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Harley 978

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Harley 978

A well-known manuscript from Reading Abbey (BL Harley 978), compiled sometime in the period 1245–65, probably at the behest of a single individual. Its contents are eclectic and reflective of wide intellectual interests and sources, suggesting a university connection. Famous principally because it contains the canon "Sumer is icumen in," Harley 978 also possesses the unique text of the "Song of Lewes" (*Calamo velociter*), the best English collection of goliardic verse, the largest surviving collection of the fables and lais of Marie de France, an index to the extensive contents of an otherwise lost book of polyphony, and other items. In addition to the Sumer canon the musical contents of the manuscripts first large section include ten lengthy monophonic Latin songs of the sequence or lai type, one three-voice motet, three two-voice textless (instrumental?) pieces, and two pages of elementary music-instruction material.

Peter M. Lefferts

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