

## The music

<b>Aires Nunes</b>	<i>¡Bailemos!</i>
<b>Cantiga 137</b>	<i>Sempr'acha Santa Maria</i>
<b>Cantiga 155</b>	<i>Ali u a pendenza</i>
<b>Cantiga 158</b>	<i>De muitas guisas los presos</i>
<b>Cantiga 281</b>	<i>U alguen a Jesucristo</i>
<b>Cantiga 207</b>	<i>Se ome fezér de grado</i>
<b>Anon</b>	<i>Cuncti simus concanentes</i>
<b>Guillaume de Machaut</b>	<i>Douce dame jolie</i>
<b>Wallada, Princess of Cordoba</b>	<i>Ana wallahi</i>
<b>trad Sephardic</b>	<i>Al pasar por Sevilla</i>

**Alfonso X of Castile** (**‘the Wise’**) was a polymath – poet, astronomer, historian and lawyer. During his reign (1252-84) he established a cosmopolitan court, encouraging all aspects of learning and arranging for many important Arabic and Classical works to be translated into the vernacular.

The poems in the great collection *Cantigas de Santa Maria* are attributed at least in part to Alfonso, and there’s no doubt that he was responsible for having them assembled into one volume. Written in Galician-Portuguese (Alfonso spent his early years in Galicia), there are 420 poems in all. 356 of them are narratives describing miracles performed by the Virgin Mary, while the others are hymns of praise or refer to Mary in some other way.

The music to which the poems are set is as varied as the stories themselves, with echoes of conductus, sequences and motets of the School of Notre Dame, of French *lais*, Provençal troubadour melodies, the *Cantigas d’amigo*, and the folk songs and dances of Galicia and Castile – a true summary of contemporary musical culture.

As a self-styled troubadour of the Blessed Virgin, Alfonso wanted to renew the bonds that tied ordinary men of all classes to the spiritual world. There’s a story and a miracle to suit everyone and it’s probable that the *Cantigas* were sung and danced in processions and in churches – as well as at inns for general amusement. They didn’t just testify to accounts of miraculous cures: by taking part in their performances, you could yourself be cured of your own sickness and sin.

One of the many contributors to the *Cantigas*, **Aires Nunes** (c1230-93) was a Galician cleric and troubador. *¡Bailemos!* (‘Let’s dance!’) is a wonderfully rousing start to our evening – please try and stay in your seats.

**From the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*:**

***Cantiga 137. ‘The Lascivious Knight’.*** A knight found himself overcome with lust – no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t

resist temptation. The devil was constantly tempting him and leading him into sin.

The knight then prayed to the Virgin to free him from this lust. Realizing that the knight’s soul was in danger, she decided to cure him of the vice. The cure? She made him impotent. The result? Even when the knight wanted to sin, he found himself unable to.

***Cantiga 155. ‘The Thieving Knight’.*** A knight in Alexandria was an unrepentant thief. But growing old, he went to a holy man to confess his misdeeds and ask for absolution. The holy man told him to go on pilgrimage, but the knight refused. He also objected to fasting and giving alms. Finally, the hermit asked him to fetch him a tankard of water. Pardon for his sins would follow.

The knight went off to fetch water from a spring, but when he tried to fill the tankard he couldn’t catch a drop. Going to a nearby river, the water drained away. For two years he couldn’t get any water, not even a sip to drink.

At a complete loss, he finally prayed to the Virgin, asking her to allow him to fill his tankard. As he said this, he wept. Two of his tears landed in it, and it was immediately full. Returning to the hermit and recounting the miracle, they both praised the Virgin.

***Cantiga 158. ‘The Imprisoned Knight’.*** A knight was captured, bound in chains, and held for ransom in prison. When his lord failed to redeem him, the knight prayed to the Virgin to release him. The Virgin then appeared to the knight, broke his bonds and led him out of the prison. No one obstructed him, although many people saw him leave.

The Virgin told the knight to go to Rocamadour. Although his captors pursued him, he did this, hung his chains in the monastery at Rocamadour and told the monks of the miracle.

***Cantiga 281. ‘The Devil’s Vassal’.*** A high-ranking French knight had nothing but misfortune. Everything he did turned out badly and he lost all his possessions.

As he was pondering his woes, the devil, in human form, approached the knight and promised to restore his wealth if he’d agree to be his vassal. The knight accepted the bargain and kissed the devil’s hand. Then the devil ordered him to deny God and all the saints. Reluctantly the knight did so – but refused to deny Holy Mary. He did promise, however, never to enter a church.

One day the knight went with the King to hear a sermon. Holding back as others entered the church, he could see a statue of the Virgin beckoning him to enter. The King said that the Virgin must be happy with him but the knight feared she was angry and explained to the King the pact he’d made with the devil.

The knight repented and renounced the devil, telling the King that despite everything he’d refused to deny the Virgin. The King blamed himself for allowing one of his subjects to suffer such poverty and rewarded the knight with more wealth than ever.

***Cantiga 207. ‘The Merciful Knight’.*** A knight who was a loyal servant of the Virgin had one son whom he loved dearly. But one day another knight murdered the boy. Stricken with grief, the father seized the murderer and took him back to the very place his son had been killed. But he found he was unable to kill the man.

Instead, the knight took the man prisoner and entered a church. Seeing a statue of the Virgin, he released him. The statue bowed and said ‘Thank you’.

***Cuncti simus concanentes*** (‘Let us all sing together’), by the ubiquitous **Anon**, appears in the *Red Book of Montserrat* (c1399). Much of the music in the collection probably originated earlier and has many of the characteristics of folk songs.

Montserrat was a site of pilgrimage and the *Red Book* makes the purpose of the songs clear – “Because the pilgrims wish to sing and dance while they keep their watch at night... and in the church no songs should be sung unless they are chaste and pious; for that reason these songs that appear here have been written. And these should be used modestly and take care that no one who keeps watch in prayer and contemplation is disturbed.”

We leave it to you to judge whether the monastery would have considered that Joglearesa’s performance tonight met their criteria.

**Guillaume de Machaut** (1300-77) flourished some years after the compilation of the *Cantigas*. As he developed as a composer, many of his songs moved into more complicated polyphony but *Douce dame jolie* remains robustly monophonic. It’s justly one of his most popular pieces.

**Wallada, Princess of Cordoba** (d.1091) was the daughter of Muhammad III, one of the last Umayyad rulers of Cordoba. She inherited her father’s possessions when he was assassinated in 1026 and with her wealth opened a palace and literary salon. As a highly accomplished poet herself, she gave instruction in poetry and other arts to women of all social ranks. These actions did not go uncriticized but she held her ground. *Ana wallahi* expresses her right to be a proud woman:

*“I, by Allah, am fit for a position so high,  
I walk my way, I stride with pride...”*

***Al pasar por Sevilla*** (‘As I was passing by Seville’) is a traditional ballad. A young man sees a girl at a fountain and asks her to

run away with him. She agrees but, as they're passing through some mountains, she bursts into tears and relates the story of her capture by the Moors when she was young – taken from her father and brother while hunting there. The young man slowly realizes that this girl is in fact his long-lost sister.

*Notes by Dick Ware*

## The artists

**JOGLARESA: Belinda Sykes** *voice, recorder, director*  
**Victoria Couper** *voice* **Jeremy Avis** *voice, percussion*  
**May Robertson** *fidel, voice* **Louise Anna Duggan** *voice, harp, percussion* **Elsa Bradley** (or **Jonny Akerman**) *dulcimer, percussion* **Jordan Murray** *dulcimer, percussion*

Directed by **Belinda Sykes**, this London-based ensemble has been playing since 1992. Now well established, they are particularly interesting for the way in which they imaginatively push, and often transcend, the limits of what is often thought of as early music. They have played twice for us in recent years at our Christmas concert.

They were the first medieval band to develop a programme of songs entirely devoted to Mary Magdalen, and they were pioneers in programming medieval Jewish and Arabic texts for otherwise more commonplace Iberian and Crusades programmes - their Crusades programme (*The Scimitar and the Sword*) represents the voices of Judaism and Islam alongside the Christian viewpoint, and their Arts Council-award-winning programme of medieval Hebrew/Arabic/Spanish song (*Dreams of Andalusia*) includes songs by medieval Arab-Andalusian poets and Spanish-Hebrew poets.

Their work focuses on connecting ancient and traditional musics but, rather than create a 'fusion' or a surreal mix of these styles, they aim to use their combined experiences (upbringings drenched in traditional Irish, English, Maghrebi, Balkan and Middle Eastern music) to create a homogeneous sound - Joglearesa members have spent years in North Africa and the Middle East absorbing the best traditional tunes and learning the local languages (Arabic and Hebrew).

[www.joglearesa.com](http://www.joglearesa.com)

*Joglearesa's performance of this programme is made possible by a grant from Continuo Foundation*

## Festival Patron: David Matthews

### Grateful acknowledgements

We thank all those who have helped with the Festival or supported us financially and in other ways. Special thanks to the funding bodies, sponsors and supporters listed below, without whose generous help there would be no Festival.

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Piano: **Fazioli 228** from **Jaques Samuel**

Tuner: **Jim Denton**

Flowers: **Rosemary Ladd**

### Next year's Festival

The 2022 Little Missenden Festival will run from Friday 7th to Sunday 16th October.

**Festival website** [little-missenden.org](http://little-missenden.org)

- See the full **2021 Festival Programme**
- **Book Tickets** (or phone 0333 666 3366)
- Be added to our **Mailing List** for next year's brochure
- Find out about the **Friends** or **Sponsorship**

### Booking Information

- Email: [tickets@little-missenden.org](mailto:tickets@little-missenden.org)
- Phone: 01494 958148 between 11am and 8pm

### General Information

- Email: [contact@little-missenden.org](mailto:contact@little-missenden.org)

### Little Missenden Festival Executive Committee

**Chair:** Alan Hedges

**Committee:** Angela Bishop, Polly Buston, Martin Cunningham, Jennie Flower, John Glasson, Beth Neill, Martin Runnacles, Dick Ware, Dick Wells.

# 61st Little Missenden Festival



**JOGLARESA**  
**Marian Miracles**

**8pm, Friday October 15th 2021**  
**Little Missenden Church**

**Programme Notes**