

Performance Notes

During the Middle Ages, three holy places—Jerusalem, Rome, and Compostela, a remote Galician village in northwestern Spain—were visited by countless pilgrims from all over Europe. Compostela was the legendary burial place of St. James the Greater, *Jacobus Major*, the first apostle, and the first to die a martyr. His power as a miracle worker was renowned, and visitors to his tomb sought both physical and spiritual healing, as they do to this day. Since the late twelfth century the Cathedral of Santiago (St. James) in Compostela has possessed a manuscript entitled *Jacobus* (also called *Liber Sancti Jacobi* or *Codex Calixtinus*). Its five books, or sections, contain sermons, lessons and chants for his feast, miracles stories and legends, a travel guide for pilgrims to the shrine, as well as a small but important collection of polyphonic music. Though it found its way to Spain, the manuscript, including the music, was probably compiled in France in the mid-twelfth century.



About ninety percent of the music in *Jacobus* is plainchant for the Vigil and Feast of St. James (25 July) and for the Translation of his body from Palestine to Galicia (30 December). Many of these chants are "contrafacts" (i.e. existing chant melodies that were "recycled" with new words in honor of St. James).

Although they represent a mere ten percent of the music in *Jacobus*, the polyphonic works (nineteen for two voices, one for three voices) have received more attention from scholars than the plainchant because they are among the earliest such pieces to have been written down. Some of these polyphonic works are adornments of liturgical chants. Others have no strict connection to the liturgy, but were perhaps meant to accompany processions or other actions of the festive Mass or other worship services, or celebrations. The polyphonic works can be labeled either "conductus" (a work written in a more or less syllabic, note-against-note style), or "organum" (a florid, rhapsodic melody over a slow-moving tenor part).

The polyphony

The notation of the polyphonic works in *Jacobus* is quite ambiguous as to both rhythm and the alignment of the pitches between the voices. Many scholars and performers have edited these works, and different transcriptions of the same piece can vary greatly. These editions are entirely our own transcriptions: the meters, rhythms and alignments of the voice parts are our own interpretations, and we have sometimes added drones and embellishments, as we perform them in concert. We will clearly indicate where the manuscript information ends and our additions begin. While we believe that smaller forces (one to three singers per part) will yield the best results, we encourage experimentation with larger groups, and with the addition (or exclusive use) of male voices. Feel free to transpose these works to any comfortable key.

Language and Pronunciation

The pronunciation of Latin was not uniform throughout the Middle Ages, nor was it uniform throughout Europe. It was probably influenced by the pronunciation of each local vernacular language and dialect. We sing the music from the *Codex Calixtinus* in Spanish Latin, which sounds the same as modern Church Latin, with three exceptions: 1) *c* followed by *e* or *i* is pronounced [s] (e.g. *duce*, *vincens*, *celici*, *vicio*; *acceptit* is therefore pronounced [akseptit]) 2) *t* followed by any other vowel is pronounced [s] (e.g. *redemptio*, *pallatia*, *gratias*) 3) *g* followed by *e* or *i* is pronounced [ʒ], as in the French word *je* (e.g. *regem*, *angelorum*)

Venite omnes cristicole

Source: Santiago de Compostela, Biblioteca de la Catedral, Codex Calixtinus, f. 105v

This is an invitational antiphon, one of the opening chants of the midnight service of Matins for the vigil of the feast of St. James. This same invitational melody is used for many different feasts, but the text of this "contrafact" honors the Apostle of Spain. Many people sing plainchant in an "equalist" fashion, with each single note getting the same time value. We prefer a freer, more elastic approach, with great emphasis on the weight and flow of the text.