

Chapter 2: Secular and Cathedral Music in the Middle Ages: ca. 1100–ca. 1300

I. Introduction

- A. Troubadours were poet-composers who wrote down the earliest nonreligious music in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries
- B. *Trouvères* wrote poems in Medieval French and imitated the music of troubadours.
 - 1. Three principal fixed forms (*formes fixes*) were the *ballade*, *rondeau*, and *virelai*.
- C. Polyphonic music and organum began to be notated in this time.

II. Troubadours and trouvères

A. Troubadours

- 1. The first European vernacular poet whose work survives was William IX (seventh count of Poitiers and ninth duke of Aquitaine).
 - a) The tradition of these poets is known as the troubadour.
 - b) The troubadour tradition was “top down” because those of the highest social ranks were the main participants. Their poetry celebrated feudal ideals.
 - c) Different types of troubadour verse dealt with various aspects of the feudal system, including songs of alliance, knightly decorum, exploits, challenges, and death.
- 2. Courtly love lay at the heart of the troubadour tradition.
 - a) The *canso* was a song about love.
 - b) The lady about whom a poet wrote usually outranked him, making her theoretically unattainable.
 - c) Courtly love was generally more about veneration than physical love.
 - d) The poetic style matches the lofty ideals of courtly love, as demonstrated in *Can vei la lauzeta mover*.

B. Performance and oral culture

- 1. We do not know the rhythm of troubadour songs, but most likely the loftier style of the troubadour songs approximated that of contemporary chant.
- 2. Joglars were low-class professional entertainers; today we would consider them minstrels. Some minstrels were able to move up the social ladder and became troubadours.
- 3. Troubadour songs were written down in books called *chansonnières* at about the time the tradition died out.
- 4. Some women wrote courtly songs, including the Comtessa de Dia.

C. Music for elites: *trobar clus*

- 1. Musical debates constitute another genre of troubadour poetry, the *tenso*.
 - a) The meaning was understood only by those who knew how to “read” such poetry. This poetry is *trobar clus*—“closed” poetry.
 - b) Many troubadours used both types of poetry.
 - c) *Trouvères* imitated the Provençal lyrics in the thirteenth century.

2. Subtle differences mark the trouvère repertory as distinct from that of the troubadours.
3. Narrative genres form more of the repertory for the trouvères.
 - a) One of these is the *lai*, whose narrative stanzas reflect northern tendencies (as seen in the *romances* and *chansons de geste*).
 - b) New genres that resemble elements of folk music also were popular in thirteenth-century France.

D. Trouvères

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III. Adam de la Halle and the *formes fixes*

A. In the mid-thirteenth century, French music and literary activities shifted from the castle to the town.

1. Musicians organized along the lines of the crafts guilds in both places.
2. Arras had a Brotherhood of Minstrels and Townspeople that fostered musico-poetic interests.
 - a) Moniot d'Arras (d. 1239)
 - b) Jehan Bretel (d. 1272)
 - c) Adam de la Halle (d. ca. 1307)
3. Adam de la Halle is the only trouvère known to have written polyphony. It was a learned style for a trouvère.
4. *Formes fixes* or “fixed forms” included three dance songs: the rondeau, the ballade, and the virelai.
5. Adam is best known for *Le jeu de Robin et de Marion* (The Play of Robin and Marion), a musical play that alternated dialogue with sixteen monophonic dance songs and duets.

IV. The geographic diffusion of the troubadour and trouvère traditions

A. Troubadour influence went south to the Iberian and Italian peninsulas.

1. The thirteenth-century *lauda spirituale* (devotional song of praise) was a religious rather than courtly genre.

B. German courtly song is traceable to trouvère influence.

1. Walter von der Vogelweide (d. ca. 1230) was considered the master of the *Minnesang*, the German Medieval lyric.
2. Songs composed by *Minnesinger* were called *Minnelieder*.

C. In Spain, the troubadours were emulated in the local vernacular language, Galician-Portuguese.

1. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* were compiled over a period of about thirty years under the supervision of King Alfonso X.

V. Musical instruments in the Middle Ages

- #### A. The notation of monophonic music does not reflect the way they were actually performed. Evidence including pictures, literary descriptions, and writings of music pedagogues and theorist shows that instruments were used to accompany Medieval song depending on their genres and social uses.

VI. Polyphony: music for more than one voice

- A. Polyphony is music for more than one voice.
 - 1. There has never been a time in European music history when polyphony was unknown.
 - 2. More is known about sacred polyphony than secular.
 - 3. At no point did polyphony completely replace monophony.
- B. In the twelfth century, musical practice took a turning point and polyphonic composition would become the norm.
 - 1. Training in composition increasingly meant training in harmony and counterpoint, the controlled combination of different pitches in time.
 - a) During the later Middle Ages, music was often called the *ars combinatoria*, or the *discordia concors*: “art of combining things” or the “concord of discord.”
- C. Organum and its modifications
 - 1. The *Musica enchiriadis* (Handbook of Music) was the first surviving Frankish treatise about practical music making, dated from sometime between 860 and 900. The *Scolica enchiriadis* (Commentary on the Handbook) is a longer contemporaneous commentary to it.
 - 2. Organum
 - a) The original chant was called the *vox principalis* (principal voice) and could be doubled at one or more of those intervals by a lower *vox organalis* (organal voice).
 - 3. Guido of Arezzo made an important contribution to the development of contrapuntal technique.
 - 4. Two decades before Guido, polyphonic activity occurred at Winchester in England with the Winchester Troper, a huge collection of polyphonic tropes notated in staffless neumes.
- D. Polyphony in Aquitanian monastic centers
 - 1. The Benedictine Abbey of St. Martial near the town of Limoges was the greatest center for the production of Latin *versus*, on which the troubadours modeled their *vers*.
 - a) Aquitaine was a center for an important repertory of early polyphonic manuscripts kept in the library of the Abbey.
 - b) This notation specifies pitch but not rhythm.
 - 2. The *Codex Calixtinus*, known as the *Liber sancti Jacobi*, or Book of St. James, is a manuscript that contains polyphonic compositions.
- E. Music in Parisian cathedrals and universities
 - 1. The most technically elaborate polyphony developed in Paris, which was the intellectual capital of Europe at this time.
 - 2. The growth of the city of Paris brought about a shift from monasteries to cathedral schools as centers of learning.
 - 3. The music of Notre Dame is known as the Notre Dame School and dates from the thirteenth century.
 - 4. Notre Dame polyphony
 - a) Around 1270 or 1280, an English student in Paris wrote a treatise that describes music at Notre Dame (*De mensuris et discantu*). Because of

circumstances involving the publication of this text in 1864, the writer is known as Anonymous IV.

- F. Measured music
 - 1. Notre Dame polyphony had essentially two note values: *nota longa* and *nota brevis*.
 - 2. Rhythmic organization followed classical poetry, following meters such as iambic and trochaic.
 - 3. Anthology 1-18 (*Viderunt omnes*) illustrates two-part Notre Dame organum.
- G. Organum with another voice
 - 1. With the addition of more voices, rhythms had to be notated in strict modal rhythm.
 - 2. Triplum and quadruplum parts often moved at the same pace as the duplum.
 - 3. Dissonance is treated with special care.
 - 4. Perotin's *Viderunt omnes* uses *hocket*, or *hoquetus*.
 - 5. Johannes de Garlandia explains the six poetic/music meters (often called the rhythmic modes).
- H. Conductus and Notre Dame
 - 1. Conductus was another type of polyphony found in the Notre Dame School.
 - a) It is not based on preexisting chant.
 - b) The texture is homorhythmic with a syllabically set text.
- I. The motet: music for an intellectual and political elite
 - 1. Grocheio wrote the *Ars musicae*, a main source about music in Paris ca. 1300.
 - 2. Grocheio describes a new genre that will become very important: the motet.
 - a) Motets had a texted duplum, which is what the word *mot* (French for "word") implies.
 - b) Early motets relate to and are connected with *clausula*.
 - c) Different parts had different texts, which we describe as "polytextual."
 - 3. The motet was a hybrid of the court tradition of the *trouvères* (in that it was a courtly literary text) and the ecclesiastical tradition of Notre Dame polyphony (in that it is related to *clausula* and contains chant).
- J. "Franconian" notation
 - 1. Early motets demanded a more precise manner of notating rhythm.
 - 2. Mensural notation specifies rhythm by specific shapes.
 - 3. In the *Ars cantus mensurabilis*, Franco of Cologne describes mensural notation.
- K. The late thirteenth-century motet
 - 1. Composers like Grocheio reveled in the complexity of the polytextual motet at the end of the thirteenth century.
 - 2. The Montpellier Codex is the most comprehensive and lavish motet book to survive from the thirteenth century, containing more than three hundred motets. Some of the motets are attributed to composer and theorist Petrus de Cruce, who took rhythmic stratification to the limit of contemporary notation.