

Manuel Pedro FERREIRA

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Hermeneutics of the Cantigas: recovering notational sense

Abstract

The Cantigas de Santa Maria are one of the most imposing corpus of medieval European song. The status of the notation in the 13th-century MSS is however ambiguous, and there are very few direct clues concerning performance. This paper will examine a few songs where conflict between text layout and notated melody, or contradictory decisions by the copyist, illuminate the musical context, allowing the modern performer to construct a meaningful interpretation, faithful yet free from strict literalism.