enough examples written before 900 to work on’ was my persistent response. I honour the memory of these two friends and mentors: Michel Huglo, whose last published thoughts on music writing dated the invention of neumes to somewhere close to 800, and Ken Levy, whose determination that Palaeofrankish scripts were a crucial element in the earliest layers of music writing puzzled me, until I realised he was right. These were two significant judgements that I eventually reached by different paths from Michel and Ken, and both surprised me. Much of what follows explains the reasoning behind those conclusions.

Long periods for thinking and writing, as well as grants for travel to European libraries to see manuscripts in person, to consult Bischoff’s *Nachlaß* in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, and for the purchase of digital reproductions, were supported by a Leverhulme Foundation Research Fellowship, the British Academy (Neil Ker Fund), *Music & Letters* and periods of sabbatical leave from the University of Cambridge and Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Without the generous support of these institutions, financial and otherwise, this study would never have made it into printable form: these thanks seem too simple for the time and openings given to me when needed, over and over again. I also thank, with much gratitude, the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, where the library holdings for study of the Middle Ages are unmatched (in my experience), the Institut für Musikforschung at the University of Würzburg, where I was liberally indulged in terms of time provided for discussion of my work, and finally the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg, where much needed quiet time allowed me to bring some kind of finality to the enterprise.

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Susan Rankin
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Abbreviations

AM Acta Musicologica
BG Beiträge zur Gregorianik
BGRT Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1849–)
CCCM Corpus Christianorum continuatio mediaevalis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–)
CCSL Corpus Christianorum series latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–)
CESG Codices Electronici Sangallenses
CNRS Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique
CSM Corpus scriptorum de musica (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1950–)
DA Deutsches Archiv
EG Études grégoriennes
EL Ephemerides liturgicae
EMH Early Music History
GN Graduale novum editio magis critica iuxta SC. 117. I: De dominicis et festis (Regensburg: ConBrio, 2011)
GT Graduale triplex, ed. the monks of Solesmes (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Solesmes & Tournai: Desclée, 1979)
JAMS Journal of the American Musicological Society
KmJb Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch
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*LmL* *Lexikon musicum latinum*, ed. Michael Bernhard (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Beck, 1992–) http://woerterbuchnetz.de/
*LmL*/


*MGH* *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*

*A*: *Antiquitates. Poetae Latini Medii Aevi*

*EP*: *Epistolae*

*LL*: *Leges*

*SS*: *Scriptores*


*nu* neumes undatable

*PM* *Paléographie musicale. Les principaux manuscrits du chant grégorien, ambrosien, mozarabe, gallican* (Solesmes, 1889–)


4: *Le Codex 121 de la Bibliothèque d’Einsiedeln (Xe-XIe siècle), Antiphonale missarum Sancti Gregorii* (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1894)

7–8: *Antiphonarium tonale missarum, XIe siècle, Codex H 159 de l’École de Médecine de Montpellier* (Solesmes: Abbaye Saint-Pierre, 1901–5)

10: *Antiphonale missarum Sancti Gregorii, IX–Xe siècle, Codex 239 de la Bibliothèque de Laon* (Tournois: Desclée, 1909)

11: *Antiphonale missarum Sancti Gregorii, Xe siècle, Codex 47 de la Bibliothèque de Chartres* (Tournois: Desclée, 1912)

13: *Le Codex 903 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris (XIe siècle, Graduel de St. Yrieix)*, (Tournois: Desclée, 1925)

14: *Le Codex 10673 de la Bibliothèque Vaticane, fonds latin (XIe siècle), Graduel Bénéventain* (Tournois: Desclée, 1936)
List of Abbreviations

15: *Le Codex VI.34 de la Bibliothèque capitulaire de Bénévent (XI–XIIe siècle),
Graduel de Bénévent avec prosaire et tropaire* (Tournai: Desclée, 1937)

16: *Le Manuscrit du Mont-Renaud. Xe siècle. Graduel et antiphonaire de

2e sér. 2: *Cantatorium, IXe siècle, N° 359 de la Bibliothèque de St Gall
(Tournai: Desclée, 1924)

PMM Plainsong and Medieval Music
RasG Rassegna Gregoriana
RB Revue Bénédictine
RG Revue Grégorienne
RISM Répertoire international des sources musicales
RMP Revue de la musique religieuse, populaire et classique
SK Dieter Schaller and Ewald Könsgen, *Initia carminum Latinorum saeculo
decimo antiquiorum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977)

VMK Veröffentlichungen der musikhistorischen Kommission, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften
(Munich: Beck)

See also abbreviations for libraries and manuscripts on page 367

* elementary script