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James Grier, *The Musical World of a Medieval Monk: Adémar de Chabannes in Eleventh-Century Aquitaine*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xvi + 367 pp. Tables, notes, appendices, bibliography, and indices. \$114.00 U.S. (cl) ISBN-13 978-0-521-85627-7 ISBN-10 0-521-85628-0.

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Only rarely can scholars of medieval music determine with any certainty the authorship, date, or historical context of a given composition, especially a piece in the vast and mostly anonymous repertory of plainchant for the liturgy of the Divine Office and the Mass. It is all the more remarkable, then, that James Grier has succeeded in identifying no fewer than 100 compositions that can be securely attributed to Adémar of Chabannes (989-1034), a monk from the abbey of Saint Cybard in Angoulême who played an important role in events at the abbey of Saint Martial de Limoges and in the Limousin in the 1020s. Equally striking is the singular significance of Adémar's compositional output, as uncovered and explicated by Grier in the many articles and books (both published and forthcoming) that distill several decades of his research on this important and exceptional figure in the history of the Middle Ages.

Even before Grier's painstaking reconstruction of Adémar's musical activities, several works of this enterprising monk were well known to historians: they include the first medieval chronicle of the Aquitaine, sermons, and the forged acts of the Council of Limoges. Richard Landes, in particular, has written eloquently about Adémar's vision of history.^[1] In *The Musical World of a Medieval Monk*, Grier reveals another way in which Adémar made history, both literally and figuratively, in his outrageous attempt to elevate Saint Martial to the rank of an apostle. Drawing on every means of persuasion available to him, he focused on liturgical song, which was certainly one of the most powerful instruments that could be deployed in support of such an endeavor. In 1029, seeking to establish the apostolicity of Saint Martial, Adémar compiled a set of offices and a mass to perform on the saint's feast day, August 3. As a musician and monk, he understood that the effect of an elaborate festal liturgy would have an immeasurable impact on perceptions of the saint. Grier's account of this episode effectively demonstrates that music is a central source for the study of medieval history.

The celebration of the apostolic liturgy was brusquely interrupted by the traveling monk Benedict of Chiusa, who denounced the fraud of proclaiming Martial an apostle. His campaign disgraced, Adémar returned to Saint Cybard, where he wrote the sermons and the forgeries until leaving for a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1033. He left all his papers at Saint Martial, including chant books in which he had altered liturgical texts to reflect the apostolic status of the saint. As Grier demonstrates, Adémar's musical and textual production posthumously supported the apostolic cult with greater success than the hapless monk had been able to do in life.

Grier's book not only tells the definitive story of the curious liturgical scandal perpetrated by Adémar, but also makes a major contribution to several interrelated aspects of medieval studies, including the role of the liturgy in shaping the cult of saints, the creation of new liturgical music and text in the eleventh century, the adaptation and reuse of borrowed material, the function of liturgical books, the development of musical notation, and the relationship between oral and literate transmission with all its implications for textual criticism today. The wealth of detail that is offered in support of every point

makes it difficult to summarize this book effectively, so the following discussion is a selective synthesis of the major arguments.

Chapter one presents the series of historical circumstances that linked Adémar to Saint Martial of Limoges. One of his ancestors had been abbot at Saint Martial, and his uncle, Roger de Chabannes (d. 1025) was cantor there. When Adémar was a young man, he was sent to study at Saint Martial; Roger apparently took charge of his education. In 1027, after failing in his ambition to become abbot of Saint Cybard, Adémar went again to the abbey of Saint Martial, where he worked in the scriptorium (except for some time spent in his home community of Saint Cybard at Angoulême in 1028). On 18 November 1028, the dedication of the abbey's new basilica heightened interest in the cult of Saint Martial and, according to Grier, was the catalyst in Adémar's decision to promote Saint Martial as an apostle, despite the fact that the community considered him a confessor bishop.

By this time the relics of Saint Martial had enjoyed considerable renown in the region for over three decades, making the abbey a center of pilgrimage. The saint's power had been manifested by a series of unusual occurrences, particularly the night in 994 when his relics, temporarily displayed on Montjovis outside Limoges, healed people afflicted with *sacer ignis* during a peace council that had brought together many important personages from around the region. This event, which contributed considerably to the prestige of Martial's cult, forms part of the historical context for the development of liturgical music at the abbey of Saint Martial around the year 1000. Grier associates the enrichment of the liturgical repertory with the promotion of saints' cults that constituted the monastic community's response to the general climate of instability in this period. Adémar's compilation of Mass and Office music for Martial as apostle emerged from this broader trend but was very much an individual initiative. Between the dedication of the new basilica at the abbey of Saint Martial and the saint's feast on August 3, 1029, Adémar recorded the apostolic liturgy of Martial in the manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 909, which Grier identifies as the first Western musical autograph.

Chapter two is an extremely rich presentation of Adémar's work as a music scribe in the manuscripts of the abbey of Saint Martial. Grier traces the history of music manuscript production at Saint Martial beginning with the tenure of Adémar's uncle, Roger de Chabannes, who was involved in the reorganization and recording of the chant repertory at Saint Martial at the beginning of the eleventh century, represented in two manuscripts (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 1085 and 1120). Grier argues that this process relied primarily on memory in the absence of complete written exemplars. In the 1020s, according to Grier, Adémar introduced into the scriptorium at Saint Martial specific elements of Aquitanian notation and accurate heighting of neumes to represent the intervals of melodies with precision. This innovation constitutes a major watershed in the history of musical notation in Aquitaine.

Chapter three reviews the evidence for Adémar's role as a compiler, emphasizing the unusual extent to which he provided a written record of liturgical music for the feast of Saint Martial. Grier demonstrates what Adémar reused and how he adapted material such as the formulaic musical elements in the Divine Office that Adémar rendered more specific to Martial in the versions he created. Adémar employed different approaches to the various services for which he composed music: in the mass for Saint Martial he reused the base chants of the mass that commemorated Martial as a confessor bishop, but composed new tropes to complement those chants. In his troped masses for two of the companions of Martial, Austriclinian and Justinian, however, Adémar adapted preexisting tropes associated with other saints of greater renown (Martial and Saint Benedict). Grier also sets Adémar's compilations in the context of other instances of musical reuse reflected in liturgical manuscripts from the abbey of Saint Martial.

Chapter four, on Adémar as editor, is in some ways the most original as well as the most revealing of Grier's own proclivities as an editor and a prominent scholar of editorial method.^[2] This chapter naturally extends some of the observations made earlier in the book about Adémar as scribe and

compiler; as Grier points out, the process of editing is integral to every act of writing music down. What is exceptional in the case of Adémar is that the manuscript tradition offers an unusually ample body of evidence for judging his editorial decisions, for it is possible to compare the manuscripts he wrote with those that were probably his exemplars. Grier assesses Adémar's copying of music in terms of the monks own goals, which were "practical (to produce a usable text for his immediate circumstances) and political (to create a monumental source that would support his apostolic programme), not scholarly" (p. 159). Later in this chapter Grier argues that Adémar's reassessed melodies in his exemplars in relation to his own experience of the chant, demonstrating that "the interaction between the visual process of musical literacy and the psychological processes of oral/aural recollection and reconstruction is very complicated indeed, with each playing its role in turn" (p. 182).

Chapter five considers Adémar as composer, situating his original contributions in the context of the processes of creation, adaptation, and compilation that characterized the production of new music for the liturgy in the central Middle Ages. Liturgical poetry for the Mass (tropes and sequences) represented a particularly fertile area for new composition; tropes, in particular, offered the possibility of expanding upon pre-existing chants with interpolated verses that strengthened the connection between the chant text (often set to a scriptural text) and the particular occasion on which it was to be sung. Adémar's compositions for the Mass on the feast day of Saint Martial included several tropes and sequences.

Grier effectively sets forth Adémar's distinctive style in both text and melody, as well as analyzing chants that draw upon conventional formulas as well as in those not necessarily based on a set structure. It is extraordinary to gain such insight into the style of a chant composer from this period of the Middle Ages; the only other example that could be cited is Hildegard of Bingen. Grier notes that his identification of Adémar's compositions is based principally on circumstantial evidence in combination with internal evidence (Adémar's citation of his own texts in some of the new compositions, and his role in the campaign to propagate the apostolic liturgy for Saint Martial) as well as on paleographical analysis of the manuscripts.

Most of Adémar's music was composed for the feast of Saint Martial and formed part of his campaign to have Martial revered as an apostle. The circumstances of performance help to explain why Adémar created more chants for the Mass liturgy of Saint Martial than for the Divine Office. Grier argues that the Mass proclaiming Martial an apostle was to be performed in the cathedral of Limoges in the presence of Bishop Jordan, who "had summoned a diocesan synod and announced that the apostolic cult would be inaugurated on its final day" (p. 219). The office liturgy adhered more closely to the traditional set of chants for Martial as bishop. By contrast, Adémar produced significantly more new music for the offices of Martial's companions Valérie, Austriclinian, and Cybard, as was also the case in offices of the early eleventh century composed outside the Aquitaine. In this entire chapter, only one assertion seems counterintuitive: the idea that divination, the muses, and musical instruments mentioned in the Old Testament are "not necessarily the first areas of concern one would anticipate in a monastic culture" (p. 270). Musical instruments evoked in the Latin Vulgate translations of the Hebrew Bible tended to interest medieval monastic readers both because of their terminology and because they were assigned symbolic meanings in exegesis. Adémar might well have learned about such instruments as a reader of biblical commentary.

In chapter six, Grier discusses the evidence for Adémar's activity as a singer, adducing that role from his work as scribe, editor, and composer as well as Benedictine monk (the Rule of Benedict assumes that all members of a monastic community will take part in the sung liturgy). Grier also presents the references to music in some of Adémar's non-liturgical works—the *Chronicon*, his interpolation into the *Liber pontificalis*, and his forged account of the Council of Limoges. All these texts are marked by specific uses of technical terminology that indicate a writer with firsthand knowledge of musico-liturgical genres and musical performance. While it seems self-evident that a monk who copied music in the early eleventh century was also a singer—in this period, no clear distinction yet existed between

musical practitioners and scribes of music—Grier’s discussion in this chapter brings up many salient points.

In the conclusion, “The Success of the Apostolic Campaign,” Grier recounts the fortunes, after Adémar’s death in 1034, of his endeavor to introduce an apostolic liturgy for Saint Martial.

Although Adémar failed to accomplish his goals during his lifetime, they were achieved not long after his death: by the 1050s, the memory of the community had transformed him, posthumously, into a monk of Saint Martial (although he had been a member of the community of Saint Cybard in Angoulême), and the now accepted apostolic rank of Martial was reflected in new compositions and liturgical books produced in the abbey.

Few deficiencies can be found in a book of this quality. Readers may well be disappointed that the volume contains no photographs of the many manuscripts discussed in the text. Only the book jacket gives an image of what Adémar’s hand and musical notation looked like. Perhaps the reason for the decision not to include photographs was that many have already been reproduced in Grier’s articles on the subject (most of which are in journals that are widely available). For those approaching this material for the first time, however, illustrations would have been helpful, and for the specialist reader, it would certainly be preferable to include at least a sampling of the manuscripts that are the main focus of Grier’s analysis.

The use of the term “professional musicians” (as in the first sentence on pp. 209–210) for monastic singer-composers such as Adémar strikes this reviewer as anachronistic. To be sure, the musicians described by Grier were highly skilled, and in the early eleventh century there were “amateurs” who made music purely for enjoyment and entertainment, as opposed to courtly musicians who received payment of some kind for their services. However, a monk such as Adémar was not remunerated for his musical efforts; music was part of his monastic vocation but not a career path as such. As employed in this book, “professional musicians” may be intended to convey the mastery achieved by dint of training, practice, and experience.

The Musical World of a Medieval Monk is written with admirable clarity while providing exhaustive analysis on a level of detail that few scholars would be able to match. It offers an ideal companion discussion to Grier’s edition (soon to appear) of Adémar’s music in the series *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* (where it forms part of the collected works of Adémar). Taken together, these two volumes will constitute the most thorough treatment currently available of the compositions and techniques that can be attributed to a medieval composer of chant. Although both are designed primarily for specialists of music, medievalists in other disciplines can draw considerable benefit from Grier’s work, which will shape all future discussions of Adémar, the cult of Saint Martial, and the abbey dedicated to him.

NOTES

[1] Richard Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History: Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[2] Grier is also the author of the best recent treatment of music editing: *The Critical Editing of Music: History, Method, and Practice* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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