

## Chapter 3: The *Ars Nova*: Musical Developments in the Fourteenth Century

- I. Introduction
  - A. *Ars Nova* (The New Art) arose in fourteenth-century France.
    1. Motets of the time used complex isorhythm with repeating rhythmic patterns (*talea*) and melodic patterns (*color*).
    2. *Ars Subtilior* (more subtle art) took *Ars Nova* style to further extremes.
  - B. Three principal genres developed in this period: madrigal, *caccia* (hunt), and *balata*.
- II. The *Ars Nova*: musical developments in the fourteenth century
  - A. The increasingly complex motets of the late thirteenth century and innovations in musical notation led to fourteenth-century developments labeled the *Ars Nova* (New Art). Advances in music theory in this period are evident in two treatises:
    1. *Ars novae musicae* (The Art of New Music) by Johannes de Muris (ca. 1290–1350)
    2. *Ars nova*, Philippe de Vitry (1291–1361)
  - B. *Ars Nova* notation
    1. New notation allowed for more possibilities and complexities, specifically shorter note values and precise metrical schemes.
    2. The minim was now the basic unit value, and new terminology was used to describe different levels:
      - a) Masimodus
      - b) Modus
      - c) Tempus
      - d) Prolatio
  - C. Music about music
    1. Another new idea in the *Ars Nova* concerns a growing realization of self-awareness as composers of art.
    2. Music composition is seen as an art, not a craft.
  - D. Establishing the prototype: the Roman de Fauvel
    1. The earliest surviving pieces in the *Ars Nova* style are found in the Roman de Fauvel.
      - a) The title character's name has multiple meanings and is an acrostic of terms modeled on the seven deadly sins.
    2. The motet *Tribum/Quoniam/MERITO* exemplifies the early *Ars Nova* motet.
      - a) It is allegorical, relating to real political events.
      - b) It is polytextual.
      - c) The rhythmic and notational features are new.
  - E. Isorhythm
    1. As a way of confirming a hidden order and unity behind the complex world, *Ars Nova* composers sought to unify their music through the use of isorhythm.

- a) Isorhythm denotes recurring patterns: in rhythm the *talea*, in pitch the *color*.
    - 2. *Tribum/Quoniam/MERITO* is an isorhythmic motet.
- III. Machaut: poet and musician
  - A. Machaut is considered the greatest poet-composer of the Ars Nova.
    - 1. He follows in the *trouvère* tradition.
    - 2. He wrote in a variety of genres.
  - B. Machaut and the isorhythmic motet
    - 1. Analysis of isorhythmic motet: *Felix virgo/Inviolata/AD TE SUSPIRAMUS*
  - C. *Musica ficta*
    - 1. The chromaticism found in Machaut's motet is called *musica ficta*.
    - 2. *Ficta* was usually added orally, not notated.
    - 3. Analysis of *Felix virgo/Inviolata/AD TE SUSPIRAMUS* demonstrates *musica ficta* in the music of Machaut.
  - D. Machaut and the art of courtly song
    - 1. Machaut enjoyed a widespread reputation as a skilled poet.
      - a) He traveled widely.
      - b) His fame grew throughout his long life.
      - c) He was probably paid by patrons honored in his works.
    - 2. Machaut's works include long narrative poems that sometimes included inserted musical interpolations.
      - a) These works, such as *Le Remede de Fortune*, continue traditions seen in the *troubadour* and *trouvère* repertoires.
  - E. Machaut's *virelais*
    - 1. Motets were composed from the bottom up (on a *cantus firmus*), but *chansons* did the opposite.
    - 2. Most of Machaut's *virelais* were monophonic.
    - 3. In a polyphonic *virelai*, *En mon cuer*, the top part has the text but the bottom does not.
    - 4. Both of these *virelais* approach cadences from below.
  - F. Machaut's *La Messe de Notre Dame*
    - 1. Machaut's best known work, *La Messe de Notre Dame*, is uncharacteristic.
      - a) This is a complete setting of the Mass Ordinary—the earliest to survive.
    - 2. Special Mass collections, *Votive Masses*, were used in memorial chapels. These also contributed to the interest in setting the Mass Ordinary polyphonically.
    - 3. Machaut's *La Messe de Notre Dame* is a tour de force of Ars Nova aesthetics.
  - G. Canons
    - 1. Another clever technique employed during the Ars Nova is canon.
      - a) *Ma fin est mon commencement* is one such example.
        - 1) The music mirrors the text as a pun.

- b) The name for canons became *chace*—a literal chase of one part behind another.

#### IV. *Subtilias*

- A. As the fourteenth century went on, subtlety became a desirable feature in composition.
- B. Philippus de Caserta wrote a treatise that explained the advanced notation necessary to convey all the subtle aspects of this style.
  - 1. *Subtilias* includes polymeters.
    - a) The notation includes odd-looking symbols and different colors of ink for different meters.
    - b) *En remirant*, by Caserta, demonstrates the virtuoso aspects of composition associated with *Subtilias*.
- C. *Subtilias* extended throughout Europe, as far as Cyprus (thanks in part to the Crusades).
- D. The Chantilly Codex is a famous source of *Subtilias* repertory.
  - 1. Solage's famous *Fumeux fume* represents the height of *Subtilias* complexity.

#### V. "A Pleasant Place": trecento vernacular music

- A. Italian composers saw nature as something to be enjoyed, not overwhelmed by.
  - 1. The poetry of Dante represents this value.
    - a. The main song genre of the trecento was the madrigal, a vernacular poem of two or more three-line stanzas.
  - 2. The main manuscripts containing trecento repertory are large, elaborately decorated volumes, similar to the chansonniers in France.
  - 3. Bologna was an important musical center, as was Padua.
  - 4. Trecento notation differs from that of the Ars Nova because the former grew out of Petronian notation, the latter out of Franconian.
- B. The "wild bird" madrigals
  - 1. Jacopo da Bologna's *Oselleto selvaggio* is a music-about-music piece that tells us something about what was desired in trecento music: the music must be as sweet and moderate as the scene painted by the text.
  - 2. Jacopo set this text twice, and the second abandons the moderation inherent in the first; it is a caccia.
- C. Landini and ballata culture
  - 1. In his treatise on music, Jacopo mentions another genre, the ballata, which resembles a virelai and came to displace the pride of place held by the madrigal.
  - 2. The last generation of trecento composers set the ballade like a French virelai.
  - 3. The master of the ballata was the blind organist Landini.
  - 4. His pieces were arranged and copied into a keyboard manuscript known as the Faenza Codex, arranged (an intabulation).
- D. The motet as political show

1. French and Italian styles converged into an international style in the late Ars Nova.
2. The pinnacle of the motet was in Italy, as composers were part of the competition between city-states.
3. Composers who mastered techniques of musical architecture produced elaborate works that served to legitimize their patrons.
4. Several of these composers were from France and Flanders.
5. The first was Johannes Ciconia.

E. Du Fay's *Nuper rosarum flores*

1. Du Fay's *Nuper rosarum flores* is famous for a number of reasons, most of which relate to the manipulation of numbers relevant to the reason for its composition.
  - a) It is the third of three motets written for Pope Eugene IV.
  - b) Du Fay wrote the motet for the dedication of the cathedral in Florence, the architect of which was Brunelleschi.
  - c) The proportional relationship of the mensuration mirrors the physical properties of the temple of Solomon, according to the Bible, which Brunelleschi used for the cathedral in Florence.

VI. The problem with musical periods

A. Dividing music into stylistic periods is useful and convenient for making sense of the past. There are many ways music, literature, and art have progressed over time.

1. Concepts for the Renaissance include secularism, humanism, and the rebirth of interest in art and philosophy of pre-Christian antiquity.
2. Scholars agreed that the Florentine trecento marks the beginning of the Renaissance. Many music historians differ from art historians on the beginning of the Renaissance, placing it between the start and middle of the fifteenth century.