

EXPLANATION 1.7: SECULAR MUSIC IN THE IBERIAN PENINSULA

1. LOVE SONGS BY MARTÍN CODAX

The earliest monophonic works found in the Iberian Peninsula are the Love Songs (Cantigas de amigo) by **Martín Codax**, a troubadour probably from Vigo, of which 6 melodies (from Vigo area) survive. They are written in Galician-Portuguese language, which was the language spoken in the Middle Ages in the area of Galicia and part of Portugal. They are probably derived from folk music rather than from troubadour love songs and are written in square notation. Its form and style is simple.

2. SAINT MARY CANTIGAS

The most important collection of medieval peninsular songs are the **Cantigas de Santa María**. There are more than 400 anonymous works in Galician-Portuguese language, gathered in the court of King Alfonso X, the Wise (13th century). They are preserved in 4 codex (very old books), two in Madrid, another in El Escorial and one in Florence. They are songs from a cultured and aristocratic society that extol the virtues of the Virgin Mary, either through their miracles or directly. They are arranged numerically so that there is a miracle for each song.

The cult to the Virgin Mary was very intense in 13th century. King Alfonso X himself could have contributed some cantigas like an author. Gerard Riquier, "the last troubadour", who was in the court of Alfonso X, is known that he composed works to the Virgin. They are religious works but not liturgical, that is to say, they were not used in the ceremonies of the Church. The form of the songs usually begins with a refrain that is repeated between verses and at the end of the work. Thus, the form is: A bba A bba A, etc. This is related to the French virelai.

3. ARAB MUSIC OR ANDALUSÍ MUSIC

The title alludes to the music practiced in the areas of the southern half of the Peninsula during Arab domination. There is little documentation on Andalusí music since this kind of music was from oral tradition, so there are no scores. The current study of this music is based on music found in the North of Africa.

The musician **Ziryab** (s.IX), from the ancient Arabic tradition of Damascus and Medina, is believed to have adapted the music of this court to what he had previously learned (Greek-Persian oriental melodies and Arabic songs). The tradition that he initiates in Cordoba can be the origin of the Andalusí music. The most common forms of this period are **nawba** (nuba) and **muwashaha** (moaxaja), with stanzas and final choruses called jarchas, which are considered the first literary manifestations known in the peninsula, written in Mozarabic.

Subsequently, the poet, composer and philosopher **Ibn Bajjah** of Zaragoza, better known as Avempace, in the 12th century gave a new impetus to the Ziryab style by taking elements of medieval Spanish music to produce an entirely new style that expanded on the Iberian Peninsula and the North of Africa. Another musical form, the **zéjel** (céjel) arises also with Ibn Bajjah.

4. JEWISH MUSIC OR SEPHARDIC MUSIC

The Sephardim were the Jews who lived in Spain. The music of this culture was a mixture of Castilian songs with Arabic rhythms and instruments. The main themes are love songs and weddings. Sephardic music is an adaptation of previous existing music.

5. READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. **Who was Martin Codax and in what language did he write?**
2. **What is the origin of Martin Codax's Love Songs?**
3. **How many of the cantigas of St. Mary are known?**
4. **Who reigned in the age of cantigas and what are their themes?**
5. **Why the cantigas are religious but not liturgical?**
6. **What is Andalusí music?**
7. **What tradition did Ziryab bring from outside Spain?**
8. **What musician stands out after Ziryab and what was his contribution?**
9. **Who were the Sephardim and what was their music like?**
10. **What is the main theme of Sephardic music?**