Constructing *Cantus Securus:* Reaping Advice from *Cantor Cartusiensis*

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Abstract: Huntington Library Manuscript Fields 5096, a manuscript of Carthusian miscellanea from 1480s, contains a didactic plainchant treatise: *Liber alphabeti super cantu plano*. It is a rare example of a practical treatise, an anonymous product of the Carthusian charterhouse at Val di Pesio in Piedmont. The original source may have been the notes of a scholar, someone who was competent and well traveled like Anthony de Aviliana. The study of plainchant and singing in the Carthusian community was relegated to a novice's study time, to be learned in solitude with the help of texts such as *Liber alphabeti*. The subjects discussed in it are those we would expect for a pedagogical work on plainchant. This work presents technical information in a way which promotes the well-being of its surrounding monastic community.

Keywords: plainchant, Carthusian liturgy, pedagogical work in the 15th century

Huntington Library Manuscript Fields 5096, a small, fragile manuscript of Carthusian miscellanea from the 1480s, contains as its first item a didactic plainchant treatise: *Liber alphabeti super cantu plano*. An anonymous product of the Carthusian charterhouse at Val di Pesio in Piedmont, *Liber alphabeti* is a rare example of a practical treatise, surviving largely complete, filled with basic information and sound advice. Unlike its counterparts, the academic, philosophical treatises found in the collections of Gerbert and Coussemaker, this work instead presents technical information in a way which promotes the well-being of its surrounding monastic community. In the course of his explanation of the rudiments of liturgy and singing, the author of *Liber alphabeti* touches on the daily contradictions of Carthusian life: being silent while living in community. When we examine the syntax and structure of the treatise, relative to the monks for whom it was intended, we discover new insights into practices of learning, liturgy, and behavior among the members of this elusive monastic order.

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The subjects discussed in *Liber alphabeti* are those we would expect for a pedagogical work on plainchant; they encompass the boundary of the gamut, solmization, hexachords, clefs, *mutacio, disiuncta,* modes, and psalmody (*Figure 1*).

1.	ff. 1r–3v	Solmization
2.	ff. 3v–8v	Hexachords, clefs and signs
3.	ff. 8v–21r	*Mutacio*
4.	ff. 21v–22r	*Disiuncta*
5.	ff. 22v–24r	*Coniuncta*
6.	ff. 24r–28r	The finals of the modes
7.	ff. 28r–30v	The relative dominance of authentic modes
8.	ff. 31r–32r	The importance of ascending and descending melodies
9.	ff. 32r–34r	The ranges of the modes
10.	ff. 34v–35r	Matching verses with their alleluias
11.	ff. 35v–36v	Tracts
12.	ff. 36v–37v	*Saeculorum* (EUOUEs)
13.	ff. 37v–38v	Matins responsories
14.	ff. 39r–40r	Memory aids for learning the intonation, mediation and flex of a chant
15.	ff. 40v–46v	The behavior of each of the modes with examples

Figure 1: Contents of *Liber alphabeti super cantu plano*
(Huntington Library MS FI 5096, fols. 1–46)

It is instructive to compare the contents of this fifteenth-century plainchant treatise with those of two others, also by Carthusian authors, represented in Coussemaker's *Corpus Scriptorum*: the anonymous *Tractatus de musica plana* of the thirteenth century, and the fifteenth-century *Ritus canendi vetustissimus et novus* by Johannes Gallicus (Johannes Legrense). Although compiled two centuries apart, these treatises share an approach to their subject which differs from *Liber alphabeti*, but one which is commonly associated with medieval treatises, in that they are primarily concerned with speculative presentation. Their authors, secure in protected environments, document the intellectual, mathematical, and theologically justifiable approaches to music as science. When examining their contents (*Figure 2*), we find an extended discussion of Pythagorean ratios within the descriptions of consonance and dissonance in the *Ritus canendi*, and sections on the naming and function of the Muses as well as a retelling of Aristotle's discourse on the emotional properties of the modes in the anonymous *Tractatus*. The *Ritus canendi* contains a section on secular song and poetry (3.6).

Contents of *Tractatus de Musica Plana* (Coussemaker, *Scriptorum*, II: 434–483)	**Contents of *Ritus canendi vetustissimus et novus*** (part 1) (Coussemaker, *Scriptorum*, IV: 298–345) Johannes Legrense
1.1 General syntax and explanation of modal vocabulary	1.1 Greek, Latin, and Hebrew origins of Music
1.2 The invention of modes by the ancients	1.2 The origin of the term "music"
1.3 The transfer of ancient names into ordinal modes	1.3 Tone, semitone, *diatessaron, diapente*
1.4 On the incipits of plainchants	1.4 Tetrachords
1.5 On the ranges of the eight modes	1.5 Measuring intervals of the *diatessaron* and *diapente*
1.6 On the finals of the eight modes	1.6 Explanation of Greek string names and intervals
1.7 On modal behavior	1.7 Summary of Greek terminology according to Boethius
1.8 On the emotional properties of the eight modes (Aristotle)	1.8 Conjunct and disjunct tetrachords
	1.9 Measuring the tetrachords, and naming them in the Greek manner
2.1 EVOVE	
2.2 *Differentia* (includes tonarium)	
3.1 On song and poetry	1.10 Jubal, Tubalcain, and Pythagoras
3.2 On the nine muses	1.11 Mathematical requirements of consonance
3.3 On the invention of secular music	1.12 Measuring intervals
3.4 On the names, duties, and order of the nine Muses	
3.5 The qualities of the muses transferred to music	2.1–2.5 Divisions of the *diapason*
4.1–4.5 On the monochord	2.6–2.10 Using the monochord
5 On the distinctions of each mode	2.11 Perfect consonances
6.1 The sections of the gamut	2.12 Dissonance defined by Boethius and Marchetto
6.2 The finals of the modes	
6.3 Modal qualities	
6.4 Modal ranges and extended range	3.1–3.2 Tones, semitones, enharmonics, and chromatics
6.6 Irregular melodies	
6.7 Rules for finding EVOVEs	3.3 Species of the *diatessaron*
6.8 On sound production (philosophy)	3.4 Species of the *diapente*
6.9 The range and properties of each of the eight modes	3.5 Species of the *diapason*
	3.6 Melody, song, and poetry
6.10 The qualities of the modal finals	
6.11 False modes in plainchant	3.7–3.8 Relating melody to the structure of the *diapason* and *diatessaron*
6.12 The components of plainchant	
6.13 *Mutatio*	
	3.9–3.10 Organization of modes
7.1 Solfege syllables	3.11 Comparison of Greek names and Latin and Hebrew letters for the gamut
7.2. Table of *differentia*	3.12 The difference between studying and singing music

Figure 2

Mathematical digressions abound in these two works, both contain extensive discussions of the monochord, and their intent is clearly for intellectual and philosophical edification. They are primarily academic exercises that happen also to contain useful, practical information, transmitted with confidence by means of known *auctoritates*. Moreover, these two treatises adhere resolutely to our expectations of Carthusian sources; products of the silent and austere Order whose fifteenth-century members believed had been purposely founded for the benefit and redemption of academics.[1] We can place Carthusian writings, and subtle evidence concerning their scholars, within the most important intellectual circles of early modern Europe in the areas of music, law, philosophy, and theology. Though eremitic and reclusive, their scholastic presence permeated the intellectual centers of Avignon, Basel, Mantua, and Lucca. The libraries in their charterhouses were extensive, with generous lending policies to other monastic scholars. The Carthusian *opus dei* was the creation of books and the preservation of scholarship within a spiritual community, with each monk devoting much of his work day to reading, writing, and copywork. The *Ritus canendi* and the anonymous *Tractatus* are detailed and intellectual, what we recognize as typical for Carthusian writings.

But did these treatises enjoy extensive practical use? Were these complex documents also used as instructional primers for aspiring Carthusian novices? The existence of a didactic treatise like *Liber alphabeti* demonstrates otherwise. It shows a different kind of approach, one that has the potential to illuminate the social constructs of the community that created and used it. Practical treatises such as this one have seemed rarely to survive the ravages of time and neglect. It is verbose, yet at the same time deceptively simplistic, and its manner of presentation gives us perspective on the processes of learning and life, and on the society which, ultimately, was its collective author.

In comparing all three Carthusian treatises, *Liber alphabeti is* distinguished more by what it lacks than by what it contains: there are no speculations on the origins of music or categorizations of its relation to human activities; no advanced discourse; no lengthy discussion of ratios, stars, and planetary motion; no list of Muses; no complicated diagrams; no abstract philosophy.

[1] A version of the famous legend of the founding of the Order may be found in Dennis Martin, *Fifteenth-Century Carthusian Reform: The World of Nicholas Kempf* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992) 258–259. The "Miracle of Paris" story tells of a brilliant professor at the University of Paris who, in 1082, fell ill and subsequently died. On three separate occasions during the funeral rites, his corpse rose from its bier, announcing to those present the accusations against the professor and his condemnation before the throne of God. These events deeply disturbed the scholar Bruno of Reims, who was visiting Paris at that same time. Bruno knew the deceased as a renowned teacher, beloved by his students, intelligent, and knew he had led an upright life. His conclusion, that the verdant meadow of university culture had much to answer for, led him and several friends to depart into the wilderness of Chartreuse to start life anew.

Instead, we are given an instruction manual on how to sing accurately and pleasantly, on how to find one's place amidst a myriad of psalm tones and, most important for novices entering a silent Order, on how to sing in a community.

The author presents each concept in methodical fashion, often with the aid of summaries, lists, notated examples and, on two occasions, with paradigms modeled on those from the discipline of rhetoric. Topics and examples are presented in contexts familiar to the Carthusian community. The author references specific chants from the Carthusian Offices of Vespers, Matins and Lauds,[2] and in addition to the usual authoritative quotations from Priscian, Aristotle, and Boethius, there are citations from two *auctoritates* familiar to Carthusians: Roger Caperon, and the *magister notabilis musicus* Arnoldus, very likely Heinrich Arnoldi von Ahlfeld, the beloved and musically talented prior of the Basel charterhouse during the late fifteenth century.[3]

We can discern a great deal about the Val di Pesio community by examining the author's unusual syntax, which alternates between simplistic description and more complicated idiomatic constructions. An indication that there has been a change in the expected intellectual complement of the community is revealed in two places, fol. 26v ff. and fol. 37r ff., where there are passages which uniquely exemplify musical discussion by means of rhetorical paradigm. The first time we encounter this tactic is in the section on the modal finals beginning on fol. 26v. The author presents a paradigm, in the form of a workbook, which identifies the function of each final. The workbook style resembles examples from treatises on grammar and rhetoric. In this case, however, the details of the explanation in fact relate to the grammar of the paradigm and not to any of the musical information (*Figure 3*).

[2] The communal offices of the Order. Fully-professed Carthusian monks spent the greater part of their days in the confines of their two-story cells and individual gardens. With the exception of festival days, each choir monk would leave his cell only twice a day: at sunset, when the community joined to sing Vespers, and again just before midnight, to join in singing the combined offices of Matins and Lauds. Meals were usually eaten in solitude as well, with the *gamella*, a can of bread and kitchen leftovers, delivered once a day to each monk by one of the laybrothers and passed through a slit in the wall near the door of each cell. Otherwise, each monk was responsible for his own corporeal sustenance, prepared from weekly rations and the fruits of his own vegetable garden. See *Consuetudines Cartusie* 14:5.

[3] Arnoldi (1407–87), is known to have composed at least two Office settings, see Heinrich Hüschen, "Kartäuser", in *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart; allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Musik. Unter Mitarbeit zahlreicher Musikforscher des In- und Auslandes,* 17 vols, ed. Friedrich Blume (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1949–86) vol. 7, cols. 706–714. Roger Caperon's *Commentum super cantum* was known to Carthusians through its circulation in the manuscript Ursino Recupero D.39 (Catania: Biblioteche Riunite Civica E. Antonio Ursino Recupero), Saec. XV.

Huntington Library MS FI 5096

fol. 26v –27r//
Tercius *e* vel *b* regitur,
quartique finis habetur

Construcio sequitur
27r Tercius tonus suple regitur *e* gravi vel *b* accuto, que pro et,
et finis quarti habetur in *e* gravi vel in *b* accuto: –

Regula sequitur:
Quasi dicat quod tercius tonus et iiii^{s} finiuntur in *e la mi* gravi vel in *b fa b mi* accuto.
Quintus in *f*, vel in *c* finem,
sextus quoque poscit eundem.

Construcio sequitur
Quintus tonus suple, habet suple, finem in *f* gravi vel in *c* accuto quoque id est certe.
Sextus tonus suple possit id requirit eundem, finem suple.

Regula est hec:
Quasi dicat que quintus et sextus finiuntur in *f fa ut* gravi vel in *c sol fa ut*.

Figure 3

The paradigm is an established one, found in many other treatises, among them, the anonymous Carthusian *Tractatus*. Yet the author presents it here as if explaining the syntactical structure of the verses. For example, the passage beginning *Quintus in f vel in c finem* is directed to be filled in with very obvious terms: *quintus tonus suple, habet suple*, and elementary concepts: *sextus tonus suple possit id requirit eundem, finem suple*, which readers with a basic comprehension of Latin (or, at least enough to be reading the treatise) would find unnecessary. Since the majority of Carthusian professions during the later middle ages came from disillusioned academics and transfers from other monastic orders who desired more austerity and solitude in their daily lives, the level of scholarship and literacy among the choir monks in the Order was very high, thus supporting our expectations concerning the speculative treatises mentioned earlier. The elementary presentation of the paradigm here is therefore puzzling, and leads us to wonder what change might have taken place within the Val di Pesio community which would necessitate such an approach. For whom was the author writing, and why was instruction in Latin inserted along with musical information?

An answer can be found in the monastery's chronicle. Compiled by Stephan de Crivalo in the late fifteenth century, the chronicle relates that beginning in 1343 and for well over a century, Val di Pesio had been beset by a variety of troubles: military invasions, land disputes, agricultural disasters, and two episodes of plague.[4] More than once the community was forced to

[4] Dom Stephan's chronicle is found in Biagio Caranti, *La certosa di Pesio: storia illustrata e documentata,* 2 vols. (Turin: Bertolero, 1900).

abandon the grounds, hiding in the surrounding mountains. At the onset of the difficulties, the monastery, which had been founded in 1173, had extensive holdings, including sizable pasture lands, dairies, mines, and grain mills, overseen by a community of twenty to forty members.[5] Numbers declined as the charterhouse sustained numerous bandit attacks; a brutal one in 1458 left both the prior and procurator with broken legs and noses.

The year 1481 marked the beginning of a peace and protection agreement with the neighboring community of Chiusa. In the following year, Dom Ricardus Trotus was transferred from the charterhouse at Lucca and installed as the charterhouse's sixtieth prior. Ordinarily Carthusian priors were elected from within the community, but Val di Pesio had suffered an enormously high turnover for the office during the fifteenth century; in the years between 1440 and 1460 alone, three priors were granted transfers, several died in office and two renounced their vows completely. Ricardus Trotus' stable, twelve-year leadership provided much needed direction for the struggling community. The number of monks under his authority swelled to thirty and during his tenure Val di Pesio saw the new professions of seven choir monks and at least one *conversus*.[6] The novices came primarily from the surrounding areas of Piedmont – areas which had been equally devastated by the tumults of the preceding era – and it is most likely that the plainchant treatise was intended to help educate these local newcomers.

The skills of Carthusian novices were assessed upon entrance to their community and any deficiencies in reading and writing Latin were either remedied immediately or the novice directed to serving as a *conversi,* or laybrother. However, the copy date of *Liber alphabeti*, between 1482 and 1487, coincides with a brief period of outward pastoral focus by the Carthusian Order, with an emphasis toward reading and preserving texts in the vernacular. The ultimate beneficiaries of the movement were, in fact, the *conversi,* who were allowed and encouraged to read vernacular literature during their limited private study time. The new Val di Pesio novices would have been most familiar with the dialect of the Piedmont, and this may explain the many occurrences of Piedmontese spellings for Latin words in the document.[7] Their probable deficiency in Latin would provide a reason for the dual-purpose paradigm for the modal finals discussed earlier.

[5] The preferred number for a Carthusian foundation was thirteen, paralleling the community of Christ and disciples. The chronicle indicates that during good times Val di Pesio was a very large institution and its property remained vast up to the time of its dispersement in 1802.

[6] Caranti, *La Certosa di Pesio*, II:200 ff.

[7] In the second sentence, for example, Γ is spelled out as it would have been pronounced: *guama.*

Seemingly analogous with his Order's focus on pastoral care, in a number of places in the treatise the author adapts his rôle as cantor and theorist to one of advisor and counselor. As such we find him disparaging those scholars who abandon both good judgement and good sound (*bene sonat*), in order to adhere to established rules (*tenentes firmis racionibus in suis codicibus*). He admonishes his readers to pay attention to what is being sung, emphasizing the importance of careful listening and knowledge of repertory. A directive to sing what sounds good, rather than rely on a written text, places the author firmly among practical musicians. In his eyes, the obligation for an accurate performance rests entirely with the singer.[8] There is always a chance for error in written music; the sense and direction of a melody should, therefore, take precedence, even though the process of singing it might go against an established rule.[9] A singer, then, should be conversant in both rules and melodies in order to sing securely. He provides rote responses for his readers in order to help them counter the arguments of those holding different opinions. "However, give the following opinion to satisfy anyone who asks you, that there are seven in class and twenty in number", is his suggestion for discussions concerning the number of letters in the gamut; on how the gamut is divided he offers: "Nevertheless, believe whatever you want, the first opinion is the more common one, but the second seems to be more correct."[10] In the concluding *tonarium*, he provides an example of a psalm intonation for each of the modes, noting in detail how it should be sung. Additionally, he notes and describes alternate and incorrect versions that he has encountered, an indication that he has traveled. The author warns his readers that if they find discrepancies with the way they have learned to sing psalms when they are in other monasteries, that it is important to honor the practices of the immediate community.[11] His message is clear: here are the tools for learning to sing, use them to sing confidently, sing well, but most important of all, have harmony in your actions: *cum bona fit concordia maxime in choro* (fol. 44r). For this fifteenth-century Carthusian, concordance in sound started with concordance in behavior.

The concept of conformity and concordance within constructed communities is an important one. Every Carthusian charterhouse was reviewed regu-

[8] *Tamen cantor debet habere discretionem ad incipiendum cantus conversationem, quia est aliquis cantus qui bene sonat per b quadratum et male per b molle. Et alius est cantus qui est e contra videlicet sonat bene per b molle et male per b quadratum. Et sic cantor debet semper cantare per proprietatem seu decuctionem que melius sonat* (fol. 20v).

[9] After all, there is usually no rule that does not allow an exception (*non est aliqua regula quin paciatur exceptionem*) fol. 19v.

[10] *sed tu, dic ad satisfaciendum opinioni cuiuslibet quod septem sunt specie*; and *tene tamen quod volueris, prima opinio est communior, secunda videtur esse verior* (fol. 2r).

[11] *Tene tamen illud quod tenebitur in ecclesiis* (fols. 43r–44v).

larly by two Visitors, senior monks whose purpose was to hear any and all complaints from the oldest prior to the newest *conversus*, to offer suggestions for resolving conflict, and to make reports to the General Chapter at the *Chartreuse*. In the treatise *De suspicionibus* from 1451, Carthusian spiritual reformist Nicholas Kempf describes some of the conflicts. Kempf explains that since Carthusian monks spend so much time alone it is natural for them to harbor suspicions about each other when they meet communally. Carthusians met conventually only twice a day; meals, work, and prayer were otherwise completed in solitude. Choir monks said a daily Mass in their cells, were encouraged to join conventual Masses on Sundays and festivals, but could be excused for as much as a month at a time. For the most part, verbal interaction between monks was limited to the structure of the office and usually sung. Without context or opportunity for explanations it was an easy matter to misread a neighbor's facial expression in choir, to assign nefarious intent to a particularly loud or soft singing dynamic, or to misinterpret voice inflection and bodily gesture as out of the ordinary. The most frequent source of contention concerned liturgical style: tempo, volume, voice timbre, and manner of recitation.

Very little has been written about the practice of music within Carthusian charterhouses and, significantly, the content of *Liber alphabeti* challenges much of the information put forward in these studies.[12] The requisite manner for monastic singing is briefly outlined in the eighteenth chapter of the *Ordinarium Cartusiense*. It is essentially a summary of the thoughts of Guigo I, the seminal prior who documented the organizing precepts of his Order in the mid-twelfth century. Despite the prominence of liturgy in the daily interactions of the Carthusian community, Guigo cautions his monks not to spend valuable time in learning chant, but rather in prayer, in mourning for the world, and in anticipating the Second Coming.[13] But we can piece together a picture of the musical life of Carthusian communities by looking at a variety of sources: the Visitor's reports to the General Chapter, the anonymous writings

[12] One discrepancy concerns a direct reference to the use of the monochord (fol. 9v). This reference is of some importance, as it gives an indication for how it was used. Both the *Ritus canendi* and the anonymous *Tractatus* contain sections on the monochord, yet the scholars writing in this area today either imply or emphatically declare that the Carthusians did not allow its use. See Carol Steyn, "The Principle of Simplicity (*Einfachheitsprinzip*) in Carthusian Chant as an Expression of the Carthusian Way of Life: A Musicological Survey," in *Die mystische Tradition und die Kartäuser*, International Congress 20–23 September 1995. *Analecta Cartusiana* 130 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1996) 167.

[13] De modo cantande et psallendi: *Quia boni monachi officium est plangere potius quam cantare, sic cantemus voce, ut planctus, non cantus delectatio sit in corde; quod, Dei gratia praeveniente, poterit fieri, si ea, quae, cantando, vanam seu vitiosam delectationem afferunt, amputentur, ut est fractio et inundatio vocis, geminatio puncti et similia, quae potius ad curiositatem attinent quam ad devotum et simplicem cantum. Analecta Cartusiana* 99/10:86.

of the monks themselves, and the often graphic descriptions of charterhouse guests.[14] Treatises like *Liber alphabeti* help provide a context.

Instructions for intoning the Psalms, found in a sacristan's manual from the charterhouse at Valsainte, suggest the desired tempo was extremely slow; many communities took over three hours to complete the liturgy. James Hogg has determined the synaxis of the charterhouse in London where, in the fifteenth century, the community began their night office at 10 PM and finished the final responsory around 3:30 AM. Visitor's reports to the General Chapter tell us that the prior of that London charterhouse was known to storm out of his church with indignation on the few occasions that his flock attempted to shorten the time.

It appears that Val di Pesio was not spared its share of liturgical contention. A Visitor's report for 1428 contains advice for resolving an ongoing conflict between one monk and the rest of the Val di Pesio community over the time taken for the conventual Mass. The complaint centers on one monk, a certain Anthony de Aviliana, who, his brethren insist, takes far too long for the liturgy. He sings so slowly that the entire *horarium* is delayed as a result. The Visitors counsel restraint. They suggest that Brother Anthony "exercise more self control over his delays" and remind the rest of the monks that they are not meant to rush.[15] This conflict was documented just a few years prior to the worst of the hardships befalling the charterhouse and before the copy date of the treatise.

Anthony de Aviliana's name appears several times in the Visitor's reports during successive years, as well as in the monastery chronicle. There is some discrepancy in the dates associated with him: in 1428 the Visitors have Brother Anthony already established within the Val di Pesio community; but the chronicle records his full profession in 1447. One entry records his death in 1458, perhaps a casualty of one of the attacks, but another places his death in 1527. Amidst the inconsistencies, though, a portrait emerges of one Anthony Lecoque de Aviliana, who is easily identified as one of the most prominent and musical monks at Val di Pesio. He appears to have been well traveled; his name is linked with charterhouses in Asti and Milan, as well as his native Avigliana.[16] Referred to as *cantor liquescor* in the monastery chronicle,

[14] One of the most colorful accounts comes from the 18th-c. German traveler, Karl Philip Moritz (d. 1793). Permitted to attend a Carthusian night office, Moritz found that the darkness of the church combined with the slow pace of the chant resulted in such a terrifying experience that he ran away into the night, leaving behind his belongings. Hüschen describes his ordeal in detail in "*Kartauser*," MGG, vol. 7, col. 711.

[15] *et monachi habeant patientiam de prolixitate domni Antonii de avilliana, quem etiam monemus ut moderetur suam prolixitatem quantum poterit bono modo, et monachos monemusne* [sic] *nimis festinent in missis suis. Cartae Capituli Generalis 1411–1436,* vol. 3. ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institute for English and American Studies, 1985) 16–17 .

[16] These charterhouses, like Val di Pesio were located within the same administrative province by the General Chapter.

Brother Anthony sang his Office and Mass slowly and emphatically, in a manner seemingly encouraged by the General Chapter. Though he gained respect for his devotion, it appears he was not open to compromise, hence the need for the Visitors' admonishments. The Val di Pesio chronicle cites recollections from Brother Anthony's servers; when he was celebrating, the Mass would sometimes take so long that the servers could slip out for something to eat between tasks, as the monk sang on in reverential unawareness.[17]

The original source of *Liber alphabeti* may have been the notes of a scholar, someone who was competent and well-traveled like Anthony de Aviliana. But whether or not its contents were drawn directly from Brother Anthony himself, his legacy had to have been known and valued by the eventual author of the treatise. It is also probable that this author would have known of the conflict concerning Brother Anthony of a generation earlier, and saw the treatise as a means of emphasizing the importance of conformity within the community. Perhaps in the hope of avoiding future reprimands, the author of the treatise scatters advice throughout his work, concerned not only with better singing, but also with better singing behavior.

Because of Guigo's priorizations, the study of plainchant and singing in the Carthusian community was relegated to a novice's study time, to be learned in solitude with the help of texts such as *Liber alphabeti*. Treatises like it were useful both as introductory manuals and as sources for those who had studied music elsewhere. Carthusian practice dictated that if at least five monks were present for worship, the Mass and requisite Offices must be sung. Yet because of the ease with Carthusians were excused from conventual participation, in even a large institution such as Val di Pesio, the chances of a full complement of monks appearing together for worship at one time were slender. Thus, each voice in choir needed to be able to execute the chants of the liturgy competently. Carthusian novices, such as the eight who joined the Val di Pesio community under Dom Ricardus, faced a unique problem: how to learn the chants of the Mass and Office – especially those peculiar to the Order – while spending a remarkably limited time singing in the company of others, with no verbal instruction and with no written reference readily available to them during the times they sang. *Liber alphabeti* seems to have been a very important means of helping to accomplish that task.

The value of the treatise is determined not by its content, but rather for what it tells us about learning and interaction in the lives of Carthusian novices. Unlike the treatises more familiar to us, ones which concern ideals, this one instead documents actual practice. As it served succeeding groups of novices

[17] Caranti II:297.

entering Val di Pesio after 1481, it fulfilled a useful purpose for them and provides for us a record of practical knowledge about chant as it was known and taught during the mid-fifteenth century. Although it provides only the rudiments of practical theory, those rudiments are presented within the context of the Carthusian synaxis, along with guidance for achieving communal identity among its fifteenth-century readers. The existence of the treatise demonstrates how newcomers transitioned to life in a silent community by assimilating verbal concepts through the written word. It tells us not just how to sing chant, but how the members of these communities learned to sing with confidence, to interact, to adjust, and to compromise while remaining silent. The author's advice serves as a timeless reminder of the purpose and difficulties surrounding every Carthusian: the joy of solitude and the inherent challenge of life within such a community.