

Atti del VI Seminario Internazionale di Filologia Musicale.

«La filologia musicale oggi: il retaggio storico e le nuove prospettive»

An Editor of Medieval Music Looks Backwards... and Forwards. The Critical Edition of Music Written in the Hand of Adémar de Chabannes (989-1034)

James Grier

University of Western Ontario

jgrier@uwo.ca

§ The edition of music written in the hand of Adémar de Chabannes will form part of his collected works in the series *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, and will constitute the first music published there. The edition is now in the hands of the publisher. Over a decade ago, I published an overview of the projected edition in my book, *The Critical Editing of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). In this paper, I shall review those remarks, made when the edition was well under way, to examine what theoretical and methodological adjustments became necessary as the edition achieved its final form, and to speculate on how those developments might affect the task of editing plainsong (the milieu practised by Adémar) and medieval music more broadly. Even though the edition rests on the exceptional body of autograph manuscripts Adémar left behind, of which some 451 folios contain musical notation in his hand, the editor must maintain a thoroughly critical attitude towards the sources in order to rectify copying and proofreading errors, and to appreciate Adémar's functional use of musical notation, both for the act of composition and preservation.

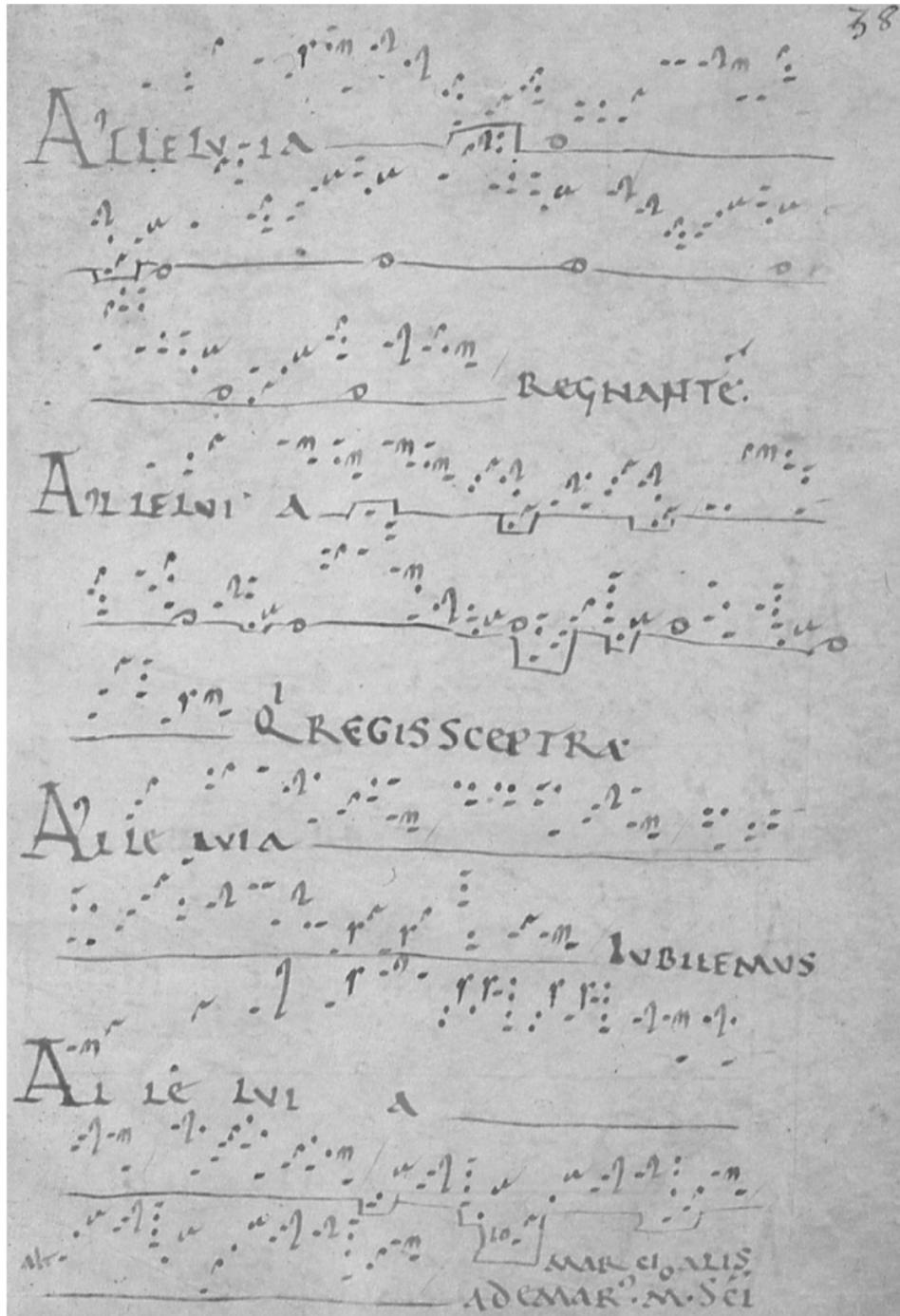
§ L'edizione della musica trascritta dalla mano di Ademaro di Chabannes andrà a far parte della raccolta dei suoi lavori nella collana *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, e costituirà il primo caso di musica pubblicata in questa collana. L'edizione è ora in corso di stampa. Più di dieci anni fa, pubblicai una descrizione del progetto nel mio libro *The Critical Editing of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). Nel contributo qui presentato riprenderò quelle osservazioni, fatte quando l'edizione era in fase di elaborazione, per esaminare quali modifiche teoriche e metodologiche siano necessarie a farle conseguire la sua forma compiuta, e per capire come tali sviluppi possano influire sull'ecdotica del canto piano (l'ambito specifico di Ademaro) e della musica medievale più in generale. Anche se l'edizione si basa su un eccezionale *corpus* di manoscritti autografi – Ademaro lasciò 451 *folia* contenenti notazione musicale di suo pugno – il curatore deve mantenere un estremo rigore nei riguardi dei testimoni, per correggere errori di copiatura e di revisione, e per valorizzare l'uso funzionale che Ademaro fa della notazione musicale, a scopo sia compositivo sia conservativo.

The edition of music written in the hand of Adémar de Chabannes will form part of his collected works in the series *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*, and will contribute the first music to be published in that distinguished series. The edition is now complete and in production at the publisher, Brepols. Over a decade ago, with work well under way, I published an overview of the projected edition in the Epilogue of my book, *The Critical Editing of Music* (GRIER 1996, pp. 184-199). Here, I shall look back on those remarks to examine what methodological adjustments became necessary as the edition achieved its final form, and to speculate on how those developments might affect the task of editing plainsong (the milieu practised by Adémar) and medieval music more broadly.

Adémar de Chabannes is well known as an early eleventh-century monk, historian, homilist and indefatigable propagandist for the promotion of Saint Martial, patron saint of the abbey that bore his name in Limoges, to the rank of apostle (LANDES 1995; GRIER 2006, pp. 1-36). He left behind some 451 folios of music with notation in his hand, including all of the music for an apostolic liturgy, Mass and Office, to be celebrated on the feast of Saint Martial (GRIER 1997; 2005; 2006, pp. 37-96). The music represents every plainsong genre then in use, and contains some 100 original compositions that I attribute to Adémar (GRIER 2006, pp. 209-271). These documents, then, exceptional in many ways, constitute the earliest identifiable compositional autographs by half a millennium at least.

Armed with these autographs, I found it easy to adopt the “best” text method, since the autographs readily presented themselves in this guise. It quickly became apparent, however, that Adémar, like many distinguished musicians and composers, was a far from distinguished proofreader, even for his own compositions. Relatively banal copying errors appeared regularly. For example, Adémar copied out two complete sequentiaries for the full liturgical year, in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MSS latins (hereafter Pa) 1121 (fols. 58-72) and 909 (fols. 110-125). Sequentiae are independent, textless pieces sung after the Alleluia in the Mass. Example 1 provides a typical page from the sequentiary in Pa 1121, showing the lines of undifferentiated neumes that comprise these pieces. Moreover, although Adémar copies the music without the benefit of any horizontal lines to guide his heighting, he does place the neumes accurately on the vertical axis to show relative pitch information (GRIER 2005, pp. 131-134). His music manuscripts are the earliest surviving examples from Aquitaine to exhibit this trait.

Nevertheless, in several sequentiae, Adémar inadvertently shifts the pitch up or down, an error that would be very easy to make in this kind of mind-numbing copying environment, with the endless strings of neumes unbroken by text. As easy as it is to err, however, it is astounding to note that he has corrected several of these errors in the production of his second sequentiary, in Pa 909. Only someone with great musical acumen and memory could



Example 1. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS latin 1121, fol. 58r.

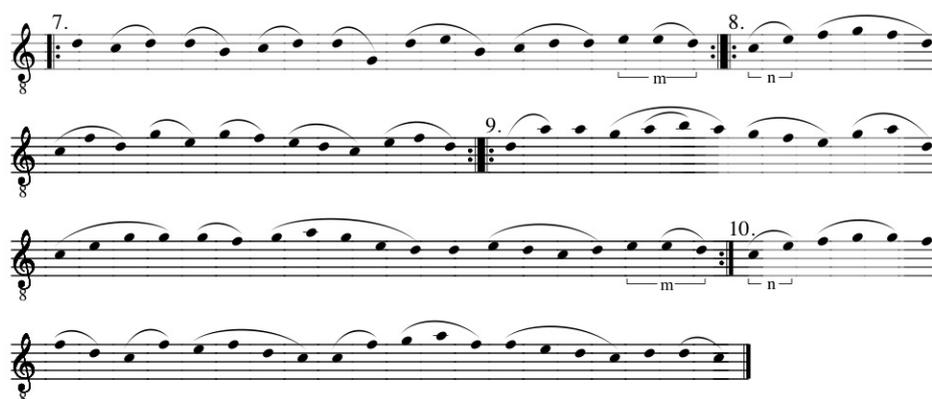
possibly have first identified such errors, especially when working from one's own exemplar, and then corrected them. Still, so that we should recognize that it remains human to err, Adémar, in correcting some of the errors he committed in Pa 1121 while producing Pa 909, has created some new ones of this type in Pa 909 (GRIER 2006, pp. 182-195).

Moreover, it is sobering to note that Adémar could easily have committed errors in Pa 1121 that he copied silently and uncorrected into Pa 909. For example, in the sequentia *Exultet elegantis* (Pa 1121 fol. 69r-v, Pa 909 fols. 124v-125r), for the dedication of a church, both Adémar's sequentiaries agree in concluding one strophe on F when all other cadences in the piece fall on either G or D, and other witnesses of the piece firmly place the cadence in question on G, a second higher than in both Adémar's copies. I concluded that Adémar silently repeated in Pa 909 the original error of heighting he committed in Pa 1121; hence, I adopted the reading of the other Aquitanian witnesses over Adémar's unanimity, and printed the cadence on G to retain the piece's prevailing tonal complexion.

The sequentia *Sanctus Petrus* (Pa 1121 fol. 64r, Pa 909 fol. 117v), for the feast of Saint Peter, shows Adémar compounding an error of heighting while attempting to correct it. Towards the end of the piece, Adémar wrote the conclusion of a strophe a second lower in Pa 1121 than it appears elsewhere, including Pa 909, where he presumably corrected it from his memory of the piece. But at the next phrase, the version in Pa 1121 is now a third lower than that in Pa 909, whereas other unrelated Aquitanian witnesses give the phrase a second lower than Pa 909 and a second higher than Pa 1121, again preserving the tonal scheme of the piece as a whole. As I reconstruct it, Adémar recognized the error he made in Pa 1121 when he came to copy Pa 909, and wrote the first passage a second higher than in his exemplar. But at the beginning of the new phrase, he overcorrected in Pa 909 by writing it a second higher than the correct pitch level, as attested by other Aquitanian witnesses, while Pa 1121 continues a second lower.

It would not be possible to discuss the transmission of either of these pieces, *Exultet elegantis* or *Sanctus Petrus*, had Adémar not corrected some of the heighting errors he made in Pa 1121 when he came to produce his second copy in Pa 909. By doing so, he alerted us to the possibility that errors of this type occur in the sequentiae, even when both of his sequentiaries agree, as in *Exultet elegantis*, and when they disagree, but the consensus of Aquitanian testimony suggests that both transmit errors, as in *Sanctus Petrus*. His ongoing vigilance while copying his second sequentiary, Pa 909, and the critical scrutiny to which he subjected his own work in Pa 1121 permit us to adopt a similarly critical attitude regarding the pitch level of the sequentiae.

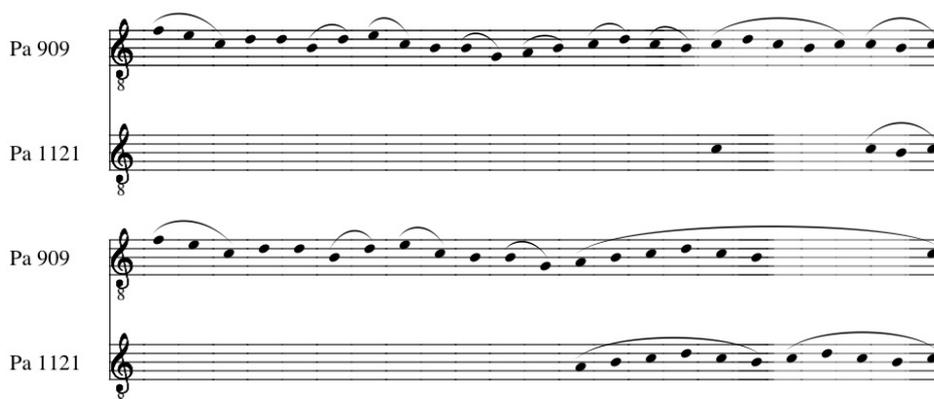
Two final examples show the magnitude of some of the errors Adémar committed in the preservation of his own compositions. First, he omitted two full strophes from his version of the dominical sequentia *Coaequalis* in Pa 1121 (fol. 69r), as illustrated in Example 2.



Example 2. *Sequentia Coaequalis*, strophes 7-10.

Strophes 7 and 9 share the same ending (marked **m** in Example 2), while strophes 8 and 10 open precisely the same (marked **n**). Hence, the error arose from a combination of homoeoteleuton and homoeoarchon. I do not believe, however, the cause was a visual slip. I attribute the piece to Adémar and so he probably had no exemplar before him from which he was copying visually. His memory of the piece, however, may have generated the error. It was certainly his memory that generated the correction he effected in Pa 909 (fol. 124r-v).

Even more bizarre is the transposition of two cadential figures in *Corde deuoto* (Pa 1121 fol. 68v, Pa 909 fol. 123v), another dominical sequentia I attribute to Adémar (see Example 3).



Example 3. *Sequentia Corde deuoto*, strophes 4 and 5.

Adémar abbreviates the penultimate neume in strophe 4 to a single note in Pa 1121, but then interpolates that five-note neume immediately before the cadential pitch at the end of the next strophe. We know that Pa 909 is correct because it accords with the texted version of the sequence (called a *prosa* in Aquitaine) later in Pa 1121 (fols. 198v-199r), where the music is written in Adémar's hand, and where the text shows that the five-note figure is required for strophe 4 and not for strophe 5. Again, Adémar's memory of a piece of his own composition has caused both the error in Pa 1121 (where his memory was faulty) and the correction in Pa 909.

These examples show that all scribes are capable of committing errors, even banal ones such those just discussed, and that composers cannot be trusted to proofread their own pieces diligently. But they also demonstrate the great musical acuity and sophistication that Adémar possessed. Only someone with great musicianship and musical sensitivity, not to mention a prodigious memory and more than a little humility, could have made the corrections he did in Pa 909 in the face of errors he himself had committed in Pa 1121. So, we are left with the paradox that Adémar's abilities as a scribe and textual critic warn us of his shortcomings as a scribe and proofreader, and require us to impose critical scrutiny on all the readings in the autographs. Many would recognize that that position defines the "best" text method, but here it stands in high relief because of the indisputable authority of the witnesses.

As regards the presentation of the edition, I am by no means the first editor to say that form should follow function, but that dictum forced an ongoing reappraisal of my approach as the edition progressed. Many of the assumptions with which I began resisted adaptation to the end, such as the use of modern musical notation to make the edition accessible to the widest possible musically literate audience. Brepols and the Institute of Mediaeval Music (in the series *Publications of Mediaeval Music Manuscripts*) have generously undertaken to make available photographic reproductions of the most important manuscripts that contain Adémar's musical hand, and so specialists in medieval music will have the opportunity to compare my edited versions with the original sources. Simultaneously, I revised my thoughts on how to present the critical apparatus, which I prepared in keeping with the scholarly traditions of the series in which the edition will appear. There, I collected the most important rejected readings from Adémar's autographs and the other witnesses most closely related to them in order to defend the readings I adopted and also to indicate where and how Adémar's versions fit into the musical environment within which he worked.

At present, there exists in editions of music no standard convention for the presentation of the critical apparatus. Two issues predominate, the formulation of the lemma and the use of musical notation for the rejected readings. Notation obviously requires more space than a brief description in prose, but the clarity that results strongly outweighs, I believe, the penalty imposed by its space requirements, and so I made the recommendation in my

book to use musical notation in the apparatus (GRIER 1996, pp. 173-174). The presentation of the competing readings in musical notation unambiguously clarifies their relationship for the musically literate user, and guarantees their rapid apprehension.

When, however, there is no literary, sung text that would provide a convenient and economical lemma (and plainsong, of course, uses no bar numbers), the only way to identify the passage unequivocally to which the rejected reading corresponds is to give complete the edited reading. In the sequentiary, this method of lemmatizing rapidly became uneconomical, to the extent that the apparatus threatened to take more space than the edited text, a situation that understandably caused the publisher some discomfort. So, I devised a system of presenting the simplest (but not necessarily unimportant) rejected readings in brief prose descriptions. The solution is far from ideal, but it provides a compromise between the space demands of the full lemma and the clarity of notation.

Finally, Adémar's autographs provide the earliest surviving evidence of the active use by a composer of notation in the compositional process. At several places in the apostolic liturgy he was preparing for Saint Martial, he erased what appears to be a first draft of a melody in order to write over top a new version (GRIER 1990, pp. 47-50; 2006, pp. 264-269). Fortunately, the erased version is in each case legible, and cannot be construed as a copying error. Adémar, therefore, was sketching and revising his original compositions in notation, something earlier composers, such as Notker Balbulus around the turn of the tenth century, may have done but for which we have no evidence. Moreover, he was doing so in the context of the fair copy he was producing in Pa 909. Because of the unique nature of these documents, it is impossible to determine whether this practice was unusual.

I had no hesitation in printing the second, revised version of the chant in the principal text in each case. It represented Adémar's considered thoughts on the melodic form of the chant, even if I would stop short of characterizing it as his "Fassung letzter Hand" or final authorial intentions. I believe he simply transferred some of the prevailing oral/aural procedures by which musicians of his and previous generations transmitted music into the musically literate practice of music, and took advantage of the technology of musical notation to visualize his first thoughts on these chants. Where he felt he could improve them, he erased and revised. Many of the revisions affect brief passages of a chant, sometimes the setting of a word or two, sometimes a phrase. In these cases, I reported the erased version in the apparatus and provided a full discussion in the commentary in order to draw them to the attention of users who might be interested in Adémar's compositional process.

For two chants, however, he produced virtually complete second versions. These are the responsorial chants for the Mass, the Gradual and Alleluia, which, together with the Offertory, are the most elaborate musical items in the Mass. Adémar had originally borrowed a standard Gradual and Alleluia from

the Common of Apostles (Pa 909 fol. 46r), but when he came to write out the Mass a second time (Pa 909 fols. 70v-71r), he decided to create entirely new pieces for these extraordinary musical moments in the liturgy. In particular, he completely rewrote the verse of the Gradual, a climactic passage of solo singing, to introduce a long range, musically dramatic melodic arch that strongly contrasts with the refrain (GRIER 2006, pp. 267-269). Because of the scope and effect of these revisions, I printed a complete transcription of the first layer of both chants in an appendix, again signaled in the commentary.

Adémar's copying habits and his procedure of compositional revision have significant implications for our understanding of musical notation in the eleventh century and for future editors of eleventh-century music. Musicians like Adémar dramatically increased the amount of visual information transmitted by the notation and simultaneously transformed it from a means to record existing melodies into an active participant in the creative process of composing new ones. The phenomenon of musical literacy, therefore, affects our understanding of the complex relationship between singing, composing and writing. Adémar's documents are no longer the precipitates of an oral tradition, to use Leo Treitler's characterization (TREITLER 1981). Rather, they provide a visual representation of musical events within which the realization of the piece does not necessarily precede, temporally or in importance, its crystallization in writing. For the editor, therefore, Adémar's manuscripts mark a turning point in the history of musical literacy and in the use of musical notation in a more narrowly prescriptive manner. These developments create a sharper dichotomy between scribal error and substantive variant, and therefore oblige the editor to adopt a more precise position on them. Musical literacy becomes a central factor in the creation, transmission and reception of musical repertoires.

Bibliography

- GRIER, J. (1990), «*Ecce sanctum quem deus elegit Marcialem apostolum*»: *Adémar de Chabannes and the Tropes for the Feast of Saint Martial*, in *Beyond the Moon: Festschrift Luther Dittmer*, ed. by Bryan Gillingham and Paul Merkley, Institute of Mediaeval Music, Ottawa (Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen, 53), pp. 28-74.
- (1996), *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method, and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- (1997), «*Scriptio interrupta*»: *Adémar de Chabannes and the Production of Paris*, *Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS latin 909*, «*Scriptorium*» 51, pp. 234-250.

- _____ (2005), *The Musical Autographs of Adémar de Chabannes (989-1034)*, «Early Music History» 24, pp. 125-168.
- _____ (2006), *The Musical World of a Medieval Monk: Adémar de Chabannes in Eleventh-Century Aquitaine*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- LANDES, R. (1995), *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989-1034*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA (Harvard Historical Studies, 117).
- TREITLER, L. (1981), *Oral, Written, and Literate Process in the Transmission of Medieval Music*, «Speculum» 56, pp. 471-491.

James Grier is Professor of Music History at the University of Western Ontario. The author of *The Critical Editing of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) and *The Musical World of a Medieval Monk: Adémar de Chabannes in Eleventh-Century Aquitaine* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), he is preparing the critical edition of music copied in Adémar's hand.

James Grier è docente di Storia della musica all'Università del Western Ontario. È autore di *The Critical Editing of Music* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) e di *The Musical World of a Medieval Monk: Adémar de Chabannes in Eleventh-Century Aquitaine* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). Attualmente sta curando l'edizione critica della musica copiata da Ademaro di Chabannes di sua propria mano.