

# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

## Idrîsî Ensemble

Friday 6 February 2026, 8pm | Queen Elizabeth Hall

We are proud to be a place where people come together to discover and connect with the wonder of classical music. Throughout the year, we provide unrivalled opportunities to encounter, live in person, the full range of music, and a variety of different ways for you to experience it.

Some of the world's most exciting artists, including our Resident Orchestras and Resident Artists, join us to shine a light on this incredible art form. Welcome to Classical Music: Spring/Summer 2026.

Toks Dada, Head of Classical Music, Southbank Centre

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Ponç d'Ortafà (12thC) Si ay perdut

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### Performers

#### Idrîsî Ensemble

Thomas Fournil *director, voice, portable organ, wheel vielle*

Irini Arabatzi, Dunja Botic, Layale Chaker, Noémie Ducimetière, Elsa Hackett Esteban, Leonard Maassen, Lucine Musaelian, Eliza Oakes, Isadora Pulman, Kerttu Sormunen, Alex Tay, Henry Tozer, Vasileios Voulgaropoulos *voice*

Oliver Dover *kaval, ney*

Konstantinos Glynos *kanun*

Lucine Musaelian *vielle*

Pratham Prathap *kanjira*

*This performance lasts approximately 2 hours and 5 minutes. There is a 20-minute interval.*

The art of the troubadours developed between the 12th and 13th centuries in the Midi region, or Occitania, with influence extending to north-eastern Spain and northern Italy. Their poetic and musical practices later helped shape related traditions in northern France (*trouvères*), in the German-speaking lands (*Minnesinger*) and in the work of composers such as Guillaume de Machaut.

The troubadours were a varied collective of individuals, stemming from all levels of society including the elite, religious figures, warriors, the middle class and those without land or title. Operating under a system akin to feudalism, in a region that lacked strong royal centralisation until the latter part of the 13th century, these poet-composers witnessed a period of relative stability and prosperity, before succumbing to Capetian conquest. The gruesome Albigensian Crusade marks the end of the troubadour era, and the beginning of a more unified French royal power and courtly culture centred on the northern monarchy. Fortunately, their oral traditions survived long enough to be notated, thereby constituting the earliest collection of secular vernacular music in Western Europe.

Although roughly 250 troubadour songs survive with their music, only a handful of melodies can be attributed to female composers. These women – *trobairitz* – occupied a unique position in the troubadour tradition, both aligning with and standing apart from it: their original discourse sharply contrasts with the silent, idealised lady often portrayed in the works of their male counterparts. Through their frequent use of direct address, criticism of social norms, and bold exploration of grief, politics and sensuality, the *trobairitz* cultivated a form of subversion by imitation.

Despite extensive research on the subject, the voice of the troubadour remains a source of controversy. Theories abound on the origins of courtly love alone: whether it be considered Hispano-Arabic, Chivalric-Matriarchal, Crypto-Cathar, Neoplatonic, Bernardine-Marianist, Feudal-Sociological, spring folk ritual, or even dismissed as a 19th-century construct. It remains that the distinctness of their language, spiritual inclinations, moral values and cultural affiliations placed Occitan people in a threatening position to Roman and Northern powers.

During a time when the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy was particularly blurred, Occitan culture was a late manifestation of the varied traditions that shaped the early Christian era. The Cathars were heterogeneous groups whose religious practices were heavily influenced by Gnostic and post-Manichean theologies. Renowned for their non-violent and ascetic lifestyles, they stood in opposition to the perceived excesses of contemporary Roman Catholicism. Catharism was not a monolithic movement and eludes any definitive genealogy. Echoes of its dualist theology are found throughout history and across cultures, from pre-Christian beliefs to medieval debates about the nature of evil. Roman Marcionism, Eastern dualistic traditions like Manicheism, Paulicianism and Bogomilism, and Western movements including the Waldensians, all interweave in this narrative. Within this landscape, Catharism evolved as a diverse and intricate movement, amalgamating distinct aspects of Christian dualism.

Armenian Paulicianism, transplanted to Europe from the ninth to tenth centuries onward, might have been an important influence over other spiritual movements, rippling through Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy and France. Our programme explores this journey starting with tenth-century Armenian poet Grigor Narekatsi, in a medieval melody transcribed by Robert At'ayan. Rare liturgical chants, female-perspective motets and

traditional polyphonies offer further glimpses into the context and influence of female troubadours.

After decades of relentless persecution and inquisition, some Occitan dissidents appear to have sought refuge in other regions of the Mediterranean, including Corsica. This final and often overlooked chapter of Cathar history ends in tragedy, as later records suggest that even these outposts did not remain untouched by repression, and that some refugees were eventually tracked down and executed. Through our music, I hope to acknowledge the troubairitz not as French subjects, but as distinct artists profoundly rooted in the wider Mediterranean. In our programme, we imagine the troubairitz as if exiled in the mountains of Corsica, singing a Mediterranean 'blues'. Their orientation within a male-dominated art, their traumas and their spiritual sensibilities invite reflection on the northern gaze and on the power struggles at work within other geographical, cultural and sexual identities.

**Programme notes © Thomas Fournil, 2026**

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### Find out more

- ▶ [idrisiensemble.com](http://idrisiensemble.com)
- ▶ [southbankcentre.co.uk](http://southbankcentre.co.uk)

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## PART I

### 1. Grigor Narekatsi (10thC) Հավիկ մի պայծառ (Havik mi paydzar)

*Armenian (selection)*

Հավիկ մի պայծառ տեսի աննըման,  
Աննըմանիդ ղիլ նման:

I beheld a radiant bird, beyond compare.  
O peerless one – who could ever be like you?  
Translation: Lucine Musaelian

### 2. Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi (13thC) Սիրս իմ սասանի (Sirt im sasani)

*Armenian (selection)*

Սիրս իմ սասանի, սարսափ զիս ունի  
վասն Հոդայի:

My heart trembles – fear grips me fast  
at Judas' deed.

Նա ոչ ամաչէ, և ոչ զարհուրի,  
սիրողն արծաթի:

He neither blushes nor quails –  
the silver-loving one.

Փրկիչըն բազմի դասուք երջանկի ի յերեկոյի,  
Տէր իմ, արժանի արա զմեզ հացի քո  
սուրբ եղանի:

May the Saviour sit, at fall of evening,  
among the blessed throng.  
My Lord, account us worthy of Your bread –  
Your holy sacrifice.

Translation: Lucine Musaelian

### 3. Comtessa de Dia (12thC) / Bernart de Ventadorn (12thC) Ab joi et ab joven arr. Martí de Riquer

*Old Occitan (selection)*

Ab joi et ab joven m.apais  
e jois e jovens m.apaia,  
car mos amics es lo plus gais  
per qu.ieu sui coindet.e gaia;  
e pois eu li sui veraia,  
be.is taing q.el me sia verais,  
c.anc de lui amar no m.estrais  
ni ai cor que m.en estraia.

Joy and youth together calm my heart,  
and joy and youth give all the ease I need;  
for my beloved is the gayest of men,  
and through him I too am bright and glad.  
Since I am steadfast and true to him,  
it is only right that he be true to me,  
for never have I turned from loving him,  
nor has my heart once wished to turn away.

Mout mi plai car sai que val mais  
sel q.ieu plus desir que m.aia,  
e cel que primiers lo m.atrais  
Dieu prec que gran joi l.atraia;  
e qui que mal l.en retraia,  
no.l creza, fors so qu.ie.l retrais:  
c.om cuoill maintas vetz los balais  
ab q.el mezeis se balaia.

I'm deeply pleased, for I know his worth  
outshines all others I could ever desire;  
and for the one who first led him to me  
I pray that God will send them boundless joy.  
Let him mistrust whoever speaks him ill,  
and trust instead the words I speak to him;  
for many a time folk bind their little brooms  
and with those very brooms sweep themselves away.

Floris, la vostra valenssa  
saben li pro e li valen,  
per q.ieu vos qier de mantenen,  
si.us plai, vostra mantenensa.

Floris, your valour and your noble heart  
are known to all the worthy and the brave;  
therefore I ask you now, if it please you,  
grant me your favour and your steadfast care.  
Translation: Thomas Fournil

#### 4. Azalaïs de Porcairagues (12thC) / Guiraut Riquier (13thC)

Ar em al freg temps vengut arr. Thomas Fournil

*Old Occitan (selection)*

Ar em al freg temps vengut  
que.l gells e.l neus e la faingna,  
e.l auçellet estan mut  
c'us de cantar non s'afraigna,  
e son sec li ram pels plais  
que flors ni foilla no.i nais  
ni rrossignols no i crida  
que l'am'en mai me rreissida

A Dieu coman Belesgar  
e plus la siutat d'Aurenga,  
e Gloriet'e.l caslar  
e lo seignor de Proenza,  
e tot cant vol mon ben lai  
e l'arc on son fag l'assai;  
cellui perdiei c'a ma vida  
en serai toz iorz marrida.

loglar que aves cor gai,  
ves Narbona portas lai  
ma chanson a la fenida  
lei cui iois e iovenz guida.

#### 5. Trouvère motet (13thC) S'on me regarde

*Triplum*

S'on me regarde,  
S'on me regarde,  
Dites le moi;  
Trop sui gaillarde,  
Bien l'aperchoi.  
Ne puis laissier que mon regard ne s'esparde,  
Car tes m'esgarde  
Dont mout me tarde  
Qu'il m'ait o soi,  
Qu'il a, en foi,  
De m'amour plain otroi.

Mais tel ci voi  
Qui est, je croi-  
Feu d'enfer l'arde!-  
Jalous de moi.  
Mais pour li d'amer ne recroi,  
Car, par ma foi,  
Pour nient m'esgarde;  
Bien pert sa garde:  
J'arai rechoi.

*Motet*

Prenés i garde  
S'on me regarde;  
Trop sui gaillarde.  
Dites le moi,  
Pour Dieu, vous proi,  
Car tes m'esgarde  
Dont mout me tarde  
Qu'il m'ait o soi.  
Bien l'aperchoi.

Et tel chi voi  
Qui est, je croi-  
Feu d'enfer l'arde!-  
Jalous de moi.  
Mais pour li d'amer ne recroi.  
Pour nient m'esgarde;  
Bien pert sa garde:  
J'arai rechoi  
Et de mon ami le dosnoi.  
Faire le doi:  
Ne serai plus couarde.

*Tenor*

HÉ! MI ENFANT

Now we have come to the cold time,  
when all is frost and snow and mire,  
and the little birds are mute,  
for none of them dares to sing;  
and dry are the branches in the hedges,  
so that neither flower nor leaf is born there,  
nor does the nightingale cry there,  
who in May awakens my love anew.

To God I commend Belesgar,  
and also the city of Orange,  
and Glorietta and the castle,  
and the lord of Provence,  
and all who wish me well there,  
and the arch where the deed is done;  
him I have lost who holds my life,  
and for that I shall be forever grieved.

Jongleur, you who have a gay heart,  
towards Narbonne carry there  
my song with its ending  
to her whom joy and youth now guide.

Translation: Thomas Fournil

*Triplum*

If someone is watching me,  
if someone is watching me,  
do tell me;  
I am too bold and gay,  
I see it clearly.  
I cannot keep my gaze from straying,  
for there is one who looks at me,  
and I long greatly  
to be with him,  
for in truth he has  
full claim upon my love.

But I see another here  
who, I believe  
– may hellfire burn him! –  
is jealous of me.  
Yet for his sake I will not renounce love,  
for, by my faith,  
he watches me in vain;  
his guarding is for nothing –  
I shall find a hiding place.

*Motet*

Pay close attention  
if someone is watching me;  
I am too bold and gay.  
Do tell me,  
for God's sake, I beg you,  
for there is one who looks at me  
and I long greatly  
to be with him –  
I see him clearly.

And I see another here  
who, I believe  
– may hellfire burn him! –  
is jealous of me.  
Yet for his sake I will not renounce love.  
He watches me in vain;  
his guarding is for nothing –  
I shall find a hiding place  
and take my delight with my lover.  
That is what I must do:  
I shall be a coward no more.

*Tenor*

'Hey! my child.'

Translation: Thomas Fournil

**6. Trad. Epirus** Αλησμονώ και χαίρομαι  
(Alismonó kai chaíromai)

Greek (selection)

Αλησμονώ και χαίρομαι, θυμούμαι και λυπούμαι  
Θυμήθηκα την ξενιτιά και θέλω να πηγαίνω.  
Σήκω, μάνα μ', και ζύμωσε καθάριο παξιμάδι.  
Με πόνους βάζει το νερό, με δάκρυα το ζυμώνει.

I forget and I rejoice, I remember and I grieve;  
I remembered foreign lands, and now I wish to go.  
Rise, my mother, and knead fine rusks, with pains she pours the  
water in, with tears she kneads the dough.

Translation: Dunja Botic

**7. Anonymous / Guiraut de Bornelh (12thC)** En un vergier arr.

Thomas Fournil

Old Occitan (selection)

En un vergier sotz fuella d'albespi  
tenc la dompna son amic costa si  
tro la gayta crida que l'alba vi,  
Oy Dieus! Oy Dieus! de l'alba tan tost ve.

'Plagues a Dieu ia la nueitz non falhis  
ni l'mieus amicx lonc de mi no-s partis  
ni la gayta iorn ni alba no vis,  
Oy Dieus! Oy Dieus! de l'alba tan tost ve.'

Bels dous amicx, fassam un ioc novel  
yns el iardi on chanton li auzel  
tro la gayta toque son caramelh  
Oy Dieus! Oy Dieus! de l'alba tan tost ve.

Per la doss-aura qu'es venguda de lay  
del mieu amic belh e cortes e gay  
del sieu alen ai begut un dous ray,  
Oy Dieus! Oy Dieus! de l'alba tan tost ve.

La dompna es agradans e plazens  
per sa beutat la gardon mantas gens  
et a son cor en amar leyalmens,  
Oy Dieus! Oy Dieus! de l'alba tan tost ve.

In an orchard, under hawthorn leaves,  
the lady holds her lover by her side,  
until the watchman cries that he sees the dawn –  
O God, O God, the dawn! it comes so soon.

'Would to God the night might never fail,  
and my lover never part from me,  
and the watchman see no day nor dawn.'  
O God, O God, the dawn! it comes so soon.

'Fair, sweet friend, let us play a new game,  
in the garden where the birds are singing,  
until the watchman blows upon his pipe.'  
O God, O God, the dawn! it comes so soon.

On the sweet breeze that has come from there,  
from my fair, courteous and joyful friend,  
of his breath I have drunk a sweet ray.  
O God, O God, the dawn! it comes so soon.

The lady is pleasing and delightful;  
for her beauty many gaze upon her,  
and yet her heart remains in loyal love.  
O God, O God, the dawn! it comes so soon.

Translation: Thomas Fournil

**8. Trad. Corsican:** Stabat Mater

Stabat Mater dolorosa  
iuxta crucem lacrimosa  
dum pendebat Filius.

Cuius animam gementem,  
contristatam et dolentem  
pertransivit gladius.

Quando corpus morietur,  
fac, ut animae donetur  
Paradisi gloria. Amen

Stood the sorrowful Mother,  
weeping beside the cross  
while her Son was hanging there.

Whose soul, moaning,  
saddened and suffering,  
a sword passed through.

When the body shall die,  
grant that to the soul be given  
the glory of Paradise. Amen.

Translation: Thomas Fournil

**PART II**

**9. Syriac chant (4th–19thC)** ܬܘܢܝܡܪܐ (Taw nīmar)

ܬܘܢܝܡܪܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ  
ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ  
ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ  
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ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܘܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ

Come, let us call Mary blessed –  
the poor girl who became renowned  
through the Son of her Lord.

Great is her glory,  
and praised is her remembrance;  
all peoples exalt her exaltation.

Mary said:  
'All nations call me blessed  
because of the one whom I bear.'

Let us give her praise,  
for she has invited us –  
and this is a debt  
even the discerning must fulfil.

Translation: Layale Chaker

## 10. Old Roman chant (4th–12thC, previously unrecorded)

Alleluia 'Deute galliasometha'

Ἀλληλούϊα.

Δεῦτε ἀγαλλιασώμεθα τῷ Κυρίῳ,  
ἀλαλάξωμεν τῷ Θεῷ τῷ σωτῆρι ἡμῶν.

Alleluia.

Come, let us rejoice in the Lord,  
let us shout in joy to God our Saviour.

## 11. Comtessa de Dia (12thC) / Raimon de Miraval (12th–13thC)

Estat ai en greu cossirier

*Old Occitan:*

Estat ai en greu cossirier  
per un cavalier q.ai agut,  
e vuoil sia totz temps saubut  
cum eu l.ai amat a sorbrier.  
Ara vei q.ieu sui trahida  
car eu non li donei m.amor  
don ai estat en gran error  
en lieig quand sui vestida.

Ben volria mon cavallier  
tener un ser en mos bratz nut,  
q.el s.en tengra per ereubut  
sol q.a lui fezes cosseillier;  
car plus m.en sui abellida  
no fetz Floris de Blanchaflor:  
eu l.autrei mon cor e m.amor  
mon sen, mos huouills e ma vida.

Bels amics, avinens e bos,  
Cora.us tenrai en mon poder?  
e que iagues ab vos un ser  
e qe.us des un bais amoros!  
Sapchatz, gran talan n.auria  
qe.us tengues en luoc del marit  
ab so que m.aguessetz plevit  
de far tot so qu.eu volria.

I have been in heavy sorrow  
for the sake of a knight I had,  
and I want it to be known for all time  
how exceedingly I loved him.  
Now I see that I am betrayed,  
because I did not grant him my love;  
for that I have been in great distress,  
in bed, as I lie there fully clothed.

Gladly would I hold my knight  
one evening naked in my arms;  
he would count himself well rewarded  
if I served him only as his pillow.  
For I am more delighted with him  
than Floris was with Blanchefleur;  
to him I grant my heart and my love,  
my mind, my eyes, and my life.

Fair friend, gracious and good,  
when shall I have you in my power,  
and lie beside you for an evening,  
and give you a loving kiss?  
Know that I would greatly desire  
to keep you in my husband's place,  
provided you had pledged to me  
to do all that I would wish.

Translation: Thomas Fournil

## 12. Anonymous (12thC) Trois serors sor rive mer

*Old French*

*Duplum:*

Trois serors sor rive mer chantent cler  
La jonete fu brunete de brun ami s'ahati  
"je suis brune s'avrai brun ami aussi"

*Triplum:*

Trois serors sor rive mer chantent cler  
La moiene a apelé Robin son ami  
"prise m'avés el bois ramé, reportées m'i"

*Quadruplum:*

Trois serors sor rive mer chantent cler  
L'aisnée dit a "on doit bien bele dame amer  
et s'amour garder, cil qui l'a"

Three sisters on the sea-shore sing clear. The youngest was a  
brunette and longed for a dark-haired lover:  
'I am dark-haired – I will have a dark-haired lover too.'

Three sisters on the sea-shore sing clear. The middle one has  
called Robin, her dear friend: 'You took me once in the leafy wood  
– take me back there again.'

Three sisters on the sea-shore sing clear.  
The eldest says: 'A fair lady truly ought to be loved,  
and he who has her love should guard it well.'

Translation: Thomas Fournil

## 13. Thomas Fournil/Trad. Corsican Dieus sal la terra

*Old Occitan:*

Dieus sal la terra e.l pais  
on vostre cors es ni estai,  
on qu'eu sia, mos cors es lai  
e sai no n'es om poderos;  
aissi volgr'eu qe.l cors lai fos  
qi qe sai s'en fezes parliers,  
mais n'am un ioi qe fos entiers  
q'el qe s'en fai tan enveios.

God save the land and the place  
where your body is and stays;  
wherever I may be, my heart is there,  
and here no man has power over it.  
Thus would I that my body were there,  
whoever here might make gossip of it;  
for I would rather have a joy that is whole  
than him who is so covetous of it.

Translation: Thomas Fournil

#### 14. *ṣana* of Algiers طوَيَّرِي مَسْرَار (Ṭuwayyarī al-Masrār)

*Maghrebi Andalusian Arabic:*

طَوَيَّرِي مَسْرَار \* مَا يَحْتَمِلُ قَهْرًا  
صَفِيْفَرُ الْمُنْقَارِ \* وَشَفِيْفَتُهُ حَمْرًا  
يُهَيِّجُ الْأَضْمَارَ \* مَخْلُوقٌ مِنْ فَجْرَةِ  
رَفْرَفٍ وَطَارَ - وَأَخْلَى الدِّيَارَ  
سَاعَةً وَدَارَ - وَنَزَلَ عَلَى يَدَيَّ  
مَا دَامَتِ الدُّنْيَا - لِحَدِّ مِنْ بَعْدِي

Little bird, quick with joy,  
cannot bear oppression.  
Yellow beak,  
red lips.  
He stirs consciences,  
a creature born of a first crack of dawn.  
He fluttered and flew,  
Leaving the house empty.  
He circled for an hour (for a while),  
then came down upon my hand.  
As long as the world lasts,  
until the ones who come after me.  
Translation: Layale Chaker

#### 15. Comtessa de Dia (12thC) A chantar

*Old Occitan (selection):*

A chantar m'er de so qu'ieu no volria,  
tant me rancur de lui cui sui amia;  
car eu l'am mais que nuilla ren que sia;  
vas lui no.m val merces ni cortesia  
ni ma beltatz ni mos pretz ni mos sens,  
c'atressi.m sui enganada e trahia  
Com degra'esser, s'ieu fos desavinens.

Valer mi deu mos pretz e mos paratges  
e ma beutatz e plus mos fins coratges;  
per q'ieu vos man lai on es vostre estatges  
esta chansson que me sia messatges,  
e voill saber, lo mieus bels amics gens,  
per que m'etz vos tant fers ni tant salvatges,  
no sai si s'es orgoills ni mals talens.

Mais aitan plus vuoil li digas, messatges,  
qu'en trop orgoill ant gran dan maintas gens.

I must sing of what I'd rather not,  
I'm so angry about him whose friend I am,  
for I love him more than anything;  
mercy and courtliness don't help me with him,  
nor does my beauty, or my rank, or my mind;  
for I am every bit as betrayed and wronged  
as I'd deserve to be if I were ugly.

My rank and lineage should be of help to me,  
and my beauty and, still more, my true heart;  
this song, let it be my messenger;  
therefore, I send it to you, out in your estate,  
and I would like to know, my fine, fair friend,  
why you are so fierce and cruel to me.  
I can't tell if it's from pride or malice.

I especially want you, messenger, to tell him  
that too much pride brings harm to many persons.  
Translation: Thomas Fournil

#### 16. Ponç d'Ortafà (12thC) Si ay perdut

*Old Occitan (selection)*

Si ay perdut mon saber,  
c'a penas say on m'estau,  
ni say don ven ni on vau,  
ni que.m fau le jorn ni.l ser;  
e soy d'aytal captenensa  
que no velh ni puesc dormir,  
ni.m play vieure ni morir,  
ni mal ni ben no m'agensa.

A per pauc no.m desesper,  
o no.m ren monge d'Aniau,  
o no.m met dins una frau  
on hom no.m pogues vezer.  
Quar trahitz soi en crezensa  
de cella qu'ieu plus dezir,  
que.m fa sospiran languir  
quar mi franh ma convinensa.

Qu'ieu suy cel que non men tensa  
vas midons ni non m'azir,  
ni vueil de ren enardir  
mas de so c'a leys ajensa.

If I have lost my wits,  
so that I scarcely know where I am,  
nor know whence I come nor where I go,  
nor what I am doing by day or by night;  
and I am in such a state  
that I do not keep watch nor can I sleep,  
neither life nor death pleases me,  
and neither ill nor good suits me.

I am all but in despair,  
and not even a monk of Aniane could help me,  
or put me in some ravine  
where no one could see me.  
For I am betrayed in the trust  
of her whom I most desire,  
who makes me languish with sighing,  
for she breaks the pledge between us.

For I am the one who does not hold back  
toward my lady, nor am I angered with her,  
nor do I wish in anything to provoke her,  
except in what is fitting and pleasing to her.  
Translation: Thomas Fournil

#### 17. Trad. Corsican Kyrie

Κύριε, ἐλέησον.  
Χριστέ, ἐλέησον.  
Κύριε, ἐλέησον.

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

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