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- [158] A. HOLSCHNEIDER: *Die Organa von Winchester. Studien zum ältesten Repertoire polyphoner Musik*. Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, Hildesheim 1968, 199 pages, 19 plates.

[159] “It has been said more than once that the deciphering of the Winchester organa is the most pressing need in the investigation of early harmony; but until we can unearth a document in pitch-notation which contains a number of pieces identical with those in the Winchester Troper, the task appears hopeless”; this is how Dom Anselm Hughes put it, a few years ago, in the eighth chapter (*Origins of Polyphony*) of the second volume of the *New Oxford History of Music* (cf. the Italian trans., vol. II, Milan 1963, p. 321). The publication of the present work by Andreas Holschneider — presented as a “Habilitationsschrift” at the University of Hamburg in 1967 — is thus most opportune, even if the methodological precondition posited by Dom Anselm Hughes has not been met.

As well known, the Winchester organa represent one of the fundamental chapters in the history of polyphony, predating by a century or so those of the so-called School of St Martial of Limoges which flourished around 1100, and thus constituting the oldest surviving repertory of polyphonic music, setting aside the few sporadic examples of organum contained in various music treatises, starting with *Musica enchiriadis*, up to the *Micrologus* of Guido of Arezzo (circa 1030). The one hundred and seventy four organa are contained in two manuscripts, one preserved at Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 473, the other at Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 775. Confirming a

hypothesis advanced by Jacques Handschin in 1936, Holschneider shows that the Cambridge manuscript was compiled between 996 and 1050 (pages 19–20) and that the Oxford codex was almost certainly written in the first half of the 11th c. (generally one has held the opposite, namely, that Oxford is older than Cambridge).

However, as far as the contents of the principal corpus of the Oxford codex are concerned, hagiographic evidence compels a redating to the last third of the 10th century; for this reason Holschneider does not hesitate to affirm that the Oxford codex “is an anachronistic copy of an exemplar compiled between 978 and a little after 984” (p. 24). As for the provenance of the materials contained in the two codices, Holschneider concludes, partly confirming previous inquiries into the matter, that although it is possible to accept French provenance (Fleury, Corbie and Jumièges) for the repertory of tropes, sequences and proses, there are several indications pointing to Winchester as the place of origin for the organa, which were almost certainly composed by Wulfstan of Winchester, author of amongst others two tropes and the compositions *Patris adest votiva dies* and *Presul Adelwoldus*, contained in the Cambridge codex. Careful examination of the notation of the organa, which, as noted, are of the type called “in campo aperto” that is, without diastematic indication of any kind — whence the difficulty of reading and transcribing the melodies (among various attempts at transcription we recall the one recently made by Armand Machabey) —, and comparison with the notation of the proses, which are still in “campo aperto” but for which we do have diastematic versions, together with a correct interpretation of the “litterae significativae”, allow Holschneider to arrive at solutions that have a great probability of

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being at least partially accurate. To be sure the transcription remains purely hypothetical in very many cases. Comparing the musical style of the Winchester organa as it results from his transcriptions (in which the “vox organalis” consists almost wholly of “Haltetöne”) with contemporary theoretical witnesses (including the *Micrologus*), the German scholar is able to verify the validity of the transcription method he has advocated in theoretical sources. In this connection we note that Holschneider does not concur with Armand Machabey (cf. A. MACHABEY, *Remarques sur le Winchester Troper*, in

“Festschrift für Heinrich Bessler”, Leipzig 1961) that the compositional technique of the Winchester organa approaches that espoused and codified in the Milanese treatise, Bibl. Ambrosiana, M 17 sup., for the reason that said treatise is about a century later than the Winchester organa (p. 128). The book contains a systematic index and a catalogue raisonné of all the organa contained in the Winchester troper, a rich bibliography on the subject, and several musical transcriptions.

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