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Silk and Spice

CANTIGAS





CANTIGAS was formed at the end of 1990 and takes its name from the Spanish, meaning 'songs'. The group plays mediæval and folk-based music from Europe, Asia and the Middle East, using percussion, recorder and mediæval string instruments.

- 1 Istanpitta Ghaetta**
Ganassi, vielle, lute, oud, darabouka 6'51"
- 2 Latin Kingdoms**
Ganassi, vielle, lute, oud, darabouka 8'01"
- 3 Stella Splendens** *lute, oud, voice flute, voice 3'30"*
- 4 Los set goyts**
hurdy-gurdy, Ganassi, lute, darabouka, tambourine 2'33"
- 5 Cantiga 50** *Tibetan singing bowl, vielle, rebec, lute, oud, darabouka 7'28"*
- 6 Ecco la Primavera (Francesco Landini)**
darabouka, rebec, vielle, lute, oud 1'04"
- 7 Tels rit au main qui au soir pleure (Guillaume de Machaut)** *Ganassi, lute, oud, darabouka 3'41"*
- 8 Saladin** *lute, oud, vielle, Indian ankle bells, darabouka, rebec 11'15"*
- 9 Crusader's Lament** *vielle, rebec, voice 5'44"*
- 10 A mon dan soy esforsieus (Guiraut Riquier)**
vielle, lute, oud 4'07"
- 11 The Silk Road**
Ganassi, darabouka, bells, clapping sticks 7'44"
- 12 Istanpitta Belicha** *Ganassi, vielle, lute, oud, darabouka, rebec 9'02"*

SILK AND SPICE reflects a musical journey through mediaeval Europe, Asia and the Middle East and is inspired by the image of a journey along the Silk Road which was made by European adventurers in search of the riches of the Orient. These journeys created a meeting of diverse cultures and resulted not only in the import of exotic cloths and spices but also in the exchange and interaction of musical ideas.

The dances *Istanpitta Ghaetta* and *Istanpitta Belicha* are part of a collection preserved in the Italian manuscript London Add. 29987, held in the British Library. Although the manuscript dates from the late fourteenth century, the music it contains was likely to have been in popular circulation throughout Europe in the Middle Ages. Johannes de Grocheo, writing around 1300, explains that the istanpitta is characterised by having several puncta of different lengths, each ending with a common refrain that has open and closed endings. Ghaetta and Belicha follow this formal structure exactly, but their melodic content seems to conform more to Arabic models than to Western European ones.

Latin Kingdoms includes three monophonic hebrew melodies which contain influences from Europe, the Near East, and parts of Africa, reflecting the extent to which the Jewish musical tradition has been shaped by the historic migrations of the Jewish people. This tradition has largely been transmitted orally from one generation to the next. The first of these three melodies is still popular today in Israel. The second and third are known as

Niggunim.

Stella Splendens and *Los set goyts* are anonymous Spanish songs of the fourteenth century found in the manuscript Llibre Vermell (The Red Book). These songs were written for mediaeval pilgrims journeying to the shrine of the Virgin Mary in Montserrat near Barcelona. This was a very important centre of worship for all of Catalonia. There was a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary at Montserrat by the end of the ninth century and a little monastery was founded around 1027.

Cantiga 50 is from a collection of 400 Spanish monophonic songs in the lavishly illustrated manuscript, Cantigas de Santa Maria. The collection was assembled at the court of Alfonso X "el Sabio", King of Castile and Léon (1252-84) and a great patron of the Arts. The collection recounts miracles of the Virgin Mary. Every tenth song (of which this is one) punctuates the series with a more general song in her praise. In addition to the unity of their subject matter, the Cantigas display a uniformity of poetic and musical form. Most poems have a recurring refrain, and follow the overall form AbbaA, the same pattern as the French virelai and the Italian ballata. A short hebrew melody finishes the bracket, complementing the Cantiga.

Ecco la Primavera is representative of the new style of composition that came to be centred on Florence in the late fourteenth century: the Ars Nova. Francesco Landini (1325-1397) was perhaps the most lyrically elegant and refined of all Italian polyphonists in this period. Ecco la Primavera is for two

voices and is in the AbbaA form of a ballata ... Its atypical brevity and simplicity recall the dance music from which the ballata originated.

Tels rit au main qui au soir pleure is a French complainte composed by Guillaume de Machaut. This piece is part of his collection Le Remède de Fortune (c.1349), in which he expresses a typically courtly attitude to Love and Fortune.

Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and Syria (1175-93), was the arch-rival of Richard I of England and succeeded in bringing the Muslim factions together to fight against the Europeans in the Crusades. The *Saladin* bracket thus begins with a traditional taqsim or improvisation moving into a metered traditional Syrian melody which is then followed by a Turkish melody. The original words of the Turkish melody are a play on the names of the different scales used in the piece. Arabic influence is prevalent throughout music of the Middle Ages and was spread by way of the Moorish occupation of Southern Spain (711-1492).

Troubadour influence in the Middle Ages was very important as much music was dispersed through the travels of these wandering minstrels. *Crusader's Lament* is a selection of two earlier secular works from the height of troubadour poetry; Pax in Nomine by Marcabru and Ja nun hons pris by Richard the Lionheart (second part arranged by J.A. Clingan). The first is a crusading song, encouraging people to go on the crusades, likening the experience to a purification ritual. It is believed that the latter work was written by Richard the Lionheart and his minstrel Blodwel.

While Richard was held captive in Germany after the Crusades, his minstrel went around to all the castles playing this song to find his king. *A mon dan soy esforsieus* is by Guiraut Riquier, a prolific Occitan poet of the latter part of the thirteenth century (c. 1254-84). The war in 1209 between North and South (Albigensian Crusade) utterly destroyed the civilised society in which the troubadour movement had flourished. Most troubadours fled to Sicily, northern Italy and Spain. Riquier, 'the last of the troubadours', was no exception; he spent much of his short life in Spain.

The Silk Road forms a dream reflection of many different cultures. The underlying connection is the element of percussion that retains stability. The bracket begins with a Cambodian wind ensemble piece. It is based on the equidistant scale, with an equidistant tendency in the upper three notes. To Western ears it sounds remarkably like the blues as the American Negroes have exploited the neutral tones in their traditional music. This piece is followed by two contrasting Hebrew dances. The African rhythms are from Ghana. Music for Africans is not only an object of beauty but



also a mode of expression vital to the community experience. Percussion is an integral part of their music. The bracket concludes with an ancient folk dance fragment from Greece in 7_8 time.

Ganassi and Voice Flute

There is much archaeological evidence of early recorders in the Ancient World, such as the bone pipe *fistulae*. The Ancient view that flute playing among ordinary adults was in some way "perilous to moral behaviour" had been dispelled by the thirteenth century. The earliest surviving drawing of a recorder is to be found in a twelfth century Psalter in the Library of Glasgow. A number of different recorders are used in *Cantigas*: a Renaissance instrument with two joints, A466 and A415, of a Ganassi Type by Michael Grinter (1989), and a Voice Flute in D by Fred Morgan (1991). The Voice Flute was used in the French Baroque period and often took the place of a transverse flute.

Vielle

The *vielle* (*fithela*, *viella*, *mediaeval fiddle*) was the most widely used and esteemed of *mediaeval* instruments. From the thirteenth century onwards, it

became one of the most popular instruments in both England and on the Continent. It was an instrument reserved for the aristocracy, although minstrels regularly played the vielle at mealtimes. The vielle came in a variety of sizes and shapes - oval, spade-shaped, pear-shaped or waisted - and with various arrangements of tailpiece, bridge, fingerboard and tuning pegs. The number of strings varied from three to five. It can be played either under the arm or vertically on the lap.

Lute

The lute is a plucked instrument with a large round back, and was one of the most important European instruments for nearly four centuries - from the Middle Ages up to the latter part of the eighteenth century. Its popularity peaked in the sixteenth century, a period which produced an enormous repertoire for solo lute. It derives from the Arabic Ud. The earliest reference in French to the lute is around 1270. These early instruments probably had double strings (courses), often more than one rose and no frets (these were added around 1400). The four courses were probably tuned in fourths with a central major third (still retained with the modern guitar). By 1400 more courses were added and by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries lutes generally had eleven strings in six courses.

Oud

The Oud (al' oud) is a short-necked plucked lute of the Arab world and is a direct ancestor of the European lute. It was considered the

king, sultan or emir of musical instruments. The first written documentation on the Oud is of the ninth and tenth centuries, although the instrument is thought to have been in Southern Iraq from the seventh century. It spread to the West by way of Andalusia; it was introduced to Europe by the eleventh century after the conquest and occupation of Spain by the Moors.

Hurdy-gurdy

The hurdy-gurdy is a mediaeval stringed instrument in which the sound is produced by the friction of a wooden wheel and the pitch is determined by stopping the strings with rods actuated by keys. It originated in the tenth century when it was an instrument played by two people, one moving the wheel and the other pushing the stops. This early instrument was called an organistrum and is thought to have been used in order to facilitate the learning of Gregorian chant. The hurdy-gurdy (or sinfonye) is still used today in France and Hungary as a folk instrument.

Rebec

The rebec is largely a Mediæval and Renaissance instrument. Derived from the Byzantine lura and the Arab rabab, rebecs have been known in Europe under different names and in various shapes from the tenth century. The size of the instrument varied as did the number of strings. The playing position of the instrument is depicted both on the lap and under the arm. Although for some time bowing was not fully accepted in the higher circles of

Asia, it was widely adopted in Europe after the bow's establishment in the tenth and eleventh centuries. During the Middle Ages the rebec was a recognised instrument of professional minstrels, who, dressed in special livery, played in royal courts or were attached to a town or noble household. In rustic society the rebec was prominent at village revels, especially at feasts and dances.

Percussion:

Arabic drums: darabouka
tambourine
Tibetan singing bowl
Indian ankle bells
bells
clapping sticks

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