Carmina Burana: vom Codex zum Klang

Carmina Burana: From Source to Sound

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Abstracts

Thursday 20 November 2025, 13:30–17:30

Giulia Gabrielli (Freie Universität Bozen)
The *Codex Buranus* in the Context of South Tyrolean Sources

The *Codex Buranus* is as celebrated as it is enigmatic. More than two centuries after its rediscovery in the library of the Benedictine monastery of Benediktbeuren, several fundamental questions concerning this remarkable manuscript songbook remain unresolved and continue to stimulate debate among scholars. One of the most crucial issues concern its origin and purpose: by whom was it written, for whom, and, above all, where? Recent scholarship increasingly supports the hypothesis that the *Codex Buranus* originated in a South Tyrolean milieu. The Augustinian monastery of Novacella/Neustift and the nearby episcopal city of Bressanone have been identified as the most plausible centres of compilation. Over the past fifteen years, Novacella, Bressanone, and the wider South Tyrolean region have been the focus of extensive research conducted under the auspices of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, aimed at rediscovering and analysing the liturgical and musical sources preserved in the area – sources that were little known, if at all, before the inception of these studies. This paper outlines the principal features of the *Codex Buranus*, explores its possible connections with South Tyrolean sources and cultural context, and proposes some potential new avenues for future research.

Kelly Landerkin (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Basel)
Invention and Imitation in the Early Recordings of the *Carmina Burana*

Abstract: In 1964, 30 years after Carl Orff happened upon the text edition of the Buranus manuscript that became the foundation for his monumental *Carmina Burana*, the first recordings with music based on the medieval manuscript appeared on the commercial market. As the earliest, the releases of Thomas Binkley's Studio der frühen Musik may either represent the first evidence of an inevitable cultural moment – something already in the air – or they may mark the irresistible influence of a role model ripe for imitation. Within a few short years of Binkley's seminal albums, both Konrad Ruhland's Capella Antiqua München and the Clemencic Consort released their own, themselves followed by countless others. This paper will explore the connections between the first generation of musical productions in terms of their chosen selections, realizations and interpretations. Where is the individual creative voice audible, and where does the gravitational pull of previous performance decisions create an implicit interpretational consensus?

Christelle Cazaux (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Basel)
The *Codex Buranus*: What It Is and How It Was Made

This paper reassesses the material, textual, and musical construction of the *Codex Buranus* (Clm 4660/4660a) and proposes new insights into its purpose and modes of use. The manuscript emerges as a composite volume shaped over a long period, through successive campaigns of copying, rubrication, notation, and later additions. Its present 18th-century binding conceals a far more complex earlier history: multiple quires are missing, several extant ones were reordered, and

fragments later identified by W. Meyer (Clm 4660a) once formed part of the main volume. Codicological evidence indicates at least two earlier binding phases preceding the current one.

The traditional tripartite division of the manuscript (seria, amatoria, potatoria et lusoria), introduced by J. A. Schmeller in 1847, proves unsatisfactory. The manuscript's few surviving rubrics, combined with its internal thematic structure, suggest a more nuanced sequence involving serious pieces, *jubili*, lament, spring and love songs, drinking and gambling songs, as well as goliardic texts, plays and various additions.

The scribal situation is likewise more complex than previously assumed. Similar plurality affects the musical notation. Earlier scholarship identified four or five main notational hands for the song part, but a closer analysis shows that all except one added their neumes long after the texts were copied, after rubrication and even after the late campaign of initials. These late, hesitant, and frequently corrected notations reflects practical use rather than formal book production.

Altogether, the *Codex Buranus* was extensively read, handled, corrected, and augmented from the 13th into the 14th century. Rather than a luxury anthology or a collector's songbook, it appears as an evolving working manuscript for clerics and scholares engaged in the study, performance, and memorization of Latin and vernacular song.

Marina Bernasconi-Reusser (Université de Lausanne)
Der Buchschmuck des Clm 4660 mit den *Carmina Burana*. Wohin mit den Miniaturen?

Die Handschrift Clm 4660, bekannt als *Codex Buranus*, scheint nicht nur eine Herausforderung für die Interpretation der Texte und der musikalischen Notation zu sein, sondern auch für den Herstellungsort des gesamten Bildschmucks, der Initialen und der Miniaturen.

Während die ikonographische Interpretation der Miniaturen heute klar und allgemein akzeptiert scheint, reichen die Vorschläge für den Herstellungsort von Kärnten über die Steiermark bis nach Südtirol.

Ziel des Beitrags ist es, nicht nur den illustrativen, sondern auch den dekorativen Apparat der Handschrift im Verhältnis zu den darin enthaltenen Texten zu analysieren und eine Bestandesaufnahme der verschiedenen Vorschläge zur geographischen Zuordnung vorzunehmen.

Friday 21 November 2025, 9:15–12:45

Solomon Guhl-Miller (Rutgers – The State University of New Jersey)
A Possible Digital Edition of the Music of the Codex Buranus

The problems with transcribing the songs of the *Codex Buranus* are well-known. The notation is adiastematic and the concordances frequently differ from what we see in the CB in terms of phrase shapes and numbers of notes. How then ought an edition be organized? Heike Sigrid Lammers-Harlander offers numerous figures in which the adiastemic notation is laid on top of the square notation found in (for example) Florence 29.1 which allows readers to see the discrepancies amongst the sources which use adiastemic notation, and the discrepancies between the sources using adiestemic notations and those using square notations. This is useful for the scholar and editor, but

presents a challenge to the performer. Most performers require fixed pitches and rhythms, and while Lammers-Harlander has presented rhythmicized versions of several songs from the collection following Romanian folk music models, most of the music has not been presented in clear modern transcriptions. The proposed edition attempts to solve this by addressing the repertoire in three ways that are only possible through a digital edition: 1. A Comparative view in which users will be able to view each song in the collection with its concordances all given in their original notations on a single page; 2. An Interpretive view in which users will be able to view each song in multiple modern interpretations side by side; 3. A Performance view in which users can create a practical performing edition from a combination of original notation or modern transcriptions according to what fits the ensembles' or the director's vision of a performance of the work(s), and then further edit them as a musicxml file in the software of their choice. This paper will walk through what this proposed edition may look like with a few key examples of works from the *Codex Buranus*.

Ugo Bindini (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Basel)
Benefits and Duties of Digital Means in Editing the *Carmina Burana*

This paper aims to explore the application of digital tools in the ongoing project *Carmina Burana* Online, a digital edition currently under development. The creation of a digital edition involves careful consideration of the types of information to be captured, as well as the methods for encoding and organizing various layers of a musical work in a digital format. This process must ensure that the resulting data is not only accessible and queryable but also easily shareable across different platforms and users. Special attention will be given to the challenges and opportunities involved in editing pieces that are notated adiastematically. The paper will examine how a digital edition of such works, when combined with artistic research, can provide tools to pass from the parchment to sound.

Agnieszka Budzińska Bennett (Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg)
Venite Exultemus – Come, let us exalt the Lord. Two New Concordances of Philip the Chancellor in Kraków

A visit some years ago to the Provincial Archives of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual in Cracow resulted in the discovery of fragments of unidentified monophonic and polyphonic pieces. According to the description on the envelope, the mutilated remnants were part of a thirteenth- and fourteenth-century codex previously kept in the possessions of the Poor Clares – the order known for owning some folios of thirteenth-century Parisian repertory. What I could retrieve from the Cracow fragments proved to be stunning. Apart from unknown two-part *lectiones* (one complete), I could recover several new musical concordances of conductus or non-liturgical sequences otherwise found in Central European sources. Most important, however, was the discovery of the two new concordances of the works by Philip the Chancellor (after 1160-1236). The first one is the broadly transmitted Marian sequence *Ave gloriosa virginum regina*, opening the whole fascicle with Latin works ascribed to Philip in the 13th-century manuscript known as LoD (London, British Library, Egerton 274). The second one is *Venite exultemus*, so far known as a text only. It appears in a thirteenth-century Italian source (Roma, Vat. lat. 1058) and in the late medieval Basler Liederhandschrift (Basel, Universitäts-bibliothek, B XI 8) with the latter source ascribing it to Philip. This attribution has often been

considered doubtful, but the Cracow source transmitting *Venite exultemus* with music (and this almost complete) might be a game-changer. Thus, this paper will explore the possibility of a more secure attribution of *Venite exultemus* to Philip based on the newly gained insight into its melody and structure, its transmission, and its particular context. At the end of the presentation, a premiere live performance of this piece will be offered with the first and the last verse re-composed, thus addressing the questions of modal reconstruction.

Richard Robinson (University of Cambridge)
Instrumental Participation in the Leiche, Sequences and Descorts in the *Codex Buranus*

The *leich* (or *lai*: a double-versicle sequence comprising unequal strophes) represents one of the most complex and enigmatic lyric genres of the Middle Ages together with the related *descort* (in irregular strophes) and *sequence* (in double versicles). These three poetic forms are well represented in the *Codex Buranus* (= CB), particularly in its love poems section (CB 56–CB 186), including in examples by Philip the Chancellor and Peter of Blois; collectively, the subject matter of CB's *leiche*, *descorts* and *sequences* ranges from church satire to the joys of love and even drinking songs. Alongside versification and melody, the question of instrumental accompaniment also represents a central issue which is pertinent to these genres.

This paper will explore evidence for this latter research question, beginning with the Latin *lais* and *modi* (as hinted at, for example, in the Latin *lai* CB 60) before considering possible performance practice relationships with vernacular Middle High German *leiche* and Old French or Anglo-Norman *lais*. Amongst others, the famous account of Tristan's self-accompanied *leiche* on a harp in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* (c. 1210) will be revisited in order to ascertain exactly what such descriptions can tell us about actual performance of lyric such as that found in CB. Two particular case studies – songs CB 97 ('O Antioche') and CB 98 ('Troie post excidum') – will also be analysed in relation to the question of evidence for accompaniment. Finally, the paper will touch upon possible ways of reconstructing instrumental participation beyond the confines of surviving evidence as a means of opening up the discussion for future research.

Friday 21 November 2025, 14:30–18:15

Davide Daolmi (Università degli Studi di Milano)
Musical Ghosts: The Goliardic Verse in the *Codex Buranus*

The goliardic verse enjoyed notable popularity between the 12th and 13th centuries. Fueled by the myth of the goliards, it is often associated with irreverent poetry. However, goliardic verse was employed for lyrics covering a wide range of themes, and the myth of the goliards and wandering clerics largely emerges as a construct of Romantic historiography. The defining characteristics of this verse are therefore primarily metrical and musical, and rather than constituting a distinct genre, they appear to outline a mode of conveying content. Unfortunately, despite its widespread diffusion, very few surviving melodies can be attributed to goliardic verse – a lack of documentation that should be understood as indicative of this form's performative purposes. This paper examines the

goliardic verses of the *Codex Buranus*, reflecting on potential musical reconstructions, in an effort to elucidate the defining elements of this elusive verse and its role within the context of medieval Latin lyric poetry of the time.

Matthieu Romanens (Universität Basel / Schola Cantorum Basiliensis)
Within The Rhythmic and Melodic Nexus of the Bilingual Songs

The macaronic and bilingual songs of the *Codex Buranus* – in which several Latin stanzas are concluded by a German stanza – reveal a striking rhythmic affinity between the Latin verses and Middle High German lyric lines. Macaronic songs present themselves as unified compositions, traversed by a poetic rhythm that thrives on linguistic interplay. A comparable logic governs the bilingual songs: they adhere to the dynamics of the Latin *ritmus*, structured around the addition of a fixed number (*numerus*) of syllables, organized and varied through rhyme and accent. I argue that it is precisely this cumulative logic that enables the seamless integration of a stanza in a foreign language in the final position.

Three bilingual songs, CB146, 147 and 151, all notated with neumes for both the Latin and German sections (for the latter section at least partially), will serve as case studies. On the textual level, I will examine correspondences as well as rhythmic interferences between the two constituent parts of each song. On the musical level, I will analyze melodic variation from one language to the other as reflected in the neumatic notation: does this variation arise from prosodic differences in German, from a deliberate effort to provide a clear closure to the performance, or from both?

Finally, I will propose a possible reconstruction of the melody of one of these songs, which will be performed in its bilingual form at the subsequent Minnesang Concert. In this way, *ad judicium aurium*, we can deepen our understanding of poetic-musical rhythm across languages and assess the impact of melodic variation in the conclusive stanza.

Anne-Zoé Rillon-Marne (Université catholique de l'Ouest, Angers)
***Carmina Burana* in the Classroom : a Didactic Approach to Performance Practice**

Some of the pieces in the *Codex Buranus* have enjoyed great discographic success, especially thanks to the existence of melodic concordances with other manuscripts. However, these few hits should not hide the difficulties that this large collection of texts and songs poses for performers. The *Carmina Burana* themselves brings together many of the problems faced by musicians involved in medieval music. Performers need to fill in the uncertainties of the manuscript through their knowledge and comparisons with other repertoires, or through their own creativity. How do such questions apply to a pedagogical context? How are the *Carmina Burana* approached in the classroom, and to what extent can they help us teach the issues at stake when performing medieval music?

As part of the *Carmina Burana Online project*, teachers and students worked to put the research questions into practice. The didactic challenge is played out at several levels, engaging in a creative-research approach by working with the scholars involved in the project, reporting on scientific advances, and contributing to solve musicological hypotheses through practice. During the spring semester of 2025, I followed the teachers and their students in the classroom in order to observe and analyse how the issues raised above are present in teaching situations and how much the *Carmina*

Burana have become key to pedagogical questions. The result of this investigation takes the form of an audio documentary (podcast). My communication includes a presentation of the methods and issues at stake, followed by the broadcasting of the podcast, leading to a discussion with the audience and project participants.

Saturday 22 November 2025, 9:00–12:30

Mark Everist (University of Southampton)
Hercules Slaying Monsters, Aristippus Advising Diogenes: Classical Allusion, the Conductus and the *Carmina Burana*

The classical impulse in the *Carmina Burana* is well known and impossible to ignore. Whether a sequence of poems about the Trojan wars, a *versus cum auctoritate* that depends on Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, or the unceasing invocation of Venus in the love song, classical antiquity – through allusion, quotation and citation – emerges from almost every leaf of the *Codex Buranus*. A particular emphasis on classical antiquity is found in the *conducti* transmitted there. Whereas, in the *conductus* repertory as a whole, works that allude to the Latin classics constitute only 5.2% of the *corpus*, the *Codex Buranus*, 29.4% --nearly a third-- of the *conducti* copied there look back to the literature and culture of Ancient Rome.

An examination of individual *conducti* demonstrates that not only does the *Codex Buranus* give a home to the classicising *conductus*, but in at least once case the artists responsible for the *Carmina Burana* took a work that previously had no relationship to classical antiquity, and changed its nature. 'Crucifigat omnes' is a widely circulated *conductus* that takes the image of *Domini crux altera* to lament the decline of the world, and is packed exclusively with complex Biblical quotation. The artists of the *Codex Buranus* added two further strophes to the three originals in order to clarify the meaning of the *conductus* but through the quotation of Ovid and Propertius. Reading the *conducti* in the *Codex Buranus* in this way problematises the transmission of not only polyphonic and monophonic music but the relationship between Latin poetry and song itself.

Anne-Zoé Rillon-Marne (Université catholique de l'Ouest, Angers)
***Codex Buranus* and Polyphonic Conductus : Agree to Disagree ?**

Among the concordances of the *Codex Buranus* with other musical manuscripts, there are some ten pieces that are known as polyphonic constructions. The widespread theory that the polyphonic versions came before the monodic neumatic ones has given rise to the idea of 'monophonic reductions'. This understanding rests on a supposed hierarchy among the sources, as well as on a *de facto* superiority granted to polyphony as notated in the anthologies associated with the 13th c. Parisian repertoire. However, this transmission has been questioned on several occasions (Flotzinger, Lammers, Knapp), assuming that some of these pieces may have circulated autonomously and monodically, before being reworked in the form of the polyphonic elaborations we know and categorized as conductus.

In this paper, I aim to pursue these tantalising reflections : on the one hand, by comparing the *codices* in their organisation and logic as the result of a compilation process involving a mixture of collection,

creation and re-creation ; on the other hand, I will explore the results of the musical analysis of this shadowy polyphonic corpus which never seems to have been considered as such. As it is not uniform, we will seek to identify different degrees of melodic autonomy in the monophonic pieces, and levels of precedence and determination in the elaboration of the polyphonic structures. In this way, I hope shedding more light on the phenomena of fluidity and transmissions of Latin songs, to which a source such as the *Codex Buranus* particularly bears witness.

Michael Eberle (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München)
Exempla in loco speciali. **Thoughts on Performing Ritual in the *Codex Buranus* Plays**

The plays in the *Codex Buranus* can all be considered early representatives of sacred plays going beyond the framework of actual liturgy. Nevertheless, their ritual function should not be underestimated. The introduction of No. 15* states: "*Cantatis matutinis in die pasche omnes persones ad ludum disposite sint parate in loco speciali...*" ("After the celebration of the Easter Matins, all performers assigned to the play should be prepared in a special place…"). The play is not only to be performed in the immediate context of the Matins but also in a special place. This particular localization goes with particular hermeneutics: a divine service outside the actual liturgy, a highly elaborated ritual, accompanied by the theatrical character of its performance. For such a structure, the question then arises as to the nature of its imple-mentation.

Based on a selection of specific passages, the proposed paper examines the plays of the *Codex Buranus* in terms of their ritual functions and considering consequences for their historical performance. After a general evaluation of their performance context and its hermeneutics based on the evidence given in the manuscript, the argument will focus on quotations from the liturgy and related liturgical plays. For such contexts, the tense relationship between ritual and theatre-like performance will be weighed and evaluated in order to derive consequences for the way in which the performance might have been carried out.

Due to the fragmentary evidence, such problems cannot be finally solved. However, the goal of the paper is to outline the ritual character of sacred plays and to reflect upon its consequences for a staged performance.

Laura Albiero (Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, Basel)
The Passion in Performance: Staging and Music in the *Codex Buranus*

This paper focuses on the musical dimension of the Passion Play in the *Codex Buranus*, showing how the work combines pieces with clear concordances to established liturgical chants and others that are entirely original, without parallels. Through the analysis of melodic patterns and structure, it becomes evident that the Passion was conceived as a performative sequence alternating between narrative recitation, chant, and lyrical insertions. Such alternation not only structures the drama musically but also suggests a form of staged performance in which different voices interacted to heighten the emotional and devotional intensity of the Passion story. The *Codex Buranus* thus emerges as a crucial witness to a moment when liturgical music, poetic creativity, and performative practice converged, transforming the Passion from a recited narrative into a living act of musical performance.