

Preface

When I started the project of transcribing the complete set of the Cantigas de Santa Maria the only complete edition was that of Anglés (four volumes with transcriptions, facsimile and commentary). This was, and still is, out of print, prohibitively expensive to buy, and found in very few libraries. This set in four volumes is my attempt to present the Cantigas in an affordable published form to those interested in performing more than the handful of transcriptions readily available.

I have produced these transcriptions as a performer and for other performers. It is not intended to be a critical edition nor a work of exhaustive scholarship. As a performer I do not feel tied to one musical theory concerning the cantiga notation or period style and I believe performers are in the best position to explore different approaches to performance. This approach can be open to extremes but, if we keep in mind a clear distinction between what is known and what is speculation, then it is also useful tool for questioning (and supporting) conventional thinking.

The transcriptions of melodies are based from the facsimiles of the manuscripts. These facsimiles have been made available to a wider public thanks to Greg Lindahl who has created a website with scans from the Anglés edition of E₁ and the Ribera edition of To. Many thanks to him for providing the resources allowing me to get started.

The previous editions of Volumes 1 and 2 were published before Andrew Casson produced his immensely valuable work on the cantiga texts in his ‘Cantigas de Santa Maria for Singers’ website. The new editions of Volume 1 and 2 incorporate many of his ideas that I had taken up when working on Volumes 3 and 4.

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Introduction

The Cantigas de Santa Maria

The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* are a group of over 400 songs praising, and recounting miracles performed by, the Virgin Mary. These have been preserved in four remarkable manuscripts dating from the last quarter of the 13th century. They were compiled under the patronage of Alfonso X, el Sabio (the Wise), king of Castile and León and are written in Galician-Portuguese, the lyric language of the court of Alfonso.

The Prologue, CSM 1 and every tenth cantiga is a song of praise to the Virgin Mary or *Cantiga de Loor*. All the others narrate the miracles associated with Mary. There are also two small groups of cantigas added later called the *Cantigas das Festas de Santa Maria* and *Cantigas das Festas de Nostro Sennor*.

The Transcriptions

No one as yet has put forward a generally accepted theory explaining the notation system used in the cantiga manuscripts. The complete edition by Anglés remains the benchmark both for academics and performers and is by far the most common source for performance – not surprising as it was for many years the only complete source of transcriptions. More recently Ferreira, Pla, van der Werf and Cunningham have written on the subject with a more systematic approach. Of the four, Pla and Cunningham have applied their ideas to create commercially available transcriptions, though the latter has only covered the *Cantigas de Loor* (42 in all, and by far the least typical of the collection).

Following Anglés I have used the Escorial E₁ manuscript as the basis of the set of transcriptions as it is the most complete source (408 including prologues). The Escorial E₂ manuscript essentially corresponds to the first 200 in E₁ and has been used extensively as a cross-reference. Ferreira argues, quite convincingly, that the Toledo manuscript (To.) is the earlier and more accurate but as it contains only 129 of the cantigas (though 11 are unique to this manuscript), and uses a more ambiguous notation, I have decided to use the more complete source and use To. as a cross-reference.

This collection is not meant to be an authoritative edition. I have decided to take a pragmatic approach and have tried to give transcriptions of all cantigas that balance ‘performability’ with an attempt to stay as close as possible to the set of literal values for the notation in the manuscript that I have outlined below. There is also the matter of producing a musically satisfying result. This raises the thorny issue of whether “musically satisfying” to the modern ear is a valid gauge for transcriptions of medieval music. Inevitably there will be an element of subjectivity in any transcription of medieval music and, though I would love to reproduce medieval music as it was performed originally, there will always be doubt over how it was performed. We can use what information we have but the music is filtered through our own perceptions and ultimately through those of our audiences.

A number of different approaches have been used to produce these transcriptions and sometimes two similarly notated cantigas have been transcribed with different rhythms (cf. CSM 10 and 41). I do not assume that all the cantigas are in some form of ternary rhythm. I have explored the possibilities for binary rhythms and larger rhythmic groupings more common outside the closed world of Parisian music theory of the medieval period.¹ Some of the cantigas clearly are in a modal rhythm (see below) but very few adhere strictly to the rules. Even where a song clearly starts in a modal rhythm there are often irregularities in heading towards cadences.

In many of the cantigas I have assumed, like Anglés, that the notation is basically mensural (each note or ligature has a fixed duration irrespective of context) but, unlike Anglés, have accepted that there are some ambiguous noteshapes. I have interpreted these noteshapes flexibly where I feel it would otherwise break the flow of the melody, but the flow may not necessarily follow an even rhythm. Much of the difficulty in understanding the rhythm of the cantigas I believe stems from the possibility that uneven, or irregular, rhythms were present but without a notation system suited to recording them.

Rhythmic Modes

1 st	♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ...	e.g. CSM 24
2 nd	♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ...	e.g. CSM 4
3 rd	♪. ♪ ♪ ♪. ♪ ♪ ...	e.g. CSM 17
4 th	♪ ♪ ♪. ♪ ♪ ♪. ...	e.g. CSM 60
5 th	♪. ♪. ♪. ♪. ...	
6 th	♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ...	e.g. CSM 139

In effect 5th mode is not used in the cantigas and the 4th and 6th used only rarely. The modes above are shown with the note values usually assigned in text books. The values in my transcriptions are twice as long, e.g. ♪ ♪ above is ♪ ♪ in the transcriptions.





















Other rhythmic patterns used in transcriptions







Binary	♪ ♪ ... or ♪ ♪ ♪ ...	e.g. CSM 25
3+2	♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ...	e.g. CSM 10
3+3+2+2	♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ...	e.g. CSM 9
3+3+2+2+3+3	♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪	e.g. CSM 15

¹ Some possibilities are discussed by Ferreira in ‘Andalusian Music and the Cantigas de Santa Maria’.















Most of the cantigas seem to be in some form of ternary or binary rhythm with ‘building blocks’ of long and short notes or ligatures (longs or L, and breves or B). These blocks can be further subdivided (breves can be divided into semibreves or S) but for rhythmic purposes L and B are the basic elements. L can be thought of as 2 tempora (or beats) and B as one. A ‘perfection’ is a group of three tempora, e.g. LB or BL. L can also be ‘perfected’, that is, increased to a value of 3 tempora (indicated as L+).




The one-note and most of the two-note noteshapes have a clear mensural value. Below is a table with the values I have assumed for most of the ligatures used in the manuscripts in terms of duration – L or B.









L									??		
B									??		

The problems occur mostly with the value of  and  which appear to be used inconsistently between cantigas for both L and B. In some cantigas they seem to be used indiscriminately (and possibly interchangeably) with  and . My initial assumptions when transcribing  and  is to assign them a value of B though as often as not in the finished transcription they are given as L. Where possible I have assumed that these four noteshapes are used consistently within a single cantiga.

Three-note ligatures are generally transcribed as L or perfected to L+. My initial assumptions were:

L							
L+							

The actual value of the component notes of a ligature is also a matter of conjecture. For example, many different ligatures are used for 3 falling notes – it is probable that they were performed in contrasting ways, e.g. , , . Practically it is not of great importance; the flow and pulse of the melody remains the same. The choice is largely a matter of performance style and taste.

Plicated ligatures (rising or falling stem on the right side) are transcribed as two notes, the second note having a stroke through the stem and subtracting its value from the previous note, e.g.  =  . The performance of the long plicated ligatures  and  is another open question. These have been transcribed as B-B with a stroke through the stem of the lesser note, e.g. . They could be  or ; again it is matter of taste and context.

The guideline principles used for the melodic lines in these transcriptions are:

- The stressed syllable of the rhyme at the end of each line of text matches the musical accent (the first note after a bar line).
- A repeated musical line will follow the same rhythmic pattern.
- A substituted noteshape in a repeated music line will have the same duration.
- A noteshape will be used consistently within a cantiga, and different noteshapes will not be used for the same rhythmic value, though duration could be the same.

The second principle is sometimes at odds with the first when the poetic metrics differ in the repeated line, but this is a rare occurrence.

I do not believe that the theory of Rhythmic Modes underlies the cantigas, rather that the rhythmic modes were among the many rhythmic patterns used (including quite irregular rhythms with no obvious pattern). There are in fact very few cantigas which are unambiguously in one of the modal rhythms throughout; at best a significant proportion could be described as a mix of 1st and 2nd mode. Also a large number of cantigas are most easily interpreted in a binary rhythm which is not recognised in modal theory.

I have used the rules of perfection sparingly (the most common rule being a long followed by a long is perfected), and have rarely followed the practice of alteration (doubling the length of the second of a pair breves followed by a long to make the pair a perfection, i.e, BBL becomes |BL| L+|) except when transcribing a melody into 3rd mode. The use of these rules relies on an assumption of an underlying ternary rhythm, and in using them on that assumption any arbitrary sequence of noteshapes will be interpreted as ternary, even, for example, a clearly binary sequence.

Where a cantiga naturally falls into ternary rhythm (with little use of perfection other than on the final long notes of a line) I generally have adopted it and have looked no further for other rhythmic solutions. In other cases, perfection has not always been applied to longs where, by not doing so, it produces a regular rhythm on a larger scale than those available with modal rhythms – usually mixtures of 3 and 2, e.g. 3+2 or 3+3+2+2. Occasionally there appears to be no regular rhythm that fits the notation. Where there appear to be other rhythmic options I have added comments as to other possible interpretations.

While trying to remain as close as possible to the manuscript occasionally I have changed explicit note values where, following the guideline principles above, these have an analogous note elsewhere in the cantiga, or where E₂ has the changed note, or the rhythm in To. implies the change. I have noted these in each cantiga. For a few cantigas I have used To. as the basis where it seems to have a clearer indication of the rhythm.

The numbering convention used to refer to noteshapes in a cantiga is x.y, where x is the line number of the transcription, and y is the relative number of the single note,

ligature or syllable in the line, eg, in CSM 1 the reference 2.5 means the ligature **■** and syllable ‘on’ (in the word ‘onrrada’) in line 2 of the transcription.

The Texts

The texts given with the transcriptions are the refrain (when present) and first stanzas based on Mettmann’s edition but for performance the complete texts from Casson are essential.

Mettmann’s edition of the cantiga texts has been the standard for both academic and performance purposes but has many problems for the singer, including irregular spelling and metrics. This is largely due to Mettmann’s purely literary approach, apparently completely ignoring the music.

The recent work by Casson in his ‘Cantigas de Santa Maria for Singers’ website is the first to approach the complete texts and music together as a whole, working with all the stanzas of each cantiga to produce a performable edition. It also has regularised spelling, a concordance and many other tools.