Listening Assignment #2

Like the first selections, these are on the CD for Literature and Arts C-22 that can be found in the Language Resource Center in Lamont Library. You should bring along this handout (the last page has the texts and translations of tracks 15-17) and your copy of The Letters of Abelard and Heloise, translated by Betty Radice: pp. 290-291 offer the English en face to the Latin text of track 14.

An Explanation of the Selections:

These songs have been selected to cluster around Peter Abelard (1079-1142) and St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153).

Track 13 (for which I regret not providing a text or translation) is an example of Cistercian chant, in this case the matins response for the feast of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Try to remember that this kind of song was designed for settings with very special acoustic characteristics: Cistercian churches that lent themselves readily to long reverberations. Just listen and imagine this song being sung by a group of White Monks (as the Cistercians have sometimes been known because of their characteristic white garb) to honor Saint Bernard on his feast day, the twentieth of August, in the middle of the night one summer more than eight hundred years ago, in a Gothic chapel.

Track 14 is definitely by Peter Abelard, track 15 probably by him. In listening to both of them, bear in mind that they were sung by nuns of the Paraclete . . . including Heloise. You will remember that in the letters (Letter 1, trans. Radice, p. 115) Heloise praised Abelard for the beauty of both the songs he composed and the quality of his singing, and mentioned that because the melodies of his songs were so sweet, even people who could not understand their Latin lyrics remembered the songs.

In terms of its intended occasion, track 14 is a hymn for Saturday vespers. [In the medieval Christian context, a hymn is a song of praise or adoration of God, but the Psalms and canticles found in the Bible are often treated as being distinct. Vespers, the sixth of the seven canonical hours, falls in the late afternoon or evening.] Its music presents a well-constructed tune with a clear and regular structure. In content it offers an ecstatic vision of heaven.

Track 15 is an Easter sequence identified by some as a composition by Abelard. [Sequences contain
double-line stanzas, often with a single line at the beginning and end. Musical and textual structures are parallel. This sequence is somewhat unusual in not having a single line at the beginning and much more so in having a psalm-like hymn at the end which departs from the double stanzas: aa (the stanzas that begin with the words “Epithalamica” and “Adulescentulae”) bb (“In montibus” and “Horrens”) cc (“Rex” and “Per noctem”) dd (“Iam video” and “Noctem”) Psalm: f (“Eia nunc”) gggg (“Quam fecit”; “Quae nos”; “Quae Sponsum”; and “Veris amoenitas”) h (“Quam fecit dominus/ Amen”). The form of the sequence allows the text to explore parallels and contrasts. Inspired by the Song of Songs, this sequence presents the drama of the Resurrection in terms of a Bride of Christ awaiting his return from the tomb. The Bride would be any nun of the Paraclete, the nunnery near Troyes of which Heloise was abbess, since as nuns they were wedded spiritually to Christ.

The ramifications of the relationship between Abelard and Heloise add a poignant dimension to the content of many of his surviving songs. For instance, he wrote an excruciatingly sensitive lament on the death of a young man named Sichem (often spelled Shechem) in the voice of a young woman, Dinah. This episode from the Bible (Genesis 34) offers disconcerting resemblances to the castration of Abelard. Sichem raped Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah. After the rape, Sichem wished to marry his victim. Her father and brothers Simeon and Levi agreed to the proposal, with the provision that Sichem and his entire tribe consent to circumcision. While Sichem and his family were incapacitated from their operations, Simeon and Levi attacked them and killed Sichem and others. Jacob was angered by their action. Abelard creates his lament by imagining what Dinah’s responses to her rape and Sichem’s slaying would have been.

Track 16 Abelard had many nemeses, among whom the foremost was Bernard of Clairvaux, who was the central figure in the growth of the Cistercian monastic order in the twelfth century. Track 16 is definitely the work of Bernard. His “Quam pium” is a short antiphon. [An antiphon is a short text from the Bible (or elsewhere) set to music in a simple syllabic style and sung before and after the psalm.] The central part of the “Quam pium” is taken from a book of the Bible--but not found in many versions of the Bible--entitled Ecclesiasticus or the Book of Jesus the son of Sirach [Ecclesiasticus 14.22 and 15.3-4]. The beginning is tailored to the specific occasion for which Bernard composed the antiphon: the matins of the office for St. Victor. The ending is a doxology, which means “an expression of the glory of God.” [This specific doxology is known in the Roman liturgy as the Lesser Doxology.] Like Abelard’s “O quanta qualia,” Bernard’s “Quam pium” has a careful structure, but it makes more leaps in its melody. It also uses extended melodies known as melismas. [A term used in reference to Gregorian chant, a melisma is an expressive vocal passage sung to one syllable.]

Track 17 is also likely to have been composed by Bernard of Clairvaux. It comes from the Cistercian Antiphonal, dating from the period of Bernard's liturgical reform. Like the sequence Epithalamica, it is imbued deeply in the language and atmosphere of the Song of Songs, as allegorically interpreted in medieval monasteries. The underlying assumption is that the Song of Songs records the love of Christ for the Church collectively and for the individual Christian singly.

Even if track 17 is not by Bernard himself, it reflects the Cistercian predilection for the Song of Songs and offers a chance to compare what happened to the Song of Songs in the Paraclete (track 15) in the piece which was probably by Abelard. Such songs bring home how difficult it can be to sort out the earthly and the heavenly resonances that texts based on the Song of Songs may have had. We know that both pieces were designed for specific points in the liturgy: the one probably by Abelard was
meant for Easter, the one perhaps by Bernard for Feasts of the Virgin (Fourth Matins responsory). [A responsory is a type of chant sung principally at matins as a musical postlude to a lesson. Matins is the first of the seven canonical hours, often known as “morning prayer.” Matins includes nine lessons (readings from the Scriptures or from the writings of the Church Fathers), which means that it involves nine responsories! This would have been intended for the fourth.]

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<th>TITLES, NAMES, AND NUMBERS</th>
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<td>Les Très Riches Heures du Moyen Age 2. Ensemble Organum: directed by Marcel Pérès. harmonia mundi HMX 290650.</td>
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15. Epithalamica [7'20"/original track 7] (Latin text and English translation provided below).


17. "Fulcite me floribus." [3'20"/original track 10] (Latin text and English translation provided below).

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Original Texts and Translations

**Track 14: Epithalamica**

Epithalamica
dic, Sponsa, cantica,
itus quae conspicis
dic foris gaudia,
et nos laetificans,
de Sponso nuntia
cuius te refovet
semper praesentia.

Adulescentulae,
vos chorum ducite,
cum haec praecinerit,
et vos succinite.
Amici Sponsi vos
vocarunt nuptiae,
et novae modulos
optamus Dominae.

In montibus hic ecce saliens
eece venit, colles transiliens;
per fenestras ad me respiciens
per cancellos dicit, prospiciens:

“Amica, surge, propera!
columba nitens, advola!

Horrens enim hiems iam transit
gravis imber recedens abit;
ver amoenum terras aperuit;
parent flores, et turtur cecinit:
   Amica, surge, propera!
columba nitens, advola!”

A sequence for Easter Day

Introduction

Exhortation to the Bride

Tell forth, O Bride.
your bridal canticle!
Tell outwardly the joys
you gaze upon within,
and, gladdening us,
give tidings of the Bridegroom,
whose presence means new life
for you - for ever!

Exhortation to the Young Maidens

Young maidens,
sing! dance!
When she, the Bride,
begins her song, join in!
The Bridgegroom’s friends
have called you to the nuptials,
and we wait to hear the songs
sung by the new liege Lady.
Song of the Bride

The Coming of the Bridegroom

See! he comes leaping upon
the mountains.
See! he comes skipping over the hills.
Gazing upon me through the windows,
looking through the lattices, he says:

"Arise, my Love, make haste!
my snow-white dove,
come fly to me!

For the bristling winter is now past,
the heavy rains are over and gone;
lovely springtide has opened earth:
flowers appear, the turtle-dove has
begun to sing.
Arise, my Love, make haste!
My snow-white dove,
come fly to me!

Rex in accubitum
iam se contulerat,
et mea redolens
nardus spiraverat;
in hortum veneram,
in quem descendert,
at ille transiens
iam declinaverat.

Per noctem igitur
hunc quaeens exco;
huc, illuc, anxia
quaerendo cursito;
occurrunt vigiles;
ardenti studio,
quos cum transierim,
Sponsum invenio.

Iam video quod optaveram,
iam teneo quod amaveram;
The Bride’s Search for the Absent Bridegroom

The King had already betaken himself into his chamber, and my redolent spikenard had breathed forth its fragrance; I had come into the garden into which he had come down - but already he had passed beyond and turned aside.

And so by night I go forth seeking him, anxious, hither and thither I run in my seeking; the watchmen come upon me; but in my burning zeal, even as I pass them, I find my Bridegroom!

The Bride Reunited with the Bridegroom

Now I see what I had hoped for, now I clasp what I had loved; now I laugh at what I had so wept for: I joy more than I had ever grieved.

At morn I laughed, I wept at night;
I laughed by morn, by night I wept.

Grief had brought on a sleepless night,
a grief made overpowering by love;
desire had grown the more
for this delaying,
till Lover comes to visit the Beloved.

Joy comes with day,
lamentation with night;
by day rejoicing, by night lamenting.

Eia nunc, comites,
et Sion filiae,
ad Sponsae cantica
psalmum adnectite,
quo maestis reddita
Sponsi praesentia,

convertit elegos
nostros in cantica!

Quam fecit Dominus
haec est dies!
Quam expectavimus
haec est dies!
Qua vere risimus
haec est dies!

Quae nos eripuit
haec est dies!
Hostes quae subruit
haec est dies!
Quam psalmus praecinit
haec est dies!

Quae Sponsum suscitat
haec est dies!
Quae Sponsam suscitat
haec est dies!
Quae cuncta reparat
haec est dies!

Veris amoenitas
haec est dies!
Mundi iucunditas
haec est dies!
Vitaeque novitas
haec est dies!
Quam fecit Dominus!
Amen.

Psalm of the Maiden Companions to the Bride

Invitation to the Young Maidens

So come, then, maid-companions,
daughters of Zion!
To the canticle of the Bride,
append a psalm
wherein the presence of the Bridegroom restored to those in grief
turns our mournful elegies
into canticles.

Psalm of the Maiden Companions

This is the day
that the Lord has made!
This is the day
we have long awaited!
This is the day
that has brought us laughter!

This is the day
that brought us deliverance!
This is the day
that did away with the foe!
This is the day
that the psalm foretells!

This is the day
that arouses the Bridegroom!
This is the day
that awakes the Bride!
This is the day
that restores all things!

This is the day,
loveliness of spring!
This is the day,
world’s delight!
This is the day,
newness of life!
This, the day that the Lord has made!
Amen.

Track 16 Bernard of Clairvaux, “Quam pium”

QUAM PIUM

Quam pium, quam dulce, quam suave, O Victor, in hoc loco afflictionis, et in hoc corpore mortis te canere, te colere, te precari.

Canticum. Eccli. 14 et 15
Beatus vir. qui in sapientia morabitur, et qui in iustitia sua meditabitur, et in sensu cogitabit circumspectionem Dei.

Cihabit illum pane vitae et intellectus: et aqua sapientiae salutaris potabit illum:

Et firmabitur in illo, et non flectetur: et continebit illum, et non confundetur: et exaltabit illum apud proximos suos.

Antiphon from Matins of the Office for St. Victor, composed by St. Bernard of Clairvaux

How good it is, how sweet, how lovely. O Victor, in this place of suffering, and in this mortal body, to sing to thee, to honour thee, to invoke thee!
Canticum. Eccli. 14 and 15
Blessed is the man who dwells with wisdom and meditates on God’s justice and ponders judiciously on his ways.

She will give him to eat the bread of life and understanding: and to drink, the water of the knowledge of salvation.

And he will be strengthened by this, and will not fall: she will hold him fast and he will not be put to shame: and she will raise him up above his neighbours.

Et nomine aeterno haereditabit illum Dominus Deus noster.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.


Quam pium ...

And the Lord our God will make him inherit an everlasting name.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

How good it is ...
Track 17, “Fulcite me floribus”

Fulcite me floribus,
stipate me malis:

Quia amore langueo. Alleluia.

Adiuro vos, filiae Jerusalem,
si inveneritis dilectum,
   ut annuntietis ei.

Quia amore …

Gloria Patri, et Filio,
et Spiritui Sancto.

Quia amore …

Matins responsory for a holy woman, from the Cistercian Antiphonale, and dating from the time of the Bernardine reform of the liturgy

Refresh me with flowers,
feed me with apples.

for I am faint with love. Alleluia.
I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem,
if you find my true-love,
tell him:

that I am faint …

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

that I am faint …