

CARMINA BURANA XXI, 2026, “medical “history...

Ten years after my first (double) CD, dedicated to the musical tradition of the sephardi, in 2016, in connection with my (first...) 80 years of life, I decided to bring to an end and publish a project that I have been working on (with shorter or very long) breaks since 1995. It is about the music of the medieval collection, the Buranus Codex, better known as “Carmina Burana”, primarily thanks to the ingenious music of the original texts that the German composer Carl Orff created in 1937., at the height of National Socialism.

The original music of this Codex, notated in so-called neumes, was already known in Orff’s time, but musicology had not yet come to the point of transcribing these neumes into modern notation. Avoiding too many details, which are not relevant to the endeavours of “Rock-izing” Early Music (EM) like mine anyway, it is worth mentioning that the first concrete steps in the transcription and practical revival of this repertoire were taken by the American EM specialist Thomas E. Binkley in the mid-1960s, and he was followed (albeit with a different approach and results) by my early musical father, dr. René Clemencic. He (unlike Binkley who limited himself to the Arabic interpretation of a music and selection of texts) with his ensemble, the Clemencic Consort, first recorded several LPs with almost all texts where neumes existed, and then in the 1970s published a book on which my reconstructions and those of all other EM soloists and ensembles in the last 50 years are based.

My active "relation" with this music began in 1979, when, with my Zagreb EM ensemble, “Universitas Studiorum Zagrabiensis”, we performed the first version of that program at the “Ivan Meštrović” Atelier (in Zagreb’s old Upper town, Gornji Grad), based on slightly “Arabized” arrangements, which were kindly made available to me by Tom Binkley. A year later, in 1980, after I came across Clemencic’s edition, a second version of that program followed, where our performances (and first recordings) were based on both Binkley’s and Clemencic’s versions. In the meantime, through numerous performances in Zagreb and the rest of Croatia, and in Belgium in 1981, “Carmina Burana” became one of our best and most asked programs, which we eventually performed by heart (our music stand contained only the lyrics) with a rich instrumentation of various string, wind, and plucked instruments (partly from traditional Croatian folklore, such as the dalmatian *ljerica* and mandolin, and other parts of the former Yugoslavia, such as the Kosovo *šarkija* and the Macedonian *tapan* drum), numerous percussion instruments, with the addition of a portative organ and hurdy-gurdy.

Whenever I listen to our studio or concert recordings of that program (especially from its last, most mature phase) I cannot help but feel that even then we unconsciously took a series of first steps in the direction of something that only 10 or 15 years later became known and popular under the name of *Medieval* rock...

I myself (from 1983 to 2004) performed that repertoire countless times with the ensemble “Clemencic Consort”, our “Duo Pomykalo” and later with the “Ensemble Lyra Wien” and very early on felt the now fully conscious impulse to “Rock-ize” it, that is, to “dress” those ancient texts and melodies in new clothes, to make some kind of *crossover* and thus bridge the space of the 6th to 7th centuries.

From 1995 onwards, I have been doing some experiments, especially around 2000, at that time I was enthusiastic about the style of Hip-hop and Rap, guided by the idea of some *Medieval* Rap. Even though some of these experiments sounded interesting, I was dissatisfied with the results and gave up the idea and letting it slowly “mature”...

The next twenty years of "silence" and intensive work on my other musical, video, educational and scientific projects pass, until in 2023 (living once again in Italy, which has inspired me time and time again), I return to that idea and begin intensively recording a wider and then definitive selection of that repertoire. In 2024, I brought most pieces to an almost definitive level, but even these results still do not completely satisfy me, so I leave them to "mature" on their own... At the end of 2025 (after I brought several other projects and books, that had taken my mental attention and concentration for years, to completion or printing) I decided that the time had come to tackle the Rock-ization of the original music of "Carmina Burana" again, but with the aim of completing and publishing this project as well. I use “Rock” here only as a generic term because most of the compositions, due to their original rhythm, 6/4 or 6/8, (i.e. the one used by Binkley and Clemencic in their transcriptions), sound best in the form of some light Blues, Ballad, or even Reggae.

In a number of cases, I decided to use (fragmentarily or in full) old recordings that we recorded live or in the studio with my Zagreb EM ensemble “USZ” or with the Viennese “Duo Pomykalo” (Mira Valenta and me) in the early 80s in Zagreb and in the mid-80s in Vienna. To this I added recent recordings with my Electric Violin and Turbofiddle Damore as well as new arrangements in which I used numerous VST instruments programmed and modified by me, some of which use samples recorded with real instruments.

As in the case of my very successful and original CD "Cantigas de Santa Maria" from 2017, where I dressed that repertoire in a contemporary Rock-styled outfit, this time I changed many details and versions until I was satisfied with the result and after my niece Giuliana Gerini-Giuli gave her "Amen". Giuli gives me the assessment and criticism that I can expect from a potential audience, unburdened by "stylistic" and other problems up to the "sacrilege" and disgust of fellow early musicians and their loyal audience.

Igor Pirnat Pomykalo, Summer of 2026