Cambridge Introductions to Music

Medieval Polyphony and Song

What characterizes medieval polyphony and song? Who composed this music, sang it, and wrote it down? Where and when did the different genres originate, and under what circumstances were they created and performed? This book gives a comprehensive introduction to the rich variety of polyphonic practices and song traditions during the Middle Ages. It explores song from across Europe, in Latin and vernacular languages (precursors to modern Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish); and polyphony from early improvised organum to rhythmically and harmonically complex late medieval motets. Each chapter focuses on a particular geographical location, setting out the specific local contexts of the music created there. Guiding the reader through the musical techniques of melody, harmony, rhythm, and notation that distinguish the different genres of polyphony and song, the authors also consider the factors that make modern performances of this music sound so different from one another.

Helen Deeming is an Honorary Research Associate at Royal Holloway, University of London. She is the author of *Songs in British Sources, c.1150–1300* (2013) and the editor, with Elizabeth Eva Leach, of *Manuscripts and Medieval Song* (2015) and *A Cultural History of Western Music in the Middle Ages* (forthcoming).

Frieda van der Heijden specializes in medieval vernacular song and manuscript production. In her PhD dissertation (2018) she demonstrates aspects of increasing commercialization in the production of (music) books in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Northern France. She has taught musicology, music history, and medieval history courses at Royal Holloway and Utrecht University.

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for Matthew, Zoë, and Sammy
HD
——
for Hucbald
FvdH

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Introduction and Historical Outline

This book is about the music composed for singers during the long period of Europe's history that we now call the Middle Ages, or 'medieval' period (from the Latin *medium* – 'middle', and *aevum* – 'age/era'). Though it by no means encompasses all vocal music from this period, the music explored in this book embraces a dazzling variety of sounds, including compositions of monumental scope and complexity, matched to the architectural splendour of the Gothic churches and cathedrals in which they were performed, as well as some of the most poignant songs of love and loss ever to have been written. This book aims to give an overview of where and when the different kinds of medieval polyphony and song emerged; who was responsible for composing them, singing them, and writing them down; and the kinds of functions – in churches and monasteries, royal and aristocratic courts, universities, and other urban institutions – that they were created to serve.

A few words about what is not included in this book would be appropriate here. It does not cover the kinds of music that were probably encountered most frequently by medieval people – namely the songs sung by mothers to their infants or by workers in the fields, and the music of instruments played in the streets and the taverns: these kinds of music have left only the faintest trace on the historical record because they were hardly ever written down or described in detail. This book also passes over the wealth of **chants** sung in churches (often grouped together under the umbrella term 'Gregorian chant'), for which a book by David Hiley in this same series of Cambridge Introductions to Music provides an excellent overview. Nevertheless, we will encounter chant frequently in the following chapters, as a great deal of medieval polyphony was conceived as an elaboration of the chant and was musically based upon it in fundamental ways.

Instead, we will be exploring the other types of vocal music that were composed and written down during the Middle Ages. **Polyphony** is a very broad term indicating any music in more than one part (from the Greek *poly* – 'many', and *phōnē* – 'voice' or 'sound'). It took many forms, from the earliest examples in which a chant melody was sung in parallel fourths or fifths – a type of singing known as **organum**, and which has often served to evoke the atmosphere of the medieval church in films and other popular media – to extremely elaborate

1

compositions in which three or four simultaneous melodic lines were ingeni-
ously combined to create complex and rich musical **textures**. The term for the
opposite of polyphony – **monophony** – means music in only a single part,
though it is possible that in practice some monophonic music was accompanied
by additional parts that were improvised at the time of performance. 'Song',
a term even broader than polyphony, encompasses religious and secular pieces,
texts in Latin and in everyday, vernacular languages such as French, German,
and English, and subject matters as diverse as funeral **laments** and May Day
celebrations. The term 'song' overlaps with 'polyphony', since some songs were
polyphonic (composed in two or more parts), and others existed in both mono-
phonic and polyphonic versions. And the connections between polyphony and
song go further still, since in many situations, song and polyphony were culti-
vated side by side, by the same musicians working in the same environments.
Just as certain medieval polyphony was musically based on chant, some other
polyphony was based on pre-existing songs: for all these reasons, it makes sense
to treat polyphony and song together in this book.

   As we would expect from such a distant historical period, before techno-
logical innovations such as the printing press, which allowed knowledge and
information to be spread much more quickly and to many more people, and
long before safe and reliable modes of long-distance transport were available,
many aspects of medieval culture were strongly local in character. In some cases,
music composed and sung in one place might never be heard anywhere else, at
least nowhere that was more than a day's journey away on horseback.
Exceptions to this rule exist, however, and we will encounter examples of
music and musicians in this book that travelled quite exceptional distances,
often undergoing interesting transformations on the way. When music (or
anything else) was written down at this time, it was in **manuscript** ('handwrit-
ten', from the Latin *manu* – 'by hand' and *scriptum* – 'written'): this process was
slow and painstaking, and usually only a single copy was made. The systems for
notating music in the Middle Ages varied from place to place and changed
substantially over the course of the period. Musical manuscripts could become
obsolete quite quickly, when their original readers were gone and later musi-
cians either had no use for – or simply could no longer decipher – the musical
copies they left behind. Over the centuries that have elapsed since medieval
singers sang their music and medieval scribes wrote it down, many – probably
most – of these written copies have been lost or destroyed (by accident or
intentionally), leaving us with information that is patchy and incomplete. What
we have left is a series of 'pockets' of information about medieval polyphony
and song, and it is around these different pockets that we have arranged the
chapters of this book.

The Chapters of This Book

There are many different ways of organizing the information that we have about medieval polyphony and song. One way would be to group the musical materials into categories according to their musical characteristics, but because these categories were mostly defined by scholars *after* the music was composed (sometimes long after), there are many pieces that blur the boundaries and refuse to fit. A chronological approach – setting out the materials in order from earliest to latest – is also possible, though not without its problems: on the one hand, there are so many gaps in our knowledge that the chronological thread would be constantly interrupted, and on the other, this approach can risk giving the impression that historical events and changes in musical style always followed on from one another neatly and inevitably, overlooking their geographical separation, which in some cases meant that these things happened in complete isolation.

Instead, we have arranged the chapters of this book so that each covers a different geographical region, sometimes as small as a single city (such as Paris in Chapter 4), in other cases a very large area spanning multiple countries (such as the lands on the shores of the Mediterranean in Chapter 8). Each of these areas incorporates one or more 'pockets' of evidence that point to particular cultures of music-making, sharing some similarities, whether of language, musical style, or social or institutional conditions. Some of the pockets refer to musical practices that seem to have emerged and died out in relatively limited periods of time (this is true of the polyphony from Aquitaine discussed in Chapter 3, for example), whereas others point to kinds of music-making that endured for much longer. Sometimes strong continuities exist between chapters: Chapters 4, 5, and 6, on Paris and Northern France in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, could easily have formed a single chapter, for example (although that would have been far too long). There is a loose chronological arrangement to the chapters: Chapter 2 explores the earliest specific evidence that we have for medieval polyphony and song, whereas Chapter 9 looks at materials from the twelfth right up to the fifteenth century, but the intervening chapters sometimes overlap (for example, Chapter 7 – on England after the Norman Conquest – covers the same time period as Chapters 3–6, which relate to Southern and Northern France). To help you navigate these intersecting chronologies, we have provided a timeline in the next section of this chapter; you may wish to refer back to this for orientation as you read the later chapters of the book.

It is our hope that this book will enhance your enjoyment of listening to medieval music, whether you are someone who has already listened to lot of it or someone whose interest in this music is just beginning. There are numerous excellent recordings of the music discussed in this book, many of which are

becoming ever more easily available via digital download and streaming services, and at the end of each chapter we have suggested recordings that you may wish to seek out. If you can read musical notation, you might like to read through the musical examples we have provided while listening to recordings of them. Alternatively, if you prefer to pass over the more detailed musical discussions in this book, you will still be able to follow our exploration of this music's historical, cultural, and social contexts. In each chapter, we have also provided a list of suggested further reading to extend and deepen your knowledge of the topics we have discussed. These suggestions refer to books and articles from which we have learnt a huge amount and which we have often recommended to our students, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to the scholars on whose work we have built our own approaches to this fascinating music and its history.

Historical Outline

This period – the Middle Ages – was given its rather dismissive name by writers in the following centuries, who regarded their own age as a 'Renaissance' or re-birth, reviving the cultural glories of the so-called 'Classical' age (that of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome). For some of them, the intervening period was a time of darkness and backwardness, merely that which fell in the 'middle' between their own, 'modern' age, and the world of the Ancients that they admired and – in some ways – tried to emulate. The fall of the Roman Empire in 476 CE is usually considered to be the start of the Middle Ages; the period's end point is less widely agreed upon, with various dates on either side of the year 1500 marking significant events that are regarded as the end of the Middle Ages in the history of different countries. In the study of art and literature, the start of the Renaissance (and therefore the end of the Middle Ages) is often dated earlier, to around 1400 in the case of art, and back into the 1300s in literature, and music history has often defined its periods to synchronize with those. The parallels between music and these other art forms only hold true to an extent, however, and no single point is entirely satisfactory as an end to the musical Middle Ages. So while much of the music of the fifteenth century belongs to the musical Renaissance (and is explored in Fabrice Fitch's book *Renaissance Polyphony* in this series), certain kinds of early fifteenth-century music are included in this book, as they seem to have more in common with medieval approaches. At the same time, there were also many continuities of musical practice between the so-called 'medieval' and 'Renaissance' periods, and elements of what we might identify as Renaissance thinking in music emerged both earlier and much later than 1400. All in all, it is important to remember both that the musical periods are categories that have been

imposed retrospectively, at a great historical distance from the times they describe, and that there are no clear breaks or boundaries between one period and the next, but instead many overlaps and fuzzy edges.

The nature of the evidence for medieval polyphony and song makes it difficult to say anything with precision about them before the ninth century. There were certainly traditions of song, and probably of polyphonic singing, before the 800s, but the rare surviving documents from the early centuries of the Middle Ages preserve texts alone, with neither musical notation nor concrete information about musical performance. The earliest medieval sources to include musical notation for song, and detailed instructions for the performance of polyphony, date from the ninth century, and were created at important monasteries within the Carolingian Empire, a vast region stretching over much of modern Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, and Northern Italy (see Figure 2.1). Named after the Emperor Charlemagne (or *Carolus Magnus* in Latin), the Carolingian Empire brought together the territories of various kings under one ruler, and lasted from Charlemagne's coronation as emperor in the year 800 until its eventual break-up into separate kingdoms towards the end of the ninth century. As we shall see in Chapter 2, the political unity of the Carolingian Empire had important consequences for the spread of knowledge and culture, including music, although the enormous distances from one end of the empire to the other still imposed limits on cultural exchange.

In the centuries following, Europe reverted to a complex network of kingdoms and dukedoms, each ruled separately by its own lord. The political map was in almost constant flux because diplomatic alliances and dynastic marriages between members of the ruling families frequently led to territories being joined under one ruler. This happened, for example, when King Henry II of England married Eleanor of Aquitaine, who was ruler of Aquitaine (a large area in what is now Western and Southern France) in her own right following the death of her father: on their marriage, her dominions were united with Henry's, and for a time, England and Aquitaine were officially under Henry's control. Surprisingly, little evidence survives of any contact between English and Aquitanian music and musicians that this dynastic marriage might have brought about, even though Eleanor was an important patron of **troubadours** such as Bernart de Ventadorn. Another royal marriage, that between Edward III of England and Philippa of Hainault, was probably responsible for bringing three of the greatest poets of the fourteenth century – Geoffrey Chaucer, Jean Froissart, and Guillaume de Machaut (the last of whom also set his poetry to music) – into contact with one another.

The political map of medieval Europe shifted not only as a result of marriages and alliances but also of military actions. Disputes over the rightful possession of territories were common, and rulers frequently raised armies to resolve these questions by force.

Some rulers were especially inclined to military action and set out on campaigns of conquest to extend their power and influence. Among the Norman aristocracy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were several prominent conquerors: around the same time as Duke William II set sail over the English Channel to defeat the English King Harold in battle in 1066 (leading to a decisive shift in English history that we will explore further in Chapter 7), Robert Guiscard and his brother Roger, from another Norman noble family, journeyed to Sicily, setting up a new power base on this strategic position in the Mediterranean (something that we will consider in Chapter 8). Others channelled their military ambitions in another direction, responding to calls from the Church to reconquer the Holy Land from Muslim rule. These actions, collectively known as the Crusades, took European noblemen, and the foot soldiers they brought with them, to the very edges of the known world; many died, either in battle or as a result of the perils attending such a journey at that time. Frequent references to the Crusades in the texts of medieval songs make clear how real – and at times how tragic – was their influence on medieval lives.

Beyond war, crusading, and the political manoeuvrings of kings and rulers, the lives of medieval people were influenced by other natural and man-made forces. An increase in average temperatures across much of Europe between the ninth and the twelfth centuries – now sometimes termed the Medieval Warm Period – led to better harvests and higher prosperity: new trade routes opened up within Europe, and merchant-explorers such as Marco Polo travelled further afield to the Near East and Asia. The cities swelled in size during the twelfth century as people moved from rural homes to urban centres: many of these cities were trade hubs, and in some, the first universities were founded to educate lawyers, doctors, and churchmen. By the fourteenth century, the climate had changed for the worse, and years of harsh winters and poor harvests led to famine and high mortality. When the series of plagues known collectively as the Black Death struck, the fourteenth-century population declined even further. All of these events shaped medieval music-making more or less directly. Travel (whether for war, trade, or education) brought musicians from different places into contact with one another and allowed music books to circulate from place to place. Stability and prosperity created conditions for music-making to flourish, as both the financial resources to employ musicians, and the leisure and cultural inclinations to enjoy them, were more readily available to patrons of high social status. By contrast, disease and deprivation reduced opportunities, though music continued to play an important role in commemorating the dead and providing solace to the living.

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Each of the chapters that follow (except Chapter 6, which relates to roughly the same area as Chapter 5) includes a map showing the political situation of the

area under discussion at a certain point during the Middle Ages. Comparing these maps to one another will give a quick sense of the changes in power and leadership over the 600 years that this book covers. The nation states of Europe that we know today were established in their present forms long after the end of this period, so when we mention their names ('Germany', 'Italy', and so on) in the following pages, it will be as a shorthand for the geographical regions that those names now represent. Each chapter opens with a more detailed description of the area covered, charting the changes in its leadership and the significant historical events that shaped it. Table 1.1 below, a timeline showing some of the key moments that surrounded the creation of medieval polyphony and song, will give you a general orientation in the history of the Middle Ages. You may find it helpful to refer back to this timeline to anchor your understanding of the musical developments discussed in this book in the broader context of the period as a whole. At the end of the book, we have provided a glossary, defining key terms relating to medieval polyphony and song, as well as an index, to help you trace mentions of important places, people, concepts, and music throughout the book.

Table 1.1 *Timeline of musical and historical events of the Middle Ages*

Musical events	Dates	Historical events
	800	Charlemagne crowned emperor
	840	Division of the Carolingian Empire
Musica Enchiriadis and *Scolica Enchiriadis* compiled	**late ninth century**	
Earliest songbooks with musical notation	**end ninth century**	
Earliest surviving example of practical polyphony	**early tenth century**	
	late tenth century	Monastic reforms in England, led from Winchester
Winchester Troper written	**1020s–1030s**	
Guido of Arezzo develops staff notation	***c.*1030**	
Cambridge Songs compiled	**mid-eleventh century**	
	1061–91	Norman Conquest of Sicily
	1066	Norman Conquest of England

Table 1.1 (*cont.*)

Musical events	Dates		Historical events
Godric of Finchale, author of first songs in English	*c.*1070–1170		
Guillaume IX, Duke of Aquitaine, first troubadour	1071–1126		
		1095	Start of the Crusades to the Holy Land
St Hildegard of Bingen	1098–1179		
Theory texts *Ad organum faciendum* and *De musica* written	*c.*1100		
First manuscripts of Aquitanian *versus* written	*c.*1100		
Bernart de Ventadorn	*c.*1130/40–*c.*1190/1200		
Hendrik van Veldeke	*c.*1150–*c.*1184		
Léonin	active 1150s–*c.*1201		
		1152	Marriage of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henry II of England
Philip the Chancellor	*c.*1160/70–1236		
Chrétien de Troyes	active *c.*1160–90		
Wolfram von Eschenbach	1160/80–*c.*1220		
		1163	Building of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris commences
		1170	Martyrdom of Archbishop Thomas Becket
Walther von der Vogelweide	*c.*1170–*c.*1230		
Codex Calixtinus written	before 1173		
Gautier de Coinci	1177/8–1236		
		1180–1223	Reign of King Philip II Augustus of France
		1182–1226	St Francis of Assisi
Raimon de Miraval	active *c.*1185–*c.*1229		
Books of Aquitanian *versus* collected at St Martial, Limoges	late twelfth century		
Gertrude of Dagsburg	*c.*1190–1225		
Neidhart	*c.*1190–after 1236		
Odo de Sully, Bishop of Paris, regulates use of polyphony at Notre-Dame	1198–99		
Later Cambridge Songs compiled	late twelfth–early thirteenth century		

Table 1.1 (*cont.*)

Musical events	Dates		Historical events
Pérotin	**active *c*.1200**		
		1200–10	Foundation of University of Paris
Thibaut IV, Count of Champagne and King of Navarre	**1201–53**		
		1209–29	Albigensian Crusade
Hadewijch	***c*.1210–*c*.1260**		
Carmina Burana compiled	***c*.1230**		
Adam de la Halle	***c*.1245/50–1285/8, or after 1307**		
Manuscript containing *Sumer is icumen in* compiled at Reading Abbey	**mid-thirteenth century**		
Cantigas de Santa Maria composed	**1252–84**		Reign of King Alfonso X of Castile-León
De mensurabili musica revised by Johannes de Garlandia	***c*.1260**		
Theory text by 'Anonymous IV' written	***c*.1275**		
Worcester manuscripts of polyphony written	**second half of thirteenth century–first half of fourteenth century**		
Franco of Cologne, *Ars cantus mensurabilis*	***c*.1280**		
Philippe de Vitry	**1291–1361**		
Johannes de Grocheio, *De Musica*	***c*.1300**		
Wizlav	**active *c*.1300**		
Guillaume de Machaut	***c*.1300–77**		
		1309–77	Avignon papacy
		1315–17	Great Famine
Interpolated *Roman de Fauvel* completed	**1317/18**		
Marchetto of Padua, *Pomerium*	**1318/19**		
Ars nova (linked to Vitry) and *Ars novae musicae* (Johannes de Muris)	***c*.1320**		
Francesco Landini	***c*.1325–97**		
		1328	Capetian dynasty in France ends; succeeded by House of Valois
		1337	Start of Hundred Years' War

(*cont.*)

Table 1.1 (*cont.*)

Musical events	Dates	Historical events
	1340–84	Geert Grote, early leader of Modern Devotion movement
	1347–53	Black Death
	1348	Foundation of Charles University, Prague
Philippus de Caserta, *Tractatus figurarum*	**c.1370**	
Llibre vermell de Montserrat compiled	**end of the fourteenth century**	
Baude Cordier	**active c.1400**	
	1415	Henry V of England wins Battle of Agincourt
	1492	Conclusion of the Christian re-conquest of Spain

Monastic Centres in the Early Middle Ages

Introduction

When Charlemagne was crowned Emperor in Rome on Christmas Day 800 CE, he was the first ruler in Western Europe to have been granted that title since the last of the Roman Emperors over 300 years earlier. The title was a fitting one, as Charlemagne's thirty-year reign as king of the Franks up to that point had brought together much of the territory that had once belonged to the Roman Empire, and he had also cultivated a special relationship with the popes, whose seat in Rome and right to govern the Latin Church he had sworn to protect. With the backing of the Church, Charlemagne's empire supported a religious and cultural revival often called the Carolingian Renaissance. The monasteries, which were the centres of education and learning in the centuries before the foundation of the first universities (something we will return to in Chapter 4), built up enviable libraries, not just of theological and religious books but also works of literature, history, rhetoric, and many other subjects, often including works by the great classical authors of Ancient Greece and Rome.

Since the only way of receiving an education at that time was in a church or monastery school, the only people who learnt to read and write were those destined for lives as monks, nuns, or priests. The rest of the population, from peasants to nobility, were unable to read books or write letters for themselves, though wealthy rulers could – and did – employ clerks to read aloud to them and to write down texts that they dictated. All books were written by hand, and in each of the larger monasteries a scriptorium, or writing workshop, was established, in which monks laboured with quill pens and parchment to make copies of existing texts or to commit new materials to writing. To expand their book collections, the monasteries borrowed books from one another in order to make copies in their scriptoria, and the comparatively stable conditions of Charlemagne's empire allowed monks to travel between abbeys to share books and ideas.

The primary function of the monasteries – and the main activity of the monks and nuns who lived in them – was to carry out the **Divine Office**, or cycle of church

Figure 2.1 The Carolingian Empire and its neighbours, *c.*800
© Mappa Mundi Cartography

services that took place every day throughout the year. Nine times each day, the community would gather in the abbey church to pray, read from the Bible and other sacred texts, and sing praise to God. The rituals, words, and music of these services (collectively known as the **liturgy**), were prescribed in liturgical books, with specific prayers, readings, and chants stipulated for the daily, weekly, and annual cycles. A strong sense of tradition surrounded the liturgy, and under the Carolingians attempts were made to ensure that all churches were following as closely as possible what was believed to be its most authentic form. Nevertheless, in

some monasteries, the central liturgy was expanded and supplemented with new prayers and music, carefully designed to complement the existing liturgy without replacing it.

The network of monasteries during the Carolingian era and in the centuries following produced musical innovations as part of their cultural and spiritual resurgence. Our earliest surviving records of the musical results of this fertile domain date from towards the end of the ninth century, though these **manu-scripts** probably bear witness to musical practices that had already been in place decades earlier. In this chapter, we will explore first the various kinds of Latin song that emerged from the monasteries of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, before turning to the ways in which polyphony was used to enhance divine worship.

Latin Song

The earliest songbooks, like the libraries of the monasteries from which they came, testify to a remarkable array of thematic interests among the clergy of the early Middle Ages. Here, songs in praise of saints, **hymns** for use in the liturgy, and secular (that is, non-religious) songs on political and personal topics stand side by side. In these early manuscripts, the songs are most frequently described as *versus*, a Latin term that seems to have had a very broad meaning, merely indicating a poetic text (a text in 'verse', as opposed to 'prose'). These *versus* (note that the Latin term is the same in both the singular and plural forms) could encompass songs on any topic and in any poetic form or pattern, though sometimes more specific terms for particular kinds of song were also used.

The earliest of the songbooks to include musical notation for its songs dates from the end of the ninth century. Several slightly earlier books include some of the same song texts but without notation to accompany the words. This need not mean that the songs in such un-notated books were not sung; in fact, it was common both in the earliest centuries and right through the Middle Ages for manuscripts to be made containing song texts without notation. Often, this was simply because the intended readers had memorized the melodies and just needed a reminder of the songs' words: this was especially the case for songs in **strophic form**, where multiple verses of text were sung to the same tune, repeated as many times as necessary. Medieval hymns followed this form, as do most hymns today, and just as a modern congregational hymnbook includes only their words, some medieval song-books relied on their readers knowing the tunes already or being able to pick them up easily when hearing them sung by others.

One hymn found in the earliest songbooks used a text that was already centuries old by that time. *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis* ('Tell, my tongue, the glorious battle') was written by the sixth-century bishop and poet Venantius Fortunatus and describes the Cross as the symbol of Christ's victory over death. Using classical **metre**, Fortunatus's poetry linked back to the Latin literature of the Ancient Romans; this may have been part of its appeal to the churchmen who gathered it into their songbooks. *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis* is also an example of a song that was not initially used in the liturgy, but later came to be sung as part of divine worship on holy days associated with the Cross. After the song (often divided into shorter sections) took on a liturgical function, it continued to be sung for centuries and provided the inspiration for several later medieval songs. These included a hymn by St Thomas Aquinas, the renowned thirteenth-century theologian, with the same opening words, *Pange lingua gloriosi corporis mysterium*, which – like Fortunatus's hymn – is still sung in the Roman Catholic liturgy today (and see Box 5.6 on p. 110 for further links in this network of musical and poetic material).

Other songs found in the earliest Latin songbooks refer to contemporary events or comment on political affairs. When such songs refer to historical events of known date, they can help us to determine when the songs were composed, something that is especially useful when the surviving written copies of the song may date from generations later. One such example is the **lament** (or *planctus*) on the death of the Emperor Charlemagne, which seems to have been written soon after the event itself (28 January 814). But the oldest surviving manuscripts of the song's text date from the second half of the ninth century, and the earliest source to contain its music as well is even later, dating from the end of the century. The first five verses of this lament, the *Planctus Karoli*, are given in Box 2.1, with an English translation on the right. The poet may have been a monk of Bobbio in Northern Italy, an abbey with a famous library which lay within Charlemagne's empire and had been supported financially by him. Here the poet expresses grief both as an individual ('Alas for *me* in *my* misery'), and as part of a community of mourners stretching across the whole world, from where the sun rises to where it sets, and including people of every social category, from children to bishops. While the geographical reach alluded to by this poet is exaggerated, the song nonetheless gives us a striking insight into the widespread influence that Charlemagne was believed to have. It is also significant that this song continued to be written down in manuscripts as much as two centuries after Charlemagne's death, testifying to the importance attached to him as a historical figure.

As well as *versus* that were newly composed, such as the *Planctus Karoli*, the ninth-century songbooks also contain songs created out of extracts from the works

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Box 2.1 A lament on the death of the Emperor Charlemagne: the *Planctus Karoli*

1. A solis ortu usque ad occidua
littora maris planctus pulsat pectora.
Heu mihi misero!

1. From the rising of the sun to the sea-shores
where it sets, lamentation beats upon our breasts.
Alas for me in my misery!

2. Ultra marina agmina tristitia
tetigit ingens cum merore nimio.
Heu mihi misero!

2. Beyond the ocean-reaches men have been
touched by immense sadness and extreme sorrow.
Alas for me in my misery!

3. Franci, Romani atque cuncti creduli
luctu punguntur et magna molestia.
Heu mihi misero!

3. The Franks, the Romans and all believers
are tormented by grief and great distress.
Alas for me in my misery!

4. Infantes, senes, gloriosi praesules,
matronae plangunt detrimentum Caesaris.
Heu mihi misero!

4. Children, old men, glorious bishops
and matrons lament the loss of the emperor.
Alas for me in my misery!

5. Iamiam non cessant lacrimarum flumina,
nam plangit orbis interitum Karoli.
Heu mihi misero! . . .

5. Rivers of tears are now endless,
for the world bewails the death of Charlemagne.
Alas for me in my misery! . . .

text and translation from Peter Godman, *Latin Poetry of the Carolingian Renaissance* (Norman, 1985), 206–11.

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of classical authors, especially the Roman poets Virgil, Horace, and Ovid. Although we cannot be certain why the early medieval musicians made songs out of classical excerpts like these, it is possible that they were meant to act as models of classical poetic metres, and were set to music as a way of helping people to memorize those metrical patterns. This in turn suggests the use of these *versus* in schoolrooms, where boys learning Latin may have been encouraged to sing the songs to help them understand the rules of classical poetic composition. The particular sections that were chosen to be set to music are also revealing. Many excerpts are the speeches of characters from dramas or epic poems, and often it was the most moving, emotionally charged speeches that were selected. For example, the lament of Dido after her abandonment by her lover Aeneas (from the fourth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*) – a speech familiar to many music-lovers from its hauntingly beautiful setting in Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* – was one of the passages most often set to music in manuscripts from the tenth century onwards. If the choice of speeches suggests that they were sung in some kind of dramatic performance in the classroom, the idea of early medieval schoolboys taking on the roles of female characters is an intriguing one.

Writing Music Down

The first songbooks in which *versus* like these are recorded are among the earliest examples of musical notation from the Latin West. (Other – and earlier – ways of writing music down were used in the Ancient Greek and Byzantine worlds, but these systems were completely unknown to the musicians of the Carolingian Empire.) Up to the middle of the ninth century, musicians in the West had relied, it seems, entirely on oral transmission of music, learning the melodies of **chants** and other kinds of music by ear, and passing them on through singing or playing. The reasons why a need arose for a system of writing music down at that time are not entirely agreed upon by scholars, and the complicated arguments involved are usually discussed in the context of chant studies (David Hiley's *Gregorian Chant*, section 4.iii, introduces the topic at greater length). For our purposes, it is important to note that – according to the manuscripts that survive, at least – it was not just chants that were written down at this early stage, but non-liturgical songs too.

The type of musical notation found in all Western music books for the first few centuries after its emergence is called **neumatic notation**, and its individual written signs are known as 'neumes'. Neumatic notation is, in fact, not one single 'type' of notation, but a plethora of different musical 'scripts', each local to a particular region. While the underlying principles – in other words, *what* the notations were designed to show, and *how* – were more or less the same from place to place, the appearance of the notations was quite different. One example of neumatic notation, from eleventh-century Winchester, is shown in Figure 2.3 on p. 30. Just as in modern vocal scores, the notational signs are placed above the sung words, each sign aligned more or less closely with the syllable to which the notes were sung. (The lines of text in Figure 2.3 that do not have neumes above them are not meant to be sung, but are titles of the pieces that follow.) But early neumatic notations like this differ in important ways from the musical notation with which we are familiar today. Unlike our own, the notational signs do not indicate the precise pitch of each note, instead simply showing whether each note was higher or lower than the one next to it in the melody. In this way, they record musical direction or contour, but not exact (or even relative) pitch content. Most neumatic notations – like the one in Figure 2.3 – were written without any horizontal lines indicating pitch as modern staff-lines do. Additionally, each neume denotes either a single note or a group of several notes all to be sung to the same syllable. Because of this, there is scarcely ever any ambiguity about which notes of the melody belong to which syllables of the sung text, and it is easy to see whether a passage of music is mainly **syllabic** (sung with just one note per syllable) or **melismatic** (sung more floridly, with several notes per syllable). In Figure 2.3, there is a series of single dots above the words 'Gloria in' (halfway down the page, beginning

with the enlarged capital G in the margin), which show that this piece opened syllabically, whereas above the word 'te' four lines lower, a long cluster of notational signs appear, indicating an extended **melisma**. Lastly, neumes did not show the precise duration of each note and thus could not communicate fixed rhythm in the way that modern notation with measurable note values can. Nevertheless, some neumatic notations did express quite a lot of rhythmic differentiation or nuance, showing that certain notes were held longer and others passed over more quickly.

Despite the great subtlety of many early neumatic notations, it will be obvious from the description above that they cannot easily be read by modern musicians or converted into modern musical notation. For example, they may show us that a melody is rising but not by how much (a step? a third? more?) or on which notes the ascent begins and ends. Presumably the musicians who made and used these early written copies were already familiar with the music they notated, since they were accustomed to learning music by ear, and did not need a fully prescriptive written copy to remind them of a melody they already knew. But to decipher these notations without having internalized the music first, as they had done, is almost impossible. The melodies of many songs in late ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts can therefore only be reconstructed with a high degree of speculation and creative imagination.

For some songs, however, we have a major clue in the form of later notated copies of the same pieces, written using a notational system that did record exact pitch. When the musical staff became widely used from the twelfth century onwards, nearly all ambiguity over the pitch of melodies was eliminated. So where we are lucky enough to find an early song being written down again in a much later, staff-notated version, and that version seems to correspond to the musical contours indicated by the earlier neumes, we can be much more certain of the song's melody and can make a modern **transcription** – that is, a copy written out using the musical notation familiar to today's musicians – from which it can be sung.

Something similar is the case for the song shown in Example 2.1, *Aurea personet lira*. Its earliest written copy dates from the mid-eleventh century, but it was evidently well known, as it is found in at least four more manuscripts from the following century and several more from later in the Middle Ages. It was also included as a musical example in a music-theory book, where the melody was notated using neither neumes nor a staff, but alphabetically, with the letter names of each note written out above the syllables. The rare musical information preserved in this music-theory book gives us the special opportunity to transcribe an early Latin song accurately, enabling us to read – and to sing – this beautiful piece about the song of the nightingale. In its closing lines, the song itself names its earliest singers as young scholars, who were doubtless in the process of being trained in both the practical and theoretical aspects of musical study which are referred to in the song.

Example 2.1 Eleventh-century Latin song: *Aurea personet lira*

Translation:

1a. *Let the golden lyre sound out bright melodies, let a single string be stretched over fifteen notes, let the middle note be the primary sound, according to the Hypodorian mode.* 1b. *Let us give praise to the nightingale with wind instruments, singing a sweet melody as music teaches us, without which true art songs are worth nothing.*

Example 2.1 (*cont.*)

> 2a. *When from the earth in spring new shoots are brought forth, and all around in the groves the branches burst into leaf, how sweet a fragrance wafts through the flowering herbs.* 2b. *The nightingale is joyful, aware of her sweet voice, and stretching out the breaths of her throat in melody she gives forth notes as the signs of the summer season.*

> 3a. *Night and day she continues with sweet-sounding voice, giving peace to sleepers through intervals of song, and pleasing solace from labour to the traveller.* 3b. *The beauty of her voice, brighter than the lyre, surpasses all other flocks of birds in its warbling, filling the woods and all the thickets with music.*

Example 2.1 shows only the first part of *Aurea personet lira*. As we can see, the first **stanza** (up to 'lege ypodorica') is set to the first passage of music, and this music is then repeated straight away for the second stanza of text ('Philomele . . . nulla valent cantica'). The same procedure is followed again for the next two text stanzas, and for the two after that. If we were to label the musical passages using letters, we could describe the musical form of the song up to this point as AABBCC. This type of construction, where each musical passage is repeated with new text before the next musical passage is introduced, is one that we find in many types of medieval song, both in Latin and in the vernacular languages. Among liturgical chants, the **sequence** is usually associated with this form, and in the vernacular sphere that we will consider in Chapter 5, the Old French ***lai*** is also based upon it. It is sometimes called 'double versicle' form – **versicle** referring to each text stanza, and 'double' because two versicles are sung to each musical passage – but the form was more flexible than that suggests, with some musical passages heard only once and others repeated three or more times or returning later in the song. After the end of the section shown in Example 2.1, the composer of *Aurea personet lira* did not continue to supply new musical passages but instead repeated all of the music again: versicles 4a and 4b are sung to musical passage A, 5a and 5b to passage B, and 6a and 6b to passage C. Passages A and B are then each heard twice more before the song comes to a close.

Versicles 1a and 1b introduce the subject of the song with an exhortation to musicians to sing and play in praise of the nightingale. Immediately delving into the realms of music **theory**, the poet mentions the fifteen notes that comprised the complete musical scale according to Ancient writers, and the Hypodorian mode, one of the eight **modes** by which Ancient and medieval melodies were classified. In a nod to the song's original schoolroom setting, the poet stresses that true, correct singing can only be achieved once the fundamentals of music theory have been grasped. As the song continues, the nightingale's singing is held up as better than that of all other birds, capable of praising creation, and soothing human ears. But

the underlying implication is that – however wonderful the nightingale's song – it must always be inferior to human song (in this case, the singing of the young scholars) because the nightingale is an irrational creature, incapable of mastering the true laws of music.

In melodic terms, the song presents several interesting features. The first musical passage partly corresponds to the Hypodorian mode mentioned in its text: melodies in that mode used the notes of the octave *A–a*, with *D* being the **final** – the principal note of the mode, on which all melodies ended. Thereafter, however, the melody continues in the Dorian mode, which also has *D* as its final, but with a musical range of *D–d*, often also incorporating the note below the final, *C*. Most of the melodic movement in the song is stepwise, and this makes the occasional leaps particularly striking. At the end of the first phrase, for example, the leap from *A* down to *D* above the word 'lira' stands out strongly against the stepwise motion circling around *A* that has come before and the similar circling around *D* that follows. Conversely, some phrases are marked out by an almost total lack of musical motion: such stasis occurs in two phrases of versicles 3a/3b, one appropriately setting the words 'giving peace to sleepers' (*soporatis dans quietem*). Though most of the melody is syllabic, the composer has incorporated some more florid (or melismatic) moments, with two or three notes per syllable. Without ever going so far as to imitate the fully wordless song of the nightingale, these moments allow for a greater sense of musical flow, relaxing (albeit fleetingly) the strict conjunction of words and notes.

For *Aurea personet lira* we are fortunate to be able to recover the full melody because of the copy in alphabetic notation, but even for those early songs for which fully decipherable copies do not survive, some kinds of musical information can still be gleaned from the neumes. For the *Planctus Karoli*, for example, the neumes show us that the melody involves repeated passages: the musical signs for the second line (beginning 'littora maris') are the same as those for the first line ('A solis ortu'), with a few slight variations. We can also see that the song opens in a declamatory fashion, with single notes for the first few syllables, becoming more musically expansive with two or three notes per syllable later in the line. In recent years, scholars have devoted more and more attention to these 'indecipherable' notations, comparing many examples of each to identify patterns, and sometimes collaborating with performing musicians to come up with sung versions that use as much information as possible from the neumes as a starting point for creative realization in sound. This approach lies behind much of the work of singer Benjamin Bagby and his ensemble Sequentia: their album reconstructing the neumed laments from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (listed at the end of this chapter) represents the fruits of their collaboration with musicologist Sam Barrett.

The Cambridge Songs

One of the songbooks in which *Aurea personet lira* is found is a collection known as the Cambridge Songs, so called because it is now preserved in the University Library in Cambridge. This song collection was assembled in the mid-eleventh century at St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, though few of its contents hail from England. Instead, we can tell from the names of historical figures mentioned in some of the song texts that many of the songs were composed in the Rhineland area. Some of the songs even have snatches of a Rhineland dialect of Old High German interspersed within the mainly Latin lyrics. Others, meanwhile, seem more likely to have originated in France and Italy, and as such the collection as a whole seems remarkably international in outlook. The subject matter of the songs is equally varied, including songs about nature, religious and moral topics, and love – though some of the more erotic passages were crossed out by a censor at an unidentified later date. Just as with the earliest songbooks, the diversity of subjects in the Cambridge Songs suggests a very broad range of interests among the monks of eleventh-century Canterbury: clearly, the monasteries continued to be places where songs and texts of all kinds were eagerly collected and treasured.

Only a few of the songs in the Cambridge collection are written with neumes above their words, but there can be no doubt that the rest of the songs were also intended to be sung. A number of them can be found in other manuscripts with notation, and many others allude so directly to music and musical performance in their texts, that their status as songs is as good as certain. Several, like *Aurea personet lira*, mention matters of music theory, such as the names of musical intervals. Others refer to the act of performance, describing children, adult musicians, and knights – as well as angels and birds – as singers. Still more list musical instruments, including the lyre, pipe, flute, drum, and harp. One song, *Caute cane, cantor care* ('Sing carefully, dear singer'), begins every word of its text with the letter c, creating a rhythmical, almost musical, clicking effect that neatly complements its focus on singing and the playing of musical instruments.

Organum in Theory and Practice

Alongside Latin song, the other main musical innovations to arise from monastic centres from the ninth century onwards were primarily elaborations of, and supplements to, the chant of the liturgy. These liturgical innovations took various

forms, and most are more appropriately dealt with in books about chant than in this book (see David Hiley's *Gregorian Chant*, chapter 3). But one kind of liturgical elaboration – **organum**, or polyphonic singing of the chant – deserves our attention here, as it is the earliest example of polyphony to have been preserved in written form.

Some important aspects of the definition of organum must be clarified to begin with. Strictly speaking, organum was a kind of musical practice, not a type of composition, at least in its early stages. In other words, it was a set of techniques used by singers for generating one or more additional voice parts to accompany the chant. These added parts were not written down, but were created *ex tempore*, in the moment of singing, and are thus often referred to as 'improvised'. However, this type of improvisation differs from other kinds of musical extemporization with which we are familiar – jazz solos, for instance – because organum singing involved the application of strict rules, not the exercise of creative freedom. The rules governing the polyphonic singing of the chant – again, at least to begin with – were straightforward and easy to learn, and hence were probably memorized by singers without needing written instructions. So by the time we first come to know of organum from music-theory books of the ninth century, the practice was probably already very old, and even in decline.

The Earliest Descriptions of Organum

Our first information about the practice of organum comes from a pair of music **treatises** (books of music theory), called *Musica Enchiriadis* ('Musical Handbook') and *Scolica Enchiriadis* ('Notes on the Handbook'). These books deal with many musical topics, and to judge from the number of surviving copies, were extremely well known in the Middle Ages. Their comparatively short chapters on organum give us the following basic principles:

- the chant, called the ***vox principalis*** (**principal voice**) was always the starting point;
- a second voice, called the ***vox organalis*** (**organal [or polyphonic] voice**), could be added *below* the principal voice;
- the organal voice started at the interval of a fourth or a fifth below the principal voice and followed its contour precisely.

From the examples given in the two handbooks, it is clear that the chant was never altered, and was always given prominence (note that the organal voice always lay below it). The basic two-voice **texture** they describe, which *Musica*

Enchiriadis calls **diaphony**, could also be expanded by doubling either the principal voice, the organal voice, or both, at the octave. The treatises note that this octave doubling occurred naturally when men and boys sang together, and even suggest that both melodic lines could be doubled an octave above *and* below, leading to a rich musical texture with up to six parallel parts. This kind of **parallel organum**, in which each voice follows along the chant melody precisely, at the interval of a fourth, fifth, or octave, is easy to generate: we have given some suggestions for how you might do this yourself in Box 2.2.

Box 2.2 Improvising organum

Try following these instructions to improvise some early medieval organum for yourself. You need a minimum of two people, but it will work with many more. (You could also play one or more of the melodies on instruments: the *Scolica Enchiriadis* tells us that 'human voices can be mixed with one another and with musical instruments'.)

- First, everyone in the group should learn a short passage of chant, such as this acclamation *Christus vincit*. A recording of this chant can be found on the album *Chant Wars* (details in the Suggested Recordings section at the end of this chapter), so the singers can listen to this passage (the first thirty seconds of track 13) a few times and start to sing along until they have learnt it.

Chris - tus   vin - cit,   Chris - tus   reg - nat,   Chris - tus   im - pe - rat.

- Then, divide the singers into two groups. One group should find a starting note that is a fourth below the chant's starting note, and practise a few times singing the chant starting on the new, lower note. (If you have male and female singers, it may work best for the male voices to sing at this lower pitch.)

principal (chant) voice:

organal (added) voice:
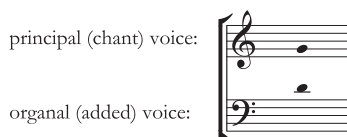
- Now put the two groups together, with half the singers singing the chant at the original pitch, and the other half singing the chant starting on the note a fourth lower. Sing this a few times until everyone feels confident.
- To make three- and four-part organum, divide the singers into smaller groups, and try doubling either the chant melody or the transposed chant melody (or both) an octave higher or lower.

Box 2.2 (*cont.*)

organal voice 3:
(i.e. organal voice 1
doubled an octave higher)

principal voice:

principal voice:

organal voice:

organal voice:

organal voice 2:
(i.e. chant voice doubled
an octave lower)

organal voice 2:
(i.e. chant voice doubled
an octave lower)

- Experiment with singing organum a fifth (instead of a fourth) below the chant, adding further voices an octave higher or lower as before.

Because the aim of these music treatises was to explain music theory as clearly as possible, including describing precise pitches and intervals, the inherent ambiguity of neumatic notation meant that it would not have been suitable for the treatises' musical examples. Instead, the music theorists responsible for *Musica Enchiriadis* and *Scolica Enchiriadis* developed an ingenious new way of showing precisely which notes were to be sung. This involved drawing a grid of horizontal lines, with each line representing a particular note, and placing the syllables of the text on the appropriate line. We can see an illustration of this method in Figure 2.2, a music example provided in *Musica Enchiriadis*. The example shows a short passage of chant with the text *Tu patris sempiternus es filius* (the word 'sempiternus' is abbreviated here to 'sēpit˜nus', using conventional marks of abbreviation that could easily be deciphered by medieval readers). Using diagonal lines to connect the displaced syllables, the diagram shows us that after the syllable 'Tu' the melody rises by skip for 'pa-' and then by step for '-tris sempiternus', before rising again by step for 'es' and falling by skip and then two steps for the final three syllables 'fi-li-us'. The horizontal grid used in Figure 2.2 and throughout the *Enchiriadis* treatises is similar – but not identical – to the musical staff. The crucial difference is that in the *Enchiriadis* grids only the lines represent notes, and not the spaces in between.

The signs to the left of the grid are symbols representing each note in a system called **daseian notation**, which was used extensively in music-theory books because it allowed writers to specify particular notes. But to the left of those
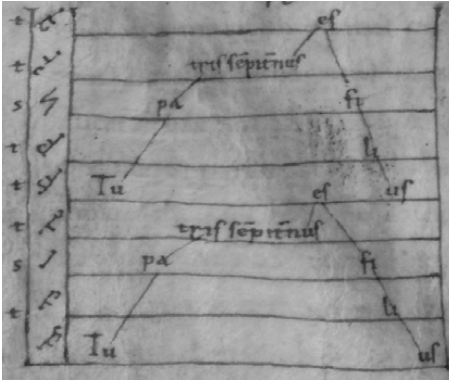
Figure 2.2 Two-part organum in *Musica Enchiriadis*
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14649, f.6 v (detail); by permission

signs, the letters t and s, standing for *tonus* ('tone') and *semitonus* ('semitone') indicate the interval between each of the lines of the grid. Even without knowing the daseian signs, then, the reader of this copy of *Musica Enchiriadis* could work out how to sing *Tu patris sempiternus es filius* accurately.

Figure 2.2 is the example given to demonstrate two-part organum at the interval of a fifth. The upper line of text represents the chant melody or principal voice, and the lower line is the organal voice. You could try singing this example for yourself, starting on any two notes a fifth apart. Remember to follow carefully the indications of tones and semitones: for example, the interval between 'Tu' and 'pa-' is a tone plus a semitone (i.e. a minor third), not two tones (a major third).

Though strictly parallel organum – using the intervals of a fourth and a fifth (with optional octave doubling) – lies at the heart of the polyphonic practice described by the *Enchiriadis* treatises, the treatises nonetheless indicate that the organal voice was permitted to deviate from following the principal voice in strict **parallel motion** under certain circumstances, such as to avoid harmonic dissonances. The conditions they describe seem somewhat theoretical, and one wonders whether in practical situations they would really have been observed by singers. These exceptions, which allowed the organal voice in some cases either to remain stationary on a single note while the principal voice moved or to move in **contrary motion** to join it on a unison at the end of a phrase, were, however, precisely that: exceptions that prove the general rule of parallel motion.

How did the theoretical descriptions of organum in the *Enchiriadis* treatises relate to practice? Until very recently, that was entirely a matter for speculation, since the treatises were the only evidence we had for polyphonic singing until 150 years later, when the first practical collection of polyphonic music was assembled in the Winchester Troper (for which, see p. 29 below). But in 2010 an extraordinary discovery was made in the British Library in London by Giovanni Varelli. On the final page of an unrelated manuscript, apparently jotted down as an afterthought, is a strange musical inscription dating from the start of the tenth century. Two short chants are written there, with neumes above their texts. But above the first chant there is also a series of dashes and circles, connected by vertical lines, which turns out to be a two-part polyphonic setting of the same chant, *Sancte Bonifati* (in honour of St Boniface). This little piece of organum has been carefully written on horizontal lines – similar to the horizontal grid used in the *Enchiriadis* examples – and can therefore be reliably transcribed into modern notation. Varelli's discovery forms priceless evidence of how organum was actually sung, outside the precepts of the music-theory texts. Parallel motion at the fourth is prominent, but other kinds of polyphonic motion similar to those described as exceptions in the treatises also feature strongly. A performance of this piece made from Varelli's transcription (for which see the articles listed in the Further Reading section at the end of the chapter) reveals a flexible and delicate approach to singing in two parts, in some ways anticipating the much later examples of practical polyphony from the eleventh century.

Later Theories of Organum

Writing around 1030, more than a century later than the earliest treatises and the sole practical example of organum discovered in the British Library, the Italian monk and music theorist Guido of Arezzo certainly knew the *Musica* and *Scolica Enchiriadis* treatises. The practice of organum that he describes in his treatise called *Micrologus* is based on the same principles but is somewhat more varied and flexible. Just as with the earlier treatises, Guido's *Micrologus* describes an unwritten practice, generated in the moment of singing by singers trained to perform the liturgy. As we can see by studying one of the passages given in the *Micrologus* to demonstrate the conventions of organum in Guido's day, the singers who created organal voices to accompany the chant now had a range of techniques to choose from.

Within the first passage (*Option 1*) in Example 2.2, several of the techniques available to organum singers are evident. In particular,

Example 2.2 Eleventh-century organum from Guido of Arezzo, *Micrologus* Two options for creating organum on the chant passage *Sexta hora sedit super puteum*

- the organal voice may proceed in parallel with the principal voice, a fourth below (as described in the earlier treatises). This occurs on the syllables 'sexta ho-' and '-dit super pute-' in *Option 1* of Example 2.2;
- *or*, the organal voice may remain stationary on a **boundary tone** (i.e. the lowest note of the chant passage in question). This happens when the organal voice reaches *C* at 'ho-' and remains on that note until '-dit'. *C* is the lowest note of the chant passage;
- *or*, the organal voice may join the principal voice in unison at a phrase ending. This is called ***occursus***, literally 'meeting', and takes places at the end of this passage, when the organal voice reaches *F* and remains there as the chant voice rises and then falls again to meet it.

In any given passage of chant, these three techniques may be flexibly combined by the singers. In other words, the deviations from strictly parallel motion are no longer described as exceptions to be resorted to only under certain theoretically defined conditions, but as options that may be drawn upon freely. It is an indication of this freedom available to singers that Guido provides an alternative organal voice to accompany the same passage of chant (*Option 2* in Example 2.2). In this option,

- the organal voice remains stationary on the boundary tone *F* throughout the whole passage;
- *F* qualifies as a boundary tone here because the chant melody only briefly dips below it (at '-ra se-' and in the middle of '-um');
- hence, in these limited circumstances, the organal voice was permitted to lie above the principal voice briefly.

Comparing these two options, it becomes clear that singers had some discretion in applying the rules of organum. Even the definition of the boundary tone was open to interpretation, and if you sing or play through the two options in Example 2.2, you will hear that two quite different results are achieved depending on whether *C* or *F* is considered the boundary tone. If you tried the exercise 'Improvising organum' on p. 23 and are feeling confident, you may wish to try creating sung polyphony according to these more elaborate procedures, using either the chant melody given there or any other chant of your choice. While this seems a lot more difficult to us, bear in mind that the eleventh-century singers who sang organum like that described by Guido were much more used than we are to singing by heart. They had memorized a vast **repertory** of chant for the church's liturgy and relied much less than we do on written copies for learning and performing music.

Two further important theory texts, both from around 1100, provide a window onto the continuing practice of organum some seventy years later than Guido. One, *Ad organum faciendum* ('On making organum'), is anonymous. The other, *De musica* ('On music'), is ascribed to 'Johannes' (John), though a more precise identification of its author has proven contentious; modern authors have sometimes referred to him as John of Afflighem ('Johannes Affligemensis') or John Cotton ('Johannes Cotto'). In both these treatises, the organal voice has shifted position to lie above the chant voice (though it could sometimes cross below it). The prevailing parallel motion between the principal voice and the organal voice has all but disappeared, and the organal voice can move freely at intervals of a fourth, fifth, octave, or unison with the chant voice. In John's *De musica*, contrary motion between the organal voice and the chant voice is encouraged, and the organal voice may even have two or more notes against one in the chant voice, breaking down for the first time the 'note-against-note' principle that was paramount in all earlier theoretical descriptions of organum. The main organum treatises discussed in this chapter are summarized in Table 2.1.

In the next chapter, we will take a closer look at some polyphonic music composed in the years immediately following *Ad organum faciendum* and *De musica*, and will be able to assess the extent to which the theoretical principles described in the treatises underpinned polyphonic composition in the twelfth century. First, however, we need to take a step back from music theory and look at the earliest substantial collection of polyphonic compositions that were fully written out rather than improvised according to theoretical conventions.

Table 2.1 *Early polyphony in theory texts, ninth–eleventh centuries*

Theory text	Date	Summary of polyphonic rules
Musica Enchiriadis and *Scolica Enchiriadis*	late ninth century	• Organal voice below chant voice • Parallel organum in fourths and fifths, with optional octave doubling
Guido of Arezzo, *Micrologus*	*c.*1030	• Organal voice below chant voice • Freely parallel organum in fourths and fifths • Organal voice can remain on boundary tone, or join the chant voice in *occursus*
Ad organum faciendum	*c.*1100	• Organal voice above chant voice, but may sometimes cross below it • No longer parallel: combination of fourths, fifths, octaves, and unisons • Many possible choices for creating an organal voice
John, *De musica*	*c.*1100	• Organal voice above chant voice, but may sometimes cross below it • Contrary motion encouraged • Organal voice may include two or more notes against one in the principal voice

The Winchester Troper

In what would turn out to be the final decades of the Anglo-Saxon period in England (before the Norman Conquest of 1066), a large collection of polyphonic music was written down at one of the country's most important monastic centres, Winchester. The Old Minster at Winchester had long since been an abbey favoured by the English kings and their families; several were buried in the church, and King Edward the Confessor was crowned there in 1043. It was also at the heart of far-reaching monastic reforms that took place in the later tenth century, led by Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester. In the 970s, Æthelwold drew up the document *Regularis concordia*, which set out the rules and standards for monasteries across England, drawing on models from monastic life elsewhere in Europe. The tenth-century abbey church housed an impressive organ, a colourful contemporary description of which survives. In the early eleventh century, neither the spirit of revival nor the church's notable musical heritage showed signs of waning, and the monks of Winchester remained in contact with their fellow churchmen throughout Europe.

A product of this vibrant monastic atmosphere at Winchester in the first half of the eleventh century is the book known as the Winchester Troper, copied there in the 1020s or 1030s. Though it contains many kinds of sacred music, it is for its

collection of polyphony that it is best known, since – aside from a few isolated pieces haphazardly jotted down (like *Sancte Bonifati* mentioned on p. 26 above) – it is the earliest surviving practical record of polyphonic composition. The manuscript itself leaves us in no doubt that the monks of Winchester regarded these pieces as compositions – works artfully created, and preserved in writing so that they would not be forgotten. The esteem in which the polyphonic pieces were held is abundantly clear from the titles written above many of them in the manuscript. The first of these titles can be translated as 'Here begin the mellifluous melodies of organa upon the sweetest heavenly proclamations'. In Figure 2.3, we can see several more such labels: on the top left, the first piece is announced as 'a sweet-sounding organum made with refined melody – this praise resounds as the priest approaches the altar', and below it, the second piece on the page is called 'an organum on the angelic hymn'.
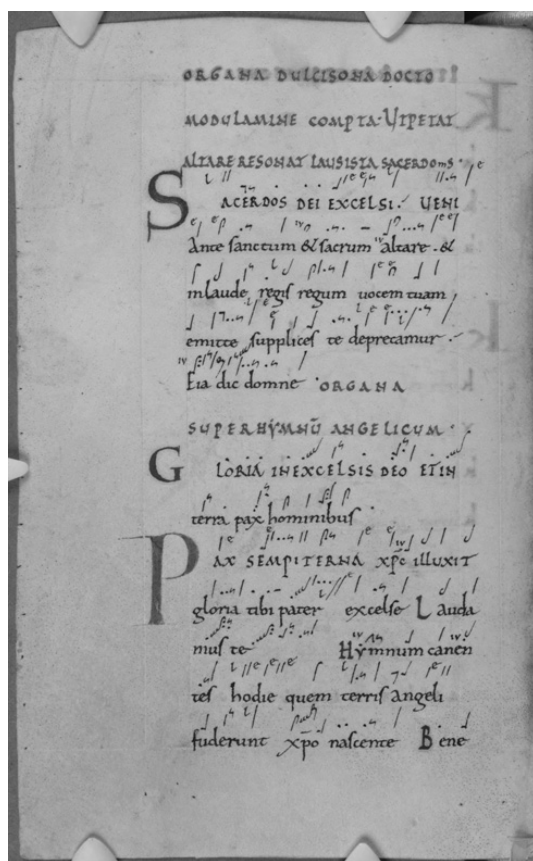
Figure 2.3 The Winchester Troper
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, The Parker Library, MS 473, f.138 v; by permission

In the Winchester Troper, the added organal voice parts are copied separately from the chants they are designed to accompany. Thus, in Figure 2.3, we see only the organal parts for *Sacerdos Dei excelsi* and *Gloria in excelsis Deo*; for the chants to go with them, users of the book would have to look elsewhere, either in different sections of the Troper itself or in other liturgical books that would have been available in the Old Minster. The particular chants for which organal parts were composed are – for the most part – those chants that would have been sung by soloists, rather than the full choir. This in turn suggests that the organa were performed by solo voices, and their complexity (in comparison to the strictly parallel procedures described in the *Enchiriadis* treatises) reinforces that suggestion. Listening to Winchester organa (as you can do on the album *Music for a King*, listed at the end of this chapter), the impression is of a much more varied and flexible approach to polyphonic singing than that described by any of the theorists. Some of the same principles continue to apply: the chant voice still predominates, with the organal voice playing a supporting role, and the notion of a boundary tone is still present, though such held tones are more 'local' in the Winchester pieces, defining the limit only of short musical figures rather than whole, long phrases. When a chant includes passages that are repeated, the organal voice is often different the second time, giving the sense that the Winchester singers were deliberately exploring a variety of musical options whenever they could. And the Winchester organa are remarkably sensitive to the texts of the chants they set, with the organal parts manipulated to ensure that word divisions are clearly heard and the syntax of each text phrase is articulated. Susan Rankin has called the polyphonic practices at Winchester a 'rhetorical art', and shown how the apparently free-flowing and mobile organal voices are in fact very carefully controlled to ensure that the structure of the chant texts was projected. As the first body of polyphonic compositions to be fully written out, the organa of the Winchester Troper represent a turning point in the history of medieval polyphony. The grandeur of the titles that were assigned to many of the pieces by the manuscript's scribes, and the elegance and care with which they were notated, make it clear that the musicians of eleventh-century Winchester considered this music of extraordinary inventiveness and text-sensitivity to be well-fitted to the praise of God.

Suggested Recordings

The *Planctus Karoli* (*A solis ortu usque ad occidua*), and *Christus vincit* with improvised early organum:

- *Chant Wars*, Sequentia, dir. Benjamin Bagby and Dialogos, dir. Katarina Livljanić (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 82876 66650 2, 2005)

The Cambridge Songs, including *Aurea personet lira*:

- *Lost Songs of a Rhineland Harper*, Sequentia, dir. Benjamin Bagby (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 82876 58940 2, 2004)

Neumed passages from Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*:

- *Boethius: Songs of Consolation*, Sequentia, dir. Benjamin Bagby (Glossa, GCD 922518, 2018)

The Winchester Troper:

- *Music for a King: The Winchester Troper*, Discantus, dir. Brigitte Lesne (Aeon, 1436, 2014)

Organum from eleventh-century France:

- *Les premières polyphonies françaises: Organa et tropes du XIe siècle*, Ensemble Gilles Binchois, dir. Dominique Vellard (Virgin Veritas, 45135, 1994)

Further Reading

Deeming, Helen, 'Latin Song I: Songs and Songbooks from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, volume 2, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, 2018), 1020–47.

Fuller, Sarah, 'Early Polyphony to *c*.1200' in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, ed. Mark Everist (Cambridge, 2011), 46–66.

Hiley, David, *Gregorian Chant* (Cambridge, 2009) – see especially sections 3.ii on elaborations of the liturgy, and 4.iii on notation/neumes.

Rankin, Susan (ed.), *The Winchester Troper: Facsimile Edition and Introduction* (Early English Church Music 53; London, 2007).

Ziolkowski, Jan M. (ed. and trans.), *The Cambridge Songs (Carmina Cantabrigiensia)* (New York and London, 1994).

On the tenth-century organum discovered in the British Library, see https://bit.ly/3L55uG1 and (with a recording of *Sancte Bonifati*) https://bit.ly/3Rxk5vd.

On the process of recovering early medieval songs from neumatic notation, and experimenting with performers to create convincing sung versions, see *Restoring Lost Songs: Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy*, https://boethius.mus.cam.ac.uk/.

Court and Cloister in Aquitaine and Occitania

Introduction

To understand the social and cultural contexts of the music to be discussed in this chapter, we must first look back to the break-up of the Frankish Empire in the ninth century. After the death of Charlemagne's son Louis the Pious in 840, the vast territory previously controlled by the Frankish kings was split into three, each part inherited by one of Louis's sons. The westernmost part of the empire, known as West Francia, encompassed much of modern-day France, but over the following centuries, the real influence of the kings of West Francia declined, as noble families across the south and west asserted their right to govern their own lands. Some of these local territories were small and co-existed largely peacefully with neighbouring domains. Others, such as the Duchies of Aquitaine and Gascony and the County of Toulouse, were large and politically important. By the end of the eleventh century, the dukes of Aquitaine had become the most significant rulers in the region, controlling a sizeable domain that would pass into the hands of the English king, Henry II, on his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152.

The need to defend their own territories led many rulers in this area (now equivalent to Southern France; see Figure 3.1) to construct fortified castles, and in some cases, fortified cities around them, a famous example being the walled city of Carcassonne. Some major churches and cathedrals were situated within these settlements, but other abbeys – equally important to the religious culture of the period – were dotted around the countryside. These abbeys, some founded centuries earlier and following the Benedictine monastic rule, others established more recently as part of the newer monastic movements of the Cluniacs and Cistercians, were deliberately separated from the day-to-day bustle of urban life, but nonetheless retained connections with the world around them. As in earlier centuries, abbots and bishops continued to be some of the most influential figures in political as well as in religious life.

The everyday language spoken across most of this region was Occitan, or the *langue d'oc* ('oc' being the word for 'yes'), hence the term Occitania to describe the linguistic area. Occitan differed from Old French, the language spoken in the northern half of what is now France, and was closer in some respects to neighbouring languages such as

33
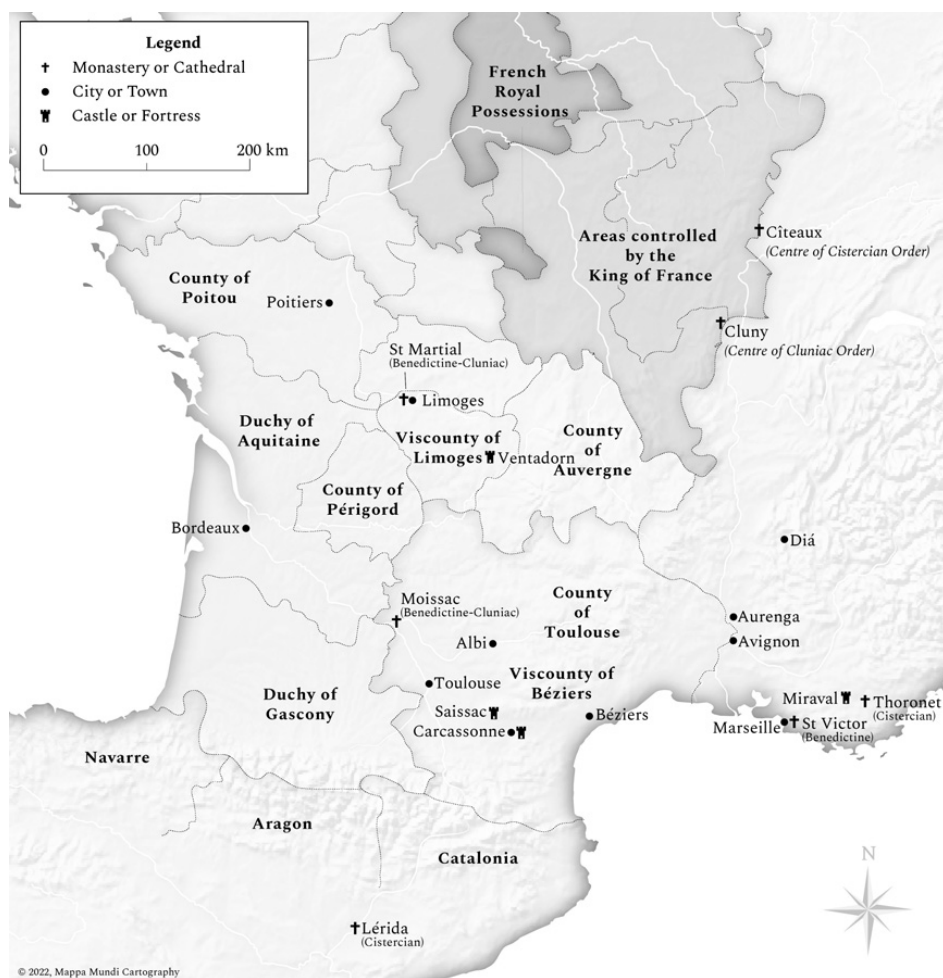
Figure 3.1 The region of Aquitaine and Occitania, *c.*1100
© Mappa Mundi Cartography

Catalan and Piedmontese. The twelfth-century kings of France had very little power in this region, so in both linguistic and political terms, Occitania was distinct from France.

Courts and Crusades

The political realities of this large region during the eleventh and twelfth centuries provided the framework which defined how, where, and by whom music was composed and sung. A large number of noble rulers, each in charge of their own lands and the people who lived on them, co-existed alongside one another in a society held together by bonds of marriage and family ties, and of political loyalty. Wealth

and power were directly derived from the quantity of land a ruler possessed, so that the highest in the social order were those with the most extensive territories. While these nobles were typically men, it was not unusual for noblewomen to find themselves in charge of large estates that had passed to them by inheritance from their fathers (when there was no male heir to inherit the property) or after the death of their husbands. Eleanor of Aquitaine is perhaps the best-known example of a medieval noblewoman with considerable political autonomy, continuing to rule the Duchy of Aquitaine in her own right even during her two marriages, and acting as regent of England during the many absences of her husband, Henry II, and her son, Richard I (the Lionheart). Beneath the highest echelons of society came the lesser nobility, people who were also from the land-owning class but whose possessions were more limited in scale: these aristocrats received support from wealthier nobles in return for political (and sometimes military) allegiance and loyalty. The nobility formed commercial relationships with urban merchants and tradesmen in cities in their vicinity; some of these merchants were themselves immensely wealthy, though their wealth had been created through trade, rather than inherited by birth. Both noble rulers and the wealthier urban citizens employed paid servants for domestic labour, and landowners allowed their agricultural land to be worked by peasant farmers in return for rents (paid in money or in produce).

The circle of people surrounding a ruler was known as their court and included members of their family and others who depended on their support. If a noble ruler controlled a large geographical area, much of their time was spent travelling around it, settling disputes, collecting dues, and otherwise making their power and influence felt. The court travelled with them, setting down en route at the ruler's various estates or as guests in the castles of other noble families.

The passage of time in this society was marked mainly by the major festivals of the Church's year, which fell in line with the seasons that governed agriculture. Whether at home or on the move, rulers and their retinues would gather to celebrate these festivals, attending religious ceremonies followed by feasting. For the most important festivals, celebrations could continue for days and include music, dancing, and storytelling.

From 1095 onwards, the nobles of Europe were caught up in the series of religious wars known collectively as the Crusades. Heeding the Church's call to muster military forces to recover the Holy Land from Muslim rule, many noble rulers drafted knights and foot soldiers from among the men who owed them allegiance, and set off to join one of the Crusading campaigns. The Crusaders had various motivations, including the desire to secure the Holy Land under Christian rulers, the spiritual benefits promised them by the Church in return for their service, and – in some cases – the intention to capture lucrative territories for themselves. Many died in the conflicts, while others returned to find that their absence had created opportunities at home for others to seize their lands and

disrupt their influence. Thus, religious and worldly affairs were intermingled, both for those who went on Crusade and for those who stayed behind.

While the term 'Crusades' primarily refers to military campaigns in the Holy Land between 1095 and 1291, other medieval conflicts with religious motivations have also sometimes been called 'crusades'. One such is the Albigensian Crusade, fought in the region covered in this chapter during the early thirteenth century. A theological movement known as Catharism had begun to flourish in the area, promoting the values of poverty, abstinence, and the rejection of violence. Cathars believed that the Catholic Church and its clergy were corrupt and spurned the authority of both the Church and secular rulers, including the king. In response to this, the Church declared the Cathars to be heretics and launched a crusade against them in 1209. The city of Albi was a hub of Cathar adherents, who were therefore called the 'Albigensians'. When Pope Innocent III offered to grant the lands of any captured or killed Cathars to the crusader who defeated them, the conflict gained political momentum. The French king, Louis VIII, saw his chance to take back control of many of the territories in the south and west that had long since evaded his power and, by the conclusion of the crusade in 1229, had largely succeeded in demolishing both the Cathar movement and the network of autonomous rulers and courts that had characterized society in the region for the previous two centuries.

The Troubadours and Courtly Love

The network of noble rulers and courts stretching across the region shown in Figure 3.1 formed the context for the musical activities of the **troubadours**. These poet-composers, of whom around 460 are known by name, came from a wide range of backgrounds and occupied an equally wide range of social positions. Some were themselves noblemen or noblewomen, who – in contrast to earlier centuries – were now educated at court by tutors who taught them to read and write, and trained them in the various accomplishments expected of the courtly aristocracy. For these nobles, composing and performing song was a form of leisure and a way to impress and amuse other members of the noble class. Troubadours of more humble birth sought employment at noble courts through their musical talents, creating and performing songs for the entertainment of their noble patrons: some of them received an education at church schools and picked up their knowledge of courtly music and poetry while serving their masters. Below these career troubadours in the social hierarchy came the *joglars*, a class of jobbing musicians (or minstrels) who played instruments and sang, but did not compose songs of their own.

Unlike many of the composers whose music features in this book, we know a considerable amount about the lives of the troubadours, largely from biographies (known as ***vidas***) that were transmitted alongside copies of their songs. From these *vidas* we learn details of when and where each troubadour lived and worked, whom they served, and what was said of their talents. The information about five selected troubadours shown in Table 3.1 gives an impression of the diversity of their origins and careers, and the complete *vida* of one, Raimon de Miraval, can be found in Box 3.1 (p. 39).

The *vidas* of the troubadours cannot be treated as fully reliable sources of information, however. Many were written a considerable time after their subject's death, sometimes by those who had heard only second- or third-hand accounts of the troubadour concerned. Some details in the *vidas* were clearly extracted from the song texts themselves, and therefore bear a questionable relationship to reality, whereas other details correspond to known facts supported by different historical sources. However, certain elements of the *vidas* must have been imagined, and others appear again and again in the *vidas* of different troubadours, suggesting that their writers resorted to standard formulas when more precise information was lacking. Nevertheless, from these biographies – along with the troubadour portraits included in some **manuscripts** of their songs (such as that in Figure 3.2) – we gain a vivid, if not always totally reliable, impression of the troubadours' lives and characters.

Figure 3.2 Raimon de Miraval
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 12473, f.52 v; source: gallica.bnf.fr.

Table 3.1 *Five troubadours*

Troubadour	Life	Songs
Guillaume IX, Duke of Aquitaine (born 1071; died 1126)	Ruler of a vast territory and active in the Crusades, Guillaume held the titles of Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine. Grandfather of Eleanor of Aquitaine and great-grandfather of her son, Richard the Lionheart (himself also a poet and musician). According to Guillaume's *vida* he was a capable and gallant knight, and talented in both composing and singing songs. His poems are among the earliest troubadour works to be preserved.	11 poems; 1 survives with incomplete music
Bernart de Ventadorn (born *c.*1130–40; died *c.*1190–1200)	Apparently of humble origins, Bernart was the son of a servant in the castle of Ventadorn. He served the Viscount of Ventadorn initially, before being dismissed (according to his *vida*) because of his love for the Viscount's wife. Later he served Eleanor of Aquitaine, who admired his songs; references to Eleanor and her husband Henry II of England appear in some of Bernart's songs. After Henry and Eleanor's removal to England, Bernart stayed behind and at the end of his life joined a Cistercian monastery.	45 poems; 18 survive with music. Many **contrafacta** (new texts set to Bernart's melodies) made by later poets
Comtessa de Dià (active late twelfth/early thirteenth century)	The earliest of the female troubadours (**trobairitz**) known by name. The precise identity of the Comtessa (Countess) of Dià is uncertain, but her title indicates that she was a noblewoman. According to her *vida*, she was married to Guillaume of Poitou but in love with Raimbaut d'Aurenga (about whom she composed her songs).	5 poems; 1 survives with music (the only melody by a female troubadour to survive)
Raimon de Miraval (active *c.*1185 to *c.*1229)	See Box 3.1 (p. 39) for Raimon de Miraval's *vida*. Although a minor nobleman, Raimon's castle at Miraval was lost in the Albigensian Crusade in 1209 or 1211, and he relied on patronage from other noblemen and -women, some of whom are referred to (often using code names) in his songs.	48 poems; 22 survive with music

Table 3.1 (*cont.*)

Troubadour	Life	Songs
Folquet de Marseille (born *c*.1150–60; died 1231)	Folquet was the son of a rich Genoese merchant, and the first part of his career was spent as a troubadour in the courts of various lords. In the second half of his life, he apparently gave up composing songs and turned to the Church. He went on to become a prominent and influential cleric, with spells as Abbot of Thoronet and Bishop of Toulouse, and is mentioned in Dante's *Paradiso* (canto IX).	29 poems; 13 survive with melodies At least 4 songs formed the models for later pieces

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Box 3.1 The *vida* of the troubadour Raimon de Miraval

Raimon de Miraval was a poor knight from Carcassès who did not have more than a quarter of the castle of Miraval. And in that castle there were hardly forty men. But because of his beautiful inventions and his beautiful discourse, and because he knew more about love and gallantry and all gracious deeds and pleasing discourse common among lovers and their mistresses, he was greatly honoured and esteemed by the Count of Toulouse. And they called one another 'Audiartz'. And the count gave him the horses and the arms and the clothing that he needed. And he influenced the count and his house, as well as King Pedro of Aragon and the Viscount of Béziers and Lord Bertran de Saissac and all the great barons of that region.

   And there was no great or worthy lady in that entire region who did not desire and did not take pains to be courted by him or to love him privately, for he knew better than any other man how to honour them and how to praise them. So that none of them considered herself esteemed if Raimon de Miraval was not her friend. He courted many ladies and composed many good songs about them. And it was believed that he never received anything in the realm of love from any of them, and that they all deceived him. He ended his life in Lérida in the convent of Sancta Clara, of the sisters of Cîteaux.

<div align="right">

from *The Vidas of the Troubadours*, trans. Margarita Egan
(New York and London, 1984), p. 97.

</div>

The overwhelming theme of troubadour poetry is that of **courtly love**, a literary theme that explores the relationships between men and women in certain specific social scenarios. In the most typical songs, the male narrator is in love with a woman who is his social superior and very often married to another: both these factors make her unobtainable, so the love affair usually

goes no further than the imagination. In the Occitan language in which the troubadours' songs are written, this kind of love was referred to as **amor de lonh** ('love from afar'), though the distance between the lover and his beloved was often one of social status, rather than physical location. In some songs, the narrator never even tells the lady of his devotion; in other cases, he declares his love and is rebuked or ignored. Thus the pain of unrequited longing is a more prominent emotion in troubadour song than the joy of successful union.

Frequent mention in the troubadours' *vidas* of their devotion to the noble ladies in whose courts they lived and worked might lead us to assume that their songs were inspired by their own real experiences of love and longing. We can probably never know the extent to which this may be true, but in at least some cases, the love affairs described were likely to have been imagined or fantasized, rather than autobiographical. The social relationships that structured the society in which the troubadours lived are reflected in the language of their songs, which frequently refer to lords and ladies, servants and vassals, honour, loyalty, and chivalry. The figure of the female beloved in troubadour poetry is highly idealized, a woman whose merits and beauty are beyond description. As we shall see later in this chapter, noticeable similarities emerge between the courtly devotion shown in troubadour song and the devotion to the Virgin Mary expressed at the same time in the Latin songs of churchmen.

The social and political upheaval initiated by the Albigensian Crusade in the first decades of the thirteenth century effectively brought troubadour activity in the region to a close. Large numbers of noble rulers, including some noble-born troubadours, such as Raimon de Miraval, lost their lands and castles, disrupting the networks of courts and patronage that had supported troubadour composition. Some troubadours turned away from secular life and joined religious orders. Folquet de Marseille went on to pursue a distinguished career in the Church, becoming closely involved with the Church's response to the Cathar heresy that had prompted the Crusade. Other troubadours were forced to travel far afield to find more stable environments to continue their poetic and musical endeavours. Some were dispersed to Northern Italy and Catalonia, where troubadour activity continued to flourish for a while (see Chapter 8). But long after troubadour composition had ceased, their songs and the details of their lives continued to be known and written down, providing – as we shall see in Chapter 5 – crucial inspiration for the work of the **trouvères** in Northern France.

Troubadour Song

The songs created by the troubadours across the two centuries during which they were active are often regarded as the first body of songs to be composed in a vernacular language: in this case, Occitan, the everyday language used by speakers across what is now Southern France. Like all medieval vernacular languages, Occitan was one language with several regional dialects (such as Gascon, Limousin, and Provençal – and the latter term was formerly used instead of Occitan to apply to the language as a whole). In all, some 2,500 troubadour songs survive, written down in around forty different manuscripts, but despite the unprecedented size of this collection of songs, there remain many barriers to modern understanding. Firstly, the songs were apparently not written down until generations after the music was composed: all the manuscripts preserving troubadour songs date from the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. Secondly, when written copies were made, it was usually far away from the songs' places of origin, either in Northern France, or to the east and south of the Occitan region, in Italy and Spain. This wide geographical and chronological separation between the composition and the writing-down of troubadour songs means that we cannot assume that the songs as we have them are identical to those that the troubadours created. In some cases, there is clear evidence that the songs did change: for example, some scribes in Northern France substituted the Occitan texts of the songs with new ones in their own vernacular, Old French. Other scribes attempted to write down the Occitan song lyrics but garbled them badly because they did not understand what they were writing. Even when these later scribes succeeded in recording the Occitan texts, substantial differences between multiple copies of the same poem suggest that the texts were prone to variation when they were passed on from singer to singer. Perhaps this had always been the case: the troubadours may not have expected their songs to remain identical every time they were performed, and may even themselves have introduced variations when singing their songs to different audiences at different times. But from a modern perspective, this idea of a song (especially one with a named author) being essentially fluid and unfixed is difficult for us to grapple with.

One way in which this fluidity is frequently obvious is in the variable spelling of the Occitan texts. The combination of different regional dialects and a lack of fixed standards for spelling meant that words (including names) in all medieval vernacular languages could be written in a number of different ways, each of them acceptable to their scribes and readers. To take the song in Example 3.1, for instance, the troubadour's surname is found as *de Ventadorn*, *de Ventador*, *de Ventadour*, *del Ventadorn*, and *de Ventedorn*, and the first line of the song is written in various different manuscripts as 'Cant lerba fresquel fuelha par', 'Quan lerba fresc el foilla par' and 'Can lerba fresch elh folha par'. Note also that medieval

punctuation differed considerably from modern approaches, so editors often add marks such as the apostrophe and the interpunct (in *l'erba* and *e·l*, for example, both here indicating words that have been elided).

A more significant problem is that only a small fraction of these later copies of troubadour songs were written down with their music. A few scribes tried to supply the melodies when they could but were often forced to leave blank staves above the texts, when the music had – presumably – been forgotten and the scribes could not find a musically notated version to copy. But most of the manuscripts include only the texts, with no intention for notated music, and it is hard to tell whether this was because the later scribes had no access to the melodies (be it in their memories, in the memories of other singers, or from other written copies) or because they did not consider writing down the music to be important. The melodies may once have been well known and passed on from singer to singer without the need for written copies, and perhaps this was still the case among those who compiled the text-only troubadour manuscripts, long after most of the poets' deaths. But even though the creators of these later troubadour collections did not usually preserve the songs' melodies, there is plenty of evidence that troubadour music was still of interest to later singers. In Northern France, many trouvères created new Old French texts to fit the troubadour melodies that they knew, in a conscious act of musical homage to their Occitan predecessors. Some troubadour melodies – most famously, Bernart de Ventadorn's *Can vei la lauzeta mover* – attracted multiple new texts in several different languages, suggesting that at least some troubadour music continued to be sung and adapted by musicians for generations.

Cant l'erba fresqu' (Example 3.1) opens as many troubadour lyrics do, by invoking the natural signs of spring: the verdant grass and leaves, the blossoming flowers, and the song of the nightingale (see Chapter 9 for an example of how the 'nature introduction' was taken up in the German songs of the **Minnesinger**). These phenomena of nature are then shown to be parallel to the narrator's state of mind, as his love blooms and fills him with joy. But this joyous state is short-lived, and the poem soon turns to the anguish that taints the lover's happiness. A later **stanza**, which appears as the second stanza in some sources of the poem, finds the narrator distracted by the strength of his desire:

> Alas, how I die to think of it!
> For many times I am thinking of it so much
> that thieves could carry me off
> without my knowing what they were doing!
> By God, Love! You find me vulnerable,
> with few friends and no lord apart from you,
> why do you not once torment my lady thus,
> before I am destroyed by my desires?

Example 3.1 Bernart de Ventadorn, *Cant l'erba fresqu'* (first stanza)

Cant l'er - ba fresqu' e·l fue - lha par,

e·l fuelh s'es - pan - dis pel ver - jan,

e·l ros - si - nhol, au - tet e clar,

aus - sa sa votz en dreg son chan,

joi ay de luy e joi ai de la flor,

joi ai de mi e de mi dons ma - jor,

de to - tas partz soi de joi claus e senh,

mas ilh es jois que totz los au - tres vens.

Translation:
When the fresh grass and leaf appear,
and the flower blooms on the branch,
and the nightingale, loud and clear,
raises her voice fully in song,
I take joy in her and in the flower,
I take joy in myself and most of all in my lady,
on all sides joy encloses me,
but this is joy that conquers all others.

Calling on Love (*Amors*) as a personified character, the poet describes him in courtly terms, as the only lord he has: there is no one, he implies, to support and provide for him except this fickle god. The lover has never told the lady of his feelings, it transpires, and he wishes that he could steal a kiss from her when asleep, since he can never dare to ask for one directly. Concluding his poem with a **tornada** – a typical ending in a troubadour lyric – the poet this time personifies the song itself as a messenger, charged with delivering the lover's sentiments to his lady on his behalf:

> Messenger, go, and may my lady not esteem me less
> because I am afraid to go to her myself.

The *tornada*, as is usually the case, is much shorter than the stanzas (two lines, instead of eight), and was probably intended to be sung to the last two phrases of the melody. Like many *tornadas*, it concludes the poem with a direct address: in this case, to the song itself as messenger, but in other songs it may be Love or the lady being addressed. It is typical of the variation between different manuscripts of troubadour poetry that the number and order of stanzas in *Cant l'erba fresqu'* varies from source to source, and the *tornada* is sometimes left out.

In the manuscripts that contain music for troubadour songs, the melody is written out for the first stanza only: the remaining stanzas of text are written out below, and the song is performed by repeating the music of the first stanza for each subsequent one (so-called **strophic form**). Both the stanza underlaid to the music and the subsequent ones are typically written continuously, without starting a new line for each new line of verse. Modern **editions** (musical scores prepared for publication, which present the music in a form that is intelligible to present-day musicians) usually lay out the music on separate lines (as we have done in Example 3.1) so that the structure of the stanza and its musical and poetic patterns can be more easily appreciated. Laid out in this way, for example, the rhyme scheme – which we could describe here as *ababccdd* – stands out, as does the musical and poetic parallel between lines 5 and 6. This is an unusual instance of two adjacent phrases being both musically identical and poetically matching, the repeated music drawing attention to the poetic relationship between the lines.

In other ways, too, the music seems to respond to the text of the poem, either in overall shape or – in some cases – in the detail of the poetic imagery. For example, the first and fourth phrases of the music form a musical pair, acting as a frame around the first half of the stanza. Since the first note of the song is not *D* – the note which will turn out to be the **final** (or central, defining note of the music's **mode**) – it is fitting that the melody of the first phrase should close on the final to give the song a clear sense of tonal direction from the outset. Thereafter, the music moves away from this focal point, returning to it only at the end of the fourth phrase, to

mark out the halfway point of the stanza. While the first and fourth phrases are restricted to the notes within the fifth above the final, the second and third are more musically expansive, extending the melodic range upwards to touch on the *C* a seventh above the final; it seems particularly fitting that these musical phrases accompany text that speaks of flowers blooming on the branches and the nightingale pouring out her song from above.

The second half of the melody explores another new tonal area, this time reaching down to the *C* below the final, and emphasizing the *C-E-G* **triad** as a contrast to the *D-F-A* one that dominates both the opening and the close of the stanza. Line 7, in which four syllables are accompanied by more than one note (in other lines, no more than two syllables are set in this way), has a tight, circling quality which reflects the poetic image of being 'bound in' or 'enclosed' by joy. The stanza closes with the only musical phrase that both begins and ends on the final, *D*, rooting the melody firmly back into its tonal centre.

With a predominantly **syllabic** setting (one note per syllable of sung text), the musical structure corresponds closely to the textual one, and the subsequent stanzas of verse, which use the same line lengths as the first stanza, fit the repeated melody precisely. Inevitably, some of the music–text parallels that are found in the first stanza are lost when the melody is repeated with new words, but this does not weaken their force. In performance, the first stanza commands the greatest attention and is the point in the song where clever or subtle musical and poetic play is most likely to be recognized and remembered.

<center>*****</center>

Compare any two performances of a troubadour song – live or recorded – and the differences in performance style will probably be striking. Some will be sung unaccompanied, the solo voice carrying the entire expression of the song in isolation. Others will introduce instrumental parts to support the singer, and the instrumentalists may elaborate on the song's musical materials by adding introductions, codas, or interludes between the stanzas. Some performances may involve two or more singers, singing together or in alternation; these singers may perform the melody rhythmically or may sing in a free, flexible way that allows different notes and words to be lengthened and stressed according to the sense of the poetry. Arguably, the medieval sources of our information about troubadour song give us licence for all of these performance possibilities. While the musical manuscripts contain only the melodies, some of the *vidas* (and sometimes the song texts) mention the troubadours accompanying themselves on instruments, and some of the portraits support this with pictorial evidence. Regarding rhythm, although most of the musical copies are notated without any indications of rhythm, a few of the later manuscripts present troubadour songs in rhythmic notation.

Perhaps these later scribes were writing down rhythms that had always been sung (and, by implication, earlier scribes 'left out' the rhythm only because they had no way to notate it accurately or did not think it was necessary to do so). Alternatively, the late rhythmic copies may be evidence of a new way of singing the songs, a kind of 'updating' of the free, flexible melodies to align with the more fixed and vibrant rhythmic norms characteristic of later (especially fourteenth-century) music. Exactly how troubadour song sounded in performances by its own creators is ultimately unknowable, but whether in terms of rhythmical style or instrumental accompaniment, it seems likely that there was considerable variation between performances, both in the troubadours' day and in the centuries following.

The Church in Aquitaine

While the troubadours operated largely in the worldly or secular circles of courts and cities, it would be false to draw too strong a divide between the secular and the religious or ecclesiastical worlds in their time. Several troubadours – such as Folquet de Marseille, mentioned earlier – were themselves churchmen, and others clearly had clerical connections. When present at courts or in cities during the great festivals of the Church's year, troubadours, like everybody else, heard sacred music performed as part of the liturgical ceremonies. Well-connected churchmen must likewise have been audience to the troubadours' own music when present as guests of noble patrons at the feasting and celebrations that followed religious ceremonies. Each kind of music had a different function and drew on different conventions of style, language, and musical technique, but they did not exist in a vacuum. As we shall see towards the end of this chapter, numerous interesting parallels may be drawn between religious and secular song, which suggest that the musicians of Aquitaine and Occitania absorbed a range of influences from the cultural and political environments that surrounded them.

The same geographical region that stimulated the vast troubadour **repertory** also gave rise to a large, innovative, and musically diverse body of church music in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The cultivation of new kinds of ecclesiastical **chant** to supplement the **liturgy** took place in monasteries across Aquitaine. The Abbey of St Martial in the city of Limoges had a particularly rich musical tradition and was also an important centre of manuscript production and collecting. Figure 3.3 shows an illustration from a late tenth- or early eleventh-century 'tonary' (a music book that listed chants according to their mode or 'tone'), held in the abbey's library from early in its history, which exemplifies both the elegant style of book decoration in the region and the
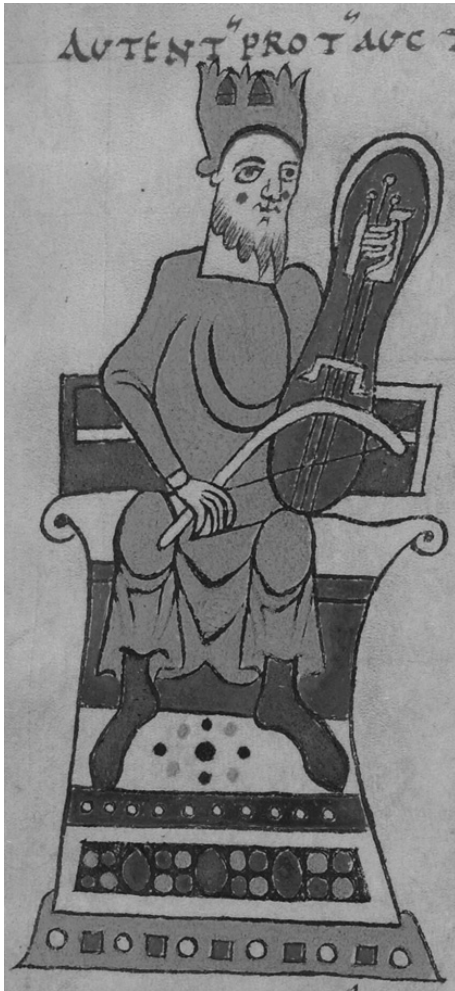
Figure 3.3 Musician from an Aquitanian tonary (late tenth or early eleventh century)
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 1118, f.104 r; source: gallica.bnf.fr.

interest in music at St Martial. An especially important gathering of sacred music in Latin, dating from the twelfth century, is preserved in four Aquitanian manuscripts known as **versaria** (or books of **versus**). Three of the four were deposited in the library of St Martial, though there is no evidence that any of them were compiled there. The music in these manuscripts, once described by scholars as a 'St Martial School' of composition, is now thought to have come from various churches across Aquitaine, and merely assembled by the music-loving librarians of St Martial.

A New Kind of Latin Song: *Nova Cantica*

The forms and styles of Latin song emerging from monasteries in Aquitaine in the twelfth century differ from earlier Latin song in several ways. Though still referred to – like Carolingian Latin songs – as *versus*, these newer Latin songs set aside the classical Latin **metres** in favour of a new kind of accentual or rhythmic verse. Instead of metrical **feet**, the poetic lines were defined by the number of total syllables and the pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. Alongside this change, rhyme began to feature more prominently as a way of organizing lines into stanzas, and other kinds of verbal patterning such as alliteration were also regularly used. The huge expansion of Latin poetry in this newer style in the twelfth century has been termed by some recent scholars **nova cantica** ('new song') and, though found first in Aquitaine, was an idiom that was taken up at numerous times and places in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Europe.

The Aquitanian *versus* in Box 3.2, *Res iocosa*, demonstrates the poetic style of the *nova cantica* well. With its short lines, rhyming both within each stanza (in the pattern *aabccb* in the first and third stanzas, *abcabc* in the second) and across the stanzas (note the '-uit' rhyme at the mid-point and end of each of the three

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Box 3.2 The paradox of the virgin birth: *Res iocosa*

1. Res iocosa	*1. O joyous matter*
quod hec rosa	*that this rose*
sine succo floruit,	*has flowered without sap,*
novum mirum	*O new marvel,*
virgo virum	*the virgin has given birth*
sine viro genuit.	*to a man without a man.*
2. Hec est luna	*2. This is the moon*
de qua Deus	*from which God*
verus sol emicuit,	*the true sun has burst forth,*
hec est una	*this is the one*
per quam reus	*through whom the sinner*
suscitari meruit.	*has deserved to be raised up.*
3. Hec est mater	*3. This is the mother*
per quam pater	*through whom God*
Deus suis profuit,	*the father served his own people,*
hac de matre	*from this mother,*
Deo patre	*with God as father,*
Deus nasci voluit.	*God resolved to be born.*

stanzas), the poem exhibits a clear and predictable rhythmic shape and also includes examples of verbal patterning, such as the alliteration of '*vir*go *vir*um sine *vir*o'. *Res iocosa* also treats a favourite theme of Aquitanian *versus*, the Incarnation of Jesus and the miracle of the Virgin birth. Focus on Christ's birth and on the Virgin Mary are among the most often-found topics of these songs and reflect an outpouring of devotion to Mary and praise for her role as Christ's mother. The reference to a 'new marvel' in *Res iocosa* is likewise typical, with Aquitanian songs referring repeatedly to Christ's birth as heralding the new, and fulfilling the prophecies of the past (as reported in the Old Testament). Another Aquitanian *versus*, shown in Example 3.2, takes this theme even further, referring to the 'new songs' (*nova cantica*) that must now be sung because of the 'new joys' (*nova gaudia*) given to humanity through the birth of Christ.

The poetic text of *Da laudis, homo* (Example 3.2) is less typical of the new style of Latin poetry than is *Res iocosa*, but some key features are still present. The repetition in the second half of the stanza ('O nova, nova, nova, nova gaudia'), which is mirrored in the later stanzas, not shown here, gives the impression of a repeating refrain, using simple, memorable vocabulary to reinforce the song's central message. The music of this *versus* also demonstrates some important elements of Aquitanian song style. Some parts of the text are set syllabically, and the repetition of notes at the start of the first and second lines of verse here are particularly effective in emphatically sounding out the song's call to mankind to give new songs of praise. In between the syllabic passages come some **melismas**, mostly of two or three adjacent or nearby notes, but in one case (at 'sunt') an elaborate melodic flourish that meanders through a full octave, encompassing nearly the entire pitch range of the song. In the music of *Res iocosa* (Example 3.3) an even more extended melisma (at 'ge*nu*it') winds downwards and upwards in both polyphonic voices, but ranging most widely in the upper voice. This melisma is placed on the penultimate syllable of the stanza, which is by far the most common location for this kind of melodic flourish across the repertory of Aquitanian song.

The Aquitanian *versus* do not seem to have had a role in the formal liturgy of the churches at which they were made but instead reflect a creative and personal expression of devotion by the monks. The music assembled in the four *versaria* includes not only *versus* but also other pieces with a more explicit liturgical purpose, as well as liturgical drama, prayers, and epistles. Both **monophonic** and **polyphonic** pieces are found side by side in these manuscript collections, and although modern scholarship has tended to treat them separately, it is clear that to their twelfth-century singers and readers, both kinds of song were part of the same musical impulse.

Example 3.2 Aquitanian *versus*: *Da laudis, homo* (first stanza)

Translation:
Give new songs of praise, O Man,
give, because new joys have been given to you,
O new, new, new, new joys,
O new joys are given, give new songs.

Polyphonic Techniques

Comparing the polyphonic methods found in the Aquitanian *versus* in two parts to the techniques described by earlier music theorists (see Table 2.1 in the previous chapter), we find both similarities and differences. Just as in the treatise of John, *De musica*, **contrary motion** between the two voice parts is prevalent, and the number of notes sung by each voice is no longer equal, as we can see in *Res iocosa* (Example 3.3). One major difference from earlier theorists, however, is that not all Aquitanian polyphony was an elaboration of a pre-existing chant. As well as polyphonic settings of liturgical chants, the Aquitanian polyphonic repertory includes *versus*, such as *Res iocosa*, in which both polyphonic voices were newly composed, so the traditional distinction between **principal voice** and **organal voice** does not apply to these pieces. In addition, this lack of priority of one voice part over the other seems to have encouraged composers to experiment with a greater musical equality between them. In *Res iocosa*, both voices have a combination of syllabic and melismatic writing and occupy a similar pitch register. The two parts frequently cross and

Example 3.3 Aquitanian polyphonic *versus*: *Res iocosa*

Res io - co - sa quod hec ro - sa

si - ne suc - co flo - ru - it,

no - vum mi - rum vir - go vi - rum

si - ne vi - ro ge - nu - - -

- - - - - - it.

sometimes echo one another directly (such as at 'virgo virgum sine viro', where the lower voice's notes *G A G F* are then immediately repeated by the upper voice). This kind of musical imitation between voice parts is called **voice exchange** and is a technique that we will encounter again in later chapters of this book.

Figure 3.4 shows the manuscript copy of *Res iocosa*, from one of the twelfth-century *versaria* containing Aquitanian polyphony and song. *Res iocosa* begins with a red and black initial R, two-thirds of the way across the top line of music, following on immediately from the previous piece in the manuscript. The upper and lower voices are laid out together in **score format**, that is, one above the other, with the two parts arranged so that the notes that sound simultaneously appear vertically aligned. This kind of layout gives the impression that both parts are of equal importance; compare, for example, the total separation of the organal voices from the principal voice chants in the Winchester Troper, discussed in Chapter 2.

Vertical lines, drawn freehand in brown ink, also help to clarify the alignment of the two voices with each other and with their associated words, and a red dashed horizontal line separates the upper voice from the lower one, to help keep them distinct. The sung text, though clearly meant to be sung by both voices, is written out below the lower voice only, but it is easy to see how it corresponds to the notes
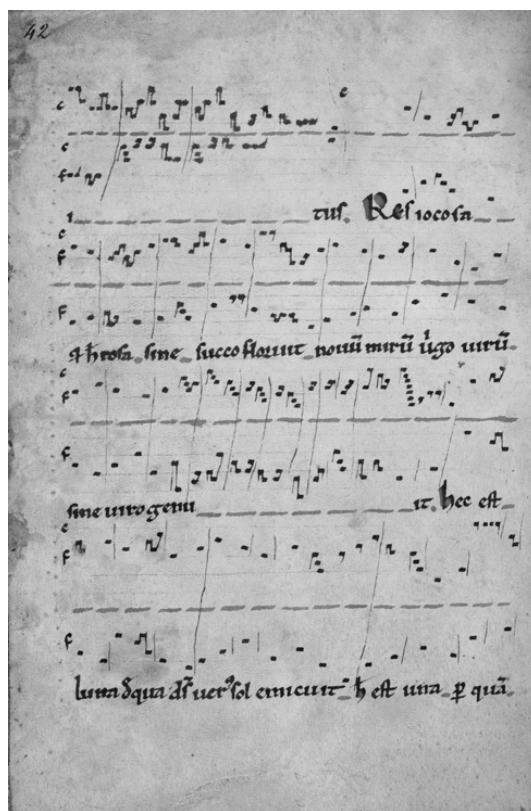
Figure 3.4 *Res iocosa*, from a manuscript of Aquitanian polyphony
London, British Library, Add. 36881, f.21 v; © The British Library Board

in both parts because of the careful layout and the additional vertical lines. These lines are placed between every word of the text, with extra ones dividing up the long melisma on 'ge*nu*it', where the singers might be in danger of getting lost or losing coordination. The layout of the music makes use of a kind of musical staff, a set of horizontal lines connecting notes of the same pitch, which was an innovation that had been introduced by Guido of Arezzo in the eleventh century. Here the staff has been ruled or scratched into the parchment with a sharp pointed tool, rather than drawn with ink or lead. The letters *C* and *F* are placed at the left-hand edge and indicate which staff-lines correspond to those pitches. These act like modern clefs to help the singer or reader pitch the melody correctly. In medieval **staff notation** like this, *C* and *F* were the pitches most frequently specified next to the relevant lines of the staff, and for good reason: these were the notes adjacent to the two semitones in the modal system (*C* is a semitone above *B*, *F* a semitone above *E*). Since the distance between all other adjacent notes on the staff was a tone, knowing where the two semitones fell was of particular value to students and singers learning or refreshing their memory of a melody from a staff-notated copy. The same imperative to distinguish between tones and semitones can be seen in the *Musica Enchiriadis* diagrams, discussed in the previous chapter. What the Aquitanian notation does not show is any indication of rhythm, and it seems likely that the Aquitanian *versus* – both monophonic and polyphonic – were sung in a free, **unmeasured** rhythm, in which singers could respond to the alternation between syllabic declamation and more florid melismas, according to how they wished to express the text.

Interconnections

As we have seen, the worlds of the troubadours and the Church in Aquitaine and Occitania in the twelfth century were not separate from one another, and interconnections between them are echoed in the music each group produced. The Aquitanian *versaria*, for example, include some *versus* that use the Occitan language, sometimes alternating with Latin within the same song. Similarly, a few troubadour songs rely on Latin models or even insert lines of Latin. Thematically, the two song genres are not as far apart as they might seem: though, broadly speaking, the *versus* are sacred and the troubadour songs secular, both typically involve intense, personal devotion to a female beloved (Mary in the *versus*, the noble lady for the troubadours). Less commonly found themes are also shared: for example, both repertories were created against the geopolitical backdrop of the Crusades, and songs exploring this theme are found in both environments. Some musical characteristics are also common to both, such as the use of predominantly syllabic **textures** to allow the text to be

expressed clearly, and the shaping of melodies to correspond to the structures of the poetry. In both cases, the manuscript copies that preserve the music were not used for performance by the songs' original singers. The troubadour song-books date from the very end of the long period of troubadour activity, being compiled long after most representatives of the tradition were dead. The *versaria* are too small to be practical for a group of singers to sing from and contain other non-musical contents that suggest they are more likely to have been assembled as personal keepsakes or archival documents by monastic readers interested in preserving songs and other religious texts. Thus, both kinds of song must have been often performed from memory, their singers perhaps sometimes making use of ephemeral copies, such as loose sheets (now lost), to help them learn and memorize the music and words. As the next chapters will show, the habit established by Aquitanian *versus* composers of setting rhythmic Latin verse to monophonic or polyphonic music, and the troubadour songs and their associated culture of courtly love were both to prove inspirational for musical movements of the thirteenth century in the north of France, in the shape of the **conductus** and the songs of the trouvères, respectively.

Suggested Recordings

Bernart de Ventadorn, *Cant l'erba fresqu'* and Comtessa de Dià, *A chantar m'er de so qu'ieu non volria*:

- *Nuits occitanes – Troubadours' Songs*, Ensemble Céladon, dir. Paulin Bündgen (Ricercar, 340, 2014)

Further troubadour songs:

- *L'amor de Lonh: Medieval Songs of Love and Loss*, Ensemble Gilles Binchois, dir. Dominique Vellard (Glossa, GCD P32304, 2010)

Da laudis, homo and other Latin song and polyphony from Aquitaine:

- *Nova Cantica: Latin Songs of the High Middle Ages*, Dominique Vellard & Emmanuel Bonnardot (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, D-7800, 1990)

Res iocosa, and further twelfth-century Latin song and polyphony (from Aquitaine and elsewhere):

- *Mel et lac: Twelfth-Century Songs for the Virgin*, Ensemble Peregrina (Raumklang, 2501, 2005)

Aquitanian polyphony heard as part of the liturgy for Christmas Matins:

- *Polyphonie Aquitaine du XIIe siècle*, Ensemble Organum, dir. Marcel Pérès (Harmonia Mundi, HMA 1901134, 1984/re-issued 1998)

Further Reading

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Golden, Rachel May, *Mapping Medieval Identities in Occitanian Crusade Song* (New York, 2020).

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Paris: City, Cathedral, and University

Cities in the Twelfth Century

The twelfth century was a time of urbanization across Europe: more and more people moved from rural areas to the cities, which consequently grew in size and importance. This development had an impact on societal structures, with the feudal division between landowning nobles and tenant labourers now supplemented by an urban middle class. Urban society was focused around trade, and specialist professions, such as bakers, butchers, candle makers, cobblers, scribes, smiths, and tanners, all played an important role in city life. Over time, craftsmen and -women of all kinds began organizing themselves into guilds, whose role was to protect each trade by regulating prices, working hours, and the terms of professional agreements. Through such regulations, guilds could ensure the quality of the work, and in some cases a guild held a monopoly in a city: only guild members were allowed to perform that trade, craft, or profession within the city walls. Guilds also provided social security, looking after their members if they fell ill and were unable to work, and supporting members' families after their deaths.

Cities became increasingly important as centres of learning in the twelfth century too. At the start of the century, individual schools were still mostly attached to monasteries or cathedrals, but in certain cities a concentration of several schools grew up, each specializing in different subjects, and some of them linked to particular masters with renowned expertise. From the mid-twelfth century onwards, several such cities were granted permission to unite their various schools under the umbrella of a 'university' (literally, a 'whole' or 'collective'), which had its own rights of governance, separate from the city authorities. These first universities taught canon law (that is, the legal regulations relating to church matters), civil – or secular – law, medicine, and theology, thus training the future generations of bishops, judges, notaries, diplomats, royal advisers, and doctors. The initial curriculum for all students was based on the seven liberal arts, an educational programme taken over from the Ancient Greeks and Romans which consisted of the *trivium* (grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic,

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geometry, astronomy, and music). Broadly speaking, the *trivium* comprised the subjects of the word, and the *quadrivium* those based on number. Music was grouped with the numerical subjects, as university study of music consisted mainly of the mathematical study of harmony and proportion, particularly as concerned the movement of celestial bodies such as stars and planets. The ways in which music is most often studied today, as a cultural product, a practical skill, or a means of emotional expression, have very little in common with the discipline of music in the medieval universities.

The changing world of the twelfth century, including the growth of cities and the rise of the universities, led to higher numbers of people receiving an education and entering professional careers. Whilst literature in the vernacular languages became more prominent (as we have already seen in Chapter 3), the standard of Latin learning also increased, with greater interest in the texts of the Ancient world. Through the works of Ancient Greek and Roman authors, such as Aristotle and Cicero, students learnt the principles of grammar and rhetoric, as well as the philosophical concepts of the Ancient world. This is why this period is often referred to as the Renaissance of the twelfth century. The term 'Renaissance' (or 're-birth') signifies a renewed interest in Ancient (Greek and Roman) culture, and has been used for several different periods in European history, including the Carolingian Renaissance of the ninth century, as well as the era usually known simply as '*The* Renaissance', which followed on from the Middle Ages in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Urbanization of Paris

The city of Paris offers one of the best examples of the effects of urbanization in the twelfth century, expanding rapidly from a provincial town of comparatively little importance to one of the leading centres of trade and intellectual life in Europe. Its strategic location on the navigable River Seine allowed Paris both political power and economic advantage (see Figure 5.1 in the next chapter). The city's heart was an island in the river itself, the Île de la Cité, whose wooden bridges blocked the passage further inland, causing merchant ships to dock on the banks of the Seine to unload their cargoes. A royal palace, the Palais de la Cité, was situated on the Île de la Cité, and under the rule of King Philip II Augustus (1180–1223), the chancellery (the financial administration) and the royal treasury were likewise moved to Paris, transforming the city into the centre of French government. At the end of the twelfth century a large fortress – the Louvre – was built near the Île de la Cité to protect the city from attacks from the west, and the whole city was surrounded by fortified walls with city gates (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Paris in the twelfth century
© Mappa Mundi Cartography

With the hub of Parisian trade on the Right Bank, merchant business flourished, and Paris grew to become the largest and wealthiest city in France. Because of the convenient location of the city, merchandise from all over Northern France and beyond was traded in Paris. Fish from Dieppe, salt from Poitou, wine from Burgundy, fabrics from Flanders, metal from Normandy, and many other products were traded in Paris. In the city, specialist craftsmen and -women produced further goods for consumption by the city's elites and wealthy visitors. Paris was notably important for the production of books. Secular scriptoria were set up, especially along the Rue Neuve Notre-Dame on the Île de la Cité. Scribes, illuminators, bookbinders, and other artisans collaborated here to make large numbers of

books, including both scholarly texts for the city's student population and luxury copies of literature in French, often beautifully decorated. Book production, which had for a long time been centred within monasteries, became increasingly commercial, with urban workshops able to produce multiple copies of popular texts at increased speed and reduced cost. The wider availability of books outside monastic libraries both reflected and encouraged the spread of literacy among lay people, and the numbers of people able to read texts and to write their names – and thereby to sign legal documents in their own right – rose significantly.

In 1163, Maurice de Sully, Bishop of Paris, started an ambitious architectural project: the construction of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, now possibly the most iconic building in Paris. Notre-Dame was built to replace an earlier church on the same site, the Cathedral of St Etienne, and more than doubled its size. The new cathedral took almost a century to be completed and was built in the innovative Gothic style. The Gothic architectural approach allowed for much higher vaults and larger windows, creating immensely tall spaces filled with coloured light from stained-glass windows. This was accomplished partly by employing tall, pointed arches instead of the shorter, rounded arches of the older Romanesque style (see Figure 7.1 on p. 140 for a church in which both styles can be seen). For twelfth- and thirteenth-century visitors, the new Notre-Dame Cathedral must have been a magnificent sight to behold, visible from far around with its towers reaching nearly 69 metres in height and its spire 91 metres. As an early example of the Gothic style in ecclesiastical architecture, Notre-Dame was revered for its technical complexity, though its primary purpose was to reflect the glory and splendour of God in stone and glass.

In the year 1200 and the decade following, while the Cathedral of Notre-Dame was still under construction, the formal status of the University of Paris was recognized, first by the king and then by the pope. As in other twelfth-century cities, the foundation of the university brought together the many church schools already active in the city as a single academic community: *universitas magistrorum et scolarium Parisiensium* (literally, 'the entirety of masters and students of Paris'). The schools of Paris were already highly regarded in the twelfth century and attracted scholars from all over Europe. By their official recognition as a university, the masters and scholars were granted autonomy from civic government and taxation, and were free to enforce the university's own laws and enact its own justice. Most university activity took place on the Left Bank of the Seine, connected to the Île de la Cité by bridge. From the twelfth century to the end of the Middle Ages, the University of Paris was responsible for the education of generations of theologians and church leaders, including popes, as well as officials serving in royal and civic governments around the continent.

The dynamic trading economy in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Paris encouraged a flow of visitors into and out of the city, and this traffic was increased further

by the scholars who made their way to and from the university. Along with the stunning new Cathedral of Notre-Dame, itself a product of the city's growth in wealth and prestige, these aspects of Parisian culture exemplify the major changes in urban life that took place around Europe at this time. In Paris, the intellectual world represented by the university and the spiritual climate symbolized by the cathedral provided the backdrop for musical innovations with far-reaching consequences for medieval **polyphony** and song, and the city's urban environment generated the circumstances that supported the flourishing careers of composers and music **theorists**.

Music at Notre-Dame

It has often been said that the polyphonic music created for the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries matches the building's architecture in terms of its grandeur and magnificence. The first churchgoers to attend **Mass** in the new cathedral must have been profoundly struck by the immense height of the ceiling vault and the vast length of the nave, whilst hearing music of a scale and complexity unlike anything that they had heard before. The huge interior space of the cathedral created very long reverberation times for sounds so that any sung tone could linger for more than four seconds. The building's acoustics therefore lent themselves particularly well to music of large proportions and whose rate of harmonic change was slow, since rapid melodies or quickly changing harmonies would blur into acoustic chaos. As we shall see in this chapter, the composers active in creating polyphony at Notre-Dame seem to have responded to both the acoustic and majestic qualities of the architecture, crafting a musical style uniquely well matched to the space in which it was sung.

On a practical level, the careers of the musicians who worked at Notre-Dame also contributed to the cathedral's special musical culture. Unlike in a monastery, whose members would typically join the community as children and remain there for most of their lives, the Cathedral of Notre-Dame was staffed by **canons** – priests who had received a clerical education but were not bound to the enclosed life of monks. Canons were able to participate more easily in life outside their own churches, and in Paris this included the scholarly world of the university, the political environment of the royal court, and the legal and commercial affairs of the bustling city. Some of the canons of Notre-Dame – who held lifetime benefices (or tenures of their posts) – found themselves so busy with activities outside the church, such as teaching in the university or acting as lawyers or royal advisers, that they appointed substitute 'vicars', known as minor canons, to stand in for them at services in the cathedral. The presence of these minor canons ensured that there were always enough singers in

the choir to perform the **liturgy** appropriately, and they were appointed on the basis of their musical skills and knowledge of the **chant** of Notre-Dame. Because the minor canons were appointed for only one year at a time, each year saw a new competition for the jobs, with the best liturgical singers being successful. Given this system, it is not difficult to imagine how several generations of musicians with extraordinary talents came to be assembled at Notre-Dame and were between them responsible for liturgical music-making of the very highest quality.

Just as in every medieval church, the bulk of the liturgy at Notre-Dame was sung as chant. But as we have seen in churches throughout Europe, a tradition developed for certain chants in particular services to be elaborated with polyphony, often improvised. At Notre-Dame, it was the **Proper** chants of the Mass that most often attracted polyphonic treatment. These are the chants whose texts are specific (or 'proper') to the particular day of the Church's year, as opposed to the **Ordinary** chants, such as the Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei, whose texts remained the same every time a Mass was sung. Certain Proper chants involved elaborate **melismatic** passages which were often sung as solos by the leading singers, alternating with the full choir for the simpler choral passages. The solo passages of chants were the ones that were most often sung polyphonically at Notre-Dame, and it is highly probable that these polyphonic sections were likewise sung by a group of soloists, one voice per part. The polyphonic singing of chant in the style of Notre-Dame thus involved the fluctuation between polyphonic passages sung by soloists and chant passages sung by the choir, leading to pieces of immense length and extreme textural contrast.

As with so much medieval music, the composers of most Notre-Dame polyphony remain anonymous, but we are fortunate to know something about the lives of two of its most important figures. Léonin (active between *c*.1150 and *c*.1201) – also known by the Latin form of his name, Leoninus – and Pérotin, or Perotinus, (probably active *c*.1200) – were leading musicians of the so-called 'Notre-Dame School' of polyphonic composition. Although many details of their biographies are uncertain, both men were canons at the cathedral and both were educated at the University of Paris. We only know of Léonin and Pérotin as composers because of the anonymous English author of a famous music-theoretical **treatise**, to whom we refer as Anonymous IV. This theorist was writing about a century after the activities of Léonin and Pérotin, perhaps around 1275, and may have been an English student who studied at the University of Paris or a member of a bishop's or nobleman's court who spent time in Paris on official business. Many mysteries surround this author and his music treatise (not least, why so many of its sentences seem to tail off with 'et cetera'!), but it has attained iconic status in music history, because it is the earliest text to supply the names of composers of polyphony, along with details of some of the music they wrote. The passage mentioning Léonin and Pérotin is given in Box 4.1.

> **Box 4.1 The music theorist Anonymous IV describes polyphony at Notre-Dame**
>
> Note that Master Leoninus, according to what was said, was the best creator of organum, who made the *Magnus Liber Organi* ['great book of organum'] from the gradual and antiphoner to elaborate the divine service.
>
> And it was in use up to the time of Perotinus the Great, who edited it and made very many better clausulae or puncta, since he was the best creator of discant, and better than Leoninus. But this is not to be said about the subtlety of the organum, etc. . . .
>
> But Master Perotinus himself made excellent *quadrupla* ['four-voice organa'] such as *Viderunt* and *Sederunt*, with an abundance of colours of the harmonic art; and also several very noble *tripla* ['three-voice organa'], such as *Alleluia Posui adiutorium*, *Nativitas*, etc.
>
> He also composed three-part conducti, such as *Salvatoris hodie*, and two-part conducti, such as *Dum sigillum summi patris*, and even monophonic conducti with several others, such as *Beata viscera*, etc.

It is hardly surprising that this text should have generated so much interest among students of music history, for in the centuries before the Renaissance, composers of liturgical music are rarely known by name. They worked in the service of God and doubtless considered their own identity irrelevant to that aim; written copies of their works (which were, in any case, very often made long after they were composed and nearly always by scribes rather than the composers themselves) did not have their names attached. If it had not been for Anonymous IV, then, we would know nothing of Léonin and Pérotin, though their polyphonic compositions are preserved anonymously in several **manuscripts**.

According to Anonymous IV, *Leoninus magister* – or 'Master Léonin', whose title indicates that he was qualified to teach at the university – was the best creator of **organum** of his generation. Léonin is said to have made a *Magnus Liber Organi*, a great book of polyphony, in which he transformed chants for the Mass (Mass chants were preserved in books called **graduals**) and the other daily services, collectively known as the **Office** (contained in **antiphoners**) into elaborate polyphonic works (*organa*, the plural of organum). This *Magnus Liber* may have been a physical book in which the organa were notated – and such books from Notre-Dame do survive, albeit from long after Léonin's lifetime – but the phrase can also be taken more metaphorically: Anonymous IV may have had in mind the **repertory** or body of works created by Léonin and probably transmitted orally. It is also important to realize that Léonin was not a 'composer' in the modern sense of the word: Anonymous IV describes him as an *organista*, literally a 'polyphonist', a term that could refer equally to the singers of polyphony. Instead, it is likely that the polyphonic pieces attributed to Léonin by Anonymous IV came into existence through oral practice, as skilled singers led by Léonin experimented together to create polyphony based on existing liturgical chant, and a collective understanding of harmonic and rhythmic conventions.

With some degree of speculation, scholars have been able to piece together the broad contents of Léonin's *Magnus Liber*, based partly on Anonymous IV's description and partly on the shared repertory found in a group of closely related manuscripts from the thirteenth century. The *Magnus Liber* was apparently a series of two-voice polyphonic settings of chants, in which the **tenor** (from the Latin *tenere*, 'to hold', because it 'holds' the chant) sang the notes of the chant for hugely extended durations, while the ***duplum*** (literally, 'second voice') sang lengthy florid **melismas** around each note. The music of the existing chant remained the fundamental basis of the polyphony, but its notes were so greatly elongated in duration that the chant and its text would scarcely be recognizable to a listener from the polyphonic passages alone. However, a complete performance of each chant, which was necessary for the correct fulfilment of the liturgy, involved not just the polyphonic passages but also intervening sections sung as chant in the usual way, during which the familiar liturgical words and melody could be easily discerned.

Anonymous IV introduces another master, whom he calls *Perotinus magnus*, the 'great Pérotin'. Like Léonin, he was probably a canon of Notre-Dame, and their careers at the cathedral may have overlapped, so the younger composer could have learnt from the elder. Pérotin, says Anonymous IV, was the best creator of **discant** and edited or updated Léonin's *Magnus Liber*. In contrast to the florid and rhythmically fluid organum associated with Léonin, discant at Notre-Dame was a style in which all voices sang rhythmically, using longer and shorter notes that could be precisely measured in relation to one another. For today's musicians, the contrast is best understood as the difference between music with free rhythm, which we notate in unstemmed noteheads (like all the examples in the chapters of this book so far), and pieces with fixed rhythm that can be converted into modern rhythmic values such as crotchets and quavers (quarter notes and eighth notes). In the manuscripts that preserve versions of the *Magnus Liber Organi*, passages of discant are found within pieces of **florid organum**, and this may be evidence of Pérotin's 'editing': short sections of Léonin's organa were removed, and new settings of the same chant section, now in discant style, inserted into their place. Perhaps the most interesting point about this musical updating is not what was changed but rather how much was left intact. Out of apparent reverence for existing music, Léonin and his generation preserved the notes of the original chant with high fidelity, whereas Pérotin and others kept a great deal of the earlier polyphony while adding touches of their own. The scribes responsible for making the written copies of the *Magnus Liber Organi*, a generation or more later than Pérotin, likewise conserved this music of their Parisian predecessors, whilst supplementing it with additional polyphonic works from their own time.

Anonymous IV and other music theorists have given us much of the terminology we now use to describe the music of Notre-Dame. Following his usage, we refer to two-voice pieces as *organa dupla* (literally 'double organa'), those for three voices as

organa tripla (or sometimes just *tripla*), and for four, *organa quadrupla*, or just *quadrupla*. The same terms – in the singular form – are used for the voice parts added to the chant tenor: the first added voice (notated next above the tenor in the musical score) is called the *duplum*, then come the **triplum** and **quadruplum** voices. Most of the polyphonic pieces mentioned by name in the treatise of Anonymous IV are Mass sections, but there are also songs in other religious genres which arose at the time, such as the **conductus** and the **motet**. These genres will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. One of the conducti ascribed to Pérotin is *Beata viscera*, which uses the text of a poem by Philip the Chancellor, who was the head of the University of Paris from 1218 to 1236. This important figure will return at the end of this chapter, as the use of Philip's text in Pérotin's *Beata viscera* underscores the strong links between the university and the musicians of Notre-Dame.

Singing Chant in Polyphony at Notre-Dame: *Viderunt omnes*

Let us now take a closer look at one of Pérotin's best-known compositions. His *Viderunt omnes* is one of the *organa quadrupla* mentioned by Anonymous IV, and the beginning of this long work can be seen in Example 4.1. *Viderunt omnes* is a chant for Christmas Day, and we also have a two-voice setting of the same chant attributed to Léonin. In both versions of *Viderunt omnes* the original chant is significantly expanded, both vertically and horizontally, Pérotin's to an even greater extent than Léonin's. Where Léonin added just a *duplum* to the chant in the tenor voice, Pérotin created *duplum*, *triplum*, and *quadruplum* parts. The horizontal expansion is achieved by elongating each of the notes of the tenor melody: a performance of Léonin's version takes around nine minutes, more than twice as long as the chant sung by itself, whereas Pérotin's work easily occupies eleven minutes or more. Example 4.1 shows part of the tenor's pronunciation of only the first syllable of the chant, 'Vi-'. In most performances, the first syllable alone occupies almost a full minute. In the original chant, it is a single note.
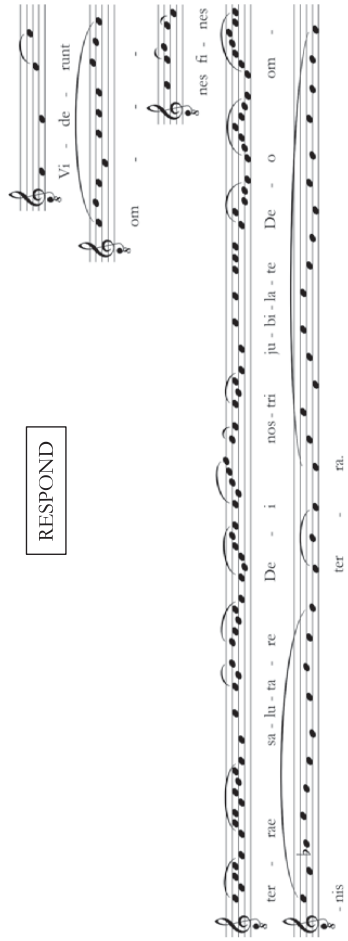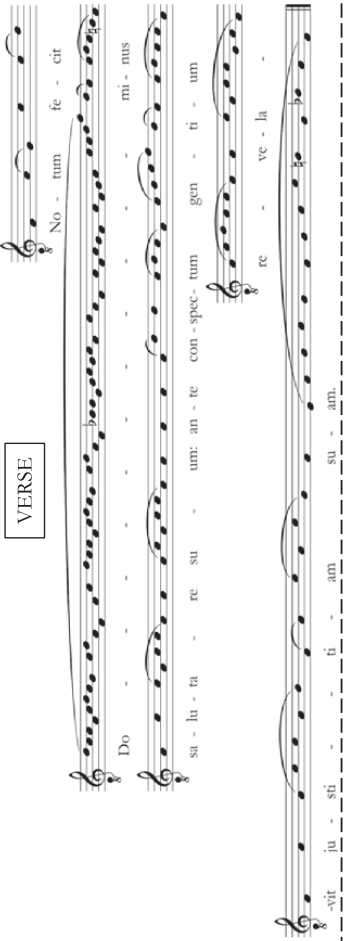
   In works for more than two voices, the distinction between florid organum and discant style described above is less clear. In the passage shown in Example 4.1, the upper three voices are notated in a fixed rhythm, which naturally helps the singers to stay together and ensure they reach phrase endings at the right time. However, this is not in fact discant, because the tenor voice has no fixed rhythm here and sings the notes of the chant greatly elongated to provide a harmonic basis a little like a **drone**. The opening of Pérotin's *Viderunt omnes* is therefore still regarded as florid organum, though some later theorists coined the term **copula** to describe this hybrid of rhythmic and non-rhythmic singing. True discant passages do occur later

Example 4.1 Pérotin, *Viderunt omnes* (opening)

in the piece, as well as passages sung as chant, and Table 4.1 summarizes these changes of musical **texture** across the course of a performance. You may wish to listen to a recording while following this summary, perhaps noting how much more

Table 4.1 *A complete performance of Pérotin's four-part Viderunt omnes*

Chant melody	Tenor	Upper voices
RESPOND	Chant notes extended	Florid organum
	Chant notes sung rhythmically	Discant
	Chant notes extended	Florid organum
	Chant (full choir)	
VERSE	Chant notes extended	Florid organum
	Chant notes sung rhythmically	Discant
	Chant notes extended	Florid organum
	Chant notes sung rhythmically	Discant
RESPOND repeated	Chant (full choir)	(either exactly as first time, or sung in full as chant)

Translation: [RESPOND] *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God; sing joyfully to God, all the world.*
[VERSE] *The Lord has made known his salvation: He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the people.*

difficult it is to pick out the chant words and melody during the polyphonic passages.

Although it was the rhythmic dimension of this music that most fascinated those who wrote about it in the thirteenth century – and, to some extent, also those who have written about it in more recent times – the components of melody and **counterpoint** are just as interesting and equally ground-breaking. With the vastly elongated tenor notes providing a constant pitch against which the newly composed voice or voices sang multiple phrases, what were the parameters governing how those upper-voice melodies were created? How were the harmonies controlled when two or three upper voices were combined in counterpoint with one another? All the organa surviving from Notre-Dame observe the basic principle that the voices should form a consonant harmony at moments of musical rest, in other words whenever a long note is held in all the voices together, and whenever the voices come to the end of a phrase and break for a breath. To the polyphonic singers of Notre-Dame, a consonant harmony meant a fifth or an octave above the lowest sounding note. The upper voices were free to move above or below the tenor note, meaning that the lowest sounding note at any given point could be either the tenor or one of the added voices. In the opening section of florid organum in Pérotin's *Viderunt omnes*, for example, the voices form the following consonant harmonies at all the phrase endings.

The tenor note is shown as a white note here, the upper voices as black notes: because there are four voices in total, one of the notes of the harmony is always doubled (sung by two of the voices). Note that on the second tenor note of the syllable '-runt', Pérotin opted to make the tenor note the fifth of the harmony, with the added voices singing the *F*s below and above. By doing this, he returned to the *F*-based harmony that had prevailed at the opening of the piece, rounding off the section of florid organum with a sense of harmonic closure.

In three- and four-part organa, each added voice was treated as an individual melody, frequently swapping register as well as musical material with the other voices. In the middle of phrases, the voices were not bound to create consonant harmonies, so the simultaneous sounding of these independent melodies sometimes generates extraordinary, fleeting dissonances. At some points, the dissonances seem purposeful rather than accidental: listen out, in

Pérotin's *Viderunt omnes*, for the moment when the voices reach the syllable '-nes' of 'omnes'. This point, just before the end of the first polyphonic section and the resumption of chant singing, marks an important structural moment, and the voices linger on a highly dissonant harmony with the adjacent notes *C*, *D*, and *E* all sounding together, heightening the sense of release when the expected consonance arrives.

How, though, did singers create melodies for the phrases in between these anchoring points? Each voice part had the freedom to roam over any notes within the **mode**, plus a note or two beyond at the bottom and top of the register. The music theorists who wrote about the Parisian organa described the formation of these melodies using the Latin word **color** (literally, 'colour'), as in Anonymous IV's description of *Viderunt omnes* as having 'an abundance of colours of the harmonic art'. What is meant by this term is clearer from the music treatise *De mensurabili musica* (see p. 75 below), where *color* is used to mean various kinds of ornamentation. Singers of the added voices should aim, according to the treatise, to create melodic figures which could form the basis of ornamentation, such as through repetition, extension, and exchange between the voices. Several of these techniques of ornamentation can be heard and seen even in the opening phrases of *Viderunt omnes* in Example 4.1 (p. 65) above. After the initial long chord, the highest-sounding voice (the *triplum* to begin with) sings a rocking figure that alternates between *E* and *F*. This same figure is then passed around all three of the added voices: the *duplum* has it next, then the *triplum*, then the *duplum* again; the figure is absent from the next phrase, but then reappears in the *triplum* and finally the *quadruplum*. Because it is the highest-sounding part wherever it appears, the figure is aurally prominent and becomes increasingly familiar as the section is sung. A different example of the techniques of *color* or ornamentation can be seen and heard in the *duplum* voice at the end of the second system and beginning of the third system in Example 4.1. Here, a scale-like figure descends first from *E* to *G* before rising to end on *C*; it is then repeated a step lower, descending from *D* to *F* and closing the phrase on *F*. This achieves the effect of elaboration – repeating the figure but shifting its tonal position – and at the same time creates a melodic 'question' and 'answer', the first element finishing on the tonally 'open' *C*, and the second closing decisively on the **final** of the mode, *F*. Musical patterning through these kinds of techniques of ornamentation pervades the repertory of three- and four-part organa, and

also the discant passages of two-part organa and **substitute clausulae** (see Box 4.2). In combination with their highly patterned rhythmic arrangements, this gives the impression of music that is tightly controlled and systematically organized on purely musical grounds. Similar principles of melodic

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Box 4.2 Substitute clausulae

As we have seen, Notre-Dame singers sometimes 'updated' the polyphony of their predecessors by substituting short passages of their own into earlier works. The section that was removed and the new passage that replaced it shared precisely the same tenor notes – so that the chant basis remained complete and unaltered – but the upper voices experimented freely with the different harmonies and rhythms that could be used above the same tenor. These substitute passages are known as 'clausulae' (singular: 'clausula'), and large collections of them were created at Notre-Dame, meaning that singers often had a wide selection of clausulae to choose from for any given passage. According to Anonymous IV, Pérotin composed many clausulae, though we have no way of knowing which of the surviving ones can be linked to him.

From the Christmas chant *Viderunt omnes*, two passages in particular became the basis for the composition of substitute clausulae: 'omnes' and 'Dominus'. Clausulae are typically composed in discant style, so the notes of the chant tenor are set to a rhythmic pattern while the upper voices explore different polyphonic elaborations on that foundation. Different clausulae on the same passage often use different rhythmic patterns for the tenor too, while keeping its chant notes intact.

The following example is the opening of a clausula on the word 'Dominus' to be inserted into a performance of *Viderunt omnes*. Compare the tenor notes with the chant melody given in Table 4.1 (p. 66) above to see how the chant has been given a fixed rhythm.

In the manuscripts that preserve the Notre-Dame repertory, this 'Dominus' clausula is written down in two ways. Sometimes it is found in a collection of clausulae, grouped together by the chant on which they are based; from here, any one of the clausulae based on the same passage could be selected to insert into a performance of *Viderunt omnes*. Elsewhere, this clausula is found already embedded within an *organum duplum*: in other words, this copy of the organum does not reflect the piece as originally composed, but instead a later stage, after the clausula had already replaced the earlier passage of florid organum.

organization – a concern for balance, repetition, and ornamentation of recurring figures – can also be found in the florid passages of *organa dupla*, although here the patterns are purely melodic and not underpinned with rhythmic configurations.

*****

In two surviving documents from 1198 and 1199, the Bishop of Paris, Odo de Sully, specifically set out the chants to be sung in two-, three-, or four-voice organum during the celebrations of Christmas week each year. *Viderunt omnes*, a chant for the Feast of the Circumcision (1 January) as well as for Christmas Day, is mentioned by name, and it is not unlikely that Pérotin's four-voice *Viderunt omnes* was created in response to this very directive. This grand work, then, may well have been sung for the first time during the Christmas season of 1199 in Notre-Dame Cathedral, which – it is important to note – was still under construction at the time. The choir and the nave of the church had already been completed and the western facade was largely finished, apart from its famous two towers, but the rest of the structure was yet to be built. Despite its unfinished state, the acoustic surroundings would already have created echoes that made the *organum quadruplum* sound like hundreds of voices coming from all directions, perhaps resembling a choir of angels singing down from the heavens. If we pause for a moment to consider the musical impact of this moment, as well as that of the first performances of Léonin's florid organum, it is not difficult to see why the names of these men were still known and revered almost a century later. Writing in England, Anonymous IV is one witness to the renown of the Notre-Dame composers, but the dozens of manuscripts (some now damaged, but still recognizable) that preserve the polyphony of the cathedral, and which were spread to locations right across Europe, from Salamanca in Spain to St Andrews in Scotland (see Chapter 7), are further testimony to the widespread cultivation and influence of Notre-Dame polyphony.

Rhythmic Organization and Notation

In order to be able to create elaborate works of polyphony through collective experimentation, the singers of the choir of the Notre-Dame needed regulations not only on counterpoint, but also on rhythm. In improvised practice, singers used six **rhythmic modes**: short rhythmic patterns consisting of long notes, or *longae*, and short notes, *breves*, which they could apply to the melodies. By sharing a consistent rhythmic pattern, the singers would be able to coordinate their parts and keep together. Such formulas also helped the singers to remember the repertory already created: medieval musicians held a large amount of music in their

memories and had highly efficient techniques for memorization, many of which were based on the use of patterns and formulas. The origin of the six rhythmic patterns used for polyphony at Notre-Dame lies in the Ancient Greek poetic **metres** and their metrical **feet**. In its original form, this was a system developed for creating, performing, and memorizing Greek verse, but it was adopted at Notre-Dame for the creation, performance, and memorization of complex polyphonic music. Table 4.2 sets out the six different patterns.

Anonymous IV and other theorists explain the system of rhythmic modes in their treatises. Having decided on a mode, the singers would repeat the rhythmic pattern until the end of the phrase and then restart it after each rest. For example, in the second rhythmic mode, based on the iamb, they would sing *breves* and *longae* alternately (short–long, short–long, short–long, etc). In practice, these patterns were often ornamented. A long note could be divided into two or three shorter ones, or two short notes could be replaced by a longer one, in order to bring some variety to what might otherwise become monotonous.

Before looking more closely at examples of the rhythmic modes in practice, some explanation of the system of rhythmic values is necessary. Comparing the two right-hand columns of Table 4.2, it may be seen that the *brevis* was sometimes equivalent to a modern quaver (eighth note) and sometimes a crotchet (quarter note); likewise the *longa* could be equivalent to a crotchet or a dotted crotchet, depending on the mode. In the third and fourth rhythmic modes, the *brevis* has two different values even within the same mode. All of the modes make use of a triple metre, in which the basic 'beat' of the music is subdivided into three. In modern terms, this 'beat' can be interpreted as a dotted crotchet, and the first, second, and sixth modes represent three ways of subdividing one beat, whereas the third, fourth, and fifth modes have a pattern that spans two beats. Because only two basic rhythmic values were used – *longa* (long) and *brevis* (short) – the value of each

Table 4.2 *The rhythmic modes*

Rhythmic mode	Equivalent metrical foot	Pattern	Rhythmic values	Equivalent in modern notation
First	Trochee	Long–short	*Longa–brevis*	♩ ♪
Second	Iamb	Short–long	*Brevis–longa*	♪ ♩
Third	Dactyl	Long–short–short	*Longa–brevis–brevis*	♩. ♪ ♩
Fourth	Anapaest	Short–short–long	*Brevis–brevis–longa*	♪ ♩ ♩.
Fifth	Spondee	Long–long	*Longa–longa*	♩. ♩.
Sixth	Tribrach	Short–short–short	*Brevis–brevis–brevis*	♪ ♪ ♪

one was flexible, and the Notre-Dame singers understood, through convention and repeated practice, how each was to be sung in each context.

If we take a look at Example 4.1 (p. 65) again, we can see a rhythmic mode in the upper voices. After the long held chord that opens the piece, the first rhythmic mode (based on the trochee) can be recognized, although the basic rhythmic pattern is ornamented and varied right from the start. In the opening phrases, the third *longa–brevis* repetition is replaced with a single note. Later on (see the *duplum* part at the end of the second system of music and beginning of the third in Example 4.1), the first two *longa–brevis* repetitions are split into three *breves*, as shown in the shaded boxes below.

First rhythmic mode:	♩♪	♩♪	♩♪	♩ 𝄾
Opening phrase variation:	♩♪	♩♪	♩.	♩ 𝄾
Later variation:	♪♪♪	♪♪♪	♩.	♩ 𝄾

On its own, this later variation looks something like the sixth rhythmic mode rather than the first, but as it occurs within a long passage of music all based on the first mode, we understand it as an ornamentation of the first mode. Different variations of the first mode pattern can be seen in the 'Dominus' clausula on p. 69. Here each phrase ends with a dotted crotchet and dotted crotchet rest (instead of the crotchet + quaver rest in Example 4.1), and the first mode pattern is varied in different ways as shown in the shaded boxes below.

First rhythmic mode:	♩♪	♩♪	♩.	𝄾
Variations:	♩.	♩♪	♩.	𝄾
	♩.	♩.	♩.	𝄾

Note that in all these cases, the overall phrase lengths – and therefore the rests – coincide in all the voices: in pieces like these, it is not difficult to imagine how singers could improvise rhythmic variations to the basic pattern while still remaining coordinated with their co-performers. Not all Notre-Dame polyphony follows this procedure, however, and many works feature passages with complex overlapping of phrases between the voices and deliberate staggering of the rests to create a disjointed effect. The greater the independence of the voices from each other, and the more they varied from the basic rhythmic pattern, the more difficult such pieces became to memorize.

It may have been partly for this reason that a notational system capable of recording not only the pitches but also the rhythmic values of this music was developed. Even more important, though, was the value attached to the musical repertory and its long-term performance history: recall Anonymous

IV's description of the '*great* book of organum' which 'was *in use up to the time* of Perotinus'. A written archive of this special music was required, and a revolutionary method through which the rhythmic modes could be captured in notation was created.

In order to comprehend how this notation worked, we need to understand what musical notation looked like shortly before this development. Since the time of Guido of Arezzo (see p. 53), musical notation had been almost entirely pitch-specific: notes were now placed on a grid of lines and spaces, so that a singer could tell precisely which note was to be sung. Notation consisted of both single notes – placed above the syllable of text to be pronounced to that note – and note groups, or **ligatures**: single symbols indicating more than one note. These signs developed gradually from the various symbols in the **neumatic notation** we encountered in Chapter 2. In twelfth-century notation, ligatures could indicate groups of two, three, or sometimes more notes. In Figure 4.2, the single notes are individual squares or rectangles with a short tail to the right (some tails are so faint that they are not visible on the photograph). The ligatures are the groups of squares joined together at their corners or with thin connecting lines; a few ligatures involve a downwards sloping shape with a tail on the left and connected to a square above.

These ligatures are the key to understanding how Notre-Dame rhythmic notation worked: it was the pattern of ligatures that told a singer which of the six rhythmic modes to sing. If the notated passage began with a ligature consisting of three notes, followed by a series of two-note ligatures, the reader would understand that the first rhythmic mode was to be implemented here. For the first rhythmic mode, then, the three-note ligature corresponds to the first *longa–brevis–longa* of the pattern, and the subsequent two-note ligatures represent the following *brevis–longa* repetitions. It is important to note that the ligatures by themselves did not correspond to particular rhythmic values but only their combination. For example, the fourth rhythmic mode is indicated by a series of three-note ligatures followed by a single note to end the phrase. Here, the three-note ligatures represent *brevis–brevis–longa* (with the second *brevis* twice as long as the first, as shown in Table 4.2 on p. 71). Understanding and reading this notation relied on conventions with which the musicians were familiar and that theorists such as Anonymous IV took care to explain for the benefit of learners and future generations. Figure 4.2 shows the opening of Pérotin's *Viderunt omnes* in the most elegant and highly decorated manuscript containing Notre-Dame polyphony. The four parts are laid out in **score format**, with the tenor at the bottom and the *duplum*, *triplum*, and *quadruplum* parts aligned above it. The passage in which the first-mode pattern of ligatures is easiest to recognize comes in the *duplum* part on the middle system

Figure 4.2 *Viderunt omnes* in a manuscript from Paris, prepared *c*.1240
Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Plut.29.1, f.1 r; Su concessione del
MiC. E' vietata ogni ulteriore riproduzione con qualsiasi mezzo [By permission of
the Ministero della Cultura; further reproduction in any form is prohibited]

of music, just before the change to the syllable '-de-' of 'Viderunt' (see Figure
4.3 for a close-up). A ligature of three squares opens the pattern and is
followed by five two-note ligatures. Overall, this passage corresponds to the
rhythm shown in Figure 4.3.

Because of the many deviations from the basic rhythmic pattern, the combin-
ation of ligatures indicating the rhythmic mode is not always easy to spot, but the
musicians of Notre-Dame had memorized much of the repertory and did not need

Table 4.3 *The rhythmic modes and their ligatures*

Rhythmic mode	Rhythmic values	Ligature pattern	Example of ligatures	Equivalent in modern notation
First	*Longa–brevis*	3-2-2-2-2-*etc.*	♩♪♩♪♩♪ etc.	♩♪♩♪♩♪ *etc.*
Second	*Brevis–longa*	2-2-2-2- . . . -3		♪♩♪♩♪♩ *etc.*
Third	*Longa–brevis–brevis*	1-3-3-3-3-*etc.*		♩. ♪♩. ♪♩ *etc.*
Fourth	*Brevis–brevis–longa*	3-3-3-3- . . . -1		♪♩♩. ♪♩♩. *etc.*
Fifth	*Longa–longa*	1-1-1-1-1-*etc.*		♩. ♩. ♩. ♩. *etc.*
Sixth	*Brevis–brevis–brevis*	4-3-3-3-3-*etc.*		♪♪♪♪♪♪ *etc.*
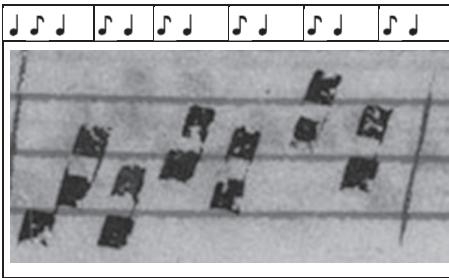
Figure 4.3 First-mode ligatures in *Viderunt omnes*
Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Plut.29.1, f.1 r; Su concessione del MiC. E' vietata ogni ulteriore riproduzione con qualsiasi mezzo [By permission of the Ministero della Cultura; further reproduction in any form is prohibited]

written copies to be 'sight-readable' in the modern sense. Table 4.3 shows the basic combinations of ligatures indicating each of the six rhythmic modes. In the fourth column of the table, an example of the ligatures is given.

Unlike modern notation, the individual signs of Notre-Dame polyphonic notation had no fixed rhythmical meaning by themselves. Instead, their significance derived from their combination into patterns, and hence the context of the entire passage of music was necessary in order to interpret any individual sign. Our ability to decode this notation relies on instructions given in music-theory treatises, of which one of the most important to discuss the rhythmic modes is called *De mensurabili musica* ('On measurable music'). The title word 'measurable' is important here because it draws attention to the main innovation of Notre-Dame notation. For the first time

in the history of medieval music, the duration of notes relative to one another could be measured precisely, and that measurement conveyed in written form. Hence why the examples in this chapter are the first in this book to be given in our familiar rhythmic values of crotchets and quavers (quarter notes and eighth notes). This is not to say that other medieval musical traditions consisted of notes that were all the same length, for not only did some of the earliest medieval notations contain indications of duration and tempo, but it is also entirely possible that performers throughout the Middle Ages sang with a range of rhythmic approaches, even if these were not written down. *De mensurabili musica* dates from around 1260, well after the time of Léonin and Pérotin but around the same time as the major manuscripts of Notre-Dame polyphony were compiled. The treatise used to be attributed to Johannes de Garlandia, another master of the University of Paris, who apparently lived on the Left Bank close to the Seine in an area called Clos de Garlande, from which his name is derived. However, we now know that Johannes merely revised an earlier text, whose author remains unknown. *De mensurabili musica* was well known and was cited by Anonymous IV in his discussion of rhythmic notation; it remains of fundamental importance to our understanding of the polyphony of Notre-Dame, its use of the rhythmic modes, and its ways of notating rhythm.

This notational system was well suited to the musical tradition of Notre-Dame, where highly skilled singers worked closely together, using their memories and shared understanding of conventions to supplement the written information. But it had two principal limitations that restricted its use for musical genres and traditions beyond thirteenth-century Paris. Firstly, the notation was impractical for music that set texts syllabically or nearly so: for reasons we shall discuss below (p. 79), the system of ligature patterns to indicate rhythm only worked well in highly melismatic music, where the syllables of text were immensely drawn out. Secondly, the system of rhythmic modes offered only a limited selection of rhythmic possibilities, even allowing for the many variations from the basic modal patterns that the Notre-Dame singers explored. Subsequent composers wishing to exploit more rhythmic complexity, in which passages of music were not tied to the same fundamental rhythmic pattern for their durations, or who wanted to notate with precision a wider range of note values than the *longa* and *brevis*, required a different method. Before the end of the thirteenth century, as Chapter 6 will show, such a notational system had arrived.

Box 4.3 The first motets

Some of the manuscripts of Notre-Dame polyphony contain, in addition to their collections of organa and substitute clausulae, the earliest examples of polyphonic pieces to be labelled motets. In later centuries, the word **motet** would develop a very broad meaning denoting almost any sacred polyphonic work (apart from settings of the Mass), but in its thirteenth-century meaning, the term is much more specific. 'Motet' derives from the French word *mot* ('word'), and the pieces are so-called because their creators added words to pre-existing untexted music. In many of the earliest cases, the raw material for motets was drawn from substitute clausulae, to whose *duplum* voice a **syllabic** text was added in place of the clausula's long melismas on single syllables.

One such case is the motet *Factum est salutare*, whose music is the same as the clausula 'Dominus' that we encountered earlier. The following example shows the opening of the motet: compare it to the example on p. 69 to see how almost identical music has been 'texted' by the addition of a newly composed set of words for the *duplum* voice. In a motet, the *duplum* with text added is usually named the **motetus** voice instead, as shown here.

Thirteenth-century motets are unusual in vocal music because their texts were created to fit the music, rather than the other way round. The rhythm of the *duplum* voice from the clausula provided the structure that the text had to follow, in terms of the length of its lines and the number of syllables.

How and when these motets were performed is not entirely clear. The newly added *motetus* texts were not taken from the established liturgy but specially invented; many of the early motet texts, however, are linked thematically to the chant from which their tenors ultimately derived and reflect upon the occasion in the Church's year for which that chant would be sung. The text and translation of the opening of *Factum est salutare* is given here: compare it to the text of *Viderunt omnes* in Table 4.1 (p. 66) to identify the shared language and topic.

Factum est salutare conspectu notum gentium *Salvation is made known in the sight of the people*
a rege, mundus cesare describitur, *by the king, the world is drawn up by the emperor,*
actor omnium rex nascitur. *the king, mover of everything, is born.*

Not all thirteenth-century motets started out as clausulae to which text was added, however. Some two-voice Latin examples, which apparently resemble motets such as *Factum est salutare*, may have been composed from scratch rather than based on pre-existing music. For some of

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Box 4.3 (*cont.*)

them, no corresponding clausula exists, and for others, there is evidence that the motet pre-dated the clausula, in a reversal of the typical process.

In the next chapter we will encounter motets with three and four voice parts, and whose upper-voice texts were sometimes in French as well as Latin and often strayed a long way from the topic of the chant in the tenor voice. In these motets, the music for the upper voices was newly composed and not a texted version of a pre-existing clausula, although the tenors were still almost always passages of liturgical chant.

Conductus

The last part of Anonymous IV's famous description of music-making at Notre-Dame (see Box 4.1 on p. 62 above) mentions the genre of the 'conductus', and gives several named examples that were composed by Pérotin. The conductus (for which we will use the plural 'conducti', although the plural form 'conductus' – the same as the singular – is another alternative) was a kind of Latin song that could be in one, two, or three voice parts, as Anonymous IV indicates. (A tiny number of four-voice conducti also survive.) It differed from all other kinds of music explored in this chapter by having no prior connection to liturgical chant: both the texts and the music of conducti were freely composed. Although conducti have not received nearly as much modern attention as organa and motets, they were extremely widespread in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with almost a thousand conductus poems surviving, 90 per cent of which are preserved with music. Many were written and sung in Paris, in the same circles as the other genres of music considered in this chapter, but conducti were also created all across Europe. Some conducti stayed local to the areas in which they were created, but others travelled great distances, often being transformed with multiple musical versions and poetic variations as they moved.

Conducti vary considerably in their musical styles. More than half of the repertory consists of monophonic pieces, and the prevailing musical texture in most of these is syllabic. In this respect, these conducti resemble the vernacular songs of the **troubadours** and **trouvères** (discussed in Chapters 3 and 5 respectively), since in all these songs, sung texts are presented clearly and audibly. Also, like vernacular song, monophonic conducti are usually written in **unmeasured** notation, leaving choices about the pace and declamation of the poem up to the performers. Some conducti are **strophic**, with multiple **stanzas** to be sung to the same melody; others are **through-composed**.

There is a range of subject matter among conductus texts, but the overwhelming majority treat sacred, devotional themes, principal among which is the Blessed

Virgin Mary. The texts are not liturgical, and only a small handful of conducti are known to have been performed as part of liturgical worship, so most of them must have been sung outside church. Among the situations where this could have taken place were in communities of clerics or scholars, at times when reading aloud or singing accompanied communal gatherings. The conducti that are best known today (such as the one we will consider shortly) are those whose texts are highly topical, referring to a specific historical event; these topical conducti are, however, relatively unusual within the repertory as a whole.

In the polyphonic conducti, just as in the monophonic ones, all the music is freely composed. All the voices sing the same text at the same pace, often pronouncing it at the rate of one note per syllable. Around two-thirds of polyphonic conducti include melismatic phrases – known as **caudae** (singular: *cauda*; literally, 'tails') – in structural positions, such as at the beginning and end: between these *caudae*, the text is heard clearly, and the melismatic phrases help to highlight and emphasize the structure of the poem.

Conducti *cum caudis* (as these polyphonic conducti with *caudae* are known) are written in a hybrid kind of notation that reveals something interesting about thirteenth-century approaches to writing music down. The syllabic passages of these conducti are written in unmeasured single notes, with no indication of rhythm (just as monophonic vernacular songs are), but the *caudae* are notated using the six rhythmic modes developed for the discant of Notre-Dame. There are two possible ways for us to interpret this. Perhaps the syllabic passages were sung in a free rhythm, the singers using the syllables of the text as their way of keeping together, while the *caudae* were sung rhythmically, the modal rhythmic patterns serving to synchronize the voices where there were no words to help. On the other hand, it is equally possible that such conducti were sung in **measured rhythm** throughout both the melismatic and syllabic portions, with the rhythm being inferred rather than explicitly notated for the syllabic sections. As we have seen, modal rhythmic notation relied on ligatures and their combinations to indicate rhythmic patterns but was impractical for music with syllabic texts because the ligatures indicating two, three, or more notes could not be made to align with the equivalent number of syllables. (To see what we mean, look again at Figure 4.3 on p. 75 above, a passage that consists of thirteen notes grouped into six ligatures, and consider how difficult it would be for a scribe to write out thirteen syllables of text below them in a way that clearly showed which syllable was to be sung to which note. Bear in mind that in these ligature forms, notes sung successively are often notated directly on top of one another, whereas the text syllables were always written out along a line from left to right.) Even if these layout problems could be overcome, musical readers and scribes of the time were used to the notation of chant, in which the same ligature forms were used to indicate notes grouped to a

single syllable (the equivalent of a slur in modern notation); it would thus have been very difficult for them to overcome their habit of extending each syllable over the entire course of each ligature.

The Conductus and the City: *Aurelianis civitas*

Aurelianis civitas ('City of Orléans') was composed in Paris in 1236, the date of the events that are described in its text. Although its only manuscript source does not name its composer, evidence from the text itself strongly suggests that the author was Philip the Chancellor (*c*.1160/70–1236). From 1217 until his death in 1236, Philip occupied the post of Chancellor of Notre-Dame, the canon who oversaw the activities of the fledgling University of Paris and had authority to grant teaching licences to its masters. He was the author of theological texts and sermons, as well as many Latin poems, which were set to music by the composers of Notre-Dame and – in some cases – by Philip himself. As a senior canon of Notre-Dame as well as de facto head of the university, Philip found himself intricately involved in the politics of the city, and its royal, episcopal, and educational authorities.

The event discussed in *Aurelianis civitas*, a riot between citizens and clerical scholars, took place in Orléans, about 120 kilometres south of Paris (see Figure 5.1 on p. 87). Geographically, Orléans resembled Paris, in that both cities were strategically located on the banks of a large river – the Loire and the Seine respectively – making them important hubs of trade and economic activity. Like Paris, Orléans was also home to several schools, which attracted students from outside the city to study with renowned masters; the schools would achieve papal recognition as a university in 1306. According to Matthew Paris, an important thirteenth-century historian whose chronicle details many significant events of the time, a violent dispute arose around the feast of Pentecost in 1236 which pitted the townspeople of Orléans against the scholars. A number of students were killed, and in revenge for their murders, their relatives descended upon the city and killed many citizens. The cause of the dispute is not known, but it appears to fit into a pattern of tension between townspeople and students (many arriving from elsewhere) in medieval university cities.

Philip the Chancellor had direct knowledge of a similar event that had occurred in Paris a few years earlier in 1229. During the carnival, a group of drunk students were entangled in an argument about the tavern bill. Presumably inflamed by the alcohol, the dispute turned ugly, and the students were beaten up by the tavern owner and neighbouring citizens. The following day, students returned to the tavern in large numbers and destroyed it with clubs and other weapons. The tavern owner was also severely beaten. Because the students were exempt from the civil

justice system, being protected by the Church and the University of Paris, it seemed at first that they would not be prosecuted, until under pressure from the regent of France, Queen Blanche of Castile, the university gave in to the city's demands for retribution. What started as a drunken brawl had now become a test case for the powers and authority of the university versus the civil government. The university closed its doors and went on a strike that lasted for two years, before negotiations in Rome led to a papal bull officially codifying the university's privileges and rights to maintain its own jurisdiction.

The text and a translation of *Aurelianis civitas* are given in Box 4.4. Addressing the city of Orléans, Philip condemns the city for its criminal attack on the students of its university. Orléans was renowned for having a relic of the Cross of the Crucifixion; Philip describes the city as no longer worthy to play host to such a precious item. The conductus mentions neither the reason for the townspeople's anger nor any of the acts of vengeance that followed the initial riots, laying the blame entirely on the city and regarding the cleric-scholars as innocent victims. At the end of the text, Philip turns to his own city of Paris. With his recollection of the Parisian riots and strikes aroused by the news from Orléans, he contrasts the two events directly.

The text consists of four stanzas, but each has a different form and rhyme scheme: the first stanza consists of six lines which rhyme in the pattern *aabccb*; the second and fourth stanza both have eight lines, but their rhyming patterns vary from one another; the third stanza is the only one to contain an odd number of lines. With this level of divergence, the four stanzas clearly could not be set to precisely the same melody repeated four times, and accordingly the music of the conductus is through-composed. Some of the rhyming lines show melodic similarities (such as the first and second phrases in Example 4.2, which shows the music for the first stanza of text), but other line pairs are entirely unrelated. In stanzas 3 and 4, the melody touches on notes outside the *D* mode in which most of the piece is anchored, and these arresting musical moments serve to emphasize particular words in the text. The music certainly allows the text to be heard clearly: the conductus is almost entirely syllabic and does not contain any *caudae* or other melismatic passages. This is highly unusual for a conductus from the 1230s, and the sober and modest musical style may well have been chosen to underscore the gravity of the events being described.

Atypical though it is of the conductus repertory as a whole, *Aurelianis civitas* offers a useful window into the dynamics of cities following the urbanization of the twelfth century. In it, we catch a glimpse of the tensions that could arise between social groups in urban contexts, at a stage when the procedures for government and control of these different factions were still being established. Philip the Chancellor presents a prominent example of a song-maker whose career saw him caught up in

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Box 4.4 Philip the Chancellor: *Aurelianis civitas*

1. Aurelianis civitas,
   te replevit iniquitas,
   novo pollutam scelere.
   Amnis qui prius aureus
   factus torrens sanguineus
   ex innocentum funere.

2. Sancte crucis exaltata
   triumphali nomine,
   passione renovata
   fuso cleri sanguine,
   sanctum nomen polluisti;
   occidisti servos Christi,
   quos servare debuisti
   a turbarum turbine.

3. Plange, civitas sanguinum,
   indigna crucis titulo,
   pro gravitate criminum
   digna crucis patibulo.
   Nomen perdis sancte crucis,
   digna cruce pene trucis
   capitali piaculo.

4. Urbs beata Parisius,
   in qua, si peccet impius,
   ultione redimitur,
   quicquid inique gesserit.
   Studio locus proprius,
   civis clero propicius;
   ad quem redire cogitur,
   quisquis ab ea fugerit.

1. *City of Orléans,*
   wickedness has filled you,
   dishonoured by a recent crime;
   A river that before was golden
   has become a bloody torrent
   from the slaying of innocents.

2. *Once ennobled by the victorious*
   name of the Holy Cross,
   by renewing the Passion
   in the shed blood of clergy,
   you have defiled the holy name;
   you have slain the servants of Christ,
   whom you should have protected
   from the force of the mob.

3. *Mourn, city of slaughter,*
   unworthy of the Cross's inscription,
   worthy of the Cross's gibbet
   for the severity of your crimes.
   You lose the renown of the Holy Cross,
   worthy of a cross of harsh punishment
   for your capital offence.

4. *Blessed is the city of Paris,*
   in which, if a wicked man sins,
   he is compensated with vengeance,
   for whatever he has unjustly done.
   It is a place proper for study,
   a citizenry favourable to clergy;
   whoever may have fled from it
   is compelled to return to it.

translation from Thomas B. Payne, '*Aurelianis civitas*: Student Unrest
in Medieval France and a Conductus by Philip the Chancellor',
Speculum, 75 (2000), 589–614

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the politics of the new urban world of Paris, involving the bishop, the king, and the pope, as well as the masters and students over whom he had authority. While other singers and composers in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Paris were not involved to the same extent, their particular environment contributed significantly to the creation and transmission of their music. The vibrant intellectualism of the surrounding schools supplied the atmosphere in which a highly systematic notational method was developed and then codified by theorists. The development of

Example 4.2 Philip the Chancellor, *Aurelianis civitas* (first stanza)

Au - re - li - a - nis ci - vi - tas   te - re - ple - vit in - i - qui - tas,

no - vo pol - lu - tam sce - le - re;   am - nis qui pri - us au - re - us

fac - tus tor - rens san - gui - ne - us   ex in - no - cen - tum fu - ne - re.
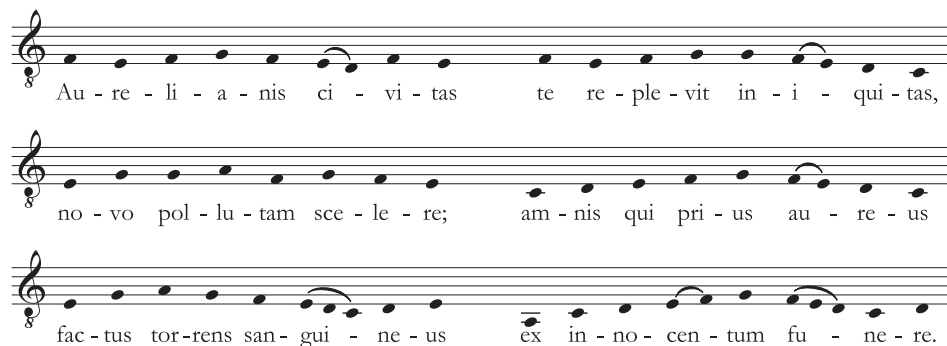
specialized commercial trades in the city's streets provided the conditions for manuscripts of the music to be created and sold, and the constant traffic of visitors from across the continent allowed these manuscripts to be distributed hundreds of kilometres beyond Paris's walls. The growing wealth of the city, and its increasing importance in French royal and civil government, lay behind the project to build a monumental new cathedral in the heart of the city, a physical setting for which music of matching splendour was mandated by the ecclesiastical authorities.

Suggested Recordings

Pérotin, *Viderunt omnes* and other polyphony from Notre-Dame:

- *Pérotin and the Ars Antiqua*, The Hilliard Ensemble (reissue: CORO, COR16046, 2007)
- *École de Notre-Dame de Paris: Permanence et Rayonnement XIIe, XIIIe et XIVe siècles*, Ensemble Gilles Binchois, dir. Dominique Vellard (Harmonic, 9349, 1993)

Pérotin, *Viderunt omnes*, 'Dominus' substitute clausula, *Factum est salutare* motet:

- *Léonin & Pérotin: Sacred Music From Notre-Dame Cathedral*, Tonus Peregrinus, dir. Antony Pitts (Naxos, 8.557340, 2005)

Philip the Chancellor, *Aurelianis civitas*, and other conducti:

- *Conductus: Music & Poetry from Thirteenth-Century France*, John Potter, Christopher O'Gorman, Rogers Covey-Crump (tenors), volumes 1, 2, and 3 [*Aurelianis civitas* is on volume 2] (Hyperion, CDA67949, 2012 / CDA67998, 2013 / CDA68115, 2016)

Further Reading

Bradley, Catherine A., *Polyphony in Medieval Paris: The Art of Composing with Plainchant* (Cambridge, 2018).

Everist, Mark, *Discovering Medieval Song: Latin Poetry and Music in the* Conductus (Cambridge, 2018).

Gross, Guillaume, 'Organum at Notre-Dame in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Rhetoric in Words and Music', *Plainsong & Medieval Music*, 15 (2006), 87–108.

Page, Christopher, *The Owl and the Nightingale: Musical Life and Ideas in France 1100–1300* (London, 1989).

Payne, Thomas B., '*Aurelianis civitas*: Student Unrest in Medieval France and a Conductus by Philip the Chancellor', *Speculum*, 75 (2000), 589–614.

Roesner, Edward H., 'Notre Dame', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, volume 2, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, 2018), 834–80.

Wright, Craig, *Music and Ceremony at Notre Dame of Paris, 500–1550* (Cambridge, 1989).

Chapter 5

Courts and Cities in Northern France

The culture of **courtly love** that flourished in Aquitaine and Occitania during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (see Chapter 3) was imitated in the different context of Northern France from the middle of the twelfth century until the early fourteenth. To begin with, courtly love travelled along with noblemen and -women in visits to northern courts, and Eleanor of Aquitaine is said to have been one of the first to bring the Occitan vernacular love songs and their surrounding culture to the north. The themes and styles of **troubadour** poetry served as inspiration for poets not only in the north of what is now France but also elsewhere in Northern Europe, each group of poets writing in their own vernacular languages. This led, for example, to the **Minnesang** culture in the German- and Germanic-speaking lands, which will be discussed in Chapter 9. The Northern-French imitators of troubadour poetry and song were known as the **trouvères**, a word which means the same as the word troubadour: 'one who finds', or perhaps more appropriately in this context, 'one who creates' or 'composes'. This was, of course, deliberate: by using the same word for themselves, the trouvères stressed their connection to their role models, the troubadours.

Trouvères wrote and sang in their own vernacular, Old French, also known as the *langue d'oïl* ('oïl' meant 'yes' and was the equivalent of Occitan 'oc'). Over the following centuries, Old French gradually developed into the modern French that is spoken in France and many other countries today. Like Occitan, however, Old French was not one single language: regional variants and dialects were found both in the written forms of the language (apparent, for example, in variable spelling), and in its spoken or sung form, with differences of pronunciation that would have been easy to hear. The vernacular culture of the trouvères flourished between the middle of the twelfth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, and thus overlapped with the activity of the troubadours to begin with. It is worth remembering this chronological overlap, as well as taking note that the music we discuss in this chapter is contemporary with the **polyphony** and Latin **monophony** of Paris explored in the previous chapter.

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Like their southern equivalents, the trouvères wrote and sang principally about love, but also about politics, morals, and many other things that were important in everyday secular life. In order to understand the context in which this poetry was created, we will first visit the courts and cities of Northern France and learn about their societies and cultures. With this context in mind, we will meet some of the trouvères and learn about their musical and poetic styles and genres. This chapter will also consider the performance of trouvère music and will finish by returning to the genre of the **motet**, first encountered in an early-thirteenth-century Parisian context in Chapter 4, but now transformed into a phenomenon that brought together the worlds of sacred polyphony and vernacular song in a uniquely fascinating way.

Northern-French Court Culture

When trouvère culture began to emerge in the second half of the twelfth century, its geographical context resembled in some ways that of the troubadours' Occitania. The region was divided into many territories, each ruled by its own count or duke. Some parts were ruled directly by the kings of France, whereas others had more autonomy, with local rulers having day-to-day control but being ultimately accountable to either the king of France or the Angevin Empire, the latter of which also included England (see Figure 5.1). By the end of the twelfth century, the Kingdom of France occupied more or less the eastern half of what we now know as France, from the County of Toulouse in the far south all the way up to the County of Flanders (now Belgium) in the north, bordering the western flanks of the Holy Roman Empire (which included Lorraine, Burgundy, and Provence, all of which are now also part of France).

During the period covered by this chapter, the French kings were members of the Capetian dynasty, a royal family named after Hugh Capet, the tenth-century ruler who had successfully dethroned the Carolingian king who ruled before him. The Capetian dynasty was one of the longest-lived of all medieval royal houses, lasting some 340 years from Hugh Capet's accession to the death of Charles IV (the Fair) in 1328. Charles IV's death without a living male heir led to a succession conflict which ultimately resulted in the Hundred Years' War, to which we will return in the next chapter.

The western half of modern-day France, from Aquitaine in the south to the duchy of Normandy in the north, fell under the rule of the English kings following the marriage of Henry II of England to Eleanor of Aquitaine; their son Richard I (the Lionheart) was an enthusiastic patron of trouvères and troubadours, and himself wrote poems in both Old French and Occitan. Throughout these regions, hostile take-overs as well as marriages between members of different noble families resulted in constant territorial shifts. By the end of the thirteenth century, the
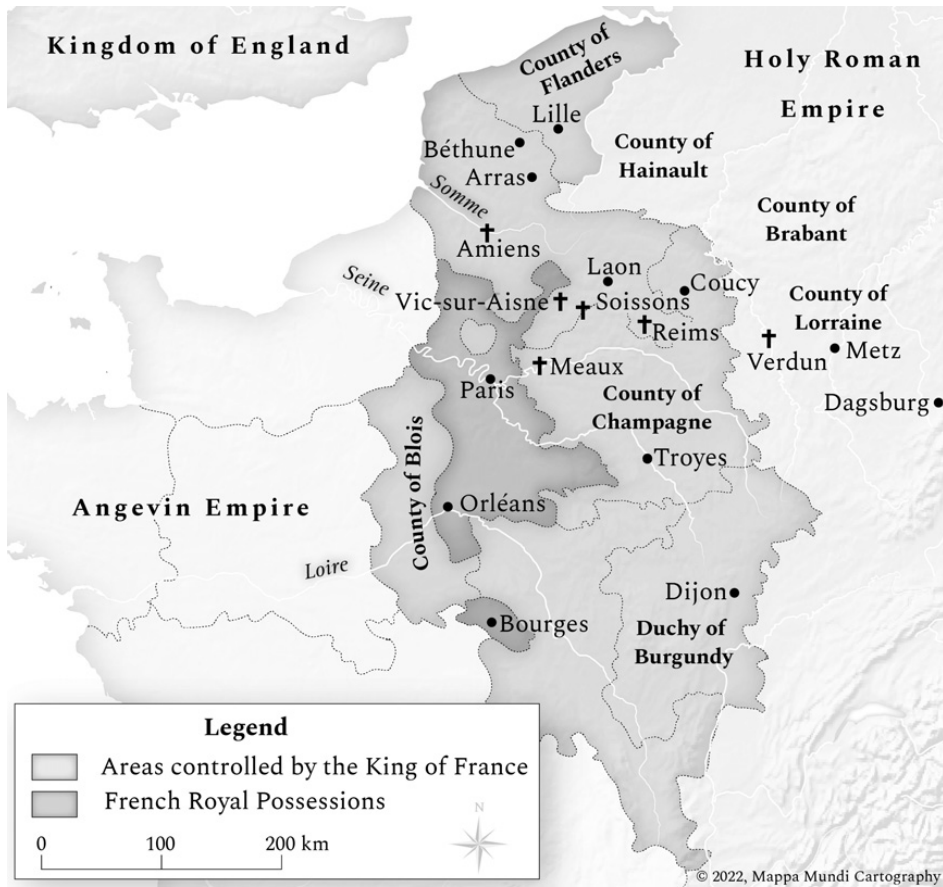
Figure 5.1 The Northern-French region, *c.*1180
© Mappa Mundi Cartography

English kings had lost almost all of their land in France, with the important exception of Aquitaine, which remained in English hands until the Hundred Years' War. Meanwhile, the French royal domain, the territory under direct royal rule, had expanded into, among other districts, the Duchy of Normandy and the County of Champagne. Additionally, counties such as Maine and Anjou, Touraine, and the Duchy of Brittany were ruled by nobles related to the House of Capet, such as the Valois, who would later claim the throne of France.

This network of courts and noble rulers provided the first trouvères with a similar system of patronage to that of the troubadours, and – again, like their southern predecessors – some trouvères were noblemen and -women themselves, while others made their living through poetry and song. However, the growth in

importance of cities as cultural centres – which we have already encountered in Chapter 4 – provided the environment in which most thirteenth-century trouvères lived and worked. The most significant city for trouvère activity was Arras in the County of Flanders. The city had acquired its financial wealth through its famous wool and cloth industry, dating back to Roman times. After receiving a commercial charter from the French crown in 1180, the city's wool, fabric, and tapestry markets expanded even more. As with Paris, the commercial importance of the city led to a constant traffic of wealthy merchants in and out of the city and the establishment of an urban middle class, or bourgeoisie, who could afford to educate their children and participate in leisurely pastimes. Many thirteenth-century trouvères were drawn from this new social class or made their money by composing and performing songs for them; some, such as Jehan Bodel and Adam de la Halle, achieved widespread fame for their vernacular poems and songs. In cities such as Arras, guilds and societies were formed of trouvères and ***jongleurs*** (the northern equivalent of ***joglars***, lower-class minstrels who performed as singers and dancers, but were not usually poet-composers). These societies helped to support the activities of those who made their living through song, but also served as places of meeting for trouvères and their audiences, holding events and competitions at which trouvère poetry and song was presented.

Chansonniers

The **manuscripts** in which troubadour and trouvère poetry and song are recorded are known as **chansonniers** ('songbooks'). In some respects, the chansonniers containing the music of these two groups are similar, and a number of them actually include both trouvère and troubadour songs. One major difference between them, however, lies in their inclusion of musical notation: only around 10 per cent of the surviving troubadour poems were written down with their melodies, whereas almost all of the trouvère chansonniers include music, and melodies are known for at least two-thirds of surviving trouvère poems. The explanation for this difference is not entirely clear. Few of the chansonniers of either group were designed to be sung from, but instead seem to have been intended to record and preserve the **repertory** of songs.

Some chansonniers consist solely of songs, often arranged in a discernible order by the names of their poet-composers. Some of these are very elegant productions, with expensive materials and costly decoration: it is in these books that we find the troubadour and trouvère portraits, such as that of Raimon de Miraval (Figure 3.2 on p. 37) and Adam de la Halle (Figure 5.3 on p. 93). Other books containing song, however, include many different genres of text as well. The expense and time

involved in producing a manuscript – not only the raw materials, such as parchment, ink, colours, and gold leaf for decoration, but also the specialist skills of the scribe, artist, and bookbinder – meant that it often made sense for several different texts to be compiled into a single book. An individual book owner, such as a wealthy citizen of Arras, for example, might possess only a few of these books of mixed contents – or **miscellanies** – but thereby have access to a 'library in miniature', portable enough to take around with her on her travels. In this way, we find vernacular songs side by side with long narrative **romances** (stories of knights and chivalric deeds), sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse: these stories frequently use techniques such as satire and allegory to convey a message about ethical behaviour. Such books can also contain historical, philosophical, and educational works, as well as devotional texts and songs, often venerating the Blessed Virgin Mary. The links between vernacular song and other musical genres, especially the motet, in the later thirteenth century will be explored further on in this chapter, but it is noteworthy that songs and different musical forms are often included together in this kind of book.

The chansonniers whose songs are organized by poet-composer are remarkable in a number of ways. Most significantly, these are the first music manuscripts in which prominence is given to the names of the music's creators. Nearly all earlier music is transmitted anonymously, and where we know the composers' names, it is often through chance references to them in other texts, rather than direct attribution in the music manuscripts themselves. It may be the case that – in the sphere of secular, vernacular poetry and song (as opposed to music in Latin, linked to religious worship or devotion) – the concept of and value attached to the individual 'author' or 'composer' in the modern sense began to emerge. A distinctly non-modern attitude on the part of the chansonniers' compilers is apparent, however, in the ordering of the songs according to the social status of their poet-composers. They typically begin with the highest nobility, frequently placing the trouvère Thibaut IV (1201–53), the Count of Champagne and also King of Navarre, first. He was then followed by other noble trouvères, trouvères of lower social ranks, and finally by the anonymous songs.

Although these chansonniers have ensured that we know many trouvères by name, our knowledge of their biographies is much more patchy. In some cases, *vidas* such as those in the troubadour chansonniers survive, telling us sometimes rather fantastical stories about the men and women who wrote vernacular poetry and song in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In other instances, biographical information can be inferred from the texts themselves. For example, some trouvères tell of their experiences in the Crusades, whereas others mention names of people they met or places they visited. More objective primary sources – such as the membership lists of guilds and societies, or church records mentioning

those who held ecclesiastical offices – supply further snippets of information, and by combining these references, we are able to reconstruct some historical context for the blossoming trouvère culture.

The category of 'trouvère', however, is broader than just a poet and composer of songs. Trouvères were involved in the creation of polyphonic music, including motets (see p. 105) and the earliest polyphonic vernacular songs (p. 100). Their literary work also extended beyond short lyrics for singing, and often included long narrative poems (see p. 102) on historical, mythological, political, and religious subjects. The four trouvères introduced in Boxes 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, and 5.5 on pages 90–92 and 104–105 – Chrétien de Troyes, Adam de la Halle, Rutebeuf, and Gautier de Coinci – illustrate the diversity of careers and creative production that can be found among the trouvères of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Northern France.

Box 5.1 Chrétien de Troyes

One of the earliest trouvères whose songs survive in manuscripts, and also the earliest one whose name is known to us, is Chrétien de Troyes (or in Old French: *Chrestien de Troies*). Like many trouvères, Chrétien's name refers to his place of origin, in this case Troyes, a city some 150 kilometres from Paris and connected to this capital by the River Seine. This river connection made Troyes an important trading centre, which led to financial prosperity and a consequently vibrant culture. Troyes was the capital of the County of Champagne, housing the count's castle, as well as a cathedral and its associated bishopric.

Chrétien was active between *c*.1160 and 1190. We do not know exactly when he was born: such information is rarely given in the sources. His first name, Chrétien ('Christian'), may perhaps suggest that he was born into the large Jewish community of Troyes, but converted to Christianity and adopted this name to confirm his new status. Chrétien trained as a cleric, receiving his education in the city in which he grew up. His Champenois dialect can be identified in some of his surviving texts.

A document from 1172 tells us that Chrétien was then working as a composer and poet at the court of Count Henry I of Champagne. Interestingly, this employment provided Chrétien with a direct connection to the Occitan troubadours: Henry's wife was Marie de Champagne, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her first husband King Louis VII. Marie may well have introduced the southern culture of courtly love at Henry's court in Champagne. It is quite possible that Chrétien, while he was working at this court, also visited England: Henry had connections there, and there are references to England in Chrétien's works. If this was indeed the case, he would have been in contact with English musical culture and may also have brought French approaches to courtly love and vernacular poetry there. At some point, Chrétien may also have worked for Philippe d'Alsace, Count of Flanders, because the romance *Perceval* – one of Chrétien's major works – is dedicated to Philippe.

At least two – and perhaps as many as five – of Chrétien's songs survive. Although some chansonniers attribute songs directly to particular poet-composers, it is still frequently the case that songs travelled anonymously, or that the same song was attributed to more than one author by different scribes. It is important to keep in mind that the trouvères still worked in a predominantly oral tradition: songs and poems circulated only in sounding form before they

Box 5.1 (*cont.*)

were ever written down, so knowledge of their authorship could easily become confused or lost altogether.

    Chrétien's songs – all love songs – form a relatively small part of his poetic output. His most important works are verse romances on a much larger scale. Chrétien's romances are mostly on Arthurian themes, relating the legendary stories of King Arthur, the Holy Grail, and his Knights of the Round Table. They are some of the earliest in a long medieval tradition of Arthurian literature and introduce famous characters such as Lancelot, Percival, and Yvain (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2 Illustration from Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval*, depicting the knight Percival arriving at the Grail Castle
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 12577, f.18 v; source: gallica.bnf.fr.

Song Genres and Themes

So keen were the trouvères to imitate the work of the troubadours, that not only the general topic of courtly love but also many specific Occitan song genres were taken up by them. The classic love song, known in Occitan as the ***canso***, became the ***chanson d'amour*** ('love song') or ***grand chant courtois*** ('grand courtly song') in the Old French of the trouvères. In both contexts and both languages, these songs were serious in tone and involved the same typical scenario: the poet expressing his love for a woman who is out of his reach. She is of higher social status than he is, and in many poems she is married to someone else. The culture of courtly love

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Box 5.2 Adam de la Halle

Adam de la Halle (Figure 5.3) is one of the best-documented of all trouvères, with autobiographical information found within his own works backed up in some cases by external historical sources. Adam was born in Arras in the second half of the 1240s to a father named Henri, who was an important citizen of the city. In historical records of his time, Adam's name was frequently given as either 'Adam d'Arras' or 'Adam le Bossu' ('the Hunchback'), the latter apparently a nickname adopted by his family to distinguish themselves from other families with the name Halle or Hale in Arras. In one of his works, Adam explained that despite his name, he himself was not a hunchback.

Adam probably studied at the University of Paris and returned to Arras when he was between twenty and twenty-five years old. He married his wife Maroie not long after. He became a member of the ***puy***, a guild-like society of poets and composers, and through it he met and collaborated with many other trouvères of Arras. With one of them, Jehan Bretel, Adam composed at least sixteen ***jeux-partis***, debate songs in which two trouvères argue the opposing sides of a question in alternate **stanzas** set to the same melody. After some years, Adam was employed in the service of Robert II, Count of Artois, and his uncle, Charles I of Anjou, who was also king of Naples and Sicily (see Chapter 8). Consequently, Adam ended up in Southern Italy, writing some of his best-known works there, including his *Jeu de Robin et Marion* ('Play of Robin and Marion'), to which we will return later in this chapter.

Because two surviving sources contradict each other, it is unclear whether Adam died in Naples in the second half of the 1280s or whether he moved to England, as suggested by a source that lists a 'maistre Adam le Boscu' as one of the minstrels present at the coronation of Edward II in 1307. This minstrel, however, could equally have been Adam's son, about whom nothing is known. Either way, Adam's extensive travels brought him into contact with an unusually broad range of people and places, and through the noblemen he served, he must have been witness to international diplomacy at the heart of thirteenth-century European and Mediterranean politics.

As a trouvère, Adam was versatile and eclectic. He wrote in every genre of vernacular music and verse, from *jeux-partis*, monophonic *chansons*, motets, and monophonic and polyphonic ***formes fixes*** (discussed in detail on p. 99 below), to ***chansons de geste***, narrative allegorical romances, and musical plays. His musical, poetic, and narrative output is enormous, and his works were transmitted in some twenty-five manuscripts – more than those of any other trouvère.

The most important source for Adam's music and poetry is a manuscript now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, often referred to as the 'Adam de la Halle manuscript'. Containing virtually all of the trouvère's works, the manuscript is arranged so that it not only presents all his poems and songs, organized by genre, but at the same time tells his life story. The increasing consciousness of trouvères as 'authors' that was mentioned earlier reaches a new level in the Adam de la Halle manuscript, the first to present musical and poetic works by a single author as a collection. In its weaving-in of autobiographical information, the manuscript also pre-figures the famous authorial collections of Guillaume de Machaut in the fourteenth century (see Chapter 6).

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considered this to be the most elevated and genuine form of love, since it included no possibility for the lover's feelings to be reciprocated. Thus, along with the love he feels, the poet expresses the pain he experiences in not being able to be with the woman to whom he has given his heart.

Figure 5.3 Adam de la Halle, depicted as a scribe
Arras, Médiathèque de l'abbaye Saint-Vaast, MS 657 (139), f.142 v; source:
Bibliothèque Virtuelle des Manuscrits Médiévaux (BVMM) – IRHT-CNRS; by
permission

Alongside the courtly *canso* and *chanson d'amour*, the vernacular poet-composers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries also wrote songs in a less serious tone. The troubadour **pastorela**, which became the trouvère *pastourelle*, involves a countryside scene typically featuring a beautiful shepherdess. The humble shepherdess is usually approached by a knight on horseback – her social superior – who wishes to seduce her. A number of possible outcomes can ensue, sometimes involving the shepherdess rejecting the knight's advances on the grounds that she already has a lover, and at other times entailing the knight succeeding in his aim, with the woman being either a consenting partner or – quite frequently – the victim of rape. The dawn song (**alba** in Occitan, **aube** in Old French) tells the story of a man spending the night with a married woman, awaking at the dawn and hurrying to depart before being caught by the woman's husband.

The *jeu-parti*, mentioned earlier in our discussion of trouvère societies (or *puys*) which were founded in cities such as Arras, was related to the Occitan **tenso**,

partimen, and **joc-partit**, all types of debate poem in which two poets (or one poet and an imagined opponent) argue two sides of a question. Once again, love tops the list of topics for debate, including questions such as 'Which is better: to touch, kiss, and embrace your lady without ever being able to see her or speak to her, or to look at and talk to her, without ever being able to touch her?' *Jeux-partis* could also be political and were very often moralistic in nature, debating the right course of action in the case of an ethical dilemma. One of the trouvères would write the first stanza of the *jeu-parti*, which poses the question, and invites his or her opponent – usually mentioned by name – to respond. The respondent would use the same melody, rhyme scheme, and overall stanza structure, and compose his or her answer to the first. Such musical games were especially prevalent in communities with many poets, such as very large and culturally vibrant courts or musically significant cities such as Arras. The genre was notably popular among women trouvères: around three-quarters of all vernacular love poetry attributed to named female trouvères consists of *jeux-partis*. In these songs, the protagonists in the debate could be two female characters or a woman debating with a man.

A Trouvère Song: *Un petit davant lou jor*

The different categories of song described above were not mutually exclusive, however, and many trouvère songs contain elements of more than one genre combined. *Un petit davant lou jor*, for example, can best be classified as a courtly love song (*grand chant courtois*), but, as we shall see, its text also contains elements drawn from the *aube* and *pastourelle* traditions.

 Un petit davant lou jor must have been well known because it survives in eight manuscripts, a high number for a vernacular song from the thirteenth century. Typically, there are several musical and textual differences between the eight versions. Six of these manuscripts include musical notation for the song, and in one other, staves for musical notation were drawn, but the notes were never added. Blank staves are not uncommon in trouvère and troubadour manuscripts, and we frequently encounter manuscripts that were left incomplete in other ways too (such as those in which space has been left for illuminated initials which were never filled in). Given the number of separate craftspeople involved in producing a manuscript, the need for specialized materials, and the great expense of the whole project, it is not hard to imagine reasons why a book's production was sometimes disrupted.

 It remains unclear who the author of *Un petit davant* was: in one manuscript the song is attributed to the Chapelain de Laon and in another to the Duchess of Lorraine. So far as we know from surviving songs, the output of both these trouvères was limited to two songs each. Other than the clerical profession

suggested by his name ('chaplain'), little is known about the Chapelain de Laon. Much more is known about the Duchess of Lorraine, however. She was born Gertrude of Dagsburg, sometime in the late twelfth century, and was the daughter and heiress of Albert II, Count of Metz and Dagsburg (now called Dabo) in Lorraine – which was at the time still part of the Holy Roman Empire but is now in France – and Gertrude of Baden. Apart from the counties left to her by her father, Gertrude acquired land through her marriages, especially her first. Probably from a young age, she was married to Thibaut, Duke of Lorraine, whose lands she inherited after he died childless; then to the famous trouvère Thibaut de Champagne, already mentioned above, who may have had the marriage annulled on account of her not being able to have children. Finally, for a short time before her death, Gertrude was married to Simon III, Count of Leiningen in what is now Germany, not far from Frankfurt; she died without ever producing an heir.

Un petit davant is structurally unusual: its text comprises six particularly long stanzas of eighteen lines each, but each line of verse is noticeably shorter than in many *chansons*. The text of the first stanza is given in Box 5.3 with a translation. In the first stanza, a narrator, who cannot readily be identified as either male or female, introduces the story. A knight speaks to his lady, who is up in a tower. This setting plays with the conventional figure of the unattainable lady by placing her literally out of the knight's reach. The lady is described as having a 'fresh complexion' and

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Box 5.3 Gertrude of Dagsburg (?), *Un petit davant lou jor*

Un petit davant lou jor	*Just before daybreak*
Me levai l'autrier,	*I rose the other morning.*
Sospris de novelle amor	*Sighing over a new love*
Ke me fait vellier.	*That has kept me awake.*
Por oblieir mes dolors	*To forget my pains*
Et por aligier,	*And soothe them,*
M'en alai coillir la flor	*I went to gather flowers*
Dejoste un vergier.	*Near an orchard.*
Lai dedans, en un destor,	*There, in a secluded spot,*
Oi un chevalier,	*I heard a knight;*
Desor lui, en haute tour,	*Above him, in a high tower,*
Dame ke moult l'ot chier.	*A lady who cherished him very much.*
Elle ot frexe la color	*She had a fresh complexion*
Et chantoit per grant dousor	*And was singing with great sweetness*
Uns douls chans pitous melleit en plor.	*A sweet, moving song mixed with tears.*
Pués ait dit, com loiauls drue:	*Then she said, like a loyal lover:*
'Amins m'aveis perdue,	*'My love, you have lost me,*
Li jalous m'ait mis en mue.'	*The jealous one has imprisoned me.'*

sings. The final lines of the stanza make clear that the lady is married to another, though she loves the knight. In the following five stanzas, the knight and the lady alternately express their love for each other as well as their pain and sorrow at not being able to be together. The main theme of the *grand chant courtois*, the yearning desire for a woman who is out of the lover's reach, whether by socio-hierarchical, geographical, or marital status, is expressed very clearly. The accompanying pain the lovers feel for being forced to be apart is also intense: 'It is such bitter torment! If we must endure it long, what will become of us, dear God? I cannot survive without you, and you without me!' Both characters wish that the lady's husband would die so that they could happily be together again, as they have been implicitly during the night that has just come to an end. The lady is unhappily married: her scornful description of her husband as an old, gluttonous, balding redhead with a cough strikes a humorous tone not usually associated with *grand chant courtois*. In the final stanza, the lady warns the knight that dawn is breaking and that he should be on his way, lest he get caught by the jealous husband. The early-morning setting and the urgent need for the knight to sneak away after having had physical intimacies with the lady whom he loves draw strongly on the traditions of the *aube* or dawn song. The short lines of verse and frequent repetition of rhyme sounds are, though, more typical of *pastourelles* and of the voice parts of French motets (a subject to which we shall return below, see p. 105).

The text is set mostly syllabically to the music (see Example 5.1, where each musical staff shows two lines of poetry). The poem has only three rhyme sounds in each stanza, arranged in the following pattern: *ab ab ab ab ab ab aaa ccc*. Each line consists of between five and nine syllables, with the *a* lines all having seven (except the very last *a* line, which has nine), the *b* lines five or six, and the *c* lines eight syllables. The poem's repetitive structure of rhymes is only partially imitated in the music, however. The first sixteen lines of the stanza (eight staves in Example 5.1) follow a pattern that is quite typical of trouvère *chansons*: the first eight of these lines are set to a repeated melodic pattern which we could describe in this way:

X Y$_1$
X Y$_2$
X Y$_1$
X Y$_2$

The first four lines with the *a* rhyme are all set to the melody X (with a few minor variations), and the first four lines with the *b* rhyme use one of two versions of the melody Y: Y$_1$ ends on the tonally 'open' note *F*, Y$_2$ on the 'closed' note *C*, which is the tonal centre of the melody. These variant melodic line endings are very typical in trouvère songs and are often referred to with the French terms **ouvert** ('open') and **clos** ('closed').

Example 5.1 Gertrude of Dagsburg (?), *Un petit davant lou jor*

1. Un pe - tit   da - vant lou   jor   2. me   le - vai   l'au - trier,

3. Sos - pris de   no - velle a - mor   4. ke   me   fait   vel - lier.

5. Por o - bli - eir   mes do - lors   6. et   por a - li - gier,

7. M'en a - lai coil - lir   la   flor   8. de - joste   un   ver - gier.

9. Lai   de - dans, en un des - tor,   10. o - i   un che - va - lier,

11. De - sor lui, en hau - te tour,   12. da - me ke moult l'ot chier.

13. Elle ot fre - xe la co - lor   14. et chan - toit per grant dou - sor

15. Uns douls chans pi - tous mel - leit   en plor. 16. Pués ait dit, com loi - auls   dru - e:

refrain

17. *"A - mins m'a - veis per - du - e,   18. li ja - lous m'ait   mis   en   mu - e."*

In the following eight lines, no such pattern is apparent. The *a*-rhyme lines beginning 'Lai dedans' and 'Elle ot frexe' are very similar, but all the other lines use new melodic material. Lines 15 and 16 (beginning 'Un douls chans' and 'Pués ait dit') are longer than any of the lines so far, containing nine and eight syllables respectively, so they could not easily have been set to the same melody as any earlier lines. Apart from this change of syllable count, though, the melodic structure of *Un petit davant* is similar to that of many trouvère songs, having a first half which

involves a repeated pattern, often using paired phrases with open and closed endings, and a second half which is melodically freer, involving little or no musical repetition. In its simplest and most typical instances, such a form can be described as AAB and is one of the commonest structures among all trouvère, troubadour and **Minnesinger** songs. The form is sometimes described as **bar form**, though medieval theorists called the two repeated A sections *pedes* ('feet'; singular: *pes*) and the contrasting B section *cauda* ('tail').

While this basic structure is apparent in *Un petit davant*, its form turns out to be considerably more complex than a typical trouvère song in AAB form. Look closely at the end of the stanza given in Example 5.1, from 'Un douls chans' onwards. As well as the poetic lines becoming longer and the new *c* rhyme being introduced, the melodic range and tonal centre also shift. In the first fourteen lines of the stanza, no musical phrase had extended beyond a fifth in range; line 16 stretches this to a seventh, and line 18 covers a sixth. Up to the end of line 16, the note *C* is unquestionably the tonal centre of the song and the point of arrival of all the 'closed' lines, but line 18 – and therefore the stanza as a whole – ends on the contrasting note *D*. With the change of line length, rhyme and tonal centre, we might even imagine that the end of the stanza had come from another song altogether, and it turns out that we would be right in that assumption. Just at the point when the poem's narrator tells us that the lady began to sing a sweet, moving song, what she 'sings' is actually a snippet of another song, woven into the stanza of *Un petit davant*. The poet-composer – whether Gertrude of Dagsburg or the Chapelain de Laon – has ingeniously tweaked the poetry and music of their newly composed song in order to fit in the borrowed song fragment. For example, knowing that she or he was going to use 'Amins, vos m'avais perdue' at the end of the first stanza, she or he lengthened lines 15 and 16, and introduced the *c* rhyme in line 16 so that the borrowed lines would blend more easily with what had come before.

Later stanzas of *Un petit davant* make use of different borrowed song fragments, each with their own new rhymes and poetic structures plus corresponding new melodies to be worked into the new material. So while the basic musical structure of *Un petit davant* is **strophic** – each stanza sung to the same melody – the stanza endings do vary because of the introduction of different borrowed fragments. We call these borrowed snippets *refrains*, and songs like *Un petit davant* that use multiple different ones are known as *chansons avec des refrains* ('songs with *refrains*'). Confusingly, this meaning of *refrain* is different from the standard sense of the English word **refrain**, which means a repeating section of song that recurs – without changing text or melody – at the end of each stanza. As we shall see later in this chapter, the habit of recycling *refrains* was followed not just in songs

like this one but right across the spectrum of thirteenth-century French music and poetry.

The *Formes Fixes*

Among the songs of the trouvères, three particular song forms emerged that would come to dominate French vernacular song composition for the next two centuries. These structures, known as the *formes fixes* ('fixed forms'), involved a predetermined pattern of musical and poetic repetition and change, and although the pattern was sometimes not adhered to strictly – particularly in the thirteenth-century examples from the beginning of the tradition – they were usually easy to recognize and distinguish. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as we shall see in Chapter 6, nearly all songs followed one of the *formes fixes*, and this became a standard way of classifying songs. It seems likely that all three *formes fixes* – **ballade**, **virelai**, and **rondeau** – originated as dance-songs. The name *ballade* derives from the Occitan and Old French verbs to dance (*balar/baler*; the same root from which the modern word 'ballet' derives). *Virelai*, meanwhile, comes from the Old French *virer* ('to turn' or 'twist'), implying a particular kind of movement to accompany the song. Songs with a very similar form to the *virelai* are also found elsewhere in Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see the discussions of Spain and Italy in Chapter 8). The *rondeau* – its name suggesting some kind of round dance or circular movement – is described by the music theorist Johannes de Grocheio, writing at the very end of the thirteenth century, as a song sung by girls and young men at the festivities and banquets of lay people.

The poetic and musical structures of the three *formes fixes* that arose in the thirteenth century are presented in Table 5.1. The poetic structure of each stanza is conventionally described using a combination of lower-case and capital letters, each letter corresponding to a section of the stanza (these sections could consist of one or more lines of poetry). All the sections labelled with the same letter share the same melody, number of syllables, and rhyme sound. If the letter is a capital, this means that the text is also the same: in other words, capital-letter sections are 'refrains', in the modern English sense of recurring passages of song whose text and melody remain the same each time. To make the structures easier to visualize, we have also shown the musical form using shaded boxes in the row below.

The structures shown in Table 5.1 represent a single stanza of each song, but the *ballade* and *virelai* in particular often consisted of several stanzas. In these cases, the structure, music, and often the rhyme sounds were repeated for every stanza, but only in the *ballade* were complete sections repeated without changes in each stanza. The *ballade*'s refrain – letter C in the table – recurred with the same text at the end

Table 5.1 *The* formes fixes

Name	Virelai					Ballade				Rondeau							
Poetic structure	A	b	b	a	A	a	a	b	C	A	B	a	A	a	b	A	B
Musical form																	

of every subsequent stanza. Among the early examples of these forms, the differences between *virelais* and *ballades* were not always clear, especially because the scribes who wrote these forms down frequently abbreviated some or all of the repetitions, as singers of the time would be familiar with the form and could work out the repetitions for themselves.

The *rondeau* is the most complex of all three *formes fixes*, though as it usually consisted of a single stanza, it was frequently shorter than either the *virelai* or the *ballade*. It starts with a refrain of two sections: in the simplest *rondeaux* the refrain consisted of just two lines of poetry. Next comes a section which has the same rhyme sound and melody as the first part of the refrain, and then the first part of the refrain – with its original text – is heard again. A longer section of new text follows, its two parts corresponding in rhyme sound and melody to the two parts of the refrain. The song ends with the complete refrain heard once again in full. Let us have a look at an example of a rondeau, to clarify this structure.

Example 5.2 shows a *rondeau* by Adam de la Halle, *Fi, maris, de vostre amour*. This *rondeau* is comparatively unusual among the trouvère *formes fixes* of the thirteenth century for being set in **polyphony**: most others are found in **monophonic** form. Adam de la Halle is exceptional in his polyphonic output: no fewer than sixteen vernacular poems survive with polyphonic notation in the aforementioned 'Adam de la Halle manuscript', and most of these are *rondeaux*.

The text consists of eight lines. The first two are the refrain: 'Fi, maris, de vostre amour / car j'ai ami'. The third line has the same number of syllables and the same rhyme sound ('-our') as the first line of the refrain (A), which then follows. The fifth and sixth lines are the same in structure as the refrain, but have a different text, and finally the refrain is sung again.

Fi, maris, de vostre amour	A	*To hell with your love, husband,*
Car j'ai ami.	B	*For I have a lover.*
Biaus est, et de noble atour,	a	*He is handsome and of noble character,*
Fi, maris, de vostre amour,	A	*To hell with your love, husband,*
Il me sert et nuite et jour,	a	*He serves me night and day,*
Pour che l'aim si.	b	*For that I love him so.*
Fi, maris, de vostre amour	A	*To hell with your love, husband,*
Car j'ai ami.	B	*For I have a lover.*

The high degree of musical repetition in the *formes fixes*, especially the *rondeau*, means that their music can be written out in a condensed way, using repeat signs and other directions to help performers navigate the song. In Example 5.2, we have presented the complete refrain on the first system of music; the A section alone on the middle system, with two lines of text and a repeat sign indicating that this music is sung twice in succession, firstly to new words, then to the words of the refrain again. Lastly, we have placed the full music again on the third musical system, with the new words of lines 5 and 6 of the poem; the indication *Da Capo al Fine* then directs singers to return to the beginning and sing the refrain a final time, ending

Example 5.2 Adam de la Halle, *Fi, maris, de vostre amour*

the song at the *Fine* mark. An even more condensed layout would be possible, and you may sometimes see *rondeaux* presented with their two musical sections (A and B) written out just once, all the corresponding text below, and a numbering system that indicates the order in which the sections should be sung.

Despite the polyphonic **texture**, the melodic style of each voice of the *rondeau* is quite typical of trouvère song as a whole. The music is set more or less syllabically, with no long **melismas**. The range of each voice is constrained to no more than a sixth. Harmonically speaking, the short sections allow for little departure from the principal sonority of *B♭–F*, since both the A and B sections of music begin with that sound, and the B sections also end with it. Dissonances are fleeting and resolved immediately. The text is sung by all three voices in the same rhythm, and neither melodic nor harmonic embellishment obstructs the clarity or audibility of the words. But, unlike the trouvère and troubadour songs we have encountered so far, which seem to prioritise the very direct expression of poetic imagery, *rondeaux* like this one use more straightforward poetic language and guide the listener's attention mainly towards the music and its frequent repetitions.

Narrative Genres

Chrétien de Troyes and Adam de la Halle, introduced in Boxes 5.1 and 5.2, were far from unusual among the trouvères in producing a wide variety of literary works alongside their songs. To give a full account of trouvère activity, then, it is important to look at these narrative works too, not least because many of them incorporate some musical elements within them.

Romances (or in Old French, *romans*), were long, historical or allegorical stories, telling of knights and their quests, and sometimes including characters who are personifications of virtues and vices, such as Humility, Honesty, Pride, Lust, and Gluttony. These were texts that could be read by individual readers, but were probably more often performed aloud, by poet-storytellers in front of an audience. In the thirteenth century, romances often contained musical insertions in the form of *refrains*. In this context, the word *refrain* refers to a short fragment of one or two lines taken from a pre-existing and usually popular song, that was inserted into another work. This could be either a different musical context, such as a *chanson avec des refrains* (like *Un petit davant* discussed earlier in this chapter), or otherwise a non-musical story, such as a romance, either in prose or in verse. Many of Adam de la Halle's songs, for example, were used in such a way. There are also many *refrains* which cannot be traced back to an original song: such *refrains*, and probably the songs from which they derived, were part of an oral tradition and were either never notated at all or their written copies have been lost. Their use as

refrains gives us an insight into how much of the trouvère repertory may now be missing from the manuscripts that remain. In the surviving manuscripts, the *refrains* frequently include their musical notation within the romance. The notation in such instances may not necessarily have been required for the readers of these books to recall the melody, as such short, well-known tunes would probably have been known to them, but may have been there to draw attention to the musical nature of these insertions. Whether the *refrains* would have been sung or simply read out during a performance of the romance is unclear and may have differed from one performance to the next, depending on the person telling or reading the romance as well as on the audience.

A different kind of narrative genre cultivated by the trouvères was the **chanson de geste** ('song of great deeds'). These were often very long, epic poems, telling the stories of warrior kings and other historical heroes. Such epic poems were not restricted to the troubadour and trouvère traditions but were popular right across Europe: famous examples include the Old English *Beowulf* and the Norse *Eddas*. The most important French *chanson de geste* is the *Chanson de Roland*, a poem of more than 4,000 lines telling the story of Charlemagne and his victory over the Muslims in Spain. The *Chanson de Roland* dates from the eleventh century but was still performed and copied widely in the thirteenth. It was translated into numerous languages, including German, Norse, Dutch, and Occitan. *Chansons de geste* are never stories about love but mostly concern themes of battle, military might and valour, and heroic deeds. Although the *chansons de geste* rarely survive with musical notation, they were certainly sung in performance, probably using formulaic or declamatory melodies that were sung to the accompaniment of a plucked string instrument. The music theorist Johannes de Grocheio suggested that listening to a *chanson de geste* could be beneficial for the elderly and for tired labourers, who could bear their own troubles more easily after hearing of the toils and sacrifices of the great heroes.

If we attempt to picture the kinds of performance situation in which all these works were first heard, we find ourselves either in the halls of noble courts or the guild houses of urban societies, with – respectively – aristocratic or urban audiences enjoying the spectacle of storytelling, singing, and sometimes dancing. Multiple performers might be involved, such as in the musical-poetic contest of a *jeu-parti*, and the spoken and sung word were interchanged readily. In these contexts, it is easy to imagine how the idea of musical plays came about: dramatic performances involving multiple characters, both speaking and singing, were just a short step away from the kinds of performance already taking place in trouvère environments. Adam de la Halle is credited with the best-known of these musical plays, *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion* ('The Play of Robin and Marion'), which was written in the 1280s, during his service of Count Robert II of Artois in Naples. The play is a dramatization of a well-known story, the classic *pastourelle* tale of the shepherd Robin, his faithful shepherdess

Marion, and the knight who tried to seduce her. The French nobles assembled at the Count's court in Naples would have recognized these stock characters and enjoyed the reminder of the Northern-French culture of their homelands.

Le Jeu de Robin et Marion consists of spoken dialogue mixed with song. All the songs have uncomplicated texts and small vocal ranges; many are in the *formes fixes*, and all are syllabic. Some of the songs in the play may have originated in popular traditions, and fragments of them are also found as *refrains* in narrative romances and other texts. The audiences, then, may well have been familiar with the songs and could perhaps have sung along to them. Other songs, though, were authored by Adam himself or fellow trouvères, in imitation of 'rustic' styles of singing.

Box 5.4 Rutebeuf

Some of the less common themes tackled by the trouvères are best illustrated through the example of the poet Rutebeuf, who was born in Champagne in the middle of the thirteenth century. Rutebeuf (a pen name adopted by the poet, whose real name is unknown) was apparently born into a poor family, though he was later educated as a cleric in Paris. He may have started his career at the bottom of the musical-poetical hierarchy, as a *jongleur* or minstrel, but his writing later caught the attention of noble audiences, who were willing to pay Rutebeuf to write new works for them.

Uniquely among trouvères, Rutebeuf never wrote about love, the most common of all topics in trouvère culture. Instead, his works focus on politics, religion, moral issues, and above all himself. Because of his autobiographical tendencies, we know a great deal about him, although it is not always clear to what extent his works were based on reality or use creative freedom to weave fact and fiction together. In his poems Rutebeuf describes his wife as an old, ugly, poor woman; he tells of having a child, and of his financial problems and struggle to make a living; he recounts losing an eye and other misfortunes that befell him. His money troubles may have stemmed from his constant gambling, since he must have been paid by the many nobles who commissioned poetry from him. However, he may not have had a stable employment with a particular patron (as, for example, Adam de la Halle did), so his financial security could have been uncertain.

The personal information in Rutebeuf's poems is mixed with plenty of political satire: through his texts, the poet criticizes the established order and the behaviour of certain people, especially within the Church. In this respect, Rutebeuf's French poetry has much in common with Latin poems written in Paris around the same time, for example the political diatribe of Philip the Chancellor's **conductus** *Aurelianis civitas*, explored in Chapter 4. The themes of Rutebeuf's poetry are also similar, in some respects, to the songs of the **Goliards**: a group of scholars and clerics who wrote political and satirical Latin poetry which condemned society and its leaders. The poems associated with the Goliards are often self-descriptive, too, recounting a life of pleasure, the enjoyment of good food and wine, gambling, and beautiful women. At the same time, complaints about their own troubles, as well as the wrongs of society, are also frequently found in Goliardic verse (see Chapter 9).

Despite his self-proclaimed poverty and destitution, Rutebeuf seems to have been well connected. He had links to the University of Paris and in some of his works defended its scholars against their critics. His works were also copied into many manuscripts, perhaps because he lived in Paris at the centre of the book production industry in France.

> ### Box 5.5 Gautier de Coinci
>
> Another trouvère whose life and works were atypical of the culture as a whole was Gautier de Coinci. Gautier was a Benedictine monk who rose to become prior (the head of a small monastery, known as a priory) of Vic-sur-Aisne and, later, the abbot of Saint-Médard in Soissons, an important abbey with a strong intellectual tradition and supported by the kings of France. It was at Vic-sur-Aisne that Gautier produced his most important work, *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame* ('The Miracles of Our Lady'). The *Miracles* represent a unique kind of poetic compilation, consisting of stories of miracles performed by the Virgin Mary, translated by Gautier from Latin originals into Old French so that they could reach a wider audience. The miracle stories are interspersed with prayers, short poems, and songs, and the whole collection is framed with an authorial narrative, in which Gautier describes the purpose of his work and introduces the materials. 'As a garden is adorned with flowers,' he says, 'so have I adorned my book with songs.'
>
> Though the *Miracles* fit in to the thirteenth-century traditions of mixed narratives, with songs and stories woven together and presented in luxurious manuscripts with illustrations added to the mix, they stand out in several ways. Firstly, Gautier adopts the vernacular language and verse forms of Old French and diverts them to a religious, rather than secular, use. Secondly, the songs in the *Miracles* are not just *refrains* but often complete songs, and nearly all of them are **contrafacta** – that is, new words set to old melodies. The source melodies are mostly the trouvère *chansons* of Gautier's contemporaries and predecessors, such as Blondel de Nesle and Gace Brulé, and Gautier was evidently familiar with the rich trouvère culture in the area around Soissons where he lived and worked. But his musical sources were very broad, and some of his *contrafacta* used melodies from Latin conducti by Pérotin and Philip the Chancellor, Parisian motets, an Occitan troubadour song, and even a liturgical **chant**. In converting these tunes for use in his collection, Gautier did much more than simply replace their texts with new ones on his desired theme of devotion to the Virgin Mary: very often he paraphrased the original texts as well, using some of the same phrases to flip the amorous desire for a worldly woman into pious devotion to the heavenly lady, the ultimate female beloved.

Motets

In Chapter 4, we looked at the origins of Latin motets and their derivation from **substitute clausulae** composed for the polyphonic **organa** of Notre-Dame. That model for the creation of motets seems to have been relatively limited and short-lived, however. By the mid-thirteenth century, a substantial repertory of motets had emerged with French texts in their upper voices and with no musical connection to pre-existing clausulae. At first, these motets were mainly in two voice parts: a **tenor**, which was still drawn from a short passage of chant, now set to a rhythmic pattern, plus a freely-composed **motetus** (or upper voice). From the 1270s onwards, however, three-voice motets had come to predominate, in which the tenor (still overwhelmingly extracted from chant) was accompanied by two further voices, each with their own individual texts. The *motetus* and **triplum** voices – as these two added voices were known – could have texts that were both

in French, or, less commonly, both in Latin, or one in each language. What was remarkable about these three-voice (plus a handful of four-voice) motets was their **polytextuality**: different texts, sung more or less syllabically, sounded simultaneously.

The clausula-based Latin motets mostly pre-dated the vernacular ones, but in terms of quantity, French motets form the vast majority of those produced in the thirteenth century. It is telling that the title 'motet' has a French derivation – from *mot*, meaning 'word' – and that many connections exist between French motets and the vernacular song of the trouvères. We refer to motets with two newly texted voices above the tenor as 'double motets' and those with three newly texted voices (i.e. four voices in total) as 'triple motets'.

Because of its complexity – two, three, or four voices sounding at the same time, each pronouncing its own text – composers could use the genre of the motet to show off their abilities in the composition of polyphony as well as their poetic skills: the combination of multiple texts was frequently designed to convey additional layers of meaning. The texts in the different voices could tell different elements of a single story, present a situation from various angles, or even debate with each other to communicate to the listener a message about moral or ethical behaviour. Even motet voices that appear to be completely unrelated to one another – an erotic love song in one voice against a devotional praise of the Virgin Mary in another, for example – could be carefully coordinated to comment on one another, just as Gautier de Coinci's *contrafacta* in his *Miracles de Nostre Dame* show how trouvère love songs could provide models for a more spiritual kind of love.

The motet was very popular in trouvère circles, especially in the higher social classes and among those who had received clerical educations. On listening to a motet for the first time, the different texts being sung simultaneously are difficult to distinguish from each other. The voices usually move in a very similar register. Their relative speed may vary more: the tenor is the slowest-moving voice, followed by the *motetus*, and finally by the *triplum* which is usually the fastest. The upper voices normally sing syllabically, the *triplum* often using shorter note values than the *motetus* in order to get through a longer text, whereas the tenor is largely melismatic, with a text consisting of only one or two words. Although this difference in speed of declamation might help a listener to follow a single text, hearing all of them at once is almost impossible. It helped, therefore, to hear a motet more than once, and to see it written down in a manuscript, possibly even reading along while it was performed. A highly educated audience would be able to

understand the nuances in the interaction between the texts and to unravel the implied messages between the lines.

Example 5.3 shows the first half of the anonymous motet *Mout me fu grief li departir / Robin m'aime, Robin m'a / Portare*. The 'title' we give to motets now usually consists of the first words (the **incipit**) of each of the voices, separated with slashes. This is necessary, as some of the *triplum* and *motetus* texts are found in more than one motet, and some tenors, in particular, recur frequently throughout the motet repertory. This is true of the *triplum* voice here, which begins identically – in both text and melody – to that of another motet, *Mout me fu grief li departir / In omni fratre / In seculum*. Typically, the note values and rate of declamation of the text is much quicker in the *triplum* than the other two voices. By the end of bar 5, for example, the *triplum* has got through thirty-one syllables, the *motetus* seventeen, and the tenor a maximum of three (we cannot be sure whether the tenor's syllables 'Por-ta-re' were spread out over the entire composition, or repeated one or more times as its melody repeats). The *triplum* text fits well into the tradition of courtly love: the protagonist expresses his love for a beautiful lady who is out of his reach, and he feels pain and sorrow for not being able to be with her. As we have seen, in both the troubadour context discussed in Chapter 3 and the trouvère culture described in this chapter, the courtly lady in such a text could sometimes be compared to – and even be symbolic of – the Blessed Virgin Mary, the personification of the purest and most perfect woman. This is a very plausible interpretation of the text in this case, especially because of the way in which the lady is described: she is white and pure, worthy and good, and compared to the rose and the lily, both of which flowers were symbols of the Virgin Mary. In that sense, this *triplum* offers the possibility of being read in both a worldly and a spiritual sense, as worship of the earthly lady or devotion to the Blessed Virgin, or both.

More obviously secular is the *motetus*, *Robin m'aime, Robin m'a*. This text as well as its melody are attributed to Adam de la Halle and are taken from the musical play *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion*. In the play, the song is in *rondeau* form with some minor variations. When used in the motet, the *rondeau* form is still apparent, but has been adapted, with only three lines (aab) between the opening and closing refrains (AB). Why this adaptation was made becomes clear when we consider the complexity involved in putting together the various pre-existing materials for this motet. The tenor is a pre-existing snippet of chant melody, the *motetus* a pre-existing song, and the *triplum* includes four quoted passages of music and text from the *triplum* of an earlier motet (mentioned above). Finding a way to fit these musical materials

together in a way that made harmonic sense was a supreme feat of polyphonic compositional technique and naturally involved a certain amount of reworking. The tenor's chant melody has also been slightly altered, and the chant fragment is made to repeat in synchronization with the in-built repetitions of the *rondeau* form in the *motetus* voice. In Example 5.3, we have marked the first repetition of the tenor's chant fragment with the Roman numeral II: it corresponds with the start of the middle section of the *rondeau* in the *motetus* voice, after the refrain AB has first been heard.

In the *motetus* text, Marion tells of the love she feels for Robin and the happy relationship they are in. *Robin m'aime* was evidently well known, for its opening lines were also transmitted as *refrains* in two *chansons avec des refrains*, one of which survives in four manuscripts. Nevertheless, although it may have been a popular song, the inclusion of *Robin m'aime* in the motet is not a coincidence. Both the protagonist's suffering in the *triplum* and Marion's happiness in the *motetus* are reinforced by the contrast between the two texts: the *triplum* and the *motetus* show the two extremities in the spectrum of feelings associated with love. In light of the spiritual love and the devotion of the Blessed Virgin which can be read between the lines of the *triplum*, hearing the voice of Marion (in French, the diminutive form of Mary) might be a playful reference to the Virgin Mary.

The liturgical tenor *Portare* is drawn from the chant *Alleluia Dulcis virgo, dulcis mater, dulcia ferens pondera, quae sola fuisti digna portare regem caelorum et Dominum* ('Alleluia Sweet virgin, sweet mother, carrying the sweet weight, you alone were worthy to carry the King of Heaven and the Lord'), a chant for the feast of the Assumption of Mary. This liturgical context of the tenor stresses the evocation of the Blessed Virgin which is already implied in the *triplum*. And a further level of meaning exists, since the chant *Alleluia Dulcis virgo* is itself a *contrafactum* of another chant, *Alleluia Dulce lignum*, which relates to Christ's Crucifixion. In this way, an educated, clerical audience for the motet may well have picked up on a symbolic reference to the extremes of maternal love – the birth and death of Mary's son, Jesus – from the tenor's chant fragment alone. With the symbolic meaning derived from the interaction of the *motetus* and *triplum* voices layered on top of this tenor, the motet as a whole becomes a web of connections and interrelations reaching out beyond itself to the other contexts from which its musical and textual materials were drawn.

Example 5.3 French double motet: *Mout me fu grief li departir / Robin m'aime,*
Robin m'a / Portare (opening)

Triplum:

Mout me fu grief li departir de m'amiete,
la jolie au cler vis
qui est blanche et vermellete
comme rose par desus lis,
ce m'est avis;
son tres douz ris
mi fait fremir
et si oell vair riant languir.

The departure of my love has grieved me much,
the pretty one with the bright face
that is white and vermillion
like rose against lily,
or so it seems to me;
her very sweet laugh
makes me tremble
and her blue eyes make me languish.

Example 5.3 (*cont.*)

Ha Diex, com mar la lessai!	*O God, what anguish that I left her!*
Blanchete comme flour de lis,	*Little white one, like a lily,*
quant vous verrai?	*when will I see you?*
Dame de valour,	*Worthy lady,*
vermelle comme rose en mai,	*red as a rose in May,*
Pour vous sui en grant dolour.	*because of you I am in great pain.*

Motetus:

Robin m'aime, Robin m'a;	*Robin loves me, Robin has me;*
Robin m'a demandee si m'avra.	*Robin asked for me and he will have me.*
Robin m'achata corroie	*Robin bought me a belt*
Et aumonniere de soie;	*and a little silk purse;*
Pour quoi donc ne l'ameroie? Aleuriva!	*Then why would I not love him? Hurray!*

Tenor:

Portare	*Carry*

Box 5.6 Interlocking networks of song

The motet *Mout me fu grief / Robin m'aime, Robin m'a / Portare* has been shown in this chapter to be a dazzling feat of compositional ingenuity because of the way its composer seamlessly amalgamated pre-existing materials from three separate sources. Not only do these materials fit together harmonically and structurally, but they are even cleverly presented so that the distinct elements offer a subtle commentary upon one another, revealing layers of implied meaning beyond the individual texts. Much excellent recent scholarship on the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century motet has drawn attention to multiple examples like this one, but the motet is not the only genre of medieval polyphony and song in which such strategies can be uncovered.

Take, for instance, the *Alleluia Dulcis virgo* chant which provided the snippet *Portare* to form the tenor of the motet. As mentioned above, this chant was a *contrafactum* of an older chant, *Alleluia Dulce lignum* ('Alleluia, sweet wood'), which was assigned to the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross. The text of this older chant was itself a quotation from a song we have already encountered in this book: *Pange lingua gloriosi proelium certaminis* ('Tell, my tongue, the glorious battle'), by the sixth-century writer Venantius Fortunatus (see p. 14). Fortunatus's song, depicting Christ's Cross as a symbol of victory, proved to be a rich source of inspiration for later liturgical materials, and traces of its poetry may be found in multiple chants for the various medieval feasts related to the Cross.

The links in this chain of interconnected music and poetry do not stop there. The melody and parts of the text of *Alleluia Dulce lignum* were re-worked in twelfth-century Paris for another kind of chant, the **sequence** *Laudes crucis attollamus* ('Let us lift up praises to the Cross'). This sequence originated at the Augustinian Abbey of St Victor which, after the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, was one of the most important ecclesiastical institutions in Paris. The abbey was supported financially by the kings of France, and its highly regarded school was one of the Parisian schools that joined together to form the University of Paris (see p. 59). In the twelfth century, members of St Victor's community were responsible for a poetic and musical flourishing that led to the composition of many new liturgical chants, especially sequences. These sequences

Box 5.6 (*cont.*)

formed a dense network of interrelated materials, drawing on each other's melodies and texts as well as quoting earlier liturgical songs. As Margot Fassler has shown, these 'Victorine' networks were carefully constructed so that each new song subtly drew on and reinterpreted the meanings of its model. *Laudes crucis attollamus* was the source for many *contrafacta* and re-workings within St Victor, but it also spread beyond the abbey's walls and became one of the most widely transmitted twelfth-century sequences. Its melody can be traced in thirteenth-century songs from across France, England, and Italy, including one by St Thomas Aquinas, *Lauda Sion Salvatorem* ('Praise, O Sion, thy Saviour'), commissioned by Pope Urban IV for the new Feast of Corpus Christi, established in 1264.

Just as with the polytextual motets of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the allusions and quotations that lie behind these musical networks would not have been obvious to all listeners. But for those with musical awareness and the opportunity to hear or sing these songs repeatedly – and perhaps to ponder them in written form – these networks of song could stimulate rich contemplation of the parallels and resonances between them, whether straightforward or more oblique.

Jongleurs, Minstrels, and the Performance of Trouvère Music

Just as in the Occitan South, a division existed in Northern France between poet-composers and those musicians whose principal activity was performance. These musicians, known as *jongleurs* or, a little later, *menestrels* (the French equivalent of the English word 'minstrel'), were often all-round entertainers, specializing in the playing of one or more musical instruments, in singing songs, telling stories, acting plays, and sometimes also in acrobatics, juggling, or performing tricks with dogs. Such jobbing entertainers had probably existed for centuries, but their work began to be professionalized in the thirteenth century, as the growth in urban environments such as Paris and Arras meant that they could make a living in cities, as well as in noble courts. In the cities, the *jongleurs* united themselves in guilds, the earliest ones being formed in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. As well as supporting the *jongleurs* professionally, the guilds gave new legitimacy to their profession, elevating them from the status of social outcasts, wandering from place to place and making a living as best they could.

From the thirteenth century onwards, historical records list *jongleurs* and minstrels as permanent servants of royal and noble courts, paid a salary to be available to provide entertainment whenever their lord required it. Descriptions of courtly festivities, such as tournaments, give us some idea of the functions that minstrels might be required to fulfil. A particularly rich account of a tournament in 1284, *Le Tournoi de Chauvency* ('The Tournament

Figure 5.4 A lady dances with two men in an outdoor setting at the *Tournament at Chauvency*; a minstrel or *jongleur* supplies the music
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 308, f.113 r; Photo: © Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

at Chauvency'), was written by Jacques Bretel (possibly related to the Arras trouvère Jehan Bretel) in the form of a long, narrative poem with *refrain* insertions. On the occasion described, the host invited his noble guests to take part in five days of sports, games, and jousting, interspersed with dancing, singing, and dining. As shown in Figure 5.4, minstrels supplied the music whenever the company wished to dance, and they were also on hand to provide background music for the feasting and to join with the noblemen and -women in performing songs and short plays for the assembled company in the evenings.

As the social status of *jongleurs* and minstrels improved, the distinction between them and trouvères became less clear. Rutebeuf, for instance, was a member of the *jongleurs* guild in Paris; in Arras, the *Confrérie des jongleurs et bourgeois d'Arras* ('Guild of *jongleurs* and citizens of Arras') included among its number Adam de la Halle and Jehan Bretel, with many other poets whose names are known to us from their *jeux-partis* and from chansonniers.

Present-day performers of trouvère music have to contend with large gaps in our knowledge of the music's original performance practice. We have already alluded to the quantity of songs that may be lost altogether and the many more which survive only in part – either as text with no notated music or only as short excerpts used as *refrains*. But even the sources preserving complete songs with musical notation leave much to the imagination.

Although rhythmical notation methods were sometimes used, trouvère song cannot easily be interpreted rhythmically. Some modern musicians believe that the songs should be performed in a free rhythm, while others try to fit the songs into a fixed rhythmic pattern, for example that of the **rhythmic modes**, sometimes with considerable effort.

Likewise, very little is known about the kinds of instrumental accompaniment that may have been provided by *jongleurs* and minstrels in their performance of trouvère music. Some present-day performers therefore prefer to sing the songs unaccompanied, while others use instruments that are modern reconstructions of those seen in thirteenth-century illustrations (see Chapter 10). As a result, there is a high level of variation between performances of trouvère music today. Most likely, this is how it was in the thirteenth century as well, as each performer had her or his own preferences, skills, audience, and setting. Each performance is unique, and that is how it has always been.

Suggested Recordings

Gertrude of Dagsburg (?), *Un petit davant lou jor*:

- *Unsung Heroine & Vision: Soundtracks to the Concertplays*, The Telling (First Hand Records, FHR123, 2021). See also www.thetelling.co.uk/unsung-heroine, for details of the film for which this is the soundtrack.

Adam de la Halle, *Fi, maris, de vostre amour*:

- *Variations amoureuses: French Love Songs from the 13th Century*, Alla Francesca, dir. Brigitte Lesne (Paraty, 220 190, 2020)

Mout me fu grief / Robin m'aime / Portare and Adam de la Halle, *Le Jeu de Robin et Marion*:

- *Adam de la Halle: Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, Tonus Peregrinus, dir. Antony Pitts (Naxos, 8.557337, 2006)

Gautier de Coinci, *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame* :

- *Gautier de Coincy: Les Miracles de Nostre-Dame*, Alla Francesca (Opus, 111 30–146, 1995)

Music from *Le Tournoi de Chauvency*:

- *Le Tournoi de Chauvency*, Anne Azéma, Ensemble Aziman (K617, K617917, 2007)

Further Reading

Aubrey, Elizabeth, 'Vernacular Song I: Lyric' [see the sections on the trouvères], in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, volume 1, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, 2018), 382–427.

Butterfield, Ardis, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge, 2002).

Fassler, Margot E., *Gothic Song: Victorine Sequences and Augustinian Reform in Twelfth-Century Paris*, second edition (Notre Dame, IN, 2011).

Hartt, Jared C. (ed.), *A Critical Companion to Medieval Motets* (Woodbridge, 2018).

Huot, Sylvia, *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet: The Sacred and the Profane in Thirteenth-Century Polyphony* (Stanford, CA, 1997).

Stevens, John, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050–1350* (Cambridge, 1986).

Scribes, Scholars, and Secretaries in Fourteenth-Century France

In contrast to the prosperity of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, during which the European population expanded rapidly and urbanization was linked to economic growth and an increase in education and literacy, the fourteenth century was a much bleaker time. This was the beginning of what has sometimes been called the Little Ice Age, which followed the so-called Medieval Warm Period. Climate change led to failing crops; combined with cattle disease, this resulted in hunger all over Europe, especially the northern half. At its peak, in the years 1315–17, this Great Famine saw food shortages, food-price inflation, and many people reduced to scavenging in the wild for survival. Famine in turn led to weakened immunity, and diseases such as pneumonia and tuberculosis spread. The Great Famine alone is estimated to have caused the deaths of 10–25 per cent of the European population, especially in the cities. Natural disasters, such as unusually heavy rain and floods, threatened lives and livelihoods, and massive storms at sea sank many ships. These natural phenomena severely affected trade, and incomes were reduced across all levels of society but especially at the lower levels of the social hierarchy, where people struggled the most.

The fourteenth century also saw political tensions escalating into wars and other major conflicts. Most severe was the Hundred Years' War, which began after the death of Charles IV, King of France, in 1328. His death without any living heirs prompted a succession conflict, a power struggle between two rival dynasties: the English royal family, the Plantagenets, on one side, and the French House of Valois on the other. The Hundred Years' War lasted well over a century and continued for five generations of kings. The series of military conflicts of which it consisted was the longest in European history. Eventually, the House of Valois retained its power in France. Meanwhile, both the Holy Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire also faced decline and eventually dissolution. After violent wars, the latter was replaced by the largely Islamic Ottoman Empire, which lasted until the 1920s.

And yet, all of these miseries, wars, and disasters appear almost insignificant when compared to the greatest tragedy of the fourteenth century: the Black Death. The bubonic plague spread relentlessly across Europe and at its peak between 1347

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and 1351 killed at least a third of all Europeans – some historians even calculate that this may have been as high as two-thirds. Precise calculations of the mortality rates are difficult to come by, but it seems that the European population was reduced by between 50 million and 150 million people, and it would take a century and a half for the population level to return to its size before the great pandemic. For those who did survive the plague, employment opportunities were higher than ever before. However, because of an overall shortage of money as well as massive inflation, wages dropped severely.

While struggling to survive, many people closest to the poverty line resorted to crime and violent protest. Popular uprisings and revolts of militant peasants and other labourers occurred across Europe, spreading violence and unrest. In the search for scapegoats on whom to blame the multiple disasters of the age, marginalized social groups became targets of persecution. Jews, Romani, beggars, pilgrims, and lepers were attacked and murdered, their possessions stolen, and their homes and businesses destroyed.

The Christian Church experienced its own troubles in the fourteenth century: political power struggles involving the popes and the kings of France led to the relocation of the papacy from Rome to Avignon and, eventually, to the Western Schism, in which rival popes in both cities simultaneously claimed to be the true head of the Catholic Church.

The fourteenth century's backdrop of poverty, hunger, violence, disease and death was never far below the surface of social change and cultural production. Some people saw the calamities as an act of punishment by God, only to be resolved by restoring the morality of society and its leaders. Others turned their focus, in the face of disaster, to earthly life, with an increased emphasis on the natural world and its scientific properties. Both of these responses can be traced in the music of the fourteenth century, especially in France (explored in this chapter) and Italy (see Chapter 8). Some of the century's most renowned composers were also closely involved – through their careers as churchmen, scholars, and courtly administrators (notaries or secretaries) – in momentous political affairs and international diplomacy.

The Ars Nova

The term **Ars Nova** ('New Art') is sometimes used in a very broad sense to describe all French music of the fourteenth century, although its original sense was much more limited. Unlike many labels that we apply to music of the past, this one was coined at the same time as the music it describes, and through the writings of fourteenth-century music theorists, we have a fairly clear idea of precisely what

they considered new in the 'New Art' of their day. As we shall see later in this chapter, the Ars Nova referred specifically to linked innovations in musical notation and musical style, found in the – mostly polyphonic – works of certain Northern-French composers from around 1320 onwards. Though most Ars Nova composers remain anonymous, for those whose names we do know, it is possible to sketch rich and detailed biographies. Even compared to the **trouvères** – about whom we know much more than musicians of earlier generations – the information available to us about composers of the Ars Nova, such as Guillaume de Machaut and Philippe de Vitry, is remarkably complete.

Philippe de Vitry was born in the County of Champagne in 1291 and may have studied at the University of Paris. Like other educated men of his time, he held many different positions during his life, from **canon** to royal adviser and court secretary, and from diplomat and soldier to bishop: he was appointed Bishop of Meaux in 1351 and retained that very prominent position until his death in 1361. Contemporaries praised his abilities as a philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer as well as a composer of music and poetry. Through his multifaceted career, he belonged to a vast network of people with both political and religious power and intellectual standing, rubbing shoulders with popes and kings, and involved with international diplomacy connected to the Hundred Years' War. Philippe de Vitry's modern reputation is principally as a poet-composer and a music theorist, but his political, intellectual, and religious interests are frequently revealed in his musical, poetic, and literary works. For example, his long allegorical poem *Le chapel des trois fleurs de lis* unequivocally supports an intended but cancelled Crusade to the Holy Land led by Louis, Duke of Bourbon; his well-known **motet** *O canenda / Rex quem / Rex regum* praises King Robert of Naples and Jerusalem; and the motet *Phi millies / O Creator / Iacet granum / Quam sufflabit* reflects hostile Anglo-French relations in the 1340s and 1350s by condemning the 'treachery' of the English.

Philippe de Vitry is of central importance here not only for his music, which reflects the ideas and events of his time, but also because of his links to the famous music-theoretical **treatise** known as *Ars nova*. This text is difficult to pin down: it exists in several versions, none of which entirely agree, and which may be later summaries or revisions of an earlier work that is now lost. Vitry may or may not have been the author of this proposed lost treatise, but nevertheless the versions that do survive name him as an important influence and closely reflect musical innovations that are found in his music.

While parts of the music **theory** discussed in *Ars nova* are shared with many music treatises of the Middle Ages, its relevance to the definition of a new style in music of the fourteenth century lies in its description of a new type of rhythmic notation. This was an innovation in the way music could be written down; something developed and used by music scribes. But it went hand in hand with a

huge increase in the levels of rhythmic complexity that composers could use. As we shall see below, the relationship between notation and composition was reciprocal: greater rhythmic complexity in music required a new way of notating, and at the same time, new ways of notating enabled rhythmic complexity that could not have been conceived before. The result was music of immense intricacy and sophistication, and it is this musical style that has come to be referred to as the Ars Nova in fourteenth-century France.

Around the same time as the *Ars nova* treatise associated with Philippe de Vitry, Johannes de Muris wrote a series of musical treatises known as *Ars novae musicae* ('The Art of New Music'). In them, he speaks of this same 'New Art' referred to by Vitry, and also explains the new rhythmic notational system. The 'Ars Nova' is contrasted with the **Ars Antiqua** (literally 'Old Art'), a term which the theorist uses to describe the style belonging to previous generations, such as Léonin and Pérotin of Notre-Dame and other composers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. For reasons we shall explore below, the notational systems of the Ars Antiqua placed limits on the rhythmic possibilities available to composers. But rhythmic complexity is not the only feature that differentiates the old and new styles: new compositional techniques such as **isorhythm** (introduced more fully below) stress symmetry, balance, and form, and we can observe – to a greater extent than ever before – self-awareness among Ars Nova composers of their own status as creators. The most important lesson that *Ars nova* and *Ars novae musicae* teach us may, in fact, not be music-theoretical, but historical: they illustrate a contemporary awareness of the significance of the new techniques and of the emergence of a new style that people at the time could recognize as distinct from what came before.

Johannes de Muris and Philippe de Vitry met several times at the papal court in Avignon and possibly also elsewhere. Johannes lent a number of books to Philippe, among which were several musical treatises, both his own and those of earlier writers, and he also dedicated one of his works to Philippe. Based on his autobiographical records, we know a great deal about the life of Johannes de Muris. He was born around the same time as Philippe de Vitry, grew up in Lisieux in Normandy, and in his teens was convicted of the murder of a cleric and banished to Cyprus for seven years. After his return to France, he studied and possibly lectured at the University of Paris, living sometimes in Paris and sometimes in Normandy and elsewhere. Like Philippe, Johannes was not only a music theorist, but also a mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and cleric. However, his music-theoretical works are by far the most important and widespread of his texts, and at least one of them became obligatory literature for music students at universities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The originally Latin texts were translated into vernacular languages, expanding their audiences even further.

Mensural Notation

The notational innovations of the Ars Nova described by Philippe de Vitry and Johannes de Muris are best understood by contrast to the notations that preceded them. We last encountered notational developments in Chapter 4, when we discussed the system for the notation of the **rhythmic modes**: by means of **ligatures**, music scribes could indicate which of the six rhythmic patterns was supposed to be sung. This system worked well enough for florid **polyphony** in the style of Notre-Dame but had limitations that prevented it from expanding to other types of music. In the first place, more complex rhythms required adaptations to the basic modal patterns and their ligatures, which became increasingly difficult to notate in a way that was free from ambiguity. More importantly, though, the modal system was only practical for the notation of **melismatic** music with many notes per syllable: ligatures, after all, encompass two or more notes but are a single symbol and cannot therefore be easily notated so as to align with two or more syllables of text. Notating **syllabic** music, such as motets, was sometimes done in the following way: a melismatic **discant clausula** was notated with melody and rhythmic indications according to the ligature system, and a texted version of the motet – without any indication of rhythm – was also written out, indicating which note corresponded with which syllable of text. The two notations combined provided all the necessary information about both rhythm and word setting. But this, of course, was not efficient in practice, and for music of this kind, a new system became necessary.

The new notational systems that emerged from the last quarter of the thirteenth century onwards are known as **mensural notations** and were designed explicitly to address this limitation of ligature-based **modal notation**. The earliest stage of mensural notation is named **Franconian notation**, after the music theorist Franco of Cologne, though it was first described by other theorists before him. Franco's treatise from *c.*1280 explains how the system works: instead of relying on ligatures whose combination conveyed the rhythmic pattern, now the rhythm was shown by individual symbols, each of which had its own rhythmic value. This was a true revolution in musical notation, and Franconian notation can be seen as the foundation of the rhythmic notation still used today for most Western music. There were four note values: to the *longa* ('long') and *brevis* ('short') of the rhythmic modes were added the *longa duplex* ('double long') and the *semibrevis* ('half-short'). Each note value had its own distinctive shape: the *longa* was a square with a downwards stem on its right-hand side; the *brevis* was a stemless square, and the *semibrevis* a diamond. A *longa duplex* was similar to a *longa* but with its square head horizontally stretched into a rectangle.

Just as in the modal system, the basic **metre** of Franconian notation was a triple one (and much of the music notated in this way uses the metrical patterns of the six

rhythmic modes). Theoretically, each *longa* lasted the duration of three *breves*, and each *brevis* lasted the duration of three *semibreves*: these triple values were known as **perfect**, because they corresponded to the Holy Trinity. However, just as in the rhythmic modes, patterns in which the *longa* could sometimes equal just two *breves*, and in which *breves* were not all the same length as each other, frequently came up. The theorists accounted for these by describing circumstances in which a 'perfect' value could be made **imperfect** (i.e. shortened to two-thirds of its 'perfect' length). In practice, this could lead to confusing situations. But the most important innovation of Franconian notation was the introduction of single note values: now that an individual musical note could indicate rhythmic value by itself, it became possible to notate syllabic music in this way. For motets, conducti, and monophonic vernacular songs, mensural notation represented the first opportunity to show both rhythm and syllable-to-note correspondence at the same time.

The fourteenth-century theories described by Philippe de Vitry, Johannes de Muris, and their colleagues, took this Franconian notation as a starting point. Two important features were added to make the shift from Franconian to Ars Nova notation. Firstly, an even smaller note value was introduced: a *semibrevis* could now be subdivided into *semibreves minimae*, or simply ***minimae***. With five levels of note durations now available (*minima*, *semibrevis*, *brevis*, *longa*, and *longa duplex*), much more intricate and complex rhythmical combinations could be employed. Secondly, and most importantly, the notation was no longer tied to a fundamentally triple metre but could express music in both triple and duple metres with equal ease. This crucial shift both required and represented a new conception of musical time (Box 6.1).

Box 6.1 Ars Nova notation

In Ars Nova notation, each note value could be divided into either two or three equal parts. This resulted in a variety of metres, each communicated to the reader by its own symbol in the notation. The relationship of *longae* to *breves* was known as ***modus***: we speak of a 'perfect *modus*' when a *longa* lasts for three *breves* and an 'imperfect *modus*' when a *longa* is two *breves* in duration. The division of *breves* into *semibreves* is called ***tempus***: 'perfect *tempus*' indicates that a *brevis* is three *semibreves* long, and 'imperfect *tempus*' means that a *brevis* is the duration of two *semibreves*. Finally, the division of *semibreves* into *minimae* is called **prolation** (or *prolatio*). 'Major prolation' means that there are three *minimae* in each *semibrevis*, and 'minor prolation' is the division of *semibreves* into two *minimae* each. To indicate to readers of the notation whether the *tempus* was perfect or imperfect, and the prolation major or minor, scribes used four '**mensuration** signs', which they notated immediately after the clef, in the same place on the staff where we write our time signatures today. The *tempus* is signified in the notation by a circle: a full circle shows that we are dealing with perfect *tempus*, while a semicircle indicates imperfect *tempus*. The prolation is signified by the presence (in the case of major prolation) or absence (minor prolation) of a dot in the middle of the circle or semicircle indicating the *tempus*. Although multiple possible combinations of *modus*, *tempus*, and prolation were theoretically possible, in practice four typical metres – or 'mensurations' – were used, as shown in Table 6.1. These were the four combinations

Box 6.1 (*cont.*)

possible from perfect and imperfect *tempus* and major and minor prolation, and each can be understood in terms of a modern equivalent. In practice, fourteenth-century music scribes did not always supply mensuration signs, because experienced readers and singers would be able to identify the *tempus* and prolation from the context and combinations of notes in the music.

Table 6.1 *Divisions of the note values in mensural notation*

Mensuration sign	⊙	○	₵	C
Brevis	□ perfect *tempus*	□ perfect *tempus*	□ imperfect *tempus*	□ imperfect *tempus*
Semibrevis	◇ ◇ ◇ major prolation	◇ ◇ ◇ minor prolation	◇ ◇ major prolation	◇ ◇ minor prolation
Minima	♩♩♩ ♩♩♩ ♩♩♩	♩♩ ♩♩ ♩♩	♩♩♩ ♩♩♩	♩♩ ♩♩
Modern equivalent	compound triple 9/8	simple triple 3/4	compound duple 6/8	simple duple 2/4

   Another notational innovation in some Ars Nova **manuscripts** is the use of red ink, instead of black, for certain notes or passages within a piece. **Red notation** expanded the rhythmic possibilities of Ars Nova notation even further and could be used in a number of ways. According to the treatise linked to Philippe de Vitry, black notes indicated perfect *modus* or *tempus*, while red notes signified imperfect *modus* or *tempus*. Red notes could also sometimes indicate a change of *modus* or *tempus* in the middle of a piece, or a brief syncopated figure (such as a triplet in a predominantly duple metre). Other uses for red notation included transposition of passages or signalling phrases that were part of a musical quotation, such as a plainchant **tenor**. As with other features of mensural notations, the function of red notation in any given piece often had to be deduced from the context in which it appears.

   In Figure 6.1, the opening of the song *Providence, la senee* is shown as it is notated in one of the most famous manuscripts of the fourteenth century, the interpolated *Roman de Fauvel*. This manuscript, dating from around 1317–18, is one of the earliest sources in which the principles of Ars Nova notation can be observed. Below the manuscript is a **transcription** into modern notation of the same section. Comparing the two, you may be able to note the following:

- Single notes mostly correspond to single syllables. For example, the first word 'Pro-vi-den-ce' has four notes, one for each syllable.
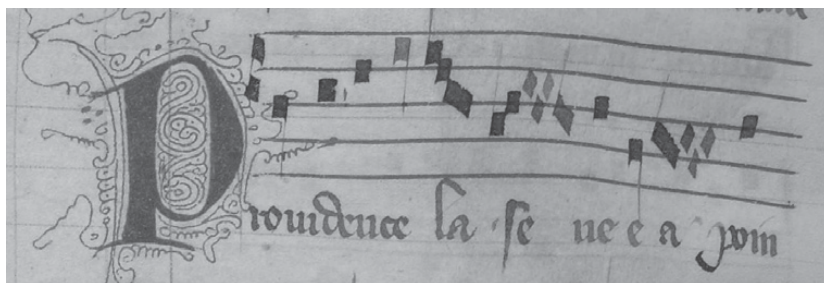
Figure 6.1 Opening of *Providence la senee* in the *Roman de Fauvel*
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 146, f.23 v; source: gallica.bnf.fr.

- The note-forms of the *longa*, *brevis*, and *semibrevis* are all present.
- There are some ligatures, but these correspond to moments where more than one note is sung to a single syllable. For example, above the second word, 'la', a four-note ligature represents the four notes that are all sung to that syllable.
- The music scribe has not provided a mensuration sign, but the song's basic metre would be easy for a reader of the time to deduce.

You may also notice that the *semibreves* in this song (corresponding to the quavers [eighth notes] in the transcription) can be either duple or triple: in today's notation, we need to use triplets in some places to notate the same rhythms. Patterns involving trochaic and iambic metres are found side-by-side (see the opening long–short–short–long figure), leading to **syncopations** that generate rhythmic energy and unpredictability. Even though this song contains by no means the most complex of the rhythmic configurations that Ars Nova notation made possible, it still represents an approach to rhythmic composition that is significantly more free and flexible than the modal patterning of a century earlier.

The *Roman de Fauvel*

The *Roman de Fauvel*, in which the song *Providence, la senee* is found, lies within the tradition of **romans** ('romances') that began in the thirteenth century (see Chapter 5). As with many thirteenth-century examples, the *Roman de Fauvel* is a narrative text with

interpolated music; its musical items were in some cases created specifically for it, while others were borrowed or adapted from other original contexts. In its most famous manuscript, the text is further elaborated with copious illustrations, picturing scenes described in the text (these are easily found online). The text is both allegorical and highly satirical, telling the story of a horse called Fauvel who climbs the social-hierarchical ladder of French courtly life, aided by Lady Fortune. Fauvel – whose name is an acronym of the French words for flattery, greed, vileness, fickleness, envy, and laxity – constantly demonstrates his vanity and ambition, setting up court in a grand castle, where his courtiers are figures such as Envy, Gluttony, Heresy, and Sodomy. Despite his immorality, he is admired by the nobility and by the clergy who make pilgrimages to see him and who groom him – even the pope himself flatters him. The horse intends to marry Fortune, but she rejects him and offers her maiden Vainglory instead.

The satirical and allegorical intent of the *Roman de Fauvel* relates to the political situation in France in the 1310s. The French royal family was mired in scandal, and the years between 1314 and 1316 saw four successive kings on the throne. Corrupt royal advisers gave poor and self-serving advice to the kings, and opposing factions at court were critical and distrustful of one another. Through ridiculing the horse's choices and the responses that his obscene rise in social position evokes in the clergy and nobles, the story criticizes the French royal court and court culture, especially in terms of social relations. The Church, likewise, is criticized abundantly in the text, at a time when political feuding had recently led to the drastic relocation of the papal seat from Rome to Avignon. In a deliberately exaggerated way, the *Roman de Fauvel* offers a warning to its readers of the consequences of allowing corruption, greed, and ambition to triumph over moral values: at the end of the tale, the offspring of Fauvel and Vainglory inherit all the vices of their parents and bring disaster upon the country.

The interpolated version of the *Roman de Fauvel* was probably compiled in 1317–18, and its author is named as Chaillou de Pestain, who may have been a secretary or clerk at the royal chancery; an earlier, shorter version of the text was written by Gervase de Bus, who occupied the same position. In total, 169 musical works are included in the interpolated *Fauvel*, encompassing many different musical genres, including polyphonic *chansons* and motets, monophonic songs and **refrains**, and Latin **chants**. The scope of these musical additions goes far beyond the typical insertion of short *refrains* found in most romances. Most of the pieces in *Fauvel* remain anonymous, though some were quoted in the treatise *Ars nova* associated with Philippe de Vitry and may perhaps have been composed by him. Crucially, the musical items play a part in the story and are not mere decorations to it. When Fauvel expresses his love for Fortune, for example, he sings love songs to her in the **courtly love** style derived from the **troubadours** and the

trouvères. *Providence, la senee* is sung by Fauvel after Fortune's rejection, and is introduced in the text just beforehand. Figure 6.2 shows the full page on which this song appears: just before the decorated letter P near the top of the third column
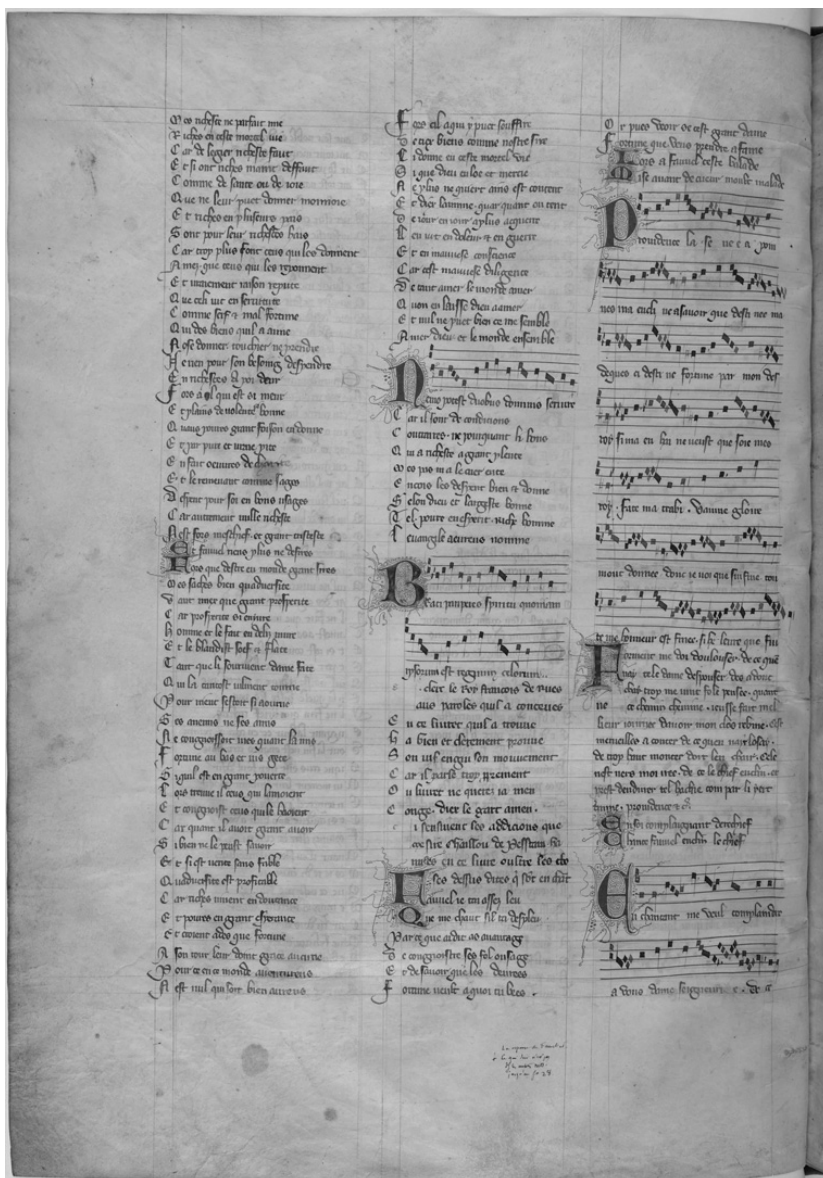
Figure 6.2 A page from the interpolated *Roman de Fauvel*
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, fr. 146, f.23 v; source: gallica.bnf.fr.

which opens the song come the words 'Lors a Fauvel ceste balade, Mise avant de cueur moult malade' ('Then heartsick Fauvel produced this ballade').

Among the other musical items included on this page are two shorter snippets in the second column, and the beginning of another French *chanson* at the foot of the third column. The two pieces in the second column have Latin texts set to music that is stylistically similar to chant. They are not, however, genuine liturgical chants. Both set Biblical passages – *Nemo potest duobus dominis servire* ('No man can serve two masters'), and *Beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum celorum* ('Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven') – to newly composed chant-like melodies in the *D* mode. The Latin snippets function as a commentary on the surrounding text, which warns that people cannot pursue worldly riches and heavenly reward at the same time. The music is vital to the message for two reasons: firstly, the musical notation allows these two Biblical quotations to be drawn attention to visually and set apart from their surroundings, and secondly, the chant-like style imbues the texts with additional meaning, associating them with religious authority and legitimacy.

Isorhythm

With the increased rhythmic flexibility and freedom that Ars Nova notation offered, new techniques for structuring music in ways that relied on the precise measurement of musical time were developed. Among the most important of these was isorhythm, which involved the repetition of a rhythmic pattern. In a typical fourteenth-century example, the tenor of a polyphonic work would consist in its entirety of a single rhythmic statement, called the **talea** (plural: *taleae*), repeated throughout the piece. Very often, rhythmic repetition was combined with melodic repetition. Just as in thirteenth-century motets (see Example 5.3 in the previous chapter), motet tenors still often consisted of a fragment of chant, repeated several times. In an isorhythmic motet, the repeated passage of melody was called the **color** (plural: *colores*). While sometimes the *talea* and the *color* coincided – each consisting of eight notes, say – composers often exploited the interesting musical possibilities that arose if the *talea* and *color* were desynchronized. In the example below (part of the tenor of Machaut's motet 14), the *color* consists of a ten-note pattern, *F A C C C B A B A G*, which is repeated three times (marked with the letters above the staff). The *talea* is a pattern of fifteen notes plus four rests, lasting ten bars in total: ○ | ○ | ⁎ ○ | ○⁎ | ⁎ ○ | ○⁎ | ○ ⁎ | |⁎ | ○ ⁎ |; this is repeated twice (marked with the Roman numerals below the staff):
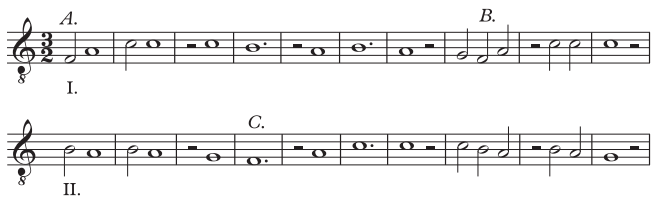
Because the two patterns are of different lengths, each time the *talea* repeats it is with a different set of notes; likewise, every time the *color* comes back, different rhythmic values attach to each of its notes. A structure like this generates variety beyond the voice part in which it appears: each *talea* – here a ten-bar section – would need different accompanying harmonies. Thus, isorhythm was a method of fuelling variation out of an underlying unity of melodic and rhythmic repetition.

When all voices of a polyphonic work are isorhythmic, that is, if there is a repetition of *taleae* in each of the voices, this is called **panisorhythm**. Example 6.1 is the beginning of Guillaume de Machaut's motet *Amours qui ha le povoir / Faus Samblant / Vidi Dominum* (his motet 15). This is one of the earliest surviving panisorhythmic motets, with isorhythm in all three voices. Let us first have a look at the tenor. The Latin tenor, singing the text 'Vidi Dominum', has long held notes. Rhythmically speaking, we can distinguish a statement that occurs four times: there are four *taleae*. Example 6.1 shows all of the first tenor *talea* (marked with the Roman numeral I), and the start of the second (Roman numeral II, at bar 11). The *talea* has a duration of thirty *breves* in total, including the rests, which are part of the pattern. In the transcription in Example 6.1, the *breves* have been converted to dotted minims (half notes), so the tenor *talea* is as follows: ·
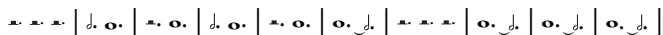
There is a single *color*, so there are no repeated melodic statements.

Both the **triplum** and the **motetus** contain two *taleae*: the rhythmic statement in those voices is twice as long as that of the tenor. However, each *talea* in the *triplum* and the *motetus* consists of two halves which are rhythmically similar: in particular, at the mid-point of the *talea* (bar 11), both repeat the rhythms from the beginning, generating a kind of 'false restart' at that point. Example 6.1 visualises the entire motet structure as a diagram, showing that it can be divided into two rhythmically identical halves (bars 1–20 and bars 21–40) or four similar quarters.

Example 6.1 Guillaume de Machaut, *Amours qui ha le povoir / Faus Samblant / Vidi Dominum* (opening)

Example 6.1 (*cont.*)

Bar number	1	11	21	31
Triplum	*Triplum talea* I	(False restart)	*Triplum talea* II	(False restart)
Motetus	*Motetus talea* I	(False restart)	*Motetus talea* II	(False restart)
Tenor	Tenor *talea* I	Tenor *talea* II	Tenor *talea* III	Tenor *talea* IV

Neither the tenor nor the upper parts make use of systematic melodic repetition in the form of a *color*, though there is a little melodic resonance in places. At bar 11 in Example 6.1, for example, the upper parts imitate both the rhythms and the melodies of bar 1, giving the listener the strong impression that this may be the start of a new *talea* and a new *color*. However, the impression is a false one, since the melodies move off in another direction in the following bar. Characteristic melodic interest is generated in bars 13 and 14, by means of the technique known as **hocket**. Hocket (Latin: *hoquetus*, related to the English word 'hiccup') describes a passage in which the melody of a voice part is temporarily broken up with rests, creating a disjointed and often syncopated effect. Hockets sometimes occurred in two or more voices at once, often with the voices alternating their sounds and silences (for an example of this, see Example 7.2 in the next chapter), but in this passage it has only been used in the *triplum* voice. The theorist Johannes de Grocheio described hocket as a kind of 'cut-up song' and said that it appealed particularly to the irritable and to the young, because of its

mobility and speed. Although the ecclesiastical authorities occasionally expressed their disapproval of hocket, the practice was widespread in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century polyphony, especially motets.

Machaut's motet provides a good example of the approach to musical structure taken by fourteenth-century polyphonic composers. The piece's overall form and internal divisions are determined almost entirely by rhythmic patterns, rather than melodic or harmonic ones. Building up musical structures out of blocks of fixed durations would be the dominant way of approaching motets throughout the century and into the next. Moving beyond relatively simple structures – such as the division into halves and quarters of *Amours qui ha le povoir / Faus Samblant / Vidi Dominum* – composers frequently explored the possibilities for organizing their pieces according to mathematical proportions. For example, by changing mensuration mid-piece and reducing all the *talea*'s note values proportionally, it was possible to craft sections with durations in satisfying ratios to one another, such as 4:2:1. As well as providing a formal blueprint for each piece and the chance for pleasing proportional unity, the durational blocks sometimes had symbolic value: for example, *taleae* lasting twelve *breves* might represent the twelve disciples in a motet whose text referred to them; sections consisting of seven *longae* could refer to the seven vices or virtues, and so on.

Abstract musical symbolism along these lines is present in *Amours qui ha le povoir / Faus Samblant / Vidi Dominum* as well. Textually, the two upper voices refer to allegorical characters from the *Roman de la Rose*, the most frequently copied text in the romance tradition of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see Chapter 5). It is the story of Amant ('the Lover') who dreams of seeing a rose (a metaphor for the idealized woman) whom he desires. The dream is set in a walled garden, in which the lover encounters allegorical figures, such as Reason, Grace, False Seeming, Poverty, and Greed. Machaut's audience would certainly have been familiar with the *Roman de la Rose* and able to appreciate the motet's references to it.

In the *triplum*, the lover claims to be a loyal servant of *Amours*, ('Love'), who does not give him what he wants and allows Cruelty, Refusal, and Resistance to triumph over him. The *motetus* is more concerned with the deception he has experienced: *Faus Samblant* ('False Seeming') has deceived him and lied to him. The deception by *Faus Samblant* can also be understood musically: the listener is deceived by the 'false restart' in the *motetus* and *triplum* voices at bar 11, and only 'undeceived' once the true second *talea* begins in bar 21. This corresponds to the point in the *motetus* text which reads 'now he has undeceived me'. The full texts of the three voices and their translations are given in Box 6.2.

Box 6.2 Guillaume de Machaut, *Amours qui ha le povoir / Faus Samblant / Vidi Dominum*

Triplum:

Amours qui ha le povoir	*Love, who has the power*
De moy faire recevoir	*To grant me*
Joie ou mort obscure,	*Joy or obscure death,*
Ne fait par sa grace avoir	*Does not, by his grace, give*
A ma dame tel voloir	*To my lady the wish*
Qu'elle m'ait en cure.	*To care for me.*
Durer ne puis longuement,	*I cannot last long,*
Car pour amer loyaument	*As neither from loving loyally,*
Ne pour servir liement,	*Nor from serving gracefully,*
Sans penser laidure,	*Without thinking bad things,*
Ne pour celer saigement	*Nor from concealing discretely,*
N'ai confort n'aligement	*Neither comfort nor relief*
De ma dolour dure;	*From my pain do I have;*
Einsois com plus humblement	*Rather, the more humbly*
La sueffre et endure,	*I suffer and endure it,*
De tant est plus durement	*So much more harshly*
Traitiés mes cuers, que briefment	*Is my heart treated, that soon*
Morray dolereusement	*I will die of sorrow*
De dueil et d'ardure,	*Of grief and desire,*
Et tant sui plus eslongiés	*And the further away I am*
De merci et estraingiés	*From mercy, and the further away I am*
De ma dame pure.	*From my pure lady.*
Mais aveuc tous ces meschiés	*But with all these miseries*
Sueffre Amours, qui est met chiés,	*Love, who is my lord,*
Que Raison, Droiture,	*Contrives that Reason, Equity,*
Douçour, Debonnaireté,	*Sweetness, Good Nature,*
Franchise, Grace et Pité	*Openness, Grace, and Pity*
N'ont povoir à Cruauté,	*Have no power over Cruelty,*
Ensois regne et dure	*Rather, there reigns continuously*
En corps d'umblece pare	*In a body adorned with humility*
Cuers qui est pleins de durté	*A heart which is hard*
Et de couverture,	*And closed,*
Refus qui d'espoir osté	*Refusal, who has taken from me*
M'a la norriture,	*The food of hope,*
Et Dangiers qui despite	*And Resistance, who has left me*
M'a sans cause et si grevé	*Without cause and has so greatly injured me*
Qu'il m'a par desdaign mené	*That he led me through disdain*
A desconfiture.	*To ruin.*

Box 6.2 (*cont.*)

Motetus:

Faus Samblant m'a deceu	*False Seeming has deceived me*
Et tenu en esperence	*And has held out the hope*
De joie et merci avoir;	*Of joy in my obtaining favour,*
Et je-l'ay com foiz creu	*And I, like a fool, believed him*
Et mis toute ma fiancé	*And put all my trust*
En li d'amoureus vouloir.	*And my loving desire in him.*
Las! Or m'a descongneü,	*Alas! Now he has undeceived me,*
Quant de moi faire aligence	*And for winning my alliance*
Ha heü temps et pooir;	*He had the time and the power;*
N'en riens n'a recongneü	*In no way has he rewarded*
Ma dolour ne ma grievance,	*My pain or my grieving,*
Eins m'a mis en nonchaloir.	*Rather, he has treated me badly.*

Tenor:

Vidi Dominum facie ad faciem	*I have seen the Lord face to face*
Et salva facta est [anima mea].	*And [my soul] has been saved.*

Guillaume de Machaut

Guillaume de Machaut is by far the best-known poet-composer of the Ars Nova and personally ensured that his name and his music would outlive him. While the thirteenth century brought about increasing levels of self-awareness among poet-composers, particularly trouvères such as Adam de la Halle (see Chapter 5), none went as far as Machaut in terms of curating their own works and controlling the ways in which they reached audiences of the time and after their deaths. Because of Machaut's efforts in supervising the writing-down of his works, a much larger body of music and poetry can be attributed with certainty to him than to any other fourteenth-century figure. But Machaut is at least as significant because of his consciousness of himself as an artist with a present and future reputation to uphold, an attitude which in some respects corresponds to more recent ideas of the creative individual. One way in which he was more typical of his time, though, was that composing music and poetry was only one facet of his career as a priest, and a noble and royal secretary.

Guillaume de Machaut was born in or shortly after 1300 into a middle-class family. His name suggests that he was born in Machault, a town in Northern France not far from Reims, where he received his education and training as a cleric. During the first part of his professional life, Machaut worked for John I, Count of Luxembourg and King of Bohemia. His tasks included copying texts, controlling finances, legal work, and secretarial administration. Meanwhile, Machaut wrote poetry and music for his

patron, King John, including him as a semi-fictionalized character in some of his poetry. Machaut also travelled extensively with John, journeying to all parts of his kingdom, which extended throughout Central Europe, and frequently visiting the French royal court. After John's death in 1346, Machaut continued to be supported by John's daughter, Bonne, her sons John (Duke of Berry) and Charles (later Charles V of France), and also by other nobles and royals such as Charles II, King of Navarre, and Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. Leaving behind his secretarial duties after John's death, Machaut took up residence as a canon of Reims, where he was in charge of the liturgical services, but also had time and leisure for the composition of poems and music, sometimes dedicated to his various patrons.

During the decade leading up to his death in 1377, Machaut devoted himself to completing and compiling all his poetic and musical works, and gathering them into a carefully ordered collection. This collection was copied into at least seven manuscripts, all beautifully decorated, and accompanied with copious autobiographical information within and alongside the poems and music. The musical pieces are organized into categories by form (such as **ballades** and **virelais**) and genre (such as **motets**), and some of them are embedded within long narrative poems, such as the *Livre dou Voir Dit* ('Book of the True Poem') and the *Remede de Fortune* ('Fortune's Remedy'). In these interpolated narratives, Machaut continued a tradition that had begun in the thirteenth century, but instead of collecting existing musical *refrains* from elsewhere, he composed his own pieces specifically to fit. The surrounding narrative – which features a semi-fictionalized version of Machaut himself as the main character – describes the circumstances under which the songs were composed.

The Machaut manuscripts show an author who was much more aware of his own status than anyone else before him or in his own generation: this overt display of his own persona through his works is unprecedented. Among the many miniatures decorating and illuminating the manuscripts, several portray Machaut himself. Along with the transmission of his *opera omnia* and the frequent autobiographical references, they give us an insight not so much into the man of reality but into his carefully crafted self-image. Machaut's renown and influence in his own time were unparalleled, and his creative persona was deliberately immortalized on parchment.

Ars Subtilior

At the very end of the fourteenth century, a further refinement of Ars Nova musical and notational techniques emerged. This style is termed the **Ars Subtilior**, literally, 'the more subtle art', a term derived from treatises written at the time. In the *Tractatus de diversis figuris* ('Treatise of various figures') sometimes attributed to the composer Philippus de Caserta, composers were advised to abandon the Ars

Nova style and move towards an 'artem magis subtiliter', a more subtle art. Although these treatises stress the idea of a break from the Ars Nova style, the Ars Subtilior can more easily be understood as a continuation of the developments that took place earlier in the fourteenth century. Just as with the Ars Nova, technical changes went alongside notational ones in the Ars Subtilior. The new rhythmical possibilities opened up by Ars Nova notation were exploited to an even greater extent by the composers of the Ars Subtilior, including stark metrical shifts within pieces or different metres in the various voices simultaneously. This results in rhythmically and metrically denser and more intricate structures. Harmonically speaking, there is also an increase in complexity: multiple layers of tonality are combined in polyphonic works, sometimes unbalancing the sense of tonality for the listener. In contrast to this rise in rhythmic and harmonic complexity, the composers of the Ars Subtilior favoured the use of repeating melodic motives and patterns, and made regular use of the ***formes fixes***: these aspects counterbalance the instability introduced by the new 'subtlety'.

Perhaps the most important characteristic of Ars Subtilior is, however, not in its musical qualities but in its notation. The new notational possibilities offered by the Ars Nova were explored even further and Ars Subtilior notation is typically very detailed and carefully applied: the utmost precision is required in the notation for the complexities of the music to be conveyed. In some manuscripts, the notation is also presented in visually arresting ways, using colour or shape to convey a pictorial – as well as musical – meaning. One of the most famous examples is shown in Figure 6.3. This page is from the Chantilly Codex, one of the most important and painstakingly notated sources of Ars Subtilior music. It contains over a hundred polyphonic works, including polyphonic *formes fixes* and isorhythmic motets. Almost all of them are rhythmically very complex and the scribes made sure that the notation was entirely correct. The page shown in Figure 6.3 is one side of an additional sheet added to the book, which contains two works by the composer Baude Cordier. The one not shown here is also notated in a highly unusual way: this time in the shape of a heart, reflecting the song's text which describes a lover giving his beloved the gift of 'a new song from within my heart'.

The song shown here, *Tout par compas*, is a **canon**. 'Canon' literally means 'law' or 'rule' and is used in relation to medieval polyphony to describe notated music to which a performer would apply a 'rule' in order to generate the intended musical result. An explanation of the rule required was often found in the song's text but could also be given separately. The most common type of medieval canon is that which is most familiar today, for example in children's songs such as *Frère Jacques*: one singer sings the song as presented on the page, and a second sings the same melody but starts a little later; third and subsequent voices may then enter in the same way. The song thus appears monophonic as written down, but polyphony is generated when the rule is
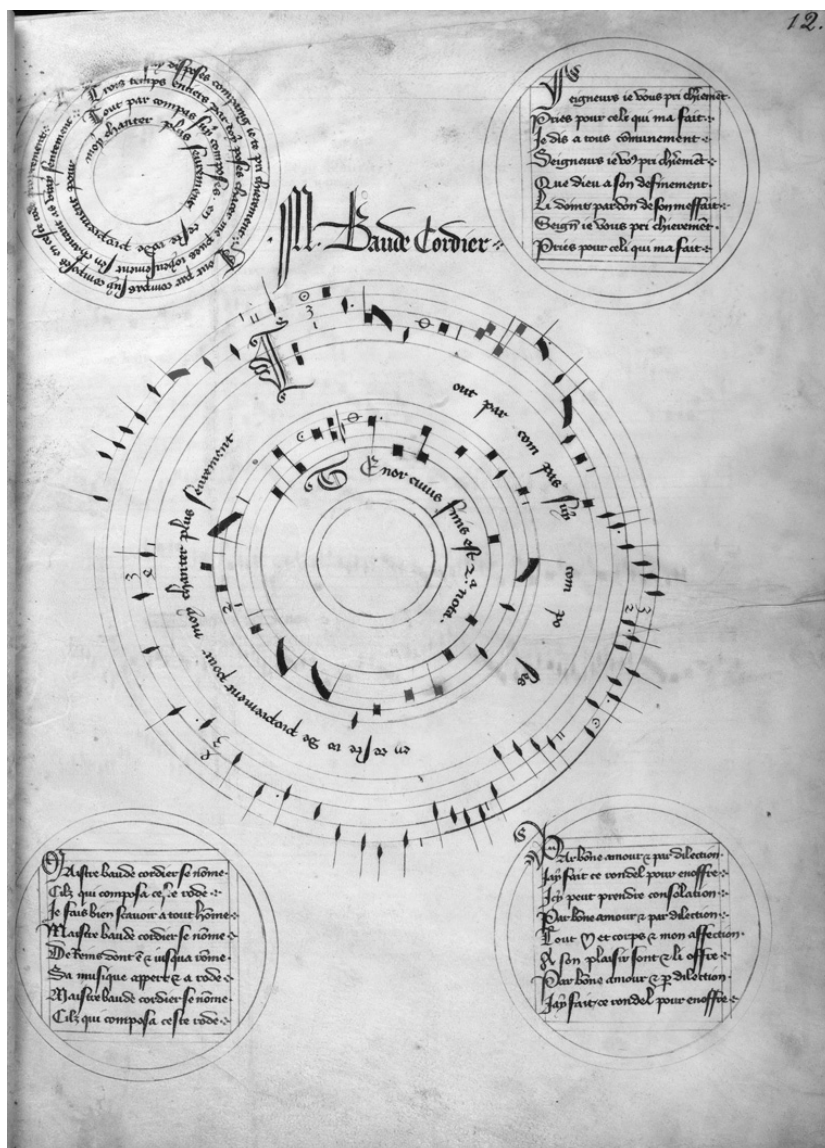
Figure 6.3 Baude Cordier, *Tout par compas*
Chantilly, Bibliothèque du Château, MS 564, f.12 r; source: Bibliothèque Virtuelle des Manuscrits Médiévaux (BVMM) – IRHT-CNRS; by permission

correctly applied. One of the earliest examples of such a canon is the anonymous English song *Sumer is icumen in*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Other types of canon include inversion canons, in which the second voice sings the same

material as the first, but vertically mirrored, causing a constant **contrary motion** between the voices; and the crab canon, where the following voice is a horizontal inversion of the first voice, so that the melodic material goes backwards in the second voice compared to the first. A famous example of the latter kind is Guillaume de Machaut's *Ma fin est mon commencement et mon commencement ma fin* ('My end is my beginning and my beginning my end'); in this song, the text itself is the clue that enables the canon to be performed.

Appropriately, given the way it is presented on the page, *Tout par compas* is a circle canon, whose melody is designed so that the singers can proceed directly from the end back to the beginning and sing it again (perpetually – at least in theory!). There are two staves: the outer circle contains the melody for the upper voices, while the inner circle shows the tenor melody. The text of the upper voices begins under the circular staff and continues in the separate circle on the top left of the page; **stanzas** 2, 3 and 4 are written in the other circles around the edge of the page.

The form of the song is hinted at by its text, which puns on the similarity of the word *ronde* ('circle' or 'round') and **rondeau**, the *forme fixe*. Typically for a *rondeau*, only the first quarter of the stanza is underlaid to music: recall from Chapter 5 that the *rondeau* form consists of only two passages of music (A and B), repeated in the pattern ABaAabAB, with repeated text shown by upper-case letters, and lines of text heard only once by lower-case. Singers familiar with the long-established *rondeau* form would be well prepared to deduce this scheme from the music and extra text given on the page.

Tout par compas suy composés,	*With a compass am I entirely composed,*
En ceste ronde proprement	*As properly befits a circle (or 'round')*
Pour moy chanter plus seurement.	*To sing me more surely.*
Regarde com suy disposes	*Look how I am disposed*
Compaing, je te pri chierement.	*My friend, I kindly pray to you.*
Tout par compas suy composés,	*With a compass am I entirely composed,*
En ceste ronde proprement.	*As properly befits a circle (or 'round').*
Trois temps entiers par toy posés;	*When you have paused for three whole beats,*
Chacer me pues joyeusement,	*You can chase me joyfully,*
S'en chantant as vray sentiment.	*If in singing you are true to me.*
Tout par compas suy composés,	*With a compass am I entirely composed,*
En ceste ronde proprement	*As properly befits a circle (or 'round')*
Pour moy chanter plus seurement.	*To sing me more surely.*

A little more ingenuity is required to work out how two voice parts may be derived from the single notated outer circle. The hint is found in the 'ab' lines halfway through the first stanza, which have often proved difficult to translate. One possibility

is that the French word 'temps' is being used in the mensural sense of *tempus* (see Table 6.1 on p. 121), and the verb-form 'posés' is one possible spelling of the more usual 'pausés': 'When you have paused for three whole beats, You can chase me joyfully'. A 'chase' requires a leader and a follower, and the time interval that the follower must wait before starting the 'chase' is specified as three *tempora*, or the equivalent of three perfect *breves*. Discovering the clue and working out how to put it into practice, perhaps through trial and error in rehearsal, was an intellectual puzzle to be enjoyed by the courtly singers. (See the Suggested Recordings section at the end of this chapter for a link to an online video which animates the manuscript so you can follow along the notation while listening to the song.)

Tout par compas displays all the characteristic metrical and notational complexity of the Ars Subtilior. If you search online for a colour image of Figure 6.3 you will see short passages of red notation within the upper voice part. These indicate temporary mensural shifts which render those *breves* imperfect (duple) rather than perfect (triple) and thus create a **hemiola** (a brief, temporary shift from triple into duple metre). The mensuration signs differ between the upper voices and the tenor, and are also altered as the song proceeds. Numbers on the staves indicate temporary augmentations or diminutions of the note values, producing triplets and syncopations in performance. The text given below the tenor melody is not to be sung but is another instruction: 'The tenor ends on its second note'.

Canons such as this one were musical games, aimed at producing joy and pleasure for the intellectual elite who read and sang them. The layout and notation are a vital part of this aim, pleasing the eye with their beauty and the mind with their tantalizing puzzles to be solved. On reaching the stanza whose text is found in the bottom right-hand corner, the reader would be delighted by the heart shape that has been drawn in place of the word *cuer* ('heart'). If the text of the song is self-referential by describing its own form and structure, the stanza in the bottom left-hand corner is self-referential in another way. It reads as follows:

Maistre Baude Cordier se nome,	*Master Baude Cordier, he is called,*
Cilz qui composa ceste ronde	*The one who composed this round*
Je fais bien sçavoir a tout homme.	*I will make it well known to everyone.*
Maistre Baude Cordier se nome,	*Master Baude Cordier, he is called,*
[Cilz qui composa ceste ronde].	*[The one who composed this round].*
De Reims dont est et jusqu'à Rome	*From Reims where he is, as far as Rome,*
Sa musique appert e a ronde.	*His music and this round are known.*
Maistre Baude Cordier se nome,	*Master Baude Cordier, he is called,*
Cilz qui composa ceste ronde,	*The one who composed this round,*
[Je fais bien sçavoir a tout homme.]	*[I will make it well known to everyone.]*

Stanzas 2, 3, and 4 do not follow exactly the same textual pattern as the first stanza, and some minor adaptation of the musical form would be needed to sing them (which was perhaps another enigma for the performers to solve). But yet again, we see a fourteenth-century composer happy to draw attention to himself, to claim works as his own, and to declare his fame and international reputation.

The new methods and techniques introduced in the Ars Nova and described in its treatises from around 1320, such as the introduction of the *minima*, duple alongside triple metres, syncopation, rhythmic complexity, red notation, and isorhythm, were pursued even more relentlessly by the composers of the Ars Subtilior. With a notational system now capable of inscribing with accuracy immensely complex rhythms and harmonies, the most esoteric of the Ars Subtilior compositions explored these aspects of music to the point of instability. The cryptic nature of these pieces appealed to intellectual elites, especially those based at certain courts in France and Italy, but was perhaps too impenetrable to have wider influence. But the Ars Subtilior represents the culmination of trends in music that defined the fourteenth century as a whole. Faced with the natural and human disasters of the world around them, fourteenth-century musicians drew on their training and intellectual resources as scribes, scholars, and secretaries to create music in which every element was tightly controlled, bringing some relief from the disordered world in which they found themselves.

Suggested Recordings

Providence, la senee and other music linked to Philippe de Vitry:

- *Philippe de Vitry: Motetten und Lieder/Motets & Chansons*, Sequentia, dir. Benjamin Bagby and Barbara Thornton (reissue: Deutsche Harmonia Mundi (BMG) Splendeurs, 82876 68351 2, 2005)

Guillaume de Machaut, *Amours qui ha le povoir / Faus Samblant / Vidi Dominum*:

- *Machaut: Motets & Music from the Ivrea Codex*, The Clerks' Group, dir. Edward Wickham (Signum, 011, 1998)

Further music by Guillaume de Machaut:

- *Guillaume de Machaut: La Messe de Nostre Dame/Songs from Le Voir Dit*, Oxford Camerata, dir. Jeremy Summerly (Naxos, 8.553833, 1996)
- The Orlando Consort has been engaged since 2012 in an ongoing project to record all of Machaut's polyphonic songs for the label Hyperion: see

www.orlandoconsort.com/Machaut_front_page.htm for details of this work and the recordings released so far.

Baude Cordier, *Tout par compas*:

- Online video animation: Jordan Alexander Key, 'Baude Cordier: Circle Canon, Tout par compas (Manuscript Animation)', www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaeOWdXM4Pg.
- *Codex Chantilly III*, Tetraktys, dir. Kees Boeke (Etcetera, O-live Music 1917, 2016)

Further Reading

Bent, Margaret and Andrew Wathey (eds.), *Fauvel Studies: Allegory, Chronicle, Music, and Image in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS français 146* (Oxford, 1998).

Hartt, Jared C. (ed.), *A Critical Companion to Medieval Motets* (Woodbridge, 2018).

Kelly, Thomas Forrest, *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation* (New York, 2015).

Leach, Elizabeth Eva, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* (Ithaca, NY, 2011).

Leach, Elizabeth Eva, 'The Fourteenth Century', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, ed. Mark Everist (Cambridge, 2011), 87–103.

Stone, Anne, 'Ars Subtilior', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, volume 2, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, 2018), 1125–46.

England after the Norman Conquest

Historical Outline

The polyphony of the Winchester Troper and the diverse **repertory** of the Cambridge Songs assembled in Canterbury (see Chapter 2) bear witness to the vibrant musical cultures of England in the mid-eleventh century. Music flourished in major monasteries such as Winchester and Canterbury as part of a parcel of religious reforms, some of which brought the country's Anglo-Saxon traditions closer to liturgical practices on the continent. Yet the secular backdrop to this ecclesiastical blossoming was one of military upheaval, which was an almost constant feature of life in eleventh-century England. Attacks by Viking raiders from Scandinavia increased in frequency at the start of the century, and English kings were not always able to mount a successful defence. Over the course of the century, the kingdom was divided between separate rulers in the north and the south, and the death of a ruler frequently led to fighting over who had the right to succeed him on the throne. In the well-known story of the Norman Conquest of 1066, Duke William of Normandy took advantage of England's weakened position by landing with his troops near Hastings on the south coast just as the English king, Harold Godwinson, was fighting invaders at Stamford Bridge in the north-east. After marching his exhausted army the length of the country to face William in battle, Harold was killed and his troops conquered. The Norman Age in England had begun.

The effects of the Norman Conquest on English history and culture were long-lasting and profound, involving changes to language, systems of law and government, and religious and secular life. Norman bishops and abbots were appointed to replace Englishmen in the Church's hierarchy, and they brought with them their own continental liturgical traditions. In many churches, these were adopted relatively smoothly: as we have seen, church reforms in eleventh-century England were already beginning to incorporate continental practices in some places. Elsewhere, the imposition of Norman liturgies was more contentious: at Glastonbury, the local monks rioted in response to their new Norman abbot's demands. But even where

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Norman practices were successfully brought in, certain older Anglo-Saxon traditions were allowed to remain, such as the veneration of English saints. This led to an amalgamation of Anglo-Saxon and Norman histories, one that is visually apparent in the architecture of churches: across the kingdom, old churches in Anglo-Saxon architectural styles were enlarged and supplemented with additions designed in Gothic styles imported by the Norman settlers. All Saints' Church at Brixworth, Northamptonshire (Figure 7.1) is an outstanding example. The solid, rounded window arches of the Anglo-Saxon church contrast with the delicate, pointed arches on the side chapel and the spire, both Norman additions to the structure.

It was the linguistic culture of the Norman invaders that had perhaps the most enduring effect on the English nation. Before the Conquest, Old English was not only the language of everyday speech but also the official written language of the country: charters, laws, and a distinctive Anglo-Saxon literary tradition in poetry and prose were all written down. Latin was learnt and understood by the literate classes, but – unlike on most of the continent – it was not the language of administration and government. The new King William and his nobles were native speakers of Norman French and brought their linguistic heritage with them, in ways that have left traces in English culture and institutions today, for example in the royal motto, *Dieu et mon droit* ('God and my right'), found everywhere that the

Figure 7.1 Norman architectural additions to an Anglo-Saxon church: All Saints', Brixworth, Northamptonshire
© iStock.com/Martin Lovatt

English monarch's coat of arms is displayed. But it was to Latin that the Normans turned for most official purposes, including legal and political documents, such as their great survey of England's population and property known as the Domesday Book. Old English did not die out after the Conquest and remained many people's native tongue, but for written purposes it was largely replaced by Latin and Norman French. All three languages continued to be used, even two centuries later, by which time a distinctive dialect of French had developed, and a renewed form of the English language, called Middle English, had emerged. Throughout the period between the Conquest and the end of the fourteenth century, there are many

Figure 7.2 Post-Conquest England and its neighbours
© Mappa Mundi Cartography

interesting examples of the three languages juxtaposed. The Eadwine Psalter, an elaborate illuminated **manuscript** written and illustrated in Canterbury in the mid-twelfth century, contains parallel texts of the Book of Psalms in Latin, Old English, and Norman French, along with alternative Latin versions and scholarly notes. The co-existence of three languages was not unique to medieval England, but was to have a marked effect on the composition of polyphony and song.

The Later Cambridge Songs

Tracing the tri-lingual culture of song in post-Conquest England is not a simple task, because the songs that survive are scattered, individually or in very small groups, among dozens of largely non-musical manuscripts. There are no dedicated songbooks comparable to the **chansonniers** of **trouvère** song (see Chapter 5) or *Liederhandschriften* of the German **Minnesinger** (Chapter 9). The largest collection of songs from this period in England consists of just thirty-five songs, gathered in a small, untidy booklet of manuscript pages, once bound as a kind of cover to a later theological book. The song booklet, known as the Later Cambridge Songs because – like the earlier and more famous Cambridge Songs manuscript discussed in Chapter 2 – it is now housed in the University Library in Cambridge, was made in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. We do not know exactly where it came from: the only clue to its origin comes from the later book with which it was bound together at the end of the thirteenth century: that later book bears an inscription that mentions a village in Leicestershire. The parchment of the song-booklet is of low quality, with rips and holes in the surface: the scribes of the songs wrote around these damaged areas wherever possible. The writing itself – both of the song texts and the musical notation – is casual and sometimes seems to have been done in a rush. Blank staves above many of the songs suggest that the job was never finished.

　　This unpromising presentation, however, preserves a real treasure-trove of musical and poetic material from medieval England. Nearly all the songs are in Latin, but two of them use a mixture of Latin and French lines in their texts. Around two-thirds of the songs are unique to this manuscript; the rest were apparently known in various places across the continent. The collection includes twenty-two **monophonic** songs, twelve **polyphonic** songs for two voices, and one three-voice setting. Some song texts are by well-known poets, such as Philip the Chancellor and Peter of Blois, whose works are found among the Latin **conductus** repertory of twelfth-century Paris (see Chapter 4). The topics range from Christian feast days, including Christmas, through complaint songs about clerical immorality, to several songs about love. All in all, the song booklet is a striking mixed bag

that suggests the work of a group of clerical singers, who collected songs from a variety of places and probably also composed their own. Although on a much smaller scale, the Later Cambridge Songbook thus bears some similarities to the eleventh-century Cambridge Songs and is in many ways an equally important record of the music of its time and place.

Exultemus et letemur, the song whose text appears in Box 7.1, is one of the two songs from the Later Cambridge Songs which features French phrases woven into the Latin text.

The text honours St Nicholas, whose feast day on 6 December was one of the occasions on which the ceremony of the 'boy bishop' was held in English medieval churches. On this day in the Church's calendar, the usual clerical hierarchy was inverted, and one of the children of the choir was elected to serve as 'bishop', with the true bishop and other senior clergy relegated from their usual position of authority. Lines in the song, such as 'who now shall be our ruler?', and 'there is here a bishop who is worthy of praise', make clear reference to the ceremony, and the day's focus on clerical rank is likewise reflected in the line 'every rank and order,

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Box 7.1 *Exultemus et letemur*, from the Later Cambridge Songs

Song-text in Latin, with French lines in italics:

Translation:

1. Exultemus et letemur,
   Nicolaum veneremur.
   Eius laudes decantemus
   et suef aleis
   decantando predicemus
   et si m'entendeiz.

1. *Let us rejoice and be glad,*
   let us venerate Nicholas,
   let us sing his praises,
   go gently now.
   As we sing, let us proclaim him.
   Please, heed my words.

2. Quisquis adest homo, gaude.
   Presul adest dignus laude.
   Omnis ordo, gratulare.
   et suef aleiz
   Non est dignum exultare?
   et si m'entendeiz.

2. *Let every man who is present wish him joy.*
   There is here a bishop who is worthy of praise.
   Every rank and order, be glad.
   Go gently now.
   Does this not deserve exultation?
   Please, heed my words.

3. Datus tibi sit hic clamor,
   Nicolae, noster amor.
   Iam et noster quis sit rector?
   et suef aleiz
   'Iube domne' dicat lector
   et si m'entendeiz.

3. *Let this cry greet you here,*
   Nicholas, our dear friend.
   And who shall now be our ruler?
   Go gently now.
   Let the lesson-reader intone: 'Command, O Lord'.
   Please, heed my words.

from John Stevens (ed.), *The Later Cambridge Songs* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 130–31.

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be glad'. The phrases in French extend the meaning of the song in two ways. Firstly, they act as a **refrain**, recurring in all three **stanzas**, and referring to movement: this could suggest a link to a festal procession (in some places, the boy bishop led a procession around the town following his election). Secondly, the French lines are drawn from the stock of *refrains* that appear in trouvère songs. In that context, the words are those of the stock character Robin flirting with the equally typical character of a shepherdess, so their incorporation into *Exultemus et letemur* would add – for those in the know – a subtly indecent edge to the song. As we shall see with many other English medieval songs, *Exultemus et letemur* gives the impression of originating among clerics who were closely engaged with the ritual customs of their community but at the same time aware of – and happy to make use of – musical and poetic traditions from totally different environments.

Solitary Songs

As a collection of songs, gathered together in a dedicated booklet, the Later Cambridge Songs are highly unusual in post-Conquest England. The norm in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England seems to have been for songs to be jotted down in isolation, often in the pages of unrelated manuscripts. Nearly all Latin, French, and Middle English songs from across this period were preserved this way, in ones and twos, jostling alongside other texts that seemingly have nothing in common with them. Perhaps there was nowhere else to write down the songs, and those who wrote them out felt that the music was worth preserving wherever a blank leaf of parchment was available. Alternatively, perhaps there were once more songbooks in England, but none have survived (see 'The Fate of Manuscripts' on p. 154 on the high levels of later destruction of music manuscripts in England).

In other respects, though, the Later Cambridge Songs reflect wider patterns among the songs surviving in more isolated situations. The majority of the songs are in Latin, with a relatively small proportion of the total using the vernacular languages of French and Middle English. Likewise, there are many more monophonic songs than polyphonic ones, and those that are polyphonic are nearly all for two voice parts. There is a mix, as in the Later Cambridge Songs, of well-travelled pieces that appear in many other locations and songs that are found only once and were probably local compositions. And there is a similar balance of themes, both religious and secular. The songs of twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, numbering close to 150 songs including the thirty-five Later Cambridge Songs, have only relatively recently begun to attract the attention they deserve, and many have yet to be performed or recorded by today's musicians.

As Latin was a shared language of literature and music across Europe, Latin songs clearly had the potential to travel and be sung in a wide range of places, and it is therefore not surprising to find that many of the Latin songs found in English manuscripts were known in France, Ireland, and further afield. Often there is no way of knowing where such songs originated, because they are usually anonymous and may once have been written down in other manuscripts that have since been lost or destroyed. One interesting feature of the songs found in English manuscripts, however, is the frequency with which a song's music was recycled for a different text. This technique – known as **contrafactum** – happened in other countries too (see p. 105, and Box 5.6 on p. 110 for example) but was particularly favoured in England and led to many fascinating clusters of songs, sharing musical material but separate texts, often in several languages. One example is a song sometimes called 'The Prisoner's Lament' because its French and English texts complain of the plight of someone wrongly imprisoned. This song is found with two alternative texts written out below the melody in a manuscript owned by Arnold Fitzthedmar, an alderman of the City of London who died in 1274. Closest to the musical notation is the French text *Eyns ne soy ke pleynte fu* ('Formerly I did not know what a lament was'), and below it comes the Middle English *Ar ne kuthe ich sorghe non* ('Once I knew no sorrow'). The two texts are loose translations of one another – not precise, since they must follow the constraints of needing to fit to the same melody – but the melody pre-dated both of them. It comes from a Latin **lament**, *Planctus ante nescia* ('Once unacquainted with lamentation'), whose theme is the grief of Mary at the Crucifixion of Jesus, and which was composed by Godfrey of St Victor, a theologian and **canon** at the Abbey of St Victor in Paris in the second half of the twelfth century (see Box 5.6 on p. 110 for more on the importance of St Victor to medieval Latin poetry and song). Though this is the only known trilingual cluster of *contrafacta*, there are plenty of bilingual pairs among the songs in English sources, suggesting that English song-makers particularly relished the creative challenge of re-purposing existing melodies with texts in another language.

The earliest songs found in the vernacular languages of French and Middle English are from the twelfth century; the English ones, unusually, are associated with a known author. Godric of Finchale (venerated as St Godric after his death in 1170) was a hermit who lived a life of self-denial and poverty near Durham. His four songs – some of which were inspired by his many religious visions – were written down and passed on by his biographer, the monk Reginald of Durham. The earliest English songs to survive with their music intact, Godric's brief songs are unique in content and character, drawing partly on traditions from Old English verse, and with melodies that lie somewhere between the styles of **chant** and song.

Songs in French from twelfth- and thirteenth-century England include some copies of trouvère song, brought in from Northern France, as well as *contrafacta* of

trouvère songs and local compositions in a similar vein. There are songs referring to contemporary events, such as the Third Crusade (1189–92), songs of love and nature, and songs in praise of the Virgin Mary. Two French love songs, focusing more on love's torments than its pleasures, are found together with a Middle English song on a single leaf of parchment now bound in with another book. Since the page begins partway through the first French song, *[. . .] chant ai entendu* (the ellipsis in square brackets here indicating the missing material at the start of the song), and ends before the completion of the English song, *Mirie it is*, we know that it must once have belonged to a larger manuscript collection, with at least one page before and one page after this one. Some have speculated that the fragment could once have been part of a fully fledged songbook, compiled in England, although we can infer almost nothing about it from the evidence of this single sheet. *Mirie it is* (Example 7.1) is a short song in its surviving form, but the music and text that remain may have been continued on the next page, now lost. At the very least, the final word and note of the single stanza must have been found there, as the melody and poetic line are certainly incomplete at the end of the page (after 'and' in the final line in Example 7.1). The word 'fast' and its accompanying note, *A*, have been conjectured to complete the rhyme and musical **cadence**. The two French songs on the same page are **strophic** songs, whose second and subsequent stanzas are written out in a block below the music given for the first stanza: it is certainly possible that *Mirie it is* might also have taken the same form.

Example 7.1 English song: *Mirie it is*

Example 7.1 (*cont.*)

Translation:

Merry it is while summer lasts, with birds' song;
but now the wind's blast and cruel weather draw near.
Ah, ah, how long is this night! And I, with so much injury, sorrow and mourn
and fast.

Opening with a meteorological metaphor, the bitter contrast between the merry joys of summer and the harsh winter weather turns out to be analogous to the narrator's state of mind, as his night of sorrow draws on and on. The language of nature, especially references to the seasons and birdsong, are found frequently in trouvère and **troubadour** song, and also in Middle English poetry. The English song, *Sumer is icumen in* ('Summer has arrived'), is the most famous example, with its depiction of the cuckoo's song and its allusions to sprouting foliage and the birth of lambs and calves. By contrast, *Foweles in the frith* ('The birds in the wood'), like *Mirie it is*, evokes the joys of the warm season which are poignantly discordant with the misery of the protagonist.

Like many thirteenth-century songs, the melody of *Mirie it is* is constructed from the alternation between a main sonority – based on the **triad** *A-C-E* – and a contrasting sonic area, here the notes *G* and *D*. Its opening gesture of a falling fifth, *E–A*, is striking, and partly echoed when the melody turns to the contrasting sonic area (at 'with fugheles song') which falls from *D* to *G*. In the middle of the stanza, the melodic range is expanded slightly, reaching up to *F*, the semitone above the previous peak of *E*, and the five notes spread across the syllables 'Ey, ey' constitute the most florid moment in the song, just as the narrator's words fail him ('Ah, ah, how long is this night!'). Uncertainty over how thirteenth-century singers might have pronounced the English words, especially which of the syllables they might have elided (slurred together to a single note), means that the precise length of the poetic lines is a matter of debate among modern editors. But whichever way that question is resolved, the poetic form of the song is unique, with the long phrases ending 'last' and 'blast' foreshadowing the final 'fast', and the short phrases 'with fugheles song' and 'and weder strong' generating the rhymes 'long' and 'wrong' for the middle lines. If *Mirie it is* once continued with further stanzas pursuing a similar theme to the two French songs that precede it, the nature of the narrator's sorrow might be revealed to be misfortunes in love; but unless the missing page should miraculously be rediscovered, this must for ever remain a mystery.

Polyphony in England

Some polyphonic pieces from this period of English medieval history have received much more attention than others. Probably best-known of all is the 'Summer

Canon', *Sumer is icumen in*, found in a mid-thirteenth-century manuscript from Reading Abbey. The canon consists of a melody sung in up to four parts as a round, over a further two parts forming a double ***pes*** (literally, 'foot'), or repeating **tenor**. The song is accompanied with detailed instructions in Latin explaining how to realize the written music as polyphony in up to six parts; the round is provided with two alternatives texts, in English and in Latin, but the *pes* is supplied only with the English text 'Sing cuccu, nu'. Nothing else quite like this exists in either English or contemporary continental sources, and the song is rightly popular among singers and listeners. Some aspects of the piece, however, resonate with wider trends in English song of the thirteenth century: the provision of alternative texts in two languages is something we have already observed in this chapter, and the composer's interest in generating polyphony out of single melodic lines repeated successively to form a round is another feature we will encounter in this section.

To set this exceptional piece in its context, though, we should first return to the polyphony of twelfth-century England. Apart from a tiny number of individual polyphonic pieces in manuscripts from the end of the eleventh century and first half of the twelfth, the earliest examples of polyphony from after the Norman Conquest are of a similar date to the Later Cambridge Songs (from the later twelfth to the early thirteenth century). These polyphonic items are mostly in two voice parts, occasionally three, and are written in **unmeasured** notation. *Exultemus et letemur*, discussed earlier in this chapter, is typical of the two-voice polyphony from these manuscripts. The two voice parts are of roughly equal range and move mostly in **contrary motion** to each other. At cadences – which occur at the end of each poetic phrase – the voices settle on a unison, fifth, or octave. The notes of each melodic line are spread evenly across the syllables of the text, with a single note or small group of two or three notes per syllable, except at the very end of the stanza, where the upper voice sings a cadential flourish descending through nine notes on the penultimate syllable. The polyphonic style is quite similar to the two-part Aquitanian ***versus*** (such as *Res iocosa*, Example 3.3 on p. 51) and also to the early two-part conducti from Paris: listening to examples from the suggested recordings given at the end of this chapter and of Chapters 3 and 4 will give a good impression of these musical similarities.

The polyphonic pieces from twelfth- and early thirteenth-century England include some that are only found in a single manuscript, and others that are known in several copies. Perhaps even more than we would normally expect of medieval handwritten texts, the copies tend to vary considerably from one another, with the same text appearing in quite different polyphonic guises, involving differing numbers of voice parts and varied quantities of shared musical material. These pieces of music evidently travelled great distances, as different versions can be found from across Europe: when they were sung in new places, new singers

apparently felt free to re-compose them, adding or subtracting voice parts and re-arranging the music and text according to their preferences.

An insight into how polyphonic music was transmitted from place to place can be gained from the history of the manuscript known as W1, one of the principal sources of the music of Notre-Dame of Paris, but which was copied and kept at St Andrews, 1,000 kilometres away on the east coast of Scotland. Despite the difficulties and dangers of long-distance travel, medieval churchmen – especially the most senior, such as bishops – did make extraordinarily long journeys, often staying for months or years at their destinations. In the first half of the thirteenth century, the bishops of St Andrews travelled several times to Rome, Lyon, and Paris, in order to be present at ecclesiastical councils or to conduct business with the pope. Furthermore, the St Andrews bishop whose career coincides most closely with the performance of liturgical polyphony at Notre-Dame was himself a Frenchman (in common with many high-ranking clerics in post-Conquest England and Scotland) and maintained close ties with his family in France. It is not difficult to imagine, therefore, how one of these bishops – or perhaps more likely, a musically enthusiastic member of the retinue travelling with him – might have developed an interest in the exciting musical innovations he heard in Paris and brought back some kind of written record of the music that could be copied into a permanent book by the scribes at St Andrews. As the scribes compiled this collection of Parisian music, they added further pieces in a Notre-Dame style to make the collection more practically useful in the local **liturgy** of their own church, as well as compositions more distinctly local in character.

Worcester Polyphony

Although musical exchange across the waters that separated Britain from neighbouring lands continued throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the second half of the thirteenth century polyphonic pieces in a more distinctively English style, differing from the polyphonic writing found elsewhere, survive in increasing numbers. Opinion is divided on the extent to which this English style corresponds to certain descriptions made by writers at the time. The author Gerald of Wales (*c*.1146–*c*.1223), for example, famously recorded the striking impression made upon him by polyphonic singing he heard in Wales and in the north of England, but his comments lack musical precision and are not straightforward to interpret. The music theorist Anonymous IV (see p. 61 above), referred to the preference of the English for the intervals of a major and minor third, stating that English singers – especially those from what he referred to as the 'West Country' – called them the 'best consonances'. In a small handful of two-part polyphonic

pieces from the British Isles, such as the Middle English *Edi beo thu* and the Latin song to St Magnus, *Nobilis humilis*, which has been associated with the island of Orkney, the voices move substantially in parallel thirds, and some have suggested that these pieces may be the (written) tip of an iceberg of improvised or unwritten practice, specific to Britain. Most written polyphony, however, uses thirds more sparingly, and even in the thirds-based pieces just mentioned, the interval is avoided for cadences, which instead opt for the conventional consonant intervals of the octave, fifth, and unison. However, at points other than the ends of phrases, English polyphony from the second half of the thirteenth century does make extensive use of the triad and inverted triad, both chords defined by the presence of the third (usually major). This feature contributes to the rich, full-sounding harmony of these pieces, in contrast to the more sparse sonority of fifths and octaves.

By far the largest collection of polyphony from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Britain is a substantial set of damaged and fragmentary parchment pages collectively known as the Worcester fragments. The pages were, at an early stage in their history, removed from the large choir books in which they originated and recycled as covers and padding for the bindings of other books held in Worcester Cathedral Library (see 'The Fate of Manuscripts' on p. 154). Around a hundred pieces are preserved, some fully or nearly intact, others badly damaged; some of them can be completed by referring to other manuscripts in which the same pieces can be found.

An extract from a **motet** matching this description is shown in Example 7.2. *Thomas gemma Cantuarie* is a four-part motet, though the copy in the Worcester fragments contains only the two tenor voices. Luckily, the upper parts are preserved in two other manuscripts and so the entire piece can be reconstructed. Though often referred to just by the opening words of its highest part, a more accurate title for the motet would be *Thomas gemma Cantuarie / Thomas cesus in Doveria / Primus Tenor / Secundus Tenor*, giving the initial words of each of the two differently texted upper parts and showing that the two lower voices are provided with only part names ('First Tenor' and 'Second Tenor') but no sung text in the sources. The opening few lines of the texts in the upper two parts (the **triplum** and **motetus**) are shown in Box 7.2, along with their translations. The text in the *triplum* concerns St Thomas of Canterbury, also known as Thomas Becket, who was killed in his cathedral in 1170 following a disagreement with the king, Henry II. Quickly recognized as a holy martyr, Becket was soon granted sainthood, and Canterbury Cathedral was substantially remodelled to place his shrine at its centre and to provide access for the many pilgrims who flocked there. The subject of the text of the *motetus* voice (*Thomas cesus in Doveria*) is the lesser-known saint Thomas of Dover, a monk martyred in 1295. The writer of the motet seized upon the parallels

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Box 7.2 Motet voices in conversation

Triplum:	*Motetus:*
Thomas, gemma Cantuarie primula,	Thomas, cesus in Doveria emulo lesus,
fide pro tuenda cesus in ecclesia,	
a divina repentina mira caritate fulgens ←	← a divina repentina mira caritate fulgens
matutina vespertina lucis increate gratia ←	← matutina vespertina lucis increate gratia;
late tibi nova reparate;	rivulo patulo
sublimaris curia regis pro fidelitate tua; ←	← sublimaris curia manens in eternitate Patris;

Thomas, first jewel of Canterbury, killed in the church for defending the faith, suddenly shining with the wonder of divine love, [shining] morning and evening with the new grace of uncreated light widely restored through you, elevated to the court of the King by faith…

Thomas, killed in Dover, wounded by striving, suddenly shining with the wonder of divine love, [shining] morning and evening with the grace of uncreated light, with an open stream, elevated to the court of the Father you will remain forever…

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between the two saints – their names, manner of death, and locations (Dover and Canterbury are around 25 km apart in the English county of Kent) – and created a pair of texts that echo one another closely, some lines shared identically, and others more loosely modelled on one another. The aim is clearly to emphasize the connections between the two Thomases, and the musical setting takes this further, placing the opening phrases 'Thomas gemma Cantuarie' and 'Thomas cesus in Doveria' in exact synchronization between the upper voices.

The extract shown in Example 7.2, taken from the point at which the *triplum* reaches the third line of its text, overlapping with the end of the second line of text in the *motetus*, demonstrates many of the techniques used throughout the rest of the motet. We have labelled the extract with boxed capital letters to help identify and describe these techniques. The motet is subdivided into very clear four-bar sections, with cadences onto *F* at the end of each four-bar phrase. The regularity of the musical structure is at odds with the unequal text lines, but the composer has skilfully planned the word-setting so that the upper voices reach the cadence with a rhyme sound, even when this is not the true end of the poetic line. (Note how the words *caritate*, *increate, late, eternitate*, and *fidelitate* are arranged to coincide with the cadences of each passage.) At times the two upper voices alternate, one resting while the other sings, but in other places their music overlaps for a whole phrase, and the same is true of the two tenor parts, which behave as a pair in similar ways. The music for passages A and B is identical, except that the triplum and motetus parts have swapped: in passage B, the *motetus* sings the melody assigned to the *triplum* in passage A, and vice versa. The two

Example 7.2 English motet: *Thomas gemma Cantuarie / Thomas cesus in Doveria / Primus Tenor / Secundus Tenor* (extract)

tenor parts simply repeat passage A as passage B, without exchanging. Exactly the same thing happens between passages E and F, although here there is a little variation between the *triplum* in passage E and the *motetus* in passage F, because their texts have a different number of syllables to fit to the music. This technique of repetition of passages, with the upper voices swapped, is called **voice exchange** and is one of the main features of English polyphony in this period.

Passage D in the example demonstrates a much more broken-up **texture**, each voice having very short phrases interspersed with rests. This is an example of **hocket** (first described in the previous chapter), a technique in which the melody in a given part is broken up with rests, and (usually) a second voice is likewise broken up, but asynchronously with the first. The impression generated is of a single melody, passing back and forth between the voices. The music of passage D returns several times through the course of the motet and on each occasion creates a striking contrast with what has come before. A texture in which two voices are singing different texts simultaneously is a verbal jungle, difficult for a listener to make out, but at each occurrence of D, the sudden thinning of the texture to one in which only one voice is singing words at any one time brings the verbal text strongly into prominence. Musically and poetically, this passage D functions as a kind of refrain because, each time it occurs, the rhymes as well as the music are very similar: the frequent return of this familiar passage is very apparent when listening to a performance of the motet (see the Suggested Recordings at the end of this chapter).

The kinds of techniques apparent in *Thomas gemma Cantuarie* and other late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century English polyphony provide a context for *Sumer is icumen in*. Compositional play with alternating voices, and the passing of a melody between two or more parts of equal importance, underlies both the motet procedures of voice exchange and hocket, and *Sumer is icumen in*'s use of a round. The regular musical structure in four-bar phrases and the tonality based on *F* (with plenty of thirds, mid-phrase) are further common features. In *Thomas gemma Cantuarie* we can catch a glimpse of the English preference for parallel thirds and sixths in places (see the phrase at bars 31–32 in Example 7.2, where the voices sing a succession of parallel inverted triads, or what would be called 'first inversion' or '6-3' chords, in modern harmonic parlance). While *Sumer is icumen in* is relatively unusual in thirteenth-century polyphony for its English text, a few other English-language polyphonic songs do exist, and there is even a fourteenth-century motet whose upper voice is Latin but whose tenor (or *pes*) is a fragment of an English song.

The Fate of Manuscripts

A highly significant feature of all the music explored so far in this chapter is that none of it currently survives in a fully intact, dedicated music book. Some individual pieces, such as *Sumer is icumen in*, are found within the pages of books that are primarily not musical; some of these have the appearance of having been squeezed into a blank space between other texts. Other music in this chapter survives only as fragments of what were once larger musical collections, which were taken apart and their parchment recycled for new purposes. Most frequently, these parchment leaves were used by bookbinders as part of the binding of later books: the old leaves serving as covers or padding that helped to protect the pages of the book being bound. From the evidence we have, it seems that in England music books were routinely and systematically destroyed in this way, presumably because to later owners, the parchment on which they were written was of greater value than the musical pieces themselves. Paradoxically, this act of apparent vandalism may have helped to preserve some music that might otherwise have been discarded altogether. The booklet of the Later Cambridge Songs, for example, which is untidily written and lacks any decoration, might have ended up on the scrap heap had not a later thirteenth-century bookbinder decided to use it as raw material.

It is very difficult to assess the extent and nature of the repertory of polyphony and song from England on the basis of its material remains. For every fragment of an early music book that has been discovered in a later book binding, many more must have been lost. Some may yet await discovery: where they are completely concealed inside the bindings, such leaves are fully invisible until modern librarians feel compelled to remove the bindings for repair or replacement. Other binding materials will have been destroyed along with the books they covered, through one of the many ways (e.g. fire, flood, theft, or deliberate destruction) that books have disappeared over the centuries.

Manuscripts and books owned by monasteries in England suffered particularly during the religious upheavals of the sixteenth-century Reformation. Under King Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1540, hundreds of manuscripts were seized from monastery libraries and dispersed among private owners, sold, or simply lost. Many hundreds of others were deliberately destroyed, as the king's commissioners were ordered to obliterate any books or church objects which represented allegiance to the pope or to traditional Roman Catholic practices. During the reigns of Henry's children, Edward VI and Elizabeth I, the Latin liturgy of the English Church was replaced with new English prayer books, and simple congregational singing was substituted for elaborate choral polyphony: thus swathes of music composed for the old church services became redundant. This fact alone partly

accounts for the loss of manuscripts of chant and liturgical polyphony from medieval England and for the fragments of such books that were recycled as binding materials.

Some binding fragments hint at the staggering size of the original music books from which they came. For example, a pair of parchment leaves in the library of Westminster Abbey in London each measure 490 x 345 mm, dimensions that represent an enormous choir book, suitable for placing on a lectern for a group of singers to read. Some of the Worcester fragments can be identified as having come from the same original book, and original folio numbers on these fragments indicate that the medieval book contained at least 140 folios (280 pages) of music. Many other surviving fragments hint at the contents of the volumes from which they came. It is relatively common to find that the pieces surviving on a fragment all begin with the same letter, suggesting an alphabetical organization in their original contexts. Perhaps even *Mirie it is*, directly preceded on its fragmentary leaf by the French song *Mult s'asprisme*, came from a songbook with songs grouped by initial letter.

Two music manuscripts that have found their way into the care of the Dorset History Centre (formerly the Dorset County Record Office) in Dorchester have interesting stories to tell about the fate of musical sources. One is a set of badly damaged scraps of parchment, the largest 140 x 275 mm, the smallest merely 16 x 14 mm. The parchment is stained with damp and has been attacked by insects or rodents. The fragments were discovered during renovations of the parish church at nearby Netherbury in 1964, concealed inside the wall of a fifteenth-century clock chamber. It is fortunate not only that these tiny scraps were placed there originally, but also that in the 1960s they were kept and later transferred to the safekeeping of the county records office, rather than discarded as builders' waste. A second set of music manuscript fragments arrived in the Dorset History Centre in 2019, where they are on permanent loan from their owners, the Fox-Strangways family, Earls of Ilchester, whose ancestral home is in Melbury, Dorset. The music leaves had been discovered among other loose papers in a chest at Melbury House, and it is highly likely that they had come into the family's possession when Sir Giles Strangways acquired the Abbey of Abbotsbury after its dissolution in 1539. The abbey's buildings, lands, and administrative documents were transferred to the family, and the music fragments – perhaps used as covers for some of these documents – have probably remained at Melbury for over 450 years.

Figure 7.3 shows one of the two fragments of the Melbury manuscript just described, with elegant decorated initials (the letters A and U/V) in red and blue ink. From the way that the musical pieces continue from one fragment to the next (albeit with a small section cut away between the two), it is apparent that the two fragments are not pages from a book but rather sections of a parchment roll, or **rotulus**. Rolls were used for music in the Middle Ages for a variety of reasons, including the need to carry music in a more easily portable form than a heavy,

Figure 7.3 The Dorset *rotulus*
Dorchester, Dorset History Centre, D-FSI acc.10959 (Abbotsbury rotulus),
fragment a (recto); by permission

bound book; as a way of quickly making written copies of new music before it could
be set down in a more permanent location; and as a format suitable for presenting
long, polyphonic pieces in a way that all the parts could be viewed at once, rather
than on separate pages of a book. The Dorset *rotulus* certainly matches the third of
these possibilities, containing the remains of two exceptionally long motets that
would have been difficult to lay out satisfactorily in book format.

The English Carol

The second reason for producing a musical roll – the desire to make a quick copy of a new piece for easy distribution – may have been the motivation behind the Trinity Carol Roll, the earliest manuscript to preserve the music of the English **carol** repertory. Among its thirteen carols is the famous Agincourt Carol, *Deo gracias Anglia*, celebrating the victory of Henry V at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. It is possible that the roll was created shortly after the return of the king and his troops to England in the autumn/winter of that year. It would certainly be fitting for a song with such a topical text to be transmitted as quickly as possible, and – since the larger books containing the carol repertory are all later – it may also be the case that the English carol was a new phenomenon, yet to establish a place in more formal book contexts.

But what do we mean when we refer to the 'English carol repertory'? The term 'carol' has had so many meanings at different historical periods that its use can be confusing. In the context of medieval polyphony and song, the English carol is a musical and poetic form shared by around ninety pieces, nearly all dating from the fifteenth century and nearly all preserved in just four English manuscripts. They use Middle English for their texts, though many – including the Agincourt Carol – incorporate short phrases of Latin too, and a further thirty pieces entirely in Latin but sharing exactly the same form can be added to the ninety mainly English-language carols. The poetic form consists of a **burden**, which opens the piece and then recurs like a refrain between each of the stanzas. Musically, many of the carols are in two voice parts which declaim the text simultaneously and in the same rhythm: the single text is thus clearly and audibly expressed. Some carols are in three parts throughout, and others create contrast by changing the number of voices between the burden and the stanzas (such as a three-part burden alternating with a two-part stanza, or sometimes a monophonic burden is used with a polyphonic stanza). The later association of the term carol with the Christmas season only partly applies to the fifteenth-century repertory: Christmas themes and praise of saints linked to the Christmas season (St Nicholas, St John the Evangelist, St Stephen, and St Thomas Becket) occur in many of these early English carols, but other topics – principally the Virgin Mary, and occasionally political or military occasions – are almost as prevalent.

Some carol poems that were written down without music have labels indicating the names of tunes to which they were to be sung; sadly, we know almost nothing about these lost melodies, and cannot know how they related to the polyphonic carols that survive. Although the English carol repertory is a highly distinctive style of music that has little in common either with other kinds of fifteenth-century polyphony or with the music of earlier generations, there are a number of notable parallels between it and the other types of song we have discussed in this chapter. The mixing of languages, often

side by side, is a feature found in thirteenth-century song and in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century motet, as well as in the English carol. The appearance of monophony and polyphony within the same repertory is also shared with earlier English song, and the tantalizing evidence of lost melodies now known to us only by the snippets of their words attached to other texts as cues for singing is a reminder of the great quantities of medieval song that were passed on orally and therefore remain unknowable to us.

Suggested Recordings

Exultemus et letemur, and the songs of St Godric:

- *Miracula: Medieval Music for St Nicholas*, Ensemble Peregrina, dir. Agnieszka Budzińska-Bennett (TACET, 213DIG, 2014)
- *Legends of St Nicholas*, Anonymous 4 (Harmonia Mundi, HMU 907232DI, 1999)

Other pieces from the Later Cambridge Songs:

- *The Earliest Songbook in England*, Gothic Voices, dir. Christopher Page (Hyperion, CDA67177, 2000)

Mirie it is and other English-language songs, plus Latin polyphony and instrumental pieces:

- *Miri it is: Songs and Instrumental Music from Medieval England*, The Dufay Collective with John Potter (Chandos, CHAN 9396, 1995)
- *Sumer is icumen in*, The Hilliard Ensemble, dir. Paul Hillier (Harmonia Mundi, HMA 1951154, 1985, 2002)

Thomas gemma Cantuarie primula, English carols, and other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English music:

- *Medieval English Music*, The Hilliard Ensemble, dir. Paul Hillier (Harmonia Mundi, HMA 1901106, 1982, 2009)

Other songs and motets from England:

- *The Lily & The Lamb*, Anonymous 4 (Harmonia Mundi, HMU 907125, 1995)
- *Flyleaves: Medieval Music in English Manuscripts*, Liber unUsualis (Passacaille, 938, 2004)

English carols:

- *Deo gracias Anglia!*, Alamire, dir. David Skinner (Obsidian, CD709, 2012)

- *Medieval Carols*, Oxford Camerata, dir. Jeremy Summerly (Naxos, 8.550751, 1993)

Further Reading

Bent, Margaret, Jared C. Hartt, and Peter M. Lefferts, *The Dorset Rotulus: Contextualizing and Reconstructing the Early English Motet* (Woodbridge, 2021).

Caldwell, John, *The Oxford History of English Music*, volume 1, *From the Beginnings to c.1715* (Oxford, 1991).

Deeming, Helen, 'An English Monastic Miscellany: The Reading Manuscript of *Sumer is icumen in*', in *Manuscripts and Medieval Song: Inscription, Performance, Context*, ed. Helen Deeming and Elizabeth Eva Leach (Cambridge, 2015), 116–40.

Deeming, Helen (ed.), *Songs in British Sources, c.1150–1300*, Musica Britannica 95 (London, 2013).

Dobson, Eric J., and Frank Ll. Harrison (eds), *Medieval English Songs* (London, 1979).

Fallows, David, *Henry V and the Earliest English Carols, 1413–1440* (Abingdon, 2018).

Stevens, John, *The Later Cambridge Songs: An English Song Collection of the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 2005).

On the Shores of the Mediterranean: Italy, Sicily, and the Iberian Peninsula

The Mediterranean Sea was crucial in the Middle Ages for the transfer of people, goods, and knowledge between areas with quite different cultures (Figure 8.1). To the north, the ports of France and Italy provided a route from the Mediterranean into Western Europe, where Western Christianity – with Rome at its centre and Latin as its language – formed the dominant culture. To the west, the Iberian Peninsula (now Spain and Portugal) was largely a Muslim territory from the year 711 onward, when Islamic forces invaded the area by crossing the Mediterranean from North Africa. Over the following centuries, a Christian re-conquest of Iberia gradually regained control of the peninsula, region by region, creating a situation in which Muslim- and Christian-ruled areas regularly co-existed as neighbours. Meanwhile, Muslim communities were also found on the island of Sicily, whose uniquely mixed culture also included influences from the Latin West and from the Greek-speaking Christians of Byzantium, in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Crusades to the Holy Land (already mentioned in Chapter 3) contributed significantly to the traffic of people across the Mediterranean from the eleventh century onwards, and brought about both military and sometimes diplomatic engagement between Christian crusaders and Muslim forces. All of these cultural encounters that took place around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea had an impact not just on political and religious affairs but on art, literature, and music as well.

In this chapter, we will explore some of the music of the Mediterranean regions between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. We will discover musical evidence of the interplay between cultures and see how travel and the transfer of knowledge affected music and musicians of the time. Beginning with the travels of the **troubadours**, when they found themselves forced to leave their traditional heartlands, we will look at **polyphony** and song in the areas to which they were dispersed, including Italy, Sicily, and Northern Spain. The special musical culture of medieval Iberia, where Christians, Muslims, and Jews worked and made music together to a degree not found elsewhere, is encapsulated by the court of King Alfonso X of Castile and León, where fruitful musical and poetic collaboration produced the song **repertory** known as the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Pilgrimage

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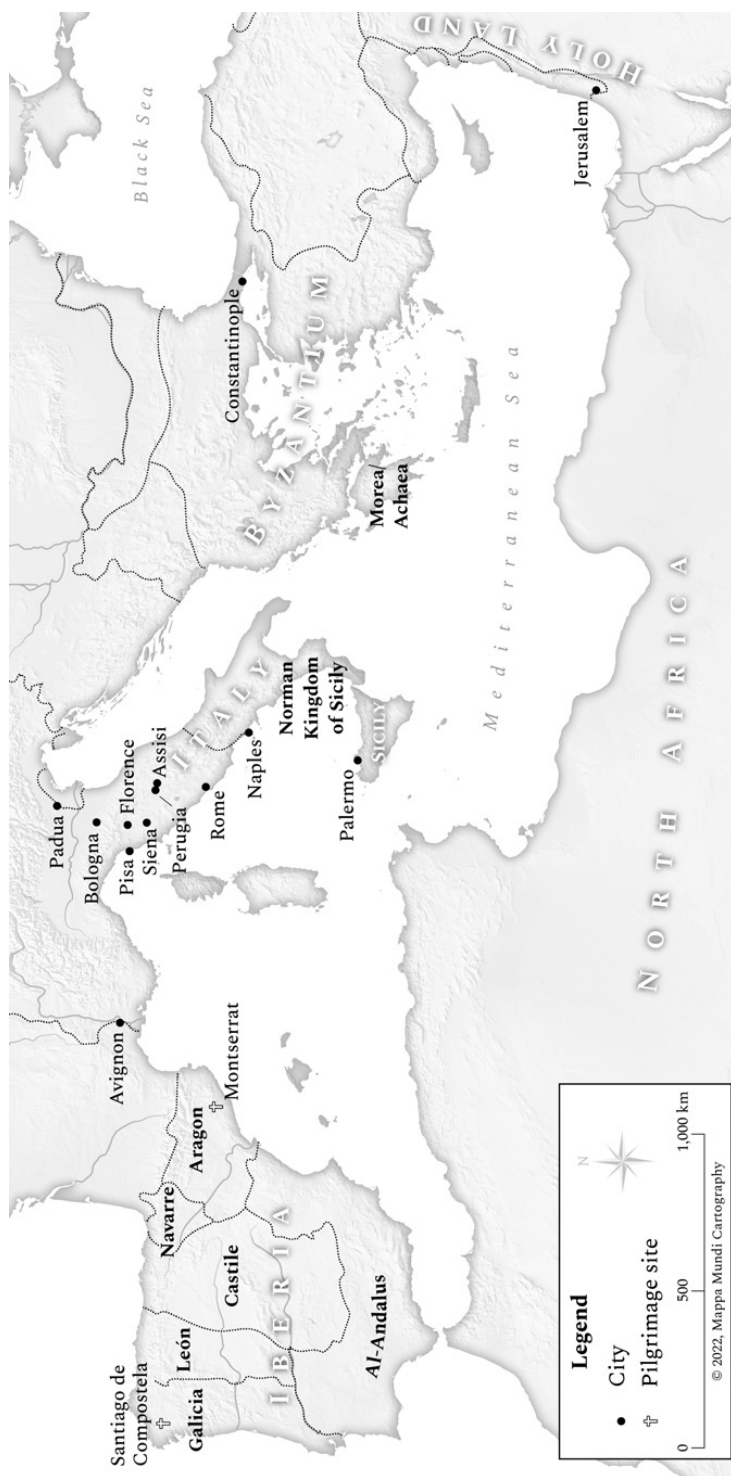
Figure 8.1 The medieval Mediterranean, c.1200
© Mappa Mundi Cartography

was a significant feature of medieval Christianity, and several important pilgrimage sites were located in Northern Spain. The polyphony of the *Codex Calixtinus* from Santiago de Compostela and the songs of the *Llibre vermell* from Montserrat are two notable musical collections that sprang out of these pilgrimage destinations. The Italian song form known as the **lauda** (literally, 'praise') originated among the followers of St Francis of Assisi, who – like pilgrims – were often laypeople animated by sincere and simple religious devotion. The chapter ends by delving into the distinctive polyphony and song of fourteenth-century Italy – a period often referred to as the **Trecento**.

Migrating Troubadours

Since the centre of troubadour activity was in what is now Southern France, it seems initially curious that most of the **manuscripts** preserving troubadour songs are of Italian origin. However, a particular pattern of migration that followed the upheavals of the Albigensian Crusade (see Chapter 3) accounts for this apparent anomaly. As the courts of the nobility which had supported the troubadours' careers were displaced and their lands subsumed under the control of the King of France, many troubadours travelled to Italy or to Northern Spain in search of new employment. The north of Italy was organized as a network of regions controlled by individual lords, and many troubadours found a willing market for their music at those courts, as well as in some cities. The influence of the troubadours in Italy is clear not only from the many manuscripts of their poems which were written there, but also from the works of Italian-born poets who imitated the troubadours' styles and adopted their Occitan language for their songs. Similar imitations happened in Spain, as migrating troubadours taught their skills to local musicians at the courts of Castile, León, Aragon, and Navarre. The impact of troubadour song, and – more broadly – of patterns of migration, could be felt widely across these areas bordering the Mediterranean Sea. They formed part of a constant circulation of people and ideas around the Mediterranean between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries that would have important consequences for music.

The Mediterranean Melting Pot

Located at a central point in the Mediterranean Sea, the island of Sicily had been a target of settlers and invaders for centuries before the period covered in this book. Occupied by the Byzantine Empire since the sixth century, the island was conquered by Arabs in the ninth, though Byzantine armies mounted repeated attempts

to retake Sicily up until the twelfth century. It was under rulers from well to the north of the Mediterranean, however, that Sicily flourished from the end of the eleventh century. From Normandy in Northern France, the knights Robert Guiscard and his brother Roger de Hauteville successfully took control of Sicily between 1061 and 1091, establishing a Norman rule on the island that was confirmed by the coronation of Roger's son, Roger II, as King of Sicily in 1130. Under King Roger, a uniquely multicultural society was fostered, and the artistic and architectural styles bear the traces of Sicily's many cultural groups (Byzantine, Muslim, Jewish, and Latin Christian). The royal chapel – *Capella Palatina* – within Roger's palace in Palermo encapsulates these different influences. The core structure is based on that of a Byzantine basilica, and its decoration was carried out by artists specially brought in from the Byzantine capital, Constantinople. Next to this Byzantine core is placed a Western-style nave with side aisles. Here the decoration includes marble walls and flooring, in a style found in Rome and Southern Italy but incorporating design details from both Byzantine and Islamic art. On the upper half of the walls and around the arches are Byzantine mosaics with a glittering golden background. Above the whole structure is a wooden ceiling constructed in the Islamic *muqarnas* ('honeycomb') style: its thousands of niches are crowded with painted scenes depicting life at court, some accompanied by Arabic inscriptions. From a musical point of view, this ceiling – one of the largest painted ceilings from anywhere in the medieval world – is of profound interest for the musicians and dancers it represents among its more than 3,000 miniature sections. Figure 8.2 shows one of these details; a musician, perhaps female, wearing typical Islamic dress and headgear and playing an **oud**.

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, troubadours travelled throughout Italy, including to Sicily, bringing their Occitan literary and musical tradition with them. Although there are no surviving records detailing their encounters with the Muslim musicians of Palermo, given the cultural interaction apparent in the island's twelfth-century art and architecture, it seems very likely that there was musical exchange between its different groups too.

From a century later we have a highly significant musical manuscript with links both to the island of Sicily and to the Morea, a part of Greece that had been occupied by Crusaders from France since 1205. The *Chansonnier du Roi* ('King's Songbook') preserves a large collection of troubadour and **trouvère** songs and French **motets**, and was commissioned by Charles of Anjou, the youngest son of King Louis VIII of France, who built up his lands and influence until he was invited by the pope to invade the kingdom of Sicily in 1266. Becoming king not just of Sicily, but at the same time much of the Southern Italian mainland including Naples, Charles was one of the most influential figures in thirteenth-century politics. He twice accompanied his brother, King Louis IX, on Crusade, acquiring

Figure 8.2 Musician playing an *oud* from the ceiling of the *Capella Palatina*, Palermo, Sicily; 1131–40 (painted wood)
Mondadori Portfolio/Electa/Sergio Anelli/Bridgeman Images

claims to lordships of territories in the Holy Land. Recent research suggests that his songbook was originally commissioned as a gift from Charles to William, Prince of Achaea (another name for the Morea), whose court was visited by travellers from across the Mediterranean and remarked on for its sophistication, opulence, and the high quality of the French language spoken there. The songbook seems to have been originally designed as a prestigious, luxurious gift, filled with elegant illustrations and the finest musical output of the Northern-French trouvères – some of whom, including the renowned Adam de la Halle (see Chapter 5), worked at Charles's court – and their troubadour predecessors. The giving of such a book was an act of homage from one lord to another, and its possession a symbol of wealth, courtliness, and high status. Other crusader knights who seized territories in the Eastern Mediterranean (known in medieval French as the *Outremer*, or 'overseas') brought luxury manuscripts of song with them, probably as part of the regalia with which they proclaimed themselves worthy of lordship.

The mingling of cultures, and the effects of the co-existence and migration of different cultural groups, can be seen most clearly in the poetry and song produced in medieval Spain. For much of the medieval period, most of the Iberian Peninsula except for the far north was ruled by Muslim lords from North Africa who had conquered the territory in the eighth century. In this area – known as 'Al-Andalus' in Arabic – local Christians and Jews were permitted to practise their religions openly, and the ancient liturgies of both groups continued to be sung in their places of worship. Christians and Jews were not merely tolerated by their Muslim rulers but regularly worked together with them, sometimes occupying important roles in government, courtly society, or the rulers' military forces. Poetry and song flourished at the courts of Al-Andalus, and there is considerable evidence of interaction between poets writing in Arabic and Hebrew. Many Jewish poets studied and then adopted poetic and musical forms from Arab songs, especially the **muwashshah** ('girdle poem'), a form based on the regular return of the opening rhyme sounds in between sections with new rhymes. Jewish poets took up the *muwashshah* – which was typically used for secular love songs in Arabic – for both their secular and later liturgical Hebrew songs, often setting new Hebrew words to existing Arab melodies. Another sign of the permeation of different poetic influences in Al-Andalus is that many Hebrew poems end with a couplet in either Arabic or Romance (the Christian vernacular language, ultimately derived from Latin). The music of the Hebrew and Arabic songs of medieval Spain was not written down: in fact, written copies of the song texts are often prefaced with a note giving the name of the tune to which they were to be sung (presumably because the singers could be relied upon to learn and perform the tunes by heart). The melodies themselves are thus sadly lost to us, but the poets, writers, and artists of the period have left plenty of information about the instruments that were played at the courts of Al-Andalus. The area became a centre for the craft of musical instrument-making, and many European instruments were derived from Arab models manufactured in Spain, such as the lute (from the *oud*; see Figure 8.2) and the rebec (from the **rabāb**).

The gradual re-conquest of Spain by Christian forces was accomplished over the course of some five centuries, with individual regions conquered one by one, until the last remaining Muslims were expelled from the peninsula in 1492. In the battles that raged for control of these territories, local inhabitants were frequently uprooted, and many – especially Jews – found themselves forced to leave their homes and seek a safe haven elsewhere. Many of the best-known Hebrew poets of medieval Spain had lives disrupted in this way and travelled from area to area with just the possessions they could carry on their backs and the music they could hold in their memories. These Jewish migrants

sometimes found new employment at the courts of Christian rulers, although neither they nor their Muslim counterparts were assured of the peaceful tolerance that they had enjoyed under Muslim government. One Christian ruler stands out for his unusually generous welcome of migrants from both south and north, and the extraordinary musical culture that it produced: King Alfonso X of Castile-León.

The Court of Alfonso X of Castile-León and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*

Alfonso X, known as *El Sabio* ('the Wise'), was king of Castile, León, and Galicia, and another character deeply woven into the inter-regional politics of thirteenth-century Europe. He inherited the kingdom of Castile and León from his father, having earlier fought alongside him to capture several surrounding territories from Muslim control. Alfonso's court was a place of learning and scientific pursuits; he welcomed into it Muslim and Jewish scholars, and arranged for the translation of many Arabic and Hebrew texts into Latin and Castilian (the local vernacular of Castile, and the precursor of modern Spanish). Interested in astronomy and astrology, history, and games of strategy such as chess, Alfonso also encouraged and supported musicians and poets at his court. Troubadours fleeing south from the disruptions of the Albigensian Crusade, as well as Muslim and Jewish musicians migrating north from the battlegrounds of Southern Spain, all found hospitality at Alfonso's court: conspicuously, half of the king's court musicians were non-Christian.

Alfonso's openness to Arabic and Hebrew texts probably extended to interest in the musical traditions of his Muslim and Jewish courtiers. Illustrations in some of the books commissioned by Alfonso show Christian, Jewish, and Muslim musicians playing a wide variety of instruments. Figure 8.3 shows a male and female musician wearing characteristically Jewish headgear and a yellow patch on their sleeves, which was a form of identification that Jews were obliged to wear in certain places and times during the Middle Ages. The pair are playing a curved horn called an **albogón**, and an hourglass-shaped drum supported on the shoulder. Many instruments featured in these books – including this type of horn and drum – are of Arab or North-African origin, and the manuscripts from Alfonso's court are often the first records of the spread of these instruments into Christian European contexts.

As well as his scientific and scholarly interests, Alfonso X was a poet and musician, and was responsible for the compilation of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* ('Songs of Holy Mary'), a vast collection of songs (**cantigas**) that mostly

Figure 8.3 Jewish musicians in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*
Thirteenth century. Canticle n°300, folio 368 V. Madrid, San Lorenzo de El
Escorial library. Author: Alfonso X of Castile the Wise (1221–84). Alamy Stock
Photo

relate miracles of the Virgin Mary. Alfonso himself authored some of the songs;
others were composed by his court musicians. All the songs use the Galician-
Portuguese language, the vernacular of the region of Galicia, neighbouring Castile-
León to the west. Although Alfonso promoted the use of the Castilian vernacular
for science and government, he chose Galician-Portuguese for the *Cantigas*, prob-
ably because the language was already widely used for courtly literature, especially
poetry and song. As a collection, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* outnumbers any
other repertory of vernacular song from medieval Europe, totalling over 400
individual poems with music. The songs are arranged in a clear sequence (with
some differences between the four manuscript copies), in which the miracle songs
are interspersed every ten songs with more general songs of praise (*cantigas de loor*)
to Mary. Three of the four manuscripts are richly decorated, and the largest of the

four includes an illustration of musicians – such as the one shown in Figure 8.3 – before each of the *cantigas de loor*.

Given the cultural diversity present at Alfonso's court, it is not surprising that the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* also draw on a wide range of influences. The subject matter is uniformly Christian, yet the musicians depicted in the manuscripts – and therefore, presumably, who played and sang the songs – are of all three religious groups present in Castile-León. The sources of the miracle stories on which the songs are based come from all around Christian Europe, though some refer quite specifically to events in the lives of Alfonso and his courtiers. The poetic form in which nearly all the cantigas are cast is called the **zéjel** (or *zajal* in Arabic), a kind of refrain song that seems to have originated in Muslim Spain and was used by poets writing in Arabic and Hebrew as well as in Galician-Portuguese. For the musical settings of most of the cantigas, Alfonso and his fellow songwriters chose to use the **virelai** form, also found in French songs of the thirteenth century (see Chapter 5). Scholars remain divided on the extent to which either (or both) the poetic and musical forms of the cantigas were directly modelled on Arab archetypes, with some suggesting that the direction of influence may have been the other way round (earlier songs in Romance languages providing the basis for Arabic songs in Al-Andalus). Perhaps the situation was more fluid, with cross-penetration of poetic and musical styles in both directions. In any case, the particular combination of *zéjel* poems with *virelai* musical settings is unique to the cantigas, which therefore must be seen as a specific product of their circumstances.

Cantiga 40, *Deus te salve* (Example 8.1) is the fifth of the *cantigas de loor* in the collection. It is headed in the manuscripts with a title describing its contents: 'This is in praise of Holy Mary, of the wonders that God has done through her'. The main focus of the text is the mystery of the Incarnation, a popular theme in medieval songs in praise of Mary, which reflects on the paradox of Mary's ability to give birth to Christ who – as God – is both her son and her heavenly Father (a variant of this same theme from the previous century is found in *Res iocosa*, Example 3.3). In *zéjel* form, the text opens with a refrain or **estribillo**, which is repeated after each of the **stanzas** (only the first stanza is shown in Example 8.1). The rhymes of the *estribillo* – whose pattern we could describe as *aa* – are then changed for the **mudanza** section; *mudanza* literally means 'change' in Galician-Portuguese. The new rhymes of the *mudanza* are repeated three times – *bbb* – before the final line returns to the *estribillo* rhyme sound *a*. This return, anticipating in rhyme sound the repeat of the *estribillo* which will follow, is called the **vuelta** (literally, 'turn'). All the typical features of the *zéjel* form are present in this example, including the triple repetition of the *mudanza* rhyme. This cantiga is more elaborate than some, since it has additional rhymes in the middle of its long lines ('-osa' in the *estribillo* and '-iste' in the *mudanza*).

Example 8.1 *Deus te salve* from the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*

Translation:
God save you, glorious queen Mary,
beautiful light of the saints and way to the heavens.
Hail to you, who conceived greatly against nature,
and then bore your Father and remained a pure virgin,
and thus you rose above the height of the heavens,
because you desired that which he wanted.
God save you . . .

The musical features of the *virelai* form are also all present in this cantiga, though – as with the text – the music is a somewhat more intricate version of the basic form. The outline structure of the *virelai* is ABBA, where here the first A section corresponds to the *estribillo*, the two B sections are the first two lines of the *mudanza* ('Salvete . . . ' and 'e pois teu . . . '), and the second A section is the repeated music that accompanies the third line of the *mudanza* and the *vuelta*

('Virgen … ' and 'dos ceos … '). Because the music returns to its opening material before the *vuelta* in the text, the musical and poetic 'returns' are asynchronized, a feature typical of the cantigas. In this particular example, though, the return of the music of the A section is actually anticipated at the end of the second B phrase: a more detailed scheme is necessary to describe the poetic and musical structures of *Deus te salve* (Table 8.1). As this shows, just as there are extra rhymes within the *estribillo* and *mudanza* sections, the musical structure is also more subdivided, with the A section consisting of four phrases, one of which (v) is internally repeated, and another of which (x) is heard again, in slightly altered form, at the end of the second B section, linking the music of B back to that of A. In all of the subsequent stanzas, unusually for a cantiga, the same rhymes ('-iste' and '-ura') are used, so that overall the song gives the impression of being very densely and coherently organized.

The notation and rhythmic interpretation of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* have been the subject of scholarly debate since they were first transcribed in the 1940s. The manuscripts were written during a time of rapid notational change and therefore seem to exhibit some elements of the older style of **modal rhythm** alongside other features of the newer **mensural** system. Though the manuscripts were written after the **treatise** of Franco of Cologne (see Chapter 6), their notation is not fully **Franconian**, and consequently there are some areas of ambiguity in how details of their rhythms should be transcribed and performed. However, the broad rhythmic shape of a cantiga like *Deus te salve* (Example 8.1), with its ternary rhythm and prevailing short–long pattern, is not in doubt.

Table 8.1 *Poetic and musical structures in* Deus te salve

Zéjel form	Rhymes	Text lines	Musical phrases	Virelai form
estribillo	a1	Deus te salve, groriosa	v	A
	a2	reina Maria	w	
	a1	lume dos santos fremosa	v	
	a2	e dos ceos via.	x	
mudanza	b1	Salvete, que concebiste	y	B
	b2	mui contra natura,	z	
	b1	e pois teu Padre pariste,	y	B
	b2	e ficaste pura	x'	
	b1	Virgen, e poren sobiste	v	A
	b2	sobe la altura	w	
vuelta	b1	dos ceos, porque quesiste	v	
	a2	o que el queria.	x	

Music and Pilgrimage

Another factor that led to the large-scale movement of people in and out of medieval Spain was the Christian tradition of pilgrimage. Two of the most important locations to which pilgrims from across Christian Europe travelled were located in Northern Spain, one of them within Alfonso X's territory of Galicia in the northwest. Santiago de Compostela housed the shrine of St James, and pilgrim routes (called The Way of St James or *Camino de Santiago*) were established across the European mainland, leading thousands of worshippers on long journeys to pray at the shrine. A twelfth-century manuscript known as the *Codex Calixtinus* provides a wealth of historical information about the pilgrimage to Compostela (including the music played and sung by the pilgrims on their travels). It also contains a booklet of music composed for services which the pilgrims would attend in the church on their arrival. These pieces include chants specially customized to honour St James, along with twenty polyphonic songs, all in Latin. Polyphony for two and three voices is present, and the music is stylistically similar to contemporary polyphony from Aquitaine (see Chapter 3), although some pieces contain **discant** passages more akin to polyphony from Notre-Dame of Paris (Chapter 4).

While the *Codex Calixtinus* provides music for the trained choir of the church to sing, music from another important pilgrimage site was designed for the pilgrims themselves. At Santa Maria de Montserrat in the north-eastern region of Catalonia, where a venerated statue of the Virgin Mary was the focus of pilgrims' devotion, another compendium of texts relating to the pilgrimage was compiled towards the end of the fourteenth century. The *Llibre vermell de Montserrat* ('Red Book of Montserrat') contains a small number of songs, prefaced by a description of their purpose:

> Since the pilgrims who keep vigil in the Church of St Mary of Montserrat sometimes wish to sing and dance, and likewise in the courtyard by day, and in those places there should be no singing except of modest and pious songs, for that reason some are written here. And these should be used modestly and take care lest they disturb those who persevere in their prayers and devout contemplations.

The music within the book seems to fulfil this purpose admirably, its short texts, catchy melodies, and straightforward polyphony making it easy for untrained singers to learn. Some of the songs are in Latin, others in Catalan; titles above the songs themselves sometimes refer to their use in dancing (such as *Ad trepudium rotundum*: 'for a circle dance'). *Laudemus virginem* (Example 8.2) is one of several songs from the *Llibre vermell* labelled a **caça** ('canon' or 'round'), and is written out in the manuscript, as in Example 8.2, as a single melodic line.

> **Box 8.1 Singing with the pilgrims**
>
> You may wish to try singing this round in three parts: you can do this with three individual singers or three groups. First, learn the whole song together until everyone knows it well. Then sing it as a round, following the numbers that are provided: when the first singer (or group of singers) reaches the point in the music marked 'ii.', the second singer (or group) should begin at the beginning, and so on. Both the rhythm and the tune are simple and easy to remember, so that pilgrims at the shrine could pick it up just as easily as children today learn *Frère Jacques*.
>
> **Example 8.2** *Laudemus virginem* from the *Llibre vermell de Montserrat*
>
>
>
> Lau‐de‐mus   vir‐gi‐nem   ma‐ter est   et   ei‐us   fi – li – us   Je‐sus est;
> Plan‐ga‐mus   sce‐le‐ra   ac‐ri‐ter   spe‐ran‐tes   in Je‐sum   iu‐gi‐ter.
>
> **Translation:**
> *Let us praise the Virgin; she is a mother, and her son is Jesus;*
> *Let us lament our sins bitterly, hoping constantly in Jesus.*

In providing appropriately devotional music for the pilgrims to sing, whilst also satisfying their apparent desire for lively, joyful songs suitable for dancing, the monks of Montserrat who compiled the *Llibre vermell* were presumably attempting to bring the pilgrims' rejoicing under control. Rather than outlaw singing and dancing at the shrine altogether, they took a more pragmatic approach and thereby granted us a rare window into the kinds of music that may have been sung by ordinary people without musical training. The Red Book of Montserrat bears comparison with another red book from the fourteenth century, this time from Ireland. The Red Book of Ossory contains sixty Latin devotional song texts composed by Bishop Richard de Ledrede. Though his songs were provided not for laypeople but for the clergy of the cathedral, his preface displays a similar concern to stamp out improper revelry, and substitute more fitting musical celebrations:

> These songs are for the vicars of the cathedral church, so that their throats and mouths, which are consecrated to God, will not be contaminated by songs of low revelry, coarse and profane.

Bishop de Ledrede's songs are not provided with music, but instead his preface invites the singers to seek out for themselves tunes that will fit to the words. A few of the songs from the Red Book of Ossory have been matched up quite successfully

with melodies that survive from around the same time, and this suggests that – just as with the Arabic and Hebrew songs from Al-Andalus mentioned earlier in this chapter – medieval singers were adept at supplying from memory appropriate song-melodies to go with new texts.

St Francis of Assisi and the *Lauda*

The songs provided for pilgrims at the shrine of Montserrat stand out among the music covered in this book, nearly all of which was composed for trained singers and those whose working lives were dedicated to music (either as professional performers or as clerical singers fulfilling the religious obligations of the daily **liturgy**). The nature of the surviving evidence necessarily dictates this focus, since most of the music sung by ordinary people was never written down. But another tradition of music created to satisfy the urge of laypeople to sing praise, comparable to the songs from Montserrat, provides a second example that stands in contrast to the music of the trained few. The Italian **lauda** (plural: *laude*; literally, 'praise') originated in the city states of thirteenth-century Italy under the influence of new religious orders of friars, the Franciscans and Dominicans. The Franciscans were followers of Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), who advocated a life of poverty, travelling from place to place preaching to the people and encouraging them to repent of their sins and devote themselves to singing praise to God. Famously, St Francis said that his followers should be like 'minstrels of God' and encouraged the singing of *laude* in mass processions through city streets. Flourishing in the Umbrian cities of Assisi and Perugia, and Tuscan cities including Florence, Siena, and Pisa, the songs used the regional dialects of everyday speech. Their texts were powerful and sometimes emotionally touching, with themes clearly intended to kindle the singers' and listeners' religious fervour, or to teach and help them to memorize Christian doctrine. Many of the early *lauda* melodies were relatively simple and easy to sing, and it is probably no coincidence that only a very small proportion of the surviving manuscripts that preserve *lauda* texts also contain notated music (the implication is that the melodies were learnt and passed on orally). Some of the notated *laude* involve a **refrain** with a restricted vocal range and mainly stepwise melodic motion, contrasting with stanzas in a more elaborate and florid style: these stanzas would be sung by a designated soloist, with the refrain sung by all. Some of the *laude* are related to dance tunes and other popular song styles.

Lauda singing soon became formalized as the main activity of confraternities, or organized religious societies for laypeople, often linked to the Dominican or Franciscan churches in city centres. Special services were held

for the confraternities, and in some places religious plays were staged, in both of which *lauda* singing had a central role. Supported by this institutional framework, the performance tradition of *laude* in Italian cities was very long-lasting, and although in some contexts the *lauda* was absorbed into a more professional musical context, it never lost its roots as a vehicle of popular devotion.

The *Trecento* in Italy

During the fourteenth century (or *Trecento* in Italian), a rich and vibrant culture flourished across all the arts in the Italian city states. This was the century of Dante and Petrarch, two writers who championed the use of the Italian vernacular for high-brow literature, and of important artists and sculptors, particularly working in the northern cities of Florence, Siena, and Padua. The social and political backdrop to the century was, however, tumultuous: as described in Chapter 6, the Black Death swept across communities throughout Europe in the mid-fourteenth century, causing countless fatalities and forcing many to flee the crowded cities and head to the fresher air and isolation of the countryside. Meanwhile, at the start of the fourteenth century, a conflict between the pope and the king of France led ultimately to the appointment of a new pope, effectively under the control of the French king, who abandoned the papal palace in Rome and relocated the papacy to Avignon in Southern France. Between 1309 and 1377, seven popes led the Church from Avignon; communication between these Avignon popes and the cardinals who remained in Rome led to frequent travel of senior churchmen and their retinues between Italy and Southern France. As with the troubadours in the preceding century, this situation led to a flow of musicians from France into Italy (and vice versa). But the increasing use of the Italian language for poetry also supported the development of a specifically Italian style of songwriting, in which most of the best-known Italian composers of the fourteenth century worked.

Trecento song is a courtly phenomenon, composed by skilled poets and musicians employed either at the courts of noble families, such as the Visconti of Milan, or as professional singers, organists, or choirmasters in churches or cathedrals. It shares little with the widespread and popular *lauda*, except for the use in both of the **ballata** form (described further below) and the low survival rate of monophonic melodies. Many *Trecento* songs are, however, polyphonic (in two or three parts) and fully notated. Their distinctive style, often involving fluid, melodic lines with groups of short note values in

sequential patterns, necessitated a specific notational system. The system is described in two highly influential treatises written by the composer Marchetto of Padua between 1317 and 1319, although many of the song manuscripts date from some decades later, by which time adaptations had been made to allow for more rhythmic flexibility.

Three main poetic forms were used by the composers of *Trecento* song. The term **madrigal** referring to fourteenth-century song denotes a particular Italian poetic form and has nothing in common with the sixteenth-century use of the term to mean an Italian or English part-song in a more general sense. The musical form can be described as AAB, with each repeated A section accompanying three lines of text and the B section setting the final couplet. The *Trecento madrigal* was nearly always set for two voices, occasionally for three; in a typical example, the lower part (**tenor**) moves in slower note values than the upper part, which is florid and intricate. Upper parts may sometimes have been embellished at will by the performers, and a performance could involve singers for both parts, a singer accompanied by an instrument, or a fully instrumental rendition without the text.

The **caccia** is a very lively song, with a text describing hunting, fishing, or bustling town scenes. The texts feature realistic description and dramatic dialogue, and often involve the imitation of animal noises or urban street calls. Musically related to forms such as the *caça* (encountered above in the *Llibre vermell de Montserrat*), the upper two parts of the *caccia* form a strict **canon**, while the lowest part accompanies them with long notes. Unlike the *madrigal*, the *caccia* is not exclusively found in Italy during the fourteenth century, since the form is also found as the **chace** in France, with examples by Machaut and other composers.

The third major *Trecento* song form was the *ballata* (plural: *ballate*), a form very similar to the French *virelai* (and thus also related to the Spanish cantigas described earlier in this chapter). The term *ballata* derives from the Italian verb *ballare* ('to dance'), and – at least to begin with – these songs were sung to be danced to. Many thirteenth-century *laude* are also *ballate* in form, in keeping with the lively rejoicing of the popular *lauda* movement. The connection between the two types of song continued into the fourteenth century, as individual voices from polyphonic *ballate* were extracted and set to new devotional texts as monophonic *laude*. This occurred with Example 8.3, the two-part love song *De sospirar sovente*, whose upper voice (in slightly simplified form) was re-texted with the *lauda* text *Batista da Dio* (both versions can be heard on the recommended recording listed at the end of this chapter).

Example 8.3 Francesco Landini, *De sospirar sovente*

Translation:

1. I am compelled to sigh often, seeing in your countenance your heart which allows you to turn your wandering eyes to another lover. 2. Suffering this deceit causes my mind to sigh continuously; 3. I find no remedy to my torment, so many

Example 8.3 (*cont.*)

> are my afflictions; 4. And you confuse me so much that in my thoughts I feel I may
> be wrong. But even if I am in error, please be so kind as to put my mind at rest. 5.
> I am compelled to sigh often . . .

De sospirar sovente employs all the typical features of a *Trecento ballata*. The
Italian poetic convention of using lines of seven and eleven syllables, often alter-
nating (a defining feature of Italian-language poetry from its origins in the thir-
teenth century onwards) is apparent, as is the classic *ballata* form (Table 8.2).

The **ripresa** both opens and closes the song, and its music is used again for the
words of the **volta**, while contrasting music is heard twice for each of the two **piedi**.
This example has only this single stanza, though some *ballate* were much longer
with multiple stanzas each using this same structure. Because all the music needed
for the song is present in the *ripresa* and the first *piede*, usually only these two
sections were laid out to music in the manuscripts, with the remaining words
written underneath, to be fitted to the music according to the singers' knowledge of
the form.

Most polyphonic *ballate* were composed in the period between 1360 and the end
of the fourteenth century. In style, some resemble *De sospirar sovente* in having two
voices, both of which move at a similar pace, so that both parts can easily be sung to
the given words. The upper voice is slightly more **melismatic**, especially approaching

Table 8.2 *Poetic and musical structures in* De sospirar sovente

Section	Text	Syllables per line	Musical form
ripresa	1. De sospirar sovente	7	A
	Constretto son vegiendo per senbiante	11	
	El cor che ti consente	7	
	Volger gli_ochi tuo' vaghi_ad altr' amante.	11	
piede 1	2. Ricever questo_inganno	7	B
	La mente mie convien c'ognor sospiri,	11	
piede 2	3. Non trovando_all' affanno	7	B
	Rimedio_alcun tanti sono_i martiri,	11	
volta	4. Et assai mi raggiri	7	A
	Che ne' pensier' mi paia_aver fallato	11	
	Ma pur s'i' sono_errato	7	
	Piacciati farne chiara la mie mente.	11	
ripresa	5. De sospirar . . .	7	A
	Constretto . . .	11	
	El cor . . .	7	
	Volger . . . amante.	11	

cadences: in Example 8.3, every cadence (marked by a rest) in the upper voice is preceded by a flourish of shorter note values, often involving a characteristic 'turning' figure like that found just before the arrival on the **final** D at 'so*spi*ri'. The two voices are close together in terms of vocal range and even overlap momentarily in the final phrase of the *piede*; at some of the cadences the two voices close on a unison, whereas elsewhere, the lower part may be a fifth or an octave below the upper. Other polyphonic *ballate* exhibit different musical **textures**, with the lower voices in much slower-moving rhythms that provide insufficient notes for the syllables of the texts. These parts clearly invite instrumental performance, although it is also possible for them to be sung wordlessly (e.g. to open vowel sounds).

In its manuscript source, *De sospirar sovente* is headed with the name 'Magister Franciscus Cecus' ('Master Francesco the Blind'). This was the name by which the composer Francesco Landini was most often referred to in his lifetime: in fact, the name Landini that is usually used for him now has no medieval authority and is probably inaccurate. Landini secured his reputation not simply as a blind musician but as a virtuoso organist (one of his other contemporary nicknames was 'Francesco degli Organi' – 'Francesco of the organs'). His career in Florence as an organist, organ builder and tuner apparently allowed him time for composition, since more than 150 works by him survive, the vast majority of them *ballate*. Along with other *Trecento* composers – most of whom are known by toponymic surnames that denote their place of origin, such as Andrea, Lorenzo, and Paolo da Firenze ('of Florence') and Jacopo da Bologna ('of Bologna') – Landini was crucial in establishing a distinctive musical style to accompany the flourishing of Italian poetry and literature that took place in the fourteenth century. Well known both in his own time and in the following generations, Landini was commemorated in the Church of San Lorenzo in Florence with a tombstone depicting him holding a portative organ (Figure 8.4), surrounded by an inscription reading as follows:

> Deprived of light [i.e. blind], Francesco – whom Music has placed alone above all others for his wide intellect and his polyphonic music – has left his ashes here, and his soul above the stars.

Figure 8.4 Francesco Landini's tombstone
Church of San Lorenzo, Florence. The History Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Suggested Recordings

Deus te salve and other *Cantigas de Santa Maria*:

- *De Santa Maria*, Aquel Trovar (The Recording Consort, 8435046259976, 2019)

Further *Cantigas*:

- *Music for Alfonso the Wise*, The Dufay Collective (Harmonia Mundi, HMU 907390, 2005)

- *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Ensemble Gilles Binchois (Ambroisie, AMB 9973, 2005)

Laudemus virginem and other songs from the *Llibre vermell*:

- *Llibre Vermell*, Capella de Ministrers, dir. Carles Magraner (Licanus, CDM 0201, 2002)

Francesco Landini: *De sospirar sovente*, further songs by Landini, and Florentine *laude*:

- *A Laurel for Landini*, Gothic Voices with Andrew Lawrence-King (Linn Records, BKD 573, 2016)

Further Reading

Cunningham, Martin G. (ed.) *Alfonso X El Sabio: Cantigas de Loor* (Dublin, 2000).

Cuthbert, Michael Scott, 'Trecento I: Secular Music', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, volume 2, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, 2018), 1079–99.

Deeming, Helen, 'Politics: Courts, Conquests, and Crusades', in *A Cultural History of Western Music in the Middle Ages*, ed. Helen Deeming and Elizabeth Eva Leach (London, in press).

Haines, John, 'The Transformations of the *Manuscrit du Roi*', *Musica Disciplina*, 52 (1998–2002), 5–43.

Kapitaikin, Lev, 'David's Dancers in Palermo: Islamic Dance Imagery and Its Christian Recontextualization in the Ceilings of the Cappella Palatina', *Early Music*, 47 (2019), 3–23.

Maloy, Rebecca, 'Exchange: Liturgical Reform, Pilgrimage, and Saints' Cults', in *A Cultural History of Western Music in the Middle Ages*, ed. Helen Deeming and Elizabeth Eva Leach (London, in press).

Shiloah, Amnon, 'Muslim and Jewish Musical Traditions of the Middle Ages', in *Music as Concept and Practice in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Reinhard Strohm and Bonnie J. Blackburn (Oxford, 2001), 1–30.

The German- and Dutch-Speaking Lands

Political and Cultural Contexts

In this chapter, we will consider song traditions in the German- and Dutch-speaking lands between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. This area spanned almost the entire northern half of western and central mainland Europe, and – across a period of 400 years – a wide variety of polyphonic and monophonic song traditions prospered. However, this broad region has often been sidelined in histories of medieval music, its songs featuring much less often than they warrant in anthologies and as examples in music histories. Though this chapter can only touch on a few examples of these musical traditions, their poet-composers, and singers, we hope to illustrate some of the rich diversity of both religious and secular song, some of it in Latin, some in the Western-Germanic vernaculars (especially Middle High German and Middle Dutch). As we shall see – and have already seen in other parts of medieval Europe – the religious and the secular cannot always be easily separated.

All the regions included in this chapter were part of the vast political entity known as the Holy Roman Empire. The ninth-century ruler Charlemagne was the first in medieval Europe to claim the title 'Emperor', and he did so with special Roman authority acquired through his relationship with the pope. After the division of Charlemagne's empire on his death, the title continued to be used – with some interruptions – by his successors in the eastern part of his territory. The area under the control of these emperors expanded, contracted, altered shape, changed rule, and witnessed many different conflicts. At its post-Carolingian height, the Holy Roman Empire covered a large part of continental Europe: from what is now the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Czech Republic, part of Poland, and all the way south to cover much of the Italian Peninsula (Figure 9.1). Various families pulled the strings in the empire: emperors from, among others, the Hohenstaufen dynasty, the House of Luxembourg, the House of Wittelsbach, and the Habsburg dynasty succeeded each other over the centuries. The empire consisted of many regions ruled by their own lords: kings, counts,

Figure 9.1 The Holy Roman Empire, *c.*1200
© Mappa Mundi Cartography

dukes, and princes, each of whom answered to the emperor. The Holy Roman Empire remained an important political power until its dissolution in 1806.

Starting in a twelfth-century monastery in Franconia, this chapter will encounter the female visionaries St Hildegard of Bingen and the thirteenth-century Dutch-speaking Hadewijch, remain in the sphere of monastic life to discuss the rise of the Modern Devotion (*devotio moderna*), and examine musical traditions in the far east of the Holy Roman Empire, which are likewise closely connected to ecclesiastical reform. Shifting our attention to the courtly world, we will explore the songs of the **Minnesinger**, effectively the **troubadours** of the German- and Dutch-speaking lands. Finally, we will consider one of the most famous, but also enigmatic, medieval music **manuscripts**: the *Carmina Burana*, from the thirteenth-century County of Tyrol in the Alps.

St Hildegard of Bingen

In 2012 Pope Benedict XVI formally canonized the twelfth-century Benedictine nun Hildegard of Bingen. Though only then officially recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church, Catholics had accepted her holiness for centuries. From a young age and throughout her life, Hildegard experienced visions in which she stood in direct contact with God: the authenticity of her visions was confirmed by a committee of church leaders at the time. One of the most remarkable medieval women known to us, Hildegard composed not only written accounts of her visions but also texts on theology, medicine, and natural history, as well as a large body of poetry and song.

Hildegard was born in 1098 in Bermersheim, some 65 kilometres south-west of Frankfurt. She came from a relatively noble family and probably had nine older siblings. When she was about five years old, she started experiencing visions. Based on how she described the visions as well as on what we know about the pains and sicknesses Hildegard experienced throughout her life, it is frequently believed that she suffered from migraines, epilepsy, or both. For Hildegard and her contemporaries, however, it was clear that the visions came from God. She described her experiences as follows:

> The visions which I saw I beheld neither in sleep, nor in dreams, nor in madness, nor with my carnal eyes, nor with the ears of the flesh, nor in the hidden places: but wakeful, alert, and with the eyes of the spirit and the inward ears, I perceived them in open view and according to the will of God.

Her parents, perhaps alerted by the visions or their daughter's poor health, sent Hildegard to a monastery in nearby Disibodenberg at the age of eight; she moved

there permanently when she was fourteen. There, Hildegard was placed under the care of another visionary woman, Jutta von Sponheim, and over the coming years they were joined by a small number of other young women dedicated to living the life of anchorites: those who were literally enclosed for life in a small room adjacent to the monastery. Despite the extreme seclusion of their life there, Jutta and Hildegard had some contact with people from outside through a window, among whom was the monk Volmar, who would come to play a very important role in Hildegard's life. After Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard became the leader of the Disibodenberg nuns. She still had to answer to the abbot but was the head of her female community. After theological disagreements, she decided to found her own convent, and some twenty of her nuns followed her there: the new monastery was situated at Rupertsberg, near Bingen. Hildegard and her community managed to become entirely financially – and in some respects also theologically – independent from the convent in Disibodenberg, and Hildegard was officially recognized as the abbess. Volmar was the provost and was also Hildegard's confessor; Hildegard would later acknowledge the influence that his encouragement and friendship had upon her.

Meanwhile, Hildegard educated herself in a variety of disciplines. She became very knowledgeable in, among other matters, theology, pharmacy, medicine, physics, and other natural sciences, but also Latin, poetry, and music. When word began to spread of Hildegard and her extraordinary visions, she was contacted more and more frequently by clerics, scholars, counts, dukes, bishops, popes, emperors, and kings, who sought her spiritual advice. Her direct contact with God made her counsel very valuable and, in turn, led to Hildegard becoming a much more powerful woman than she could ever have foreseen, though she remained very humble and often wrote that she did not feel worthy to be the one to receive these messages from God.

Instructed by God in a vision to write down the revelations she had received and encouraged by the monk Volmar as well as by a letter from the renowned theologian Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegard began to write down her visions. The nuns of Rupertsberg worked in their scriptorium to compile books which included – alongside text narrating Hildegard's visions – sketches of the images she had seen and notation of the music she had heard while in a visionary state. Visiting the region in 1147–48, Pope Eugenius III became aware of Hildegard's writings and studied their vivid and striking descriptions and images before concluding that they were genuine. This papal endorsement further increased the numbers of those who sought out Hildegard's advice and guidance.

The music composed by Hildegard consists of songs designed for liturgical singing, including **antiphons**, **responsories**, **sequences**, **hymns,** and **Mass chants**, as well as a morality play, *Ordo virtutum* ('Play of the Virtues'), which includes

eighty-seven songs. *Ordo virtutum* is the oldest known morality play and tells the story of a battle for the human soul against the Devil, using allegorical personifications of seventeen Virtues. The play's melodies are simpler and more **syllabic** than Hildegard's other music, and it has been suggested that the play was performed at the dedication of the Rupertsberg convent church. Hildegard's liturgical music stands apart from other chant of the time because both its text and its music were newly composed, rather than being drawn from the long-standing liturgical tradition. As abbess of Rupertsberg, Hildegard had the authority to decide how the **liturgy** should be celebrated there and to introduce new liturgical music. Her texts are full of the same vivid imagery as the descriptions of her visions, and her melodies are equally striking. Often very long and complex, with remarkably lengthy **melismas** and a range of melodic decorations, Hildegard's melodic style is rhapsodic and individual. There is a relatively large amount of repetition: patterning and reappearance of melodic material often occur, sometimes echoing the poetic form of the text but never strictly. Frequently, melodic statements are repeated in different modal contexts or are otherwise altered when they recur. Perhaps most remarkable of all is the vocal range: covering as many as nineteen notes, the span of Hildegard's melodies goes far beyond the relatively restricted boundaries of more typical chants.

Hildegard's music was intended for practical use in the daily worship of the nuns in her own monastery and thus is one of the first examples of a large **repertory** of music composed specifically for women. Her music may have been performed at certain other monasteries as well, including the one in Disibodenberg, but the songs did not spread widely in Hildegard's time. Consequently, it was as a visionary, theologian, and writer that Hildegard was primarily known until the second half of the twentieth century, when her music began to attract attention once more, as part of a more general revival of interest in medieval music, to be discussed in Chapter 10. Hildegard's music is now regularly performed and recorded, by both female and male singers, and is rightly seen as a significant part of her output. It is fortunate that two manuscripts containing musical notation for her songs have survived, despite the destruction of the Rupertsberg monastery during the Thirty Years' War in 1632. One manuscript dates from Hildegard's own lifetime, and the other from shortly afterwards. Although she may not have been directly involved in the making of these particular copies, their early dates and Hildegard's participation in the copying of her own works more generally makes it likely that these manuscripts represent her works fairly faithfully. To have even one surviving manuscript dedicated to the output of a single musician from this early date is extremely rare and places Hildegard into the select company of figures such as the thirteenth-century **trouvère** Adam de la Halle (see Chapter 5) and the fourteenth-century poet-composer, Guillaume de Machaut (Chapter 6).

Hadewijch

Although St Hildegard of Bingen is perhaps the best-known medieval female mystic, she belongs to a tradition of female visionaries that stretched across Europe throughout the Middle Ages. In the following century, Mechthild of Magdeburg was the first mystic to write in the German vernacular, and Mechtilde of Hackeborn's visions were recorded in Latin and circulated rapidly around Europe. The fourteenth-century mystics Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe from England, and Catherine of Siena from Italy, were similarly well known, although none of these women left behind a collection of songs.

Another female mystic who did compose songs was Hadewijch, a thirteenth-century poet and visionary from the Duchy of Brabant, now the area in the south of the Netherlands and the north of Belgium. Her poetry, descriptions of her visions, and some prose texts survive in the vernacular, a Brabantian dialect of Middle Dutch. Like Mechtild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch belonged to the order of Beguines, a semi-monastic religious group whose members were not enclosed in a monastery, but free to travel, living a life of humility, service, and prayer. Partly because she did not live in a formal community, as Hildegard did, very little is known about Hadewijch's life, though her own writings tell us that she lived a nomadic existence, moving from town to town. Her poetry, however, demonstrates an intimate knowledge of the trouvère and troubadour traditions, as well as skills in French, Latin, and the Western-Germanic vernaculars.

Most notable in Hadewijch's literary and poetic output are forty-five vernacular poems in the style of the trouvères. Using the language and imagery of **courtly love**, Hadewijch reinterpreted the genre and wrote about spiritual love instead. The trouvères' love for their idealized and out-of-reach lady is translated by Hadewijch into undying love for God. Many of her songs are *contrafacta* of existing songs, re-using the melodies, poetic structures, and rhyme schemes, but with new words in Middle Dutch. For her melodies, Hadewijch drew on Latin devotional song, **Minnesang** (see later in this chapter), and trouvère songs, especially the work of the trouvères of Arras. The Duchy of Brabant, where Hadewijch lived, was located on the western edge of the Holy Roman Empire, bordering the Northern-French regions in which the trouvères operated. She seems to have had access to poetry and music from several areas surrounding her own and drew on these resources to animate her spiritual ideas in song. Hadewijch's approach can be compared to that of Gautier de Coinci (see Chapter 5), whose *Miracles de Nostre Dame* contains songs which likewise recycle a wide range of music with new, devotional words. A recent **edition** of her songs and accompanying recording (see Suggested Recordings at the end of this chapter) will hopefully focus deserved attention on Hadewijch and her music.

Modern Devotion

Monastic life is inherently slow to change: its strict rules and adherence to long-established traditions mean that life within a monastery's walls remains largely the same, even when the outside world transforms rapidly. However, every once in a while, a transformation takes place even in such an apparently stable environment as a monastery. The history of the movement known as Modern Devotion (*devotio moderna* in Latin) is one such transformation. The story begins in the late fourteenth century in the area that is now the north-east of the Netherlands. At that time, disapproval was mounting of certain practices within the Church, such as the lack of piety among some clerics, monks, and nuns, the great wealth that the Church had acquired, and the ways in which it had done so. It was one of the critics of these practices who laid the foundations for a new movement of religious reform. His name was Geert Grote (sometimes given in Latin as Gerardus Magnus).

Geert Grote was born in 1340 in Deventer, an important city for trade and education in what is now the Netherlands. He studied theology and philosophy first in Aachen (now Germany) and then at the University of Paris. In Paris, he extended his studies to other fields, but theology and philosophy remained his main focus, and Grote returned to the Holy Roman Empire to teach these two disciplines in Cologne. He became a prebendary (an administrative position in the Church) in the bishoprics of Utrecht and Aachen, and as such received a large income. He lived a life of luxury and wealth, until he experienced a profound spiritual awakening. Renouncing the worldly and selfish life he had been leading, Grote returned to Deventer and opened a shelter for poor women. He preached his new beliefs, which included severe criticism of the heresy, debauchery, and general sinfulness he witnessed, and gathered ever larger crowds of followers. Grote was especially critical of sins and malpractices among churchmen, and for this reason he was eventually prohibited from preaching in any church. As a response, he founded his own religious community, the Brethren of the Common Life. Grote died in 1384 at the age of 44 after contracting the plague.

The Brethren of the Common Life settled in a house in Windesheim, not far from Deventer. They were a religious order, but in the early years the brothers did not take official vows and were not recognized by the Church. While the community was small at first, its followers grew in number quickly, spreading further and further throughout the Dutch- and German-speaking lands, mostly in what is now the Netherlands and Western Germany. To gain official recognition, the brothers at Windesheim adopted the Rule of St Augustine and thus gained Church approval as a congregation of Augustinian **canons**. New monasteries were founded as off-shoots from Windesheim, and at its peak in the late fifteenth century, the broad Congregation of Windesheim numbered almost a hundred houses.

The main focus of the Windesheim monks, nuns, and priests was inner spirituality coupled with pious labour. Hard work, charity, simplicity, sobriety, and inner contemplation on the suffering of Christ, heaven and hell, and the Bible were central to the beliefs shared by the Congregation and its many lay followers. Distancing itself from the institutional and hierarchical religious practices of much of the late-medieval Church, the Congregation placed emphasis on its members' individual and personal access to God through meditation and prayer. This new religious outlook formed the core of a larger movement known as Modern Devotion, which challenged the ways in which ordinary people's access to spiritual benefits had always been mediated through the educated clergy. A key part of enabling everyone to take responsibility for their own salvation was the spread of education to a much wider section of society, and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular (Dutch or German; see Figure 9.2).

This was a conceptual transformation in monasticism that left audible traces. In keeping with the movement's overall aims, liturgical music was no longer performed by specialist singers with worshippers as passive listeners: singing in church was to be made as accessible as possible, and in some cases that meant liturgical singing in the vernacular. As well as formal worship in church, followers of Modern Devotion were encouraged to develop their own devotional practices at home, and vernacular songs expressing the fundamental spiritual concepts in memorable and emotional language were composed for this purpose. While elaborate **polyphony** suitable only for trained soloists was not used, evidence suggests that more straightforward kinds of polyphonic singing did play a part, at least during important festivals. Much of this may have been sung without the aid of written copies, but the few sources that do exist demonstrate the following features:

- a preponderance of **parallel motion**, especially in fifths and octaves;
- no written indication of **measured rhythm**;
- a high degree of variation between copies of the same piece, suggesting oral transmission or improvised practice;
- some use of memorable melodic formulas.

All of these features align the polyphony of the Modern Devotion movement with much older traditions of polyphonic singing, such as those described in Chapter 2, which date from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. This music has attracted very little attention among scholars and performers, and it is not easy to find recordings of it (for one example from fourteenth-century Northern Germany, listen to the track *Kyrie fons bonitatis* from the album *Pomerania*, listed in the Suggested Recordings at the end of this chapter). There is not even general agreement on what this kind of music should be called: 'simple polyphony', 'archaic polyphony', and 'non-mensural polyphony' have all been suggested. Whatever we call it, this
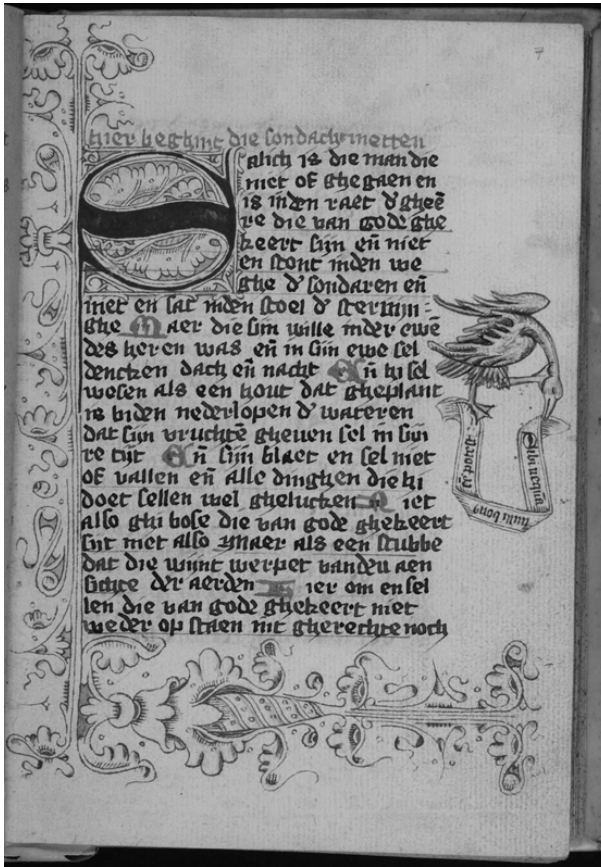
Figure 9.2 Dutch translation of the Book of Psalms by Geert Grote and Johannes Scutken
Deventer, Stadsarchief en Athenaeumbibliotheek, 101F1, f.7 r; by permission

polyphonic music from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century north-Western Europe is a powerful reminder that early musical traditions are contingent upon their local conditions, and music history is not a one-way street leading inevitably towards ever greater complexity and sophistication.

Central Europe

On the eastern borders of the Holy Roman Empire lay the Duchy of Bohemia and the Margraviate of Moravia. Bohemia, in particular, was one of the largest and most significant political powers within the empire and became a kingdom in 1212 under

the rule of Ottokar I. As a kingdom, it exercised greater independence from the Holy Roman Empire, and played an increasingly important role in international affairs. Some five generations after Ottokar I, King John I of Bohemia (a member of the House of Luxembourg) employed the French poet-composer Guillaume de Machaut in his entourage (see Chapter 6), and John's son Charles IV (born Wenceslaus, or in his own language Václav) made Prague the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia. He also founded Charles University there in 1348 as Central Europe's first university, attracting scholars and artists and turning Prague into Central Europe's cultural and intellectual capital as well as its political centre. When Charles was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 1355, Prague also became the imperial seat.

Musically speaking, likewise, Prague became an important centre. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts containing Central-European music-theory **treatises** demonstrate that music **theory** was studied at Charles University. As other universities were founded in Central Europe, such as those in Vienna and Kraków, musical knowledge travelled from Prague to those new institutions along with students and masters. Given the family connections of the Luxembourg dynasty, and their extensive travel around their territories across Europe, it is not surprising to find evidence in Bohemia and its surroundings of musical traditions that originated in France: music-theory treatises show that the principles of the French Ars Nova (see Chapter 6) were transmitted to Prague, and fragments of manuscripts containing polyphony in the style of Notre-Dame continue to be discovered across Central Europe.

A religious reform movement with even greater consequences than that of Modern Devotion arose in Central Europe at the end of the fourteenth century. Following the teachings of Jan Hus (born *c.*1372, about a generation younger than Geert Grote), the Hussite movement eventually led to a series of military conflicts known as the Hussite Wars. The largest group within the Hussite movement were the Utraquists, and after the Hussite Wars, the majority of the population in Bohemia – as well as large groups in Moravia and neighbouring Silesia – identified themselves as Utraquist. Modern Devotion and Utraquism are often regarded as two of the 'proto-Protestant' reform movements in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe that were the forerunners of the Protestant reformations of the sixteenth century.

The majority of songs surviving from medieval Central Europe are in Latin rather than in the vernaculars: it was not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that religious songs were more frequently written in Czech, Polish, German, and other vernaculars. An important genre in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Central Europe was the *cantio*, most often in Latin but with some examples surviving in the vernacular, especially from Hussite circles. Often with a simple

form such as AB or AAB, monophonic, and syllabic, but also appearing in more complex layered structures and with multiple voices, these liturgical songs frequently open by quoting liturgical chant. Quotation is a technique that is dominant in Central-European *cantiones*: parts of existing liturgical songs are cited and commented upon through musical elaboration. Intriguingly, polyphonic techniques with a resemblance to much earlier practices of **organum** also appear in liturgical manuscripts from late-medieval Central Europe, possibly suggesting a long-lasting tradition of organum performance practice in the east of the empire.

Apart from the *cantio*, the genres found in other parts of fourteenth-century Europe, such as the **motet**, the ***formes fixes***, and the many liturgical genres, were likewise used in Central Europe. Central-European song has long been neglected by researchers but has begun to receive much more attention in recent decades. This has allowed scholars to highlight the distinct identities of these repertories, which not only leaned heavily on techniques and styles imported from France and other parts of Europe but also incorporated, in some compositions, local traditions and features relating to Utraquism. In some cases, a distancing from Western-European traditions can be observed, highlighting the distinct musical culture of the eastern side of the Holy Roman Empire, one that is only now gradually coming to light.

Minnesang

The tradition of courtly love poetry which blossomed in the troubadour culture of Southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and was reinterpreted in Northern France by the trouvères spread throughout Europe. In the German- and Dutch-speaking lands, too, this tradition blossomed, resulting in vast repertories of love poetry in the German and Western-Germanic vernaculars. German and Dutch poets to whom we refer as 'Minnesinger' (a word whose singular and plural forms are the same and which literally means 'courtly love singer') produced their love poetry from as early as the twelfth century, and the tradition endured well beyond the decline of troubadour and trouvère cultures to the west.

Like so many secular and vernacular song cultures, the transmission of the works was initially mostly oral. The most important sources for the so-called **Minnelied** or Minnesang ('courtly love song') date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which means that some songs had been in existence for well over a hundred years before they were copied down. This is important to keep in mind, as an orally transmitted song constantly evolves and changes, and multiple variants of the same song can be in existence simultaneously. Even when a song is written down, continuing oral transmission – plus the fact that medieval sources tend to specify some but not all musical features with precision – will ensure that the song will

continue to change, adjusting itself to local interests or regional dialects, or mixing with other existing songs. In Minnesang culture, *contrafacta* are as common as they are in the world of the troubadours, as singers merged texts and music with different origins, out of necessity or creative inclination.

Like the troubadour culture, the Minnesang tradition was strongly connected to courtly life. Music played a central role in the courts of the Hohenstaufen emperors who stood at the head of the Holy Roman Empire in the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century, and of the dukes, duchesses, counts, countesses, princes, and princesses who ruled their lands within the German- and Dutch-speaking areas in Europe. As was the case with many of the troubadours in Southern France, some Minnesinger were themselves aristocrats: dukes, counts, kings, and even emperors produced vernacular love poetry. We also know of poet-musicians belonging to the lower nobility or middle class, often living at courts but on rare occasions travelling from court to court to perform their works. Minnesang was aimed towards a relatively learned and intellectual audience familiar with the themes and tropes of courtly love, who would understand and recognize cross-references to literary traditions beyond their own.

Formally speaking, too, the Middle High German and Middle Dutch vernacular song culture shows many similarities with that of the Occitan and Old French languages: many songs (or *Lieder*) are **strophic** and consist of one or more **stanzas** sharing the same rhyme scheme and melody. The AAB musical structure (or **bar form**) found frequently among troubadour and trouvère song is also prominent in strophic Minnelieder. However, there are also **through-composed** genres, such as the *Leich*, which consists of line pairs or couplets after an initial line with a unique rhyme sound (*abbccddee*, etc.). Variety in form increased in the thirteenth century: some *Lieder* had complex rhyme structures, internal rhyme, and sophisticated forms, while others were much freer.

As with troubadour song, Minnesang tends to be classified by theme or content rather than poetic or musical form, and many of the same genre categories can be found in both. One example is the *Tagelied*, a song telling the story of a man who is forced to leave his lover at the break of dawn, warned by his friend standing watch. This genre is very similar to the troubadour *alba* or the Northern-French *aube*; an example of a *Tagelied* will be discussed below. German or Dutch interpretations of the Occitan *pastorela* were likewise composed, and debate songs and Crusade songs similarly occur in Minnesang traditions as well as in those of the troubadours and trouvères. Melodies survive for a relatively small proportion of Minnelieder, because – like troubadour **chansonniers** – song texts were usually written down without musical notation.

Among the songbooks – *Liederhandschriften* – preserving the songs of the Minnesinger, one of the largest is the *Codex Manesse*, a beautifully illuminated

book dating from the first half of the fourteenth century. Copious illustrations provide portraits of the Minnesinger and depictions of courtly society, such as the famous portrait of the renowned Minnesinger Walther von der Vogelweide (*c*.1170–*c*.1230) shown in Figure 9.3. Walther's reputation endured long after his death: his songs are well represented in the *Codex Manesse*, compiled about a century later, and poet-singers continued to mention him respectfully in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (These much later poet-singers, belonging to guilds known as Meistersinger, were popularized by Richard Wagner's portrayal of them in his 1868 music drama, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*.)

What the *Codex Manesse* does not provide is any musical notation for its songs, though there can be no doubt that the poems were intended to be sung. Some of

Figure 9.3 Walther von der Vogelweide
Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, f.128 v; Public Domain

Walther von der Vogelweide's – and other Minnesinger's – songs have survived in musically notated form elsewhere, and scholars and performers have been able to use these melodies as a starting point for creative reconstruction of the many lost tunes of Minnesang.

Another well-known poet and contemporary of Walther von der Vogelweide is Wolfram von Eschenbach (1160/1180–*c.*1220). Like Walther, Wolfram wrote in Middle High German. Wolfram is mostly renowned for his epic poems, in the tradition of **chansons de geste**, usually referring to Arthurian characters and topics. Another genre in which he was influential was the *Tagelied*. Several of them survive, sometimes inserted in his own epic stories as **refrains**. The text and a translation of Wolfram's song *Den Morgenblic*, one of his *Tagelieder*, can be seen in Box 9.1. The song tells of two lovers who woke up at the break of dawn, entangled in each other's arms. They had spent the night together, but the secretive nature of their relationship (perhaps because one or both of the lovers was married) forced them to part in the morning. The description of the couple grants them the status of nobility – a 'lady' and a 'worthy man'; though probably adulterous, their relationship appears to be one of true love. Each of the three ten-line stanzas has the same rhyme scheme, *abc abc defd*, but the actual rhyme sounds change for each stanza. Every stanza begins with a noun (the daybreak, the day, and the sad man) and when there is direct speech, it is the lady who speaks. The entire poem is composed in the past tense, which adds to the melancholy sentiment of the text by creating the feeling of desire for something that once was but can no longer be. All the elements of a typical *Tagelied* are present in *Den Morgenblic*: the secret romance, the break of dawn, and a watchman announcing the new day and the impending departure.

Although Minnesang has much in common with the courtly love tradition of the troubadours and trouvères, it nevertheless has distinctive characteristics of its own. The root word **Minne** has a meaning that is similar to but not precisely synonymous with 'courtly love'. It is broader in meaning, encompassing spiritual love and love of God alongside the worldly love of men and women, and especially in the earlier Minnelieder, this spiritual or religious aspect is particularly prevalent. Within the worldly meaning of love, there is a distinction of register between 'high' *Minne* and 'low' *Minne*, the former being the noble and honourable yearning of the heart and unconditional love, and the latter encompassing the more physical sides of carnal desire and sex. While the distinction between high and low *Minne* is relatively straightforward, in practice many songs combine the two, or can be difficult to place. *Den Morgenblic*, for example, discusses the 'worthy', 'great', and 'faithful' love of the two lovers who are even willing to risk the discovery of their secret romance as long as they can be together, and emphasizes the sadness and sorrow the two lovers experience

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Box 9.1 Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Den Morgenblic*

Den morgenblic bî wahtaeres sange erkôs	*At the break of dawn when the watchman sang*
ein vrouwe, dâ si tougen	*heard by a lady, as she secretly*
an ir werden vriundes arm lac.	*lay in the arms of her worthy friend.*
dâ von si der vreuden vil verlôs.	*Because of that, she lost all her joy.*
des muosen liehtiu ougen	*It caused her bright eyes*
aver nazzen. sî sprach: 'ôwê tac!	*to fill with tears. She spoke: 'Oh, day!*
Wilde und zam daz vrewet sich dîn	*All living beings rejoice in you and see you gladly,*
und siht dich gern, wan ich eine. wie sol iz mir	*but not me. What shall become of me!*
ergên! nu enmac niht langer hie bî mir bestên	*For now my friend cannot stay here with me any*
mîn vriunt. den jaget von mir dîn schîn.'	*longer; your light drives him away from me.'*
Der tac mit kraft al durch diu venster dranc.	*The day pierced through the window with force.*
vil slôze sî besluzzen	*They had closed many bolts*
daz half niht; des wart in sorge kunt.	*but that did not help; it entered anyway.*
diu vriundîn den vriunt vast an sich dwanc.	*The woman held her friend tightly;*
ir ougen diu beguzzen	*her eyes cried tears*
ir beider wangel. sus sprach zim ir munt:	*on both cheeks. This is what she said to him:*
'Zwei herze und ein lîp hân wir.	*'We have two hearts and one body.*
gar ungescheiden unser triuwe mit ein ander vert.	*Inseparably our faithful love travels with the other.*
der grôzen liebe der bin ich vil gar verhert,	*I have lost this great love,*
wan sô du kumest und ich zuo dir.'	*except when you come to me and I to you.'*
Der trûric man nam urloup balde alsus:	*The sad man said goodbye resolutely as follows:*
ir liehten vel, diu slehten,	*their light and smooth bodies*
kômen nâher, swie der tac erschein.	*came together, while the day was approaching.*
weindiu ougen – süezer vrouwen kus!	*Weeping eyes, the sweet lady's kiss!*
sus kunden sî dô vlehten	*Thus could they entwine themselves,*
ir munde, ir bruste, ir arme, ir blankiu bein.	*their mouths, chests, arms, their bare legs.*
Swelch schiltaer entwurfe daz,	*If a painter should wish to paint that,*
geselleclîche als si lâgen, des waere ouch dem genuoc.	*the couple lying there together, it would be too hard.*
ir beider liebe doch vil sorgen truoc,	*Their love together brought many troubles,*
si pflâgen minne ân allen haz.	*but they loved each other without reservation.*

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when they have to part, but at the same time it focuses a great deal on their physical union, describing the intertwining of their bodies and the kisses they exchange before having to leave. In some songs, mostly those written in the high *Minne* register, it is not always easy to ascertain whether a poet intended the poem to be interpreted as secular or as spiritual love. Various different interpretations of Minnesang poems can therefore be equally valid.

The Minnesinger Neidhart, sometimes known by his allegorical nickname 'von Reuental' ('of the vale of tears'), took an ironic approach to the traditions of Minnesang. His songs often open with the typical **Natureingang** ('nature introduction') – a feature adopted from troubadour lyrics (see Chapter 3) – which sets the mood of many Minnelieder at the start through reference to the beauties (or sometimes cruelties) of the natural world. In Neidhart's hands, however, the *Natureingang* seems exaggerated and often proves to be a deceptive opening, leading not to a serious song of love but to humorous mockery of the lower classes. *Mir ist ummaten leyde*, the opening of which is shown in Example 9.1, provides a good example. The first stanza supplies the *Natureingang*:

Mir ist ummaten leyde	*I am grieved beyond all measure*
daz der kalde winder	*that the cold winter*
verdervet lechter blomen vil	*has withered many a bright flower*
noch so tvinghet mich ein selentlicher arebeyt.	*and the hardship of yearning also besets me.*
Desse claghe beyde	*Both these grievances*
irrent mich in hinder	*estrange me*
an miner hoghesten vroyden zil.	*from the goal of all my joys.*
Owe, daz de gute mit ir willen daz vor treyt.	*Alas, for the good lady even does this with intent.*
De mir wol ghesemften mach	*She, who could well ease*
alle mine svere.	*all my suffering.*
Owe, leftich noch den tach	*Alas, if only I could live to see the day*
daz se mi genetich were.	*that she would grant me favour.*

In the second stanza, however, Neidhart launches us into a low-class dance, where a 'crude and shameless' young man is behaving inappropriately with a maiden: he 'molests' her, ripping the veil from her head, and the two of them practice a 'back and forth' all day long, exchanging gifts of flowers. As the song continues, the scene deteriorates into insults and threats from the bystanders and ends in a violent brawl. The ironic contrast between the classic Minnelied opening and the coarseness of what follows was doubtless intended to make Neidhart's courtly audience laugh, although the surface humour could also conceal veiled criticism of the courtiers themselves and their own lapses from proper standards of behaviour.

Minnesinger from the twelfth and fourteenth centuries exemplify different aspects of the tradition from the three thirteenth-century figures we have discussed so far (Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Neidhart). One of the earliest known Minnesinger is Hendrik van Veldeke, who was born in Veldeke in the region of Brabant (in what is now Belgian Limburg) around 1150 (or earlier) and died sometime after 1184. Hendrik's works include not only songs but also long epic poetry that displays both his Latin clerical education and his familiarity with French courtly

Example 9.1 Neidhart, *Mir ist ummaten leyde*

Mir ist um-ma-ten ley-de   daz de kal-de win-der

ver - der - vet   lech - ter   blo - men   vil

noch so tvin-ghet mich ein se-lent-li-cher a-re-beyt.

Des-se cla-ghe bey-de   ir-rent mich in   hin-der

an   mi - ner   hoghes-ten   vroy-den   zil.

O-we, daz de gu-te mit ir wil-len daz vor treyt.

De mir wol ghe-semf-ten mach al-le mi-ne sve - re.

O-we, lef-tich noch den tach daz se mi gene-tich we-re.

genres. Renowned as the earliest known poet to write in Middle Dutch, many of Hendrik's works survive only in Middle High German versions: since his career was spent in courts all over the German-speaking regions, it is not known whether these works are translations of Middle Dutch originals or whether the poet adapted his language of composition to the contexts in which he worked.

Representing a later generation of Minnesinger, the poet Wizlav, whose songs date from around 1300, has sometimes been identified with Prince Wizlaw III of Rügen (Rügen being an island in the Baltic Sea, just off the coast of Pomerania).

There is not enough evidence to be sure whether the poet-composer and the prince were one and the same, but a high number of his poems survive with musical notation, which suggests that they were well known during his lifetime. Alongside *Lieder* in characteristic Minnesang style, Wizlav also wrote in the genre of the **Spruch** (plural: *Sprüche*), a kind of sung poem whose topics included moral and political commentary, religion, and the praise of patrons. Melodically, *Sprüche* could be more recitational than Lieder, and their poets sometimes made use of pre-existing poetic structures with accompanying melodies, each called a **Ton**. Thus, many *Sprüche* could be sung to the same *Ton*, which could have been composed by the poet himself or one of his predecessors or contemporaries.

Wizlav's *Ich warne dich* (Example 9.2) is a *Spruch* of moral advice offered to a young man, advising him to maintain his good character and serve God earnestly.

Example 9.2 Wizlav, *Ich warne dich*

Translation:

I advise you strongly, dear young man, to keep your generous heart. Behold the salvation that awaits you if you are good. Avoid bad advice, all the saints will greet you in their midst, your good soul, in God's kingdom on high.

Carmina Burana

The large collection known as the *Carmina Burana* consists of songs, poems, and prose texts compiled during the thirteenth century in the Alpine region of what is now southern Germany, Austria, and Northern Italy. The name *Carmina Burana* ('Songs from Benediktbeuern') is a modern title, often used to describe both the collection of texts and the manuscript in which they are compiled, though some scholars refer to the manuscript as the *Codex Buranus* ('Manuscript from Benediktbeuern'). Both titles are, in a sense, inaccurate, because the Benedictine Abbey of Benediktbeuern is no longer believed to be the place of origin of the manuscript or the songs within it, but the well-known name continues to be used. Benediktbeuern, a municipality in Bavaria, is where the manuscript was discovered in the early nineteenth century, after which it was transferred to the Bavarian State Library in Munich. The place where the manuscript was produced has not yet been firmly identified, although evidence from the manuscript's styles of handwriting and decoration, and the dialect of some of the texts, strongly suggests somewhere in the South Tyrol region, perhaps the cathedral or bishop's household in Brixen or the Augustinian Abbey of Neustift a few kilometres away. (Both these places now lie within Italy and are known both by their German names and by the Italian equivalents, Bressanone and Novacella.)

The *Carmina Burana* have achieved renown since the early twentieth century because of the use of some of the texts in a cantata by the composer Carl Orff: this and other aspects of the collection's modern reception are explored in the next chapter. It contains more than two hundred texts in total, many of them songs, around fifty of which are accompanied by musical notation. When present, this notation consists of staffless **neumes**, giving no indication of precise pitch or rhythm (see Chapter 2 for a description of this kind of notation). By the first half of the thirteenth century, when the *Carmina Burana* were written down, methods that were both pitch-specific (**staff notation**) and rhythmic (**modal notation**) were theoretically available to music scribes, and the choice to use such an apparently 'outdated' method is curious. However, it seems likely that this notation was sufficient for those who used the manuscript. It is a very effective memory aid for those already familiar with the songs: it outlines the melodic contours and relationship of words to notes, and therefore the melody can be recognized by someone who knows it. If the manuscript was copied with no intention of transmitting the music beyond the community who already knew and sang it, there would be no need for a notation of greater precision than this. To hear the songs now, we must rely on the discovery of other manuscripts containing the same songs in more detailed notations, or the painstaking work of reconstruction of melodies from neumatic notations (also described in Chapter 2).

The songs in the *Carmina Burana* are mostly written in Latin, but in some cases, stanzas in a vernacular language – usually Middle High German – are either added to the end of Latin songs or integrated within them, alternating with stanzas in Latin, a practice which produces what are known as **macaronic** songs. The collection displays a remarkably broad variety of material, on a wide range of topics, and originated from all across Europe, including the Holy Roman Empire, Southern and Northern France, England, Scotland, and the Iberian Peninsula. Most of the songs are anonymous, though some works are ascribed to poets whom we know by name. Works by known Minnesinger, including Walther von der Vogelweide and Neidhart, are included, as are many songs by renowned Parisian poets, such as Philip the Chancellor (see Chapter 4), Peter of Blois, and Walter of Châtillon. Many of the poems are satirical in nature, some mocking political or ecclesiastical figures in scathing and sometimes vulgar terms. After the manuscript's discovery and the publication of its poetry in the nineteenth century, an image of the collection as the repertory of a group of wandering scholars, so-called **Goliards**, took hold. The Goliards were known for their biting criticism of the Church and of society's leaders, and were thought to have travelled from town to town, enjoying the pleasures of drinking and gambling, while sharing their satirical views through plays and songs. The songs of the *Carmina Burana* seemed – to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century readers – to fit this context beautifully, with their satirical themes, a number of drinking songs, and a parodic 'Gamblers' Mass'. As we shall see in the next chapter, this impression of the collection as the product of a group of rowdy, drunken students has influenced the ways in which the songs have been, and still are, performed, both by specialist medieval ensembles and by rock, metal, and crossover bands.

However, more recent work on the *Carmina Burana* has disentangled them from the popular notion of an origin among vagrant or wandering scholars and has shown that the manuscript was compiled by a highly educated community with access to song materials from all over Europe. In this way, the *Codex Buranus* demonstrates a number of parallels with both the earlier and later Cambridge Song Manuscripts (discussed in Chapters 2 and 7). The compilers' interest in the songs went well beyond the act of copying them: as we have seen, the imprecise musical notation strongly suggests that the songs' music belonged to a living, sounding tradition in their community. And many of the songs seem to have been adapted or modified by the musicians in the South Tyrol, for example, through the adding of German stanzas to Latin songs or by the making of *contrafacta* whose recasting of a familiar melody in the guise of a new text could be deliberately provocative or humorous for a knowledgeable audience.

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The *Carmina Burana* illustrate in a particularly stark way the difficulties of dividing medieval music into strict categories. Their topics are often secular – and some were considered so indecent by their first editor that he censored them, printing the most 'offensive' lines separately on the final pages of his edition, so that sensitive readers might cut them out – yet the manuscript was compiled by members of a religious community whose day-to-day life was dominated by prayer and worship. Latin and vernacular are placed not only side by side here but even woven together to create multilingual song. Lastly, some of the *Carmina Burana* songs, though all presented in this manuscript in monophonic form, turn out to be adaptations of voices from polyphonic pieces, so it is impossible to gauge the manuscript's musical background without considering the world of polyphonic conducti and motets.

Though by far the best-known source of medieval music from the German language area, the *Carmina Burana* is noticeably international. The high degree of interaction between the provinces within the Holy Roman Empire must have led to the transmission of musical materials across wide distances, both within the empire and across its boundaries. Some other repertories of polyphony and song that we have explored in this chapter came about in response to specific local circumstances and remained local in their distribution. Our examples have been chosen to illustrate some of the rich diversity of musical culture in the German- and Dutch-speaking lands between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, whether that music was inspired by mysticism, religious reform, courtly lifestyles, or clerical interests.

Suggested Recordings

St Hildegard of Bingen:

- *A Feather on the Breath of God: Sequences and Hymns by Abbess Hildegard of Bingen*, Gothic Voices, dir. Christopher Page (Hyperion, CDA 66039, 1985)
- *900 Years: Hildegard von Bingen*, Sequentia (Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, 05472 77505–2, 1998)

Songs in Middle Dutch by Hadewijch:

- *Poissance d'amours: Mystics, monks and minstrels in 13th-century Brabant*, Graindelavoix, dir. Björn Schmelzer (Glossa, GCDP32103, 2008)

Polyphony in the style of the Modern Devotion, and other music from Northern Germany and Poland:

- *Pomerania: Music from Northern Germany and Poland (14th–15th century)*, Ensemble Peregrina, dir. Agnieszka Budzińska-Bennett (TACET, 273, 2021)

Central European *cantiones*, liturgical polyphony, and chant:

• *Cor Europae: Christmas in Mediaeval Prague*, Tiburtina Ensemble, dir. Barbora Kabátková (Ricercar, RIC 410, 2019)

Neidhart, *Mir is ummaten leyde* and other songs:

• *Neidhart: A Minnesinger and his 'Vale of Tears'*, Ensemble Leones, dir. Marc Lewon (Naxos, 8.572449, 2012)

Wizlav, *Ich warne dich* and other songs:

• *Wizlav von Rügen: Complete Songs*, Ensemble Peregrina, dir. Agnieszka Budzińska-Bennett (TACET, 271DIG, 2020)

Carmina Burana:

• *Carmina Burana*, Boston Camerata, dir. Joel Cohen (Erato, 825646208463, 2005)
• *Carmina Burana: Sacri Sarcasmi*, La Reverdie (Arcana, A353, 2009)

Further Reading

Aubrey, Elizabeth, 'Vernacular Song I: Lyric' [see the sections on Minnesang], in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Music*, volume 1, ed. Mark Everist and Thomas Forrest Kelly (Cambridge, 2018), 382–427.

Bobeth, Gundela, trans. Henry Hope, 'Wine, Women, and Song? Reconsidering the *Carmina Burana*', in *Manuscripts and Medieval Song: Inscription, Performance, Context*, ed. Helen Deeming and Elizabeth Eva Leach (Cambridge, 2015), 79–115.

Ciglbauer, Jan, 'Quoting, Rethinking and Copying: A Few Remarks on the Tradition of the Monophonic Cantio in Central Europe', *Hudební věda*, 51, 1–2 (2014), 21–32.

Curry, Robert, 'Music East of the Rhine', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Music*, ed. Mark Everist (Cambridge, 2011), 171–82.

Gancarczyk, Paweł, 'Petrus Wilhelmi de Grudencz (b. 1392) – A Central European Composer', *De musica disserenda*, 2, 1 (2006), 103–12.

Hascher-Burger, Ulrike, and Hermina Joldersma, 'Music in the Spiritual Culture of the Devotio Moderna', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 88, 3 (2008), 313–28.

Louviot, Manon, *Controlling Space, Disciplining Voice: The Congregation of Windesheim and Fifteenth-Century Monastic Reform in Northern Germany and the Low Countries*, PhD dissertation (Utrecht, 2019).

Meconi, Honey, *Hildegard of Bingen* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield, IL, 2018).

Medievalisms: Modern Encounters with Medieval Polyphony and Song

The previous chapter ended with a discussion of the *Carmina Burana*, a highly significant **manuscript** source from the thirteenth century. If the name of this book was familiar to you, there is a good chance that this was not because you know its medieval melodies but because you have heard all or part of Carl Orff's 'scenic cantata', which set some of its song texts to newly composed music in 1935–36. For his *Carmina Burana*, Orff selected twenty-four poems from the collection and arranged them into five scenes, each based around the theme of the Wheel of Fortune turning inevitably to control human destinies. One of the most often-performed choral works of the twentieth century, Orff's cantata – and especially its dramatic *O Fortuna* movement – has also been used as part of the soundtracks to multiple video games, advertisements, and films, including *Glory* (1989), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), *Jackass: The Movie* (2002), and *G-Force* (2009).

None of the music preserved in the thirteenth-century *Carmina Burana* manuscript was used by Carl Orff, nor could it have been, since the 1847 **edition** published by Johann Andreas Schmeller – in which Orff discovered the poems – was only concerned with the texts, ignoring the musical notation of the manuscript. Nineteenth-century editions of medieval poetry were most often made by linguistic scholars, as part of a wave of research into the history of vernacular languages that was tied up with nation-centred study of the past. The same impulse had led to nineteenth-century editions of Middle English poetry, which gradually began to be included in popular anthologies of English verse. It was from one of these that Benjamin Britten selected the medieval English texts used in his *Ceremony of Carols* (1942), which likewise makes no reference to the melodies that originally accompanied them.

The rediscovery of the music of medieval polyphony and song – as distinct from its texts – generally happened later, and it was not until after World War II that this music began to be performed and recorded for wide audiences. Scholars who had begun the work of deciphering medieval musical notation and **transcribing** it into more familiar forms mounted some more or less experimental performances in the 1920s and 1930s, but only from the 1950s onwards did the medieval music revival

begin in earnest. The impulses and trends at the various stages of this revival, and the influential performers, conservatories, and festivals that led them, have shaped in a fundamental way how medieval **polyphony** and song has been – and continues to be – encountered in the modern era. It is to these developments that we devote this final chapter.

Reviving Medieval Music

Among the themes that have been touched on repeatedly in this book are, firstly, that medieval music was often transmitted orally for a very long time before ever being written down and, secondly, that medieval composers regularly drew upon much older music as the basis for new compositions. Both of these themes make it clear that an interest in music of the past is not a new or modern phenomenon: medieval musicians sang and played music from long before their own time and often seem to have held earlier music in high regard. Over the following centuries, countless groups of musicians showed similar enthusiasm for 'old' music, not least the humanists of Renaissance Florence, who aimed to recreate the singing styles of Ancient Greece in their own dramas. To tell the story of the early music revival as beginning with the foundation of the Academy of Ancient Music in late eighteenth-century London – as is often done – is, therefore, to oversimplify matters. What this organization considered 'ancient' was, however, the music of fifty to a hundred years before their own time, and as the Academy's example was followed during the nineteenth century, most performances of 'early' or 'ancient' music continued to be dominated by works from the seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries.

An enthusiasm for an idealized medieval past was a feature of nineteenth-century Romanticism and was especially prominent in Germany. Medieval stories, paintings, architecture, sculpture, and literature became the main source of inspiration for many Romantic works of art, something that can be seen, for example, in Gothic Revival architecture, Pre-Raphaelite painting, and Gothic fiction. In music, this nostalgia for the Middle Ages is reflected in Wagner's operas based on medieval stories, such as the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* (*c*.1200) and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*. Nationalist trends were apparent in the same period, and some early music (as well as literature and art) was drawn into a historical narrative that asserted the cultural superiority of particular nations. Medieval music largely escaped this treatment, partly because so little of it had been deciphered by the mid-nineteenth century and that which had was regarded as 'primitive' by later standards of musical complexity.

One nineteenth-century project would, however, turn out to be fundamental to the revival of medieval music. The monks of the Abbey of Solesmes in France,

under their abbot Dom Prosper Guéranger, restored the Benedictine Order after monastic life had been curtailed by the French Revolution. From the 1830s, they set about reviving Gregorian **chant**, with the aim of restoring the chant to its 'original' form. From today's perspective, this seems an impossible task, since chant had been orally transmitted for centuries before it was first written down, and regional variants had always existed alongside each other. However, in their attempt to rediscover the 'purest' form of liturgical chant, the monks of Solesmes tirelessly scoured the libraries of Europe for music manuscripts and fragments, leading to the unearthing of vast amounts of medieval music that had lain silent for centuries. The Solesmes monks' attempt at the rigorous and systematic analysis and classification of early notations also laid the foundations for the academic study of medieval music manuscripts. Building on their work, scholars of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were able to decipher and transcribe medieval music, providing a resource from which contemporary musicians could begin to prepare performances.

Another vital development in the revival of medieval music in modern performance came with the foundation of the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis, a dedicated early music academy in Basel, Switzerland, instigated by Paul Sacher in 1933. The Schola rapidly became a magnet for performers specializing in early musical performance, attracting the best teachers and initiating collaborations between performers that led to the foundation of many of the most significant early music ensembles of the twentieth century. The Schola also formed connections with expert instrument-makers, who could co-operate with scholars and performers in the creation of historically inspired instruments for them to play. Musicians from across the world travelled to Basel to train at the Schola, and this enabled – and still does to the present day – the exchange of ideas, information, and stylistic practices across national boundaries.

The circumstances of World War II placed such international collaborations on hold, though after the war, Basel re-emerged and was joined by London as the most active centres for early music performance. In Britain, cultural innovations such as the launch of the BBC Third Programme in 1946, a radio station dedicated to classical music and the arts, and the Festival of Britain at the newly built Southbank Centre in London in 1951 provided new platforms for performers of early music and offered much bigger audiences than ever before. In a series of eight concerts of music by English composers, held as part of the Festival of Britain, one whole programme was given over to medieval music. The organizer responsible for that concert was the monk-scholar Dom Anselm Hughes, whose tireless work in bringing the fruits of his scholarly discoveries to the attention of performers and listeners included collaborating with the composer Percy Grainger to make accessible and affordable editions of medieval English music.

Performers of extraordinary charisma and energy led the way in the medieval music ensembles that were formed in the decades from 1950 to 1990 (Table 10.1). In New York, Noah Greenberg's costumed performances of medieval plays with music were legendary, while in London, David Munrow approached the performance of medieval music with his Early Music Consort of London with the same infectious enthusiasm that he devoted to his radio programmes for children. Thomas Binkley's Studio der frühen Musik, based in Munich, recorded no fewer than fifty LPs of medieval **repertory** in the 1960s and 1970s, allowing listeners at home to build up a rich library of medieval music for the first time. Different styles

Table 10.1 *Influential medieval music ensembles founded 1950–1990*

Ensemble	Country of Foundation	Founders/Original Directors	Date of Foundation
New York Pro Musica	USA	Noah Greenberg	1952
Boston Camerata	USA	Narcissa Williamson	1954
Musica Reservata	UK	Michael Morrow	mid-1950s
Studio der frühen Musik	Germany	Thomas Binkley	1960
Early Music Consort of London	UK	David Munrow and Christopher Hogwood	1967
Clemencic Consort	Austria	René Clemencic	1968
Huelgas Ensemble	Switzerland/Belgium	Paul van Nevel	1971
Hilliard Ensemble	UK	Paul Hillier	1974
Hespèrion XX	Switzerland	Jordi Savall	1974
Sequentia	Switzerland/Germany	Benjamin Bagby and Barbara Thornton	1977
Ensemble Gilles Binchois	France	Dominique Vellard	1979
Gothic Voices	UK	Christopher Page	1980
New London Consort	UK	Philip Pickett	1981
Ensemble Organum	France	Marcel Pérès	1982
Anonymous 4	USA	Johanna Marie Rose, Susan Hellauer, Marsha Genensky, Ruth Cunningham	1986
Dufay Collective	UK	William Lyons	1987
Orlando Consort	UK	Angus Smith, Donald Greig, Robert Harre-Jones, Charles Daniels	1989

of performance of medieval music – to be considered in the next section of this chapter – were clearly apparent among the ensembles of the 1950s and 1960s, and influences from folk music, indigenous musics of South America, the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and the Arab world could also be heard. Many of these ensembles explored a wide repertory, from medieval to Renaissance and Baroque music, but – especially from the 1970s onwards – more specialized groups emerged, whose focus and corresponding line-up of singers and/or instrumentalists was more fixed on music of the Middle Ages. The surge of performance activity, which both developed from and also stimulated research on medieval music, coupled with a corresponding increase in the availability of playable reproductions of historical instruments, is reflected in the foundation in 1973 of the journal *Early Music*. This magazine was specifically designed to appeal to performers, scholars, and the listening public, and featured copious advertisements for instrument makers and sellers, and for concerts and festivals, as well as reviews of recordings and concerts and articles outlining the latest research. The many early music festivals that began to emerge around the same time, which we will explore further below, were a sure sign of the secure place that the performance of early music had now established in the musical mainstream.

Medieval Music: Performance and Authenticity

The early music revival gained critical momentum in the late 1960s and 1970s, when two related strands of activity started to crystallize. On the one hand, huge amounts of medieval and Renaissance music that had hardly been heard in modern times outside the lecture halls of academic institutions reached wider audiences through the concerts and recordings of ensembles such as those in Table 10.1. At the same time, a new approach to music of the past, in which performers specifically dedicated themselves to recovering the performance methods – and therefore, in theory, the sounds – with which its composers would have been familiar, also appeared. This new approach quickly gained the label 'authentic performance', and through the efforts of record companies and concert promoters, soon became a badge of respectability, claiming such 'authentic' performances as superior to those which recreated earlier music using the performance styles and techniques of the present day. The goal of these 'authentic' performances, the recovery of the music's 'original sound', was in some ways similar to that of the Solesmes monks of a century earlier. Both treated early musical repertories as revered objects, fixed in their own place and time, from which layers of later accretion and corruption should be stripped away to recover their true identities.

Central to the 'authentic performance' movement was the use of historical instruments. For some (especially seventeenth- and eighteenth-century) music, actual instruments from the time survived and could be restored to a playable state. In other cases, modern copies could be constructed that matched as closely as possible surviving instruments that were damaged beyond repair. Further historical research, drawing on written sources and illustrations of instruments, added to the wealth of knowledge assembled in support of the goal of 'authentic performance'. By the late 1980s, however, the claims made by the authentic performance movement began to be questioned. For us to hear early music as its composers truly intended, detractors pointed out, we would need not only historically accurate instruments but also historically accurate concert locations, lighting, dress, and all manner of other practical features that combine to create the experience of playing, singing, or listening. Moreover, as modern listeners, we can never hear music as people hundreds of years ago did, because our aural memories and musical education have been filled with more recent sounds, which they could never have experienced. Some even claimed that this style of performance was the opposite of true 'authenticity', since it attempted to circumvent the subjectivity of the modern performer, treating her or him as something of an empty vessel through which other, older musical 'selves' or 'voices' could be channelled. The early music performance world took these criticisms to heart, and – unwilling to abandon the musical insights that historical techniques could bring to music of the past – have continued to explore this approach under the more neutral and now generally accepted label of 'historically informed performance' (HIP).

Medieval music has been less embroiled in the arguments about authenticity than other kinds of early repertory, especially music of the Baroque. Among its pioneering performers of the 1950s and 1960s, there was an admission that so much was unknown about the original sounds, styles, and techniques of the Middle Ages that modern performers could not even aspire to create historically accurate performances. Reproducing historical instruments was considered fundamental by 'authenticity'-driven performers of Baroque music, but remained elusive for those playing medieval music, as there were almost no surviving instruments that could be played or copied. Information on medieval instruments came entirely from pictures and writings of the time, neither of which could be trusted to supply accurate and precise enough detail to allow instruments to be reproduced with great fidelity. Performers and instrument-makers nonetheless worked together to create medieval-style instruments, as faithful as possible to the sources that were available, often drawing on close fits from folk-music traditions, but they acknowledged that their reconstructions were speculative and could hardly be granted the distinction of 'authenticity'.

A second problem for instrumental performers of medieval music was that almost no instrumental music survived for them to play. Practically all notated

music from the Middle Ages was written to be sung; the music played on instruments was – in nearly every case – never written down, having been passed on orally, memorized, or improvised. It is no coincidence that, in the fourteenth-century depiction of two apparently simultaneous musical activities reproduced on the cover of this book, for example, the clerics inside the church *sing from a music book*, whereas the instrumentalist outside gazes out at the viewer, *playing by heart* for us and his rapt listener leaning out from the tower beside him. As we have seen countless times in this book, medieval notated sources are completely silent on matters of performing forces, leaving the door wide open for vocal music to be sung by voices of any register, either unaccompanied or with improvised instrumental accompaniments. For historically informed performers of Baroque music, it was possible to have both a historically accurate instrument and a well-researched 'Urtext' score, along with perhaps some helpful tips on playing technique from instrument manuals of the time. But medieval ensembles were compelled to use their own creativity to invent instrumental parts and playing methods from the extremely patchy information that was available to them.

Decades on from those ground-breaking performers, the state of our knowledge concerning medieval performance practice has improved only slightly, and it remains the case that many aspects of the original sounds of medieval music are, and will always be, irrecoverable. The gaps in our knowledge – which performers have had to find a way to fill – are at least partly responsible for the wide variation between performances of the same medieval pieces today. No two performances of, say, a **troubadour** song, sound alike: their modern interpreters make highly divergent choices on such fundamental matters as instrumentation (if instruments are used at all), vocal register, singing style, rhythm, timbre, and acoustic environment. Some performance choices seem to have swung into and out of fashion, whereas others are linked to national traditions of musical training. As we examine some of these trends and choices in the modern performance of medieval music, it is important to bear in mind that commercial decisions also have a part to play: a modern performance of medieval music, however much it aspires to be faithful to the 'original', must also be something that modern audiences want to hear.

To the founders of medieval music ensembles in the 1950s and 1960s, it seemed self-evident that all-vocal performances of medieval music would seem bland and uninteresting to their audiences. Unaccompanied vocal or choral performances of music from any era had very little place on the concert stage or in the recording studio during those decades, which meant that instruments would inevitably be used alongside voices in those early concerts and recordings of medieval music. To supply music for the instruments to play, these performers turned to a variety of sources. Thomas Binkley, noting the similarities between instruments depicted in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (see Chapter 8) and those played by contemporary

musicians in North Africa and the Middle East, was convinced that the living musical traditions in these places contained reflections of performance styles that had been cultivated in the medieval era. He travelled extensively in the 1960s with his Studio der frühen Musik, learning techniques of improvisation and embellishment from local musicians, importing instruments, and developing an explicitly 'Arabic' style of performance that met with an extremely positive audience response. Some of this approach's popularity may have been simple enthusiasm for the 'exotic' and 'colourful', aspects that were also evoked by the vibrant, 'Oriental'-style costumes and Arabian percussion of the New York Pro Musica in their performances of *The Play of Daniel*. Michael Morrow, by contrast, looked to folk music traditions from the Balkans for inspiration for his Musica Reservata performances. His desire to unlock a way of playing that was strident and direct, along with an 'outdoors style' of singing that could be heard over bagpipes and other loud wind instruments, led to a highly distinctive sound, closely related to Bulgarian and Romanian folk idioms. When justifying their approaches, these performers tended to stress that their choices were not meant to be definitive but rather represented one possibility that did not contradict any of the historical information available to them and that seemed – in their aesthetic judgement – to suit the music they were performing.

From the late 1970s onwards, styles of performance based primarily or exclusively on voices rather than instruments came to the fore, especially among British ensembles. Many of these singers had been educated in the English choral tradition, in which boy trebles and adult male voices sang liturgical music for daily services in cathedral and college choirs, much of it unaccompanied. This musical training was quite different from the education of solo singers, including most continental singers, because its primary focus was on optimal intonation and balance, rather than vocal projection and expressivity. Bringing their choral techniques to medieval music, the singers of ensembles such as Gothic Voices and the Hilliard Ensemble (followed later by the Orlando Consort and the all-female Anonymous 4) cultivated an *a cappella* sound that soon became standard for the performance of medieval music, at least in the Anglophone world. In these performances, a **drone** (provided by an instrument such as the **hurdy-gurdy**) sometimes accompanied the singers, supplying a harmonic element that was appealing to modern tastes, and recordings were often made in highly reverberant acoustics, evoking the imagined atmospheric soundscapes of medieval churches and castles.

With so little historical material to justify them and with so much at stake – performers are obliged, after all, to fill audience seats and sell recordings – performers' differing choices inevitably came under close scrutiny and were debated forcefully among those with vested interests. The recording reviews and correspondence pages of journals and magazines such as *Early Music*, for example, were filled throughout this

period with strongly worded critiques from reviewers and equally robust defences from the artists themselves. Debates about instrumentation, vocal forces, ornamentation, and other performance practice matters frequently rolled on and on through successive issues of the journal, with contributors drawing variously on scholarly research, practical considerations, and aesthetic conviction in support of their perspectives. Some of the heat has gone out of these debates as the twentieth century has given way to the twenty-first, partly because the great expansion of opportunities for performers, in terms of recording contracts, concert bookings, and festival appearances, has broadened the market and made room for multiple contrasting styles to be accommodated without direct competition. At the same time, as listeners have become increasingly familiar with the music played by medieval ensembles, they have been correspondingly more able to appreciate a plurality of approaches to its performance.

The Business of Medieval Music

We have already mentioned commercial realities as a force that should not be overlooked in the modern re-creation of medieval music, and some further comments on how the market has shaped the medieval music revival are appropriate. Recorded music – a phenomenon which has its own history, only recently beginning to be studied as a cultural trend in itself – became a principal mode of encountering medieval music from the 1950s onwards. Phonograph records produced before the 1950s were mostly 78 rpm discs, which could hold less than five minutes of recorded music per side of the record. Longer works of classical music had to be split over multiple discs, released together as a set, and the music had to be interrupted to turn over the record at frequent intervals. The few recordings of medieval music from the 78 era show signs of having their performance choices dictated by the capacity of the format, their performers choosing speeds and cuts so that a complete piece could fit on a single side. The replacement of the 78 rpm record with the new LP (long-playing) format in the 1950s freed performers from these constraints, since it could now fit at least twenty-three minutes of music per side. When sales of compact discs (CDs) overtook those of LPs in the late 1980s, uninterrupted playback time was more than doubled again, since the CD could accommodate seventy-four or more minutes of music without the need to turn over the disc. At every stage, these practical considerations have influenced the decisions that performers of medieval music have made. The start of the LP era coincided with the release of field recordings of world folk musics on the dedicated folk record label Folkways and in the encyclopaedic record series The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music. Ready access to the indigenous musical traditions of many regions of the world undoubtedly inspired the creative experimentation of many medieval music performers. Thomas Binkley taught

his students not to be afraid of generating performances of medieval pieces that were ten or even fifteen minutes in length, since recordings of Arab-Andalusian music made by musicians he had encountered in Fez, Morocco, routinely allowed single pieces to occupy the whole of one side of an LP. As physical recording formats have retreated in favour of digital streaming, with the accompanying potential for listeners to curate their own playlists of whatever length and mixture of contents they like, there has been a gradual shift away from the more-or-less standard 'album' of roughly eighty minutes of music, and the programming constraints it represented. Today, as well as selling recordings through streaming and download services, ensembles are increasingly focused on offering free high-quality sound clips via social media, primarily as a means of marketing live concerts (which are themselves now, more and more frequently, simultaneously streamed and/or available for subsequent downloading).

The public enthusiasm for medieval music from the 1980s onwards, partly stimulated by the recording industry, has resulted in a burgeoning number of festivals dedicated to medieval music (or which include medieval music alongside other kinds of early music). The largest annual early music festival takes place in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Since its foundation in 1982, it has attracted over 70,000 visitors. The ten-day festival now hosts over 300 concerts, including a large number of free fringe concerts, and events in the historic centre of Utrecht (see Figure 10.1).

Figure 10.1 Street performance of trumpeters at the Utrecht Early Music Festival 2010 Image by China Crisis. Licensed under CC Attributions 3.0

Each year, the festival has a main theme on which most of the concerts are focused, usually a specific period or region. Lectures, exhibitions, and other activities are also organized to entertain and enlighten its audience of enthusiasts from around the world. The organization of the Early Music Festival (*Festival Oude Muziek Utrecht*) also presents concerts throughout the year. The Stockholm Early Music Festival is the largest of its kind in Scandinavia, bringing several thousand annual visitors and many artists from around the world to Sweden. The director who founded the festival in 2002, Peter Pontvik, also initiated the European Day of Early Music, celebrated each year since 2013 on 21 March (the birthday of J. S. Bach).

In the UK, medieval music features on the programmes of annual early music festivals in London (established 1973), York (1977), and Brighton (2003), and similar festivals are to be found in most European countries, across the USA, and in certain places in South America. Some festivals hold competitions, helping to showcase and promote new ensembles and young artists, and others are attached to educational events, such as summer schools or mentoring schemes, which further support the development of specialist skills among amateur and professional performers. An unusual early music festival established in 2004 was *Nox Illuminata*, based first in Basel, Switzerland, then later in Sankt Pölten, Austria. This festival combined European early music with repertories from other cultures. Performances made use of period instruments, modern instruments, and instruments from non-classical musical cultures simultaneously, offering a new perspective on early music, alongside dance, theatre, film, and visual arts exhibitions.

An even larger audience than attends early music festivals such as those mentioned here is to be found at more general medieval festivals and fairs, at which enthusiasts for the history and culture of the Middle Ages can experience re-enactments, historical food and drink, and medieval entertainments such as jousting. Music forms an important part of these events and is generally performed by non-specialist or amateur musicians, whose aim is to create an enjoyable 'medieval-style' sound, drawing on a limited amount of actual medieval repertory. This type of performance might now be classified as 'medievalist' rather than 'medieval' music, but should not be dismissed, because it is a significant means by which many people experience the Middle Ages in the present day.

Medieval and Medievalist Music

Even listeners with no particular interest in medieval music frequently encounter music that is meant to portray a sounding image of the Middle Ages. The historical or fantasy medieval worlds often used as settings for films and video games have

invited their composers to explore ways of projecting those worlds in sound. For some film composers, this has meant employing actual medieval pieces or techniques. We can observe this in two examples from the 1970s, a decade during which genuine medieval music could now be accessed relatively easily in concerts or on recordings. In the comic Arthurian film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975), hooded friars in procession chant Latin words from the Requiem Mass – 'Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem' – in **parallel organum**, evoking an atmosphere of austerity and penance. The scene is satirical, but the musical technique is a genuinely medieval one. *The Wicker Man*, from 1973, used the English medieval song *Sumer is icumen in* in its climatic bonfire scene, the song's praise of the natural world grotesquely reinterpreted as the bloodthirsty call of villagers attempting to secure a good harvest through human sacrifice. The musical setting is drastically reconfigured too, harmonized by modern woodwind and brass instruments, and accompanied by a beating drum, but the melody itself – and most of the text – remains intact.

The majority of sonic references to the idea of the Middle Ages in film, television, and video games, however, make no reference to actual medieval sounds, instead drawing on entirely newly created 'tropes', which become a shorthand for 'the medieval' when employed repeatedly. Consider, for example, the music for the *Lord of the Rings* film adaptations (2001–2003), composed by Howard Shore. J. R. R. Tolkien's books – though fictional – shine with historical credentials: Tolkien trained as a philologist and linguist, and was an expert in medieval texts and languages. Medieval stories, most notably *Beowulf* (a long epic story surviving in Old English) and Arthurian **romances**, but also Norse sagas and the Germanic *Nibelungenlied*, were Tolkien's sources of inspiration for the stories set in the fictional world of Middle Earth, and the invented languages spoken there are heavily influenced by medieval languages such as Old English, Old Norse, and Celtic. For the 1968 BBC Radio dramatization of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, the producers turned to David Munrow and The Early Music Consort of London to provide a medieval-type soundscape (although the music was in fact newly composed by David Cain). For the more recent *Lord of the Rings* film adaptations, Howard Shore created an epic score of over thirteen hours of music, performed by hundreds of musicians from the London Philharmonic Orchestra, various other ensembles, choirs, and vocal and instrumental soloists, using Wagnerian procedures such as *leitmotifs* to make his score an integral part of the narrative of the films. Though he made no use of specific medieval techniques or quotations of actual medieval music, Shore used medievalist tropes that create – in sound – a fantasy, medieval-like world full of mystery and magic. These tropes include the use of Celtic instruments, such as the

bodhrán, tin whistle, and Celtic harp, as well as chimes, bells, and – at some points – 'exotic'-sounding instruments and melodic intervals. The use of Celtic music and culture as a trope for 'the medieval' is a commonplace in film, and Celtic folk musical idioms are frequently found in film scores as part of an attempt to create historical fantasy worlds in music.

The employment of folk and 'Oriental' styles as part of medievalist sonic tropes recalls the approaches of medieval music ensembles in the 1950s and 1960s. Melodic and harmonic techniques discovered by those musicians, both in folk traditions (from many different regions) and Arab and Middle Eastern classical music, were found to be a good fit with the musical traces that remained from the Middle Ages, and, though other approaches have appeared in the interim, folk-based and 'Oriental' styles of performance have remained closely associated with the popular projection of medieval sounds.

Other tropes consist of the use of certain types of instrumentation, reflective of some aspect of the setting or action portrayed. Church bells and pipe organs, for example, can evoke the Middle Ages for an audience simply because of the prominent role of the Church in medieval society. Percussion and brass instruments, most notably trumpets, have a military character that is associated with war and violence, aspects of the Middle Ages that are frequently stressed in popular culture. The use of wordless choirs or wordless solo voices, also very common in medieval and fantasy film music, elicits a sense of mystery, emphasizing the temporal and cultural distance between the listener and the far-removed world of the Middle Ages being depicted. The tropes found in medievalist music lean heavily on a stereotypical view of medieval society and have little to do with genuine medieval music. But through their repetition in films such as *Braveheart* (1995), with music composed by James Horner and performed by the London Symphony Orchestra; *King Arthur* (2004), with a soundtrack by Hans Zimmer; and many of the *Robin Hood* film adaptations, these sonic tropes have come to represent 'the medieval' for audiences in audibly direct ways. They have also transferred seamlessly from film into the worlds of television, in series such as *Game of Thrones* (2009–11), and video games, including *Crusader Kings* (from 2004) and *Assassin's Creed* (from 2007).

Another kind of musical medievalism is apparent in the genres of medieval rock and medieval metal, whose bands seek to evoke something of the atmosphere of the Middle Ages (as they perceive it) within a primarily rock music tradition. Especially prominent in Germany, medieval rock and metal have produced bands such as Ougenweide, whose name is a Middle High German term taken from a song by the **Minnesinger** Neidhart, and In Extremo, much of whose material is based upon medieval songs. In the

1960s, British bands Forest and Pentangle similarly integrated medieval elements into their folk-rock and progressive rock styles. The successful all-female crossover band Mediæval Bæbes continues this tradition of medieval-inspired popular music to the present day, and like the earlier bands, makes use of historical instruments alongside more mainstream electric and acoustic line-ups. The band Corvus Corax (Figure 10.2), formed in the former East Germany (German Democratic Republic) in 1989 and still active now, is perhaps most closely associated with the songs of the *Carmina Burana*, which they have performed with bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy, and drums and, more recently, formed into a large-scale stage performance involving a full orchestra and choir as well. The end result is just as far removed from the thirteenth-century song manuscript as was Carl Orff's cantata in the 1930s. But both these modern encounters with medieval song exemplify the continuing fascination with the medieval music that we have explored in this book, across the spectrum of twentieth- and twenty-first-century musical life.

Figure 10.2 Medieval rock band Corvus Corax
Image by Christian Ermel. Licensed under CC Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0
International

Suggested Recordings

Reissues of recordings from the 1960s and 1970s made by medieval music pioneers:

- *Troubadours and Trouvères*, Studio der frühen Musik, dir. Thomas Binkley (reissue: Warner Classics, 2564-69645-5, 2008)
- *Music of the Crusades*, Early Music Consort of London, dir. David Munrow (reissue: Decca 430 264, 1991)
- *French Court Music of the Thirteenth Century*, Musica Reservata, cond. John Beckett [dir. Michael Morrow] (reissue: Decca, 00028947587798, 2008)

1967 recording of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, made under the composer's supervision:

- *Carl Orff: Carmina Burana*, Gundula Janowitz, Gerhard Stolze, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Berlin Opera Chorus and Orchestra, cond. Eugen Jochum (reissue: Deutsche Grammophon, 447 437-2, 1995)

Howard Shore's soundtrack for the *Lord of the Rings* film adaptations:

- issued as three recordings (one for each of the films) on Reprise Records, 2001–2003.

Medieval rock, metal, and crossover:

- *Salva nos*, Mediæval Bæbes (Virgin, 7243 8 45157 2 0, 1997)
- *Mille Anni Passi Sunt*, Corvus Corax (John Silver Productions, JS CD 1000, 2000)

Further Reading

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Glossary

alba – **troubadour** dawn song, in which lovers are forced by the arrival of dawn to part after a night spent together. Equivalent to the **trouvère** *aube* and the **Minnesinger** *Tagelied*.

albogón – large, curved horn, probably derived from the Arab *al-buq*, played by musicians at the court of King Alfonso X of Castile-León and depicted in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

amor de lonh – see **courtly love**

amour courtois – see **courtly love**

antiphon – **chant** for the Office (see **liturgy**)

antiphoner – book of Office **chants** (see **liturgy**)

Ars Antiqua – literally 'Old Art', referring to thirteenth-century Notre-Dame and related polyphony, in contrast to the **Ars Nova**.

Ars Nova – literally 'New Art', referring to the fourteenth-century music of French composers such as Vitry and Machaut, and its notation (see **mensural notation**).

Ars Subtilior – literally 'More Subtle Art', referring to the rhythmically complex late-fourteenth-century music of French composers such as Baude Cordier, and its notation.

aube – see *alba*

ballade – French song form, one of the *formes fixes*. Each stanza of a *ballade* has the poetic-musical structure aabC, with the C section being a **refrain** that is repeated at the end of each stanza.

ballata (plural: *ballate*) – Italian song form, similar in structure to the *virelai*. Its poetic-musical structure can be described as AbbaA, where A is the *ripresa*, b the *piede*, and a the *volta*.

bar form – musical structure of many **troubadour**, **trouvère**, and **Minnesinger** songs. May be described as AAB, where the two A sections are the *pedes* and the B section is the *cauda*.

bodhrán – Irish or Celtic frame drum, often used along with other 'Celtic' instruments in the soundtracks of films with medieval settings.

boundary tone – lowest note in a phrase or passage of **chant**, on which the **organal voice** may remain stationary in eleventh-century **organum**.

brevis (plural: *breves*) – a note of shorter duration than the *longa*: in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century **measured** music, either two or three *breves* were equivalent to one *longa*.

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burden – refrain-like passage in an English **carol**, that opens the song and is then repeated after each stanza.

c./circa – used to refer to an approximate date, e.g. *c.*1300 means 'around the year 1300'.

caça (Catalan) and *caccia* (Italian) – songs in the form of a round or **canon**. Equivalent to the French *chace*.

cadence – conclusion of a musical phrase or section: cadences reinforce or establish the **mode** by arriving on the **final** (and – in a polyphonic piece – notes that form consonances with that final).

canon – **1**. musical technique in which a rule is applied to generate polyphony from a single line of melody. The simplest form of canon is a round, like *Frère Jacques*. **2**. ecclesiastical position: canons differed from monks in not living an enclosed lifestyle and being free to engage in other activities outside the churches or cathedrals at which they were based.

canso – **troubadour** song of **courtly love**, equivalent to the **trouvère** *chanson d'amour*.

cantiga – Galician-Portuguese song, often a love song in a similar vein to the **troubadour** *canso*, and typically using the musical form of the *virelai*. Religious cantigas were cultivated at the court of King Alfonso X of Castile-León and collected in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

cantio (plural: *cantiones*) – religious, non-**liturgical** song, often **strophic** in form with a **refrain**.

carol – English song form, in two or three voice parts, mainly dating from the fifteenth century. It consists of a **burden,** which opens the song and then recurs after every **stanza**. Only some fifteenth-century carols are associated with the Christmas season.

cauda (plural: *caudae*) – literally 'tail'; **1.** referring to a section of **melismatic** music within a largely syllabic **conductus**. *Caudae* are often found towards the end of a **stanza** but also occur in other positions. **2.** B section of the stanza in **troubadour**, **trouvère**, and **Minnesinger** songs in **bar form**; contrasts with the repeated A section to make the overall structure AAB.

chace – French song in the form of a round or **canon**. Equivalent to the Catalan **caça** and Italian *caccia*.

chanson avec des refrains – **trouvère** song in which *refrains* originating in other songs are incorporated within a newly composed song, creating a patchwork of new and old material.

chanson d'amour – **trouvère** song of **courtly love**, also known as the *grand chant courtois*; equivalent to the **troubadour** *canso*.

chanson de geste – long, narrative poem relating a historical or mythical tale, cultivated by the **trouvères**. Although melodies were not written down for them, *chansons de geste* were often sung, sometimes to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument.

chansonnier – manuscript containing songs of the **trouvères** and **troubadours**.

chant – traditional, **monophonic** music for the Christian **liturgy**. Much medieval polyphony is based on chant.

clausula – see **substitute clausula**

clos – 'closed'; second-time ending for a repeated musical phrase, especially in fourteenth-century French song. In contrast to the first-time ending – called ***ouvert*** ('open') – the *clos* concludes on the **final**.

color (plural: *colores*) – **1**. method of melodic elaboration or ornamentation in the upper voice parts of **florid organum**. **2**. repeated passage of melody in an **isorhythmic** piece that may combine with a ***talea*** to create the structure of the **tenor** or another voice part.

conductus (plural: **conducti** or **conductus**) – Latin song, **monophonic** or **polyphonic**, composed in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries across Europe.

contrafactum (plural: *contrafacta*) – substituting new words to the existing melody of an older song. The term *contrafactum* may refer both to the process of composition and to the end result.

contrary motion – two voice parts in a polyphonic piece moving in opposite melodic directions. Compare **parallel motion**.

copula – in Notre-Dame polyphony, a hybrid musical texture in which the upper voices move in **discant** (**measured rhythm**), while the **tenor** consists of long, **unmeasured** notes.

counterpoint – two or more independent melodies in different voice parts combining – according to rules of consonance – to create **polyphony**.

courtly love – literary theme: the primary basis for **troubadour**, **trouvère** and **Minnesinger** song. Courtly love (Occitan: *amor de lonh*; French: ***amour courtois***; German: ***Minne***) emphasizes chivalry and honour, and typically involves an unattainable lady and the unrequited love of her (usually socially inferior) admirer.

daseian notation – form of musical notation used for examples in some ninth- and tenth-century music-**theory** texts, which allowed precise pitches to be specified (unlike **neumatic notation**).

diaphony – two-part **polyphony** or **organum**. The term is used in music-**theory** texts of the ninth to eleventh centuries, often associated with the **parallel organum** described by the treatises *Musica Enchiriadis* and *Scolica Enchiriadis*.

discant – in Notre-Dame and related polyphony, a **texture** in which all the voice parts move in **measured** rhythm.

Divine Office – see **liturgy**

drone – an accompaniment consisting of a long, continuous note or notes, providing a static backdrop to the melody it accompanies. Drones could be sung or played on an instrument such as a **hurdy-gurdy**.

duplum – the second voice in a polyphonic piece. In **score format**, the *duplum* is notated directly above the **tenor**. The term *duplum* is also used as a shorthand for ***organum duplum***, referring to two-part polyphony, especially of the thirteenth century.

edition – musical score prepared for publication. Editors of medieval music must first make a **transcription** from their original notation into modern notation, then add notes and commentary for the benefit of those who will use the edition for performance or study.

envoi – see ***tornada***

estribillo – **refrain** and opening section of the **stanza** in *zéjel* form; followed by the *mudanza* and the *vuelta*.

final – the defining note of a melodic **mode**; usually the closing note at **cadences**.

florid organum – polyphonic **texture** in which florid **melismas** in one voice part are accompanied by sustained notes in another.

foot – in poetic **metre**, the basic rhythmic unit, consisting of a pre-defined pattern of long and short syllables. Examples include the iamb, trochee, and dactyl. The **rhythmic modes** of thirteenth-century **measured** music were based on poetic feet. See also *pes*.

formes fixes – 'fixed forms'; three particular poetic-musical structures found among French songs from the fourteenth century onwards. See *rondeau*, *ballade*, and *virelai*.

Franconian notation – earliest stage of **mensural notation**, named after Franco of Cologne and described by theorists from around 1280 onwards. In Franconian notation, rhythmic values are represented by individual signs, in contrast to the **ligature** patterns of the **rhythmic modes**.

Goliards – wandering clerical scholars, who wrote Latin poetry and song on a variety of themes, often moral or satirical in tone.

gradual – **1.** book of Mass **chants**. **2.** an individual **chant** from the Mass **liturgy**.

grand chant courtois – see *chanson d'amour*

hemiola – short **syncopated** figure within a piece in which a triple **metre** is temporarily changed to a duple **metre**.

hocket – musical technique in which the melody of one or more voice parts is temporarily broken up with rests, creating a 'hiccup' effect. Often found in **motets** of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

homophony – see **polyphony**

hurdy-gurdy – stringed instrument whose sound is produced by a wheel rubbing the strings, turned by a handle. One or two of the strings produce a continuous **drone**, while other, melody strings can have their pitch varied by keys which stop the strings to produce different notes.

hymn – Office **chant** (see **liturgy**) in **strophic form**.

imperfect – see *modus, tempus*

incipit – the first few words of the sung text of a song (or – in **polytextual** polyphony – of each voice part). Polytextual **motets** are usually referred to with the incipits of each of the voice parts.

isorhythm – technique for structuring pieces based on a repeated rhythmic pattern (*talea*). Found in **motets** and other polyphonic pieces from the fourteenth century. Often the repeated *talea* was combined with a repeated melodic pattern, known as the *color* (see *color* – **2**).

jeu-parti (plural: *jeux-partis*) – **trouvère** debate song, in which two characters argue opposing sides of a question in alternating **stanzas**. Similar to the **troubadour** forms *tenso, joc-partit*, and *partimen*.

joc-partit – see *jeu-parti*

joglar – Occitan musician and performer, lower in social status than the **troubadours**.

jongleur – Northern-French musician and performer, originally lower in status than the **trouvères**, although some *jongleurs* did become trouvères.

lai – French song form based on double **versicles**, and similar in this respect to the *Leich* and the **sequence**. The form was often quite free and irregular, especially in the thirteenth century.

lament – (Latin: *planctus*) song mourning the death of a well-known figure, or (more generally) a song of grief or sorrow in misfortune. Laments are found in all medieval languages.

lauda (plural: *laude*) – Italian religious song of praise, associated with St Francis of Assisi and the lay devotional movements inspired by him in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy.

Leich – **Minnesang** song form using double **versicles**: similar to the **trouvère** *lai*.

Lied (plural: *Lieder*) – 'song': general term for songs of the **Minnesinger**.

Liederhandschrift (plural: *Liederhandschriften*) – **manuscript** containing songs of the **Minnesinger**.

ligature – notational sign in which two or more notes are combined in a single figure. Derived from the **neumes** of **chant** notation, ligatures were adopted for the notation of the **rhythmic modes**, the pattern of ligatures of different lengths indicating the mode in use.

liturgy – set texts, music, and ritual actions that make up the services of communal worship in the Church. The daily liturgy consists of the Mass and the Office (the latter a series of eight services at fixed times of the day and night), each with prescribed prayers, readings, and **chants**. Certain chants remained the same at every service (see **Ordinary of the Mass**); others varied with the season of the Church's year (see **Proper of the Mass**).

longa (plural: *longae*) – a note of longer duration than the *brevis*: in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century notation, the *longa* could be equal to either two or three *breves*. In thirteenth-century **measured rhythm**, an even longer value, called a *longa duplex*, was sometimes used.

macaronic – text (such as a poem or sung lyric) switching between phrases in different languages.

madrigal – Italian song form associated with the *Trecento*; its musical form can be described as AAB.

manuscript – book written by hand; in the European Middle Ages, before printing was widely adopted as a method for mass-producing books during the fifteenth century, all books were manuscripts.

Mass – see **liturgy**

measured/measurable rhythm – music with fixed rhythmic values, in which the note lengths can be measured precisely in relation to one another. Notre-Dame polyphony is the earliest Western repertory in which measured rhythm could be specified in notation (see **rhythmic modes**). Other medieval repertories of polyphony and song, which are notated in **unmeasured** notation, may have

been sung with a free, flexible pace or in a measured rhythm that was learnt orally, rather than notated.

melisma – florid melodic gesture, in which two or more notes are sung to a syllable of text. Where a melody consists predominantly of melismas, it is said to have a **melismatic texture**, by contrast to a **syllabic** texture, in which each syllable is sung to a single note.

mensural notation – rhythmic notation developed in the late thirteenth century, in which rhythmic values are expressed by individual signs, rather than by combinations of ligatures, as in **modal notation. Franconian notation** is the earliest example of mensural notation; **Ars Nova** notation introduced further refinements to the mensural system.

mensuration – in **Ars Nova** notation, the metre governing the durational relationships between rhythmic values. Essentially equivalent to the modern time signature, the mensuration – sometimes indicated in notation by a mensuration sign – specified if the *brevis* was subdivided into two or three *semibreves*, and the *semibrevis* into two or three *minimae*, thereby indicating whether the music was in triple or duple, compound or simple metre. See also *modus*, *tempus*, **prolation**.

metre – **1. (poetic)** basic rhythmical structure of poetry, involving pre-determined patterns of long and short, accented and unaccented syllables, sometimes arranged in metrical feet (see **foot**). **2. (musical)** basic rhythmical structure of music, involving patterns of strong and weak beats, and the subdivision of longer notes into shorter ones (see also **rhythmic modes**, **mensuration**).

minima (plural: *minimae*) – a note of shorter duration than the *semibrevis*, introduced in **Ars Nova** notation in the fourteenth century. Either two or three *minimae* were equivalent to one *semibrevis*.

Minne – see **courtly love**

Minnelied (plural: **Minnelieder**)/**Minnesang**: song of the **Minnesinger**.

Minnesinger (plural: **Minnesinger**) – German or Dutch poet-composer, primarily of vernacular song.

miscellany – **manuscript** of mixed contents, including texts and sometimes music of multiple different kinds or genres.

modal notation, **modal rhythm** – see **rhythmic modes**

mode – **1. (melodic)** hierarchical arrangement of notes from which melodies are constructed. Similar in concept to the modern scale, a medieval mode is defined by its **final** (closing, defining note), and range (either the octave above the final, or the octave reaching from the fourth below the final to the fifth above). **2. (rhythmic)** – see **rhythmic modes**

modus – in **mensural notation**, the relationship between the duration of the *longa* and the *brevis*. In perfect *modus*, the *longa* was equivalent to three *breves*; in imperfect *modus*, the *longa* equalled two *breves* in length.

monophony – music written or performed as a single voice or instrumental part, in contrast to **polyphony**, music for more than one part.

motet – polyphonic genre, originating in thirteenth-century Paris. Some early motets were created by fitting newly written texts to the upper-voice music of **substitute clausulae**. The first motets are in Latin, but motets with French upper voices soon came to dominate. The defining feature of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century motet is **polytextuality**: different texts sung simultaneously in each of the voice parts.

motetus – part notated above the **tenor** in a **motet**. In early motets derived from **substitute clausulae**, the motetus is the texted version of the clausula's *duplum*.

mudanza – middle section of the **stanza** in *zéjel* form, between the *estribillo* and the *vuelta*.

muwashshah – 'girdle poem'; Arabic and Hebrew poetic and song form, cultivated in Muslim Spain.

Natureingang – 'nature introduction': typical opening of a **Minnelied**, describing the narrator's natural surroundings before linking them to human emotions.

neumatic notation – form of medieval notation used for **chant** and other musical genres in the early Middle Ages. It consists of **neumes**: signs above the syllables of sung text, which could indicate a single note or group of joined notes. Neumatic notation shows melodic direction or contour but not precise pitch; some neumatic notations also contain rich details of performance nuance. Neumatic notations could only be deciphered by someone with prior aural knowledge of the music, and were therefore primarily used as a memory aid.

notation – see **daseian notation**, **Franconian notation**, **mensural notation**, **modal notation**, **neumatic notation**, **red notation**, **staff notation**

nova cantica – style of Latin poetry and song originating in twelfth-century Aquitaine, in which classical **metres** were replaced by rhythmic or accentual verse. Rhyme and other kinds of verbal patterning became much more prominent in *nova cantica*.

occursus – in eleventh-century **organum** described by Guido of Arezzo, a kind of **cadence** at which the **organal voice** joins the **principal voice** on a unison.

Office – see **liturgy**

Ordinary of the Mass – the elements of the Mass **liturgy** that remain the same at every Mass. These include chants such as the *Kyrie eleison*, *Gloria*, and *Credo*.

organal voice – voice part added to the **chant** to form two-part **organum** (or **diaphony**). In the earliest examples, the organal voice moved strictly in parallel with the chant (or **principal voice**), but in eleventh- and twelfth-century organum, it could move with more freedom and variation.

organum – in a general sense, all medieval polyphonic music. More specific usages include the **parallel organum** described by the *Musica Enchiriadis* and *Scolica Enchiriadis* treatises, and the **florid organum** of twelfth-century Aquitaine and Paris. At Notre-Dame in Paris, pieces in two-, three- and four-part polyphony were described respectively as *organum duplum, organum triplum*, and *organum quadruplum*.

oud – plucked stringed instrument of Arab origin, precursor of the lute; played by musicians in medieval Mediterranean areas such as Sicily and Muslim Spain.

ouvert – 'open'; first-time ending for a repeated musical phrase, especially in four-teenth-century French song. In contrast to the second-time ending – called *clos* ('closed') – the *ouvert* concludes on a note other than the **final**, giving a sense of incompletion.

panisorhythm – **isorhythmic** technique in which all voices of a **motet** or other poly-phonic piece were structured around a repeated rhythmic pattern (*talea*).

parallel motion – two or more voice parts in a polyphonic piece moving in the same melodic direction. Compare **contrary motion**.

parallel organum – improvised polyphonic practice described in the *Musica Enchiriadis* and *Scolica Enchiriadis* treatises of the late ninth century, in which one or more **organal voices** are added to the **chant**, moving in **parallel motion** with it, at the interval of a fourth or fifth.

partimen – see *jeu-parti*

pastorela (Occitan)/*pastourelle* (French) – literary theme in **troubadour** and **trouvère** songs and narrative genres, based on a pastoral scene involving a shepherdess and a knight who wishes to seduce her.

perfect – see *modus*, *tempus*

pes (plural: *pedes*) – **1.** repeated A section of the **stanza** in **troubadour**, **trouvère**, and **Minnesinger** songs in **bar form**; contrasts with the following B section to make the overall structure AAB. **2.** in English **motets** and other polyphonic pieces, a **tenor** made up of a repeating melodic phrase, not derived from **chant**.

piede (plural: *piedi*) – middle section of the **stanza** of an Italian *ballata*. The *piede* is heard twice with different texts, between the *ripresa* and the *volta*.

planctus – see **lament**

polyphony – music for more than one part. In later, post-medieval usages, polyphony is sometimes distinguished from 'homophony', with 'polyphony' indicating parts that move independently in **counterpoint** and 'homophony' describing music whose parts share the same rhythm and thus proceed as a series of chords. This distinction is not generally made of medieval music.

polytextuality – polyphonic music in which each part sings a different text simultan-eously. Polytextuality is the defining feature of the medieval **motet**.

principal voice – in **organum** of the ninth to the early twelfth century, the voice singing the **chant**. One or more **organal voices** could be added to the principal voice to create polyphony.

prolation – in **mensural notation**, the relationship between the duration of the *semibrevis* and the *minima*. In major prolation, the *semibrevis* was equivalent to three *minimae*; in minor prolation, the *semibrevis* equalled two *minimae* in length.

Proper of the Mass – the elements of the Mass **liturgy** that change according to the season of the Church's year. Proper **chants** have texts appropriate to the festival or time of year during which they are sung.

puy – society or guild of poets and composers, especially **trouvères**. Some *puys* held song competitions in which their members competed to win prizes for their songs.

quadruplum – the fourth voice in a polyphonic piece. In **score format**, the *quadruplum* is notated as the highest of the four voices. The term *quadruplum* is also used as a shorthand for **organum quadruplum**, referring to four-part polyphony, especially of the thirteenth century.

rabāb – bowed stringed instrument of Arab origin, precursor of the rebec; played by musicians in medieval Mediterranean areas such as Sicily and Muslim Spain.

red notation – use of red ink, as opposed to black, for passages within pieces in **Ars Nova** and **Ars Subtilior** notation. Red ink could indicate a variety of primarily rhythmic features, such as a temporary change of **mensuration** or a brief **syncopated** passage.

refrain (English) – recurring section of music and text in a song, usually found after each **stanza**.

refrain (French) – a migrating snippet of song, quoted in multiple contexts such as **chansons avec des refrains**, French **motets**, *romans*, and other narrative poetry and drama.

repertory (or **repertoire**) – stock of musical or poetic materials. We speak of the 'repertory' sung at particular locations or institutions, or by particular groups of musicians; or the 'repertory' of a particular kind of musical piece, meaning all the known pieces of that kind.

responsory – **chant** for the Office (see **liturgy**).

rhythmic modes – system of rhythmic organization and its notation used in Notre-Dame and related polyphony. The six rhythmic modes were fixed patterns of *longae* and *breves*, based on classical **metres**, and whole pieces or sections of pieces would be based on a single mode, with minor variations from the basic pattern. Originally used in improvised practice, a notational system to represent the rhythmic modes in writing was developed in the thirteenth century and was the first musical notation in which **measured rhythm** could be conveyed.

ripresa – opening, **refrain** section of the **stanza** of an Italian **ballata**. The *ripresa* is heard at the start and end of each stanza, either side of the *piede* and the *volta*.

roman/**romance** – long, narrative poem, especially in French, sometimes with musical insertions in the form of *refrains*.

rondeau (plural: *rondeaux*) – French song form, one of the **formes fixes**. A *rondeau* has the poetic-musical structure ABabAaAB, with the opening AB section described as the **refrain**, and supplying all the music for the song.

rotulus – 'roll': **manuscript** written on a long piece of parchment rolled up into a scroll.

score format – layout of polyphonic parts in which the **staves** of all the parts are vertically aligned, so that their coordination can be seen at a glance. Some medieval polyphonic **manuscripts** used **score format**; others have each part written in full in separate blocks of the page (or sometimes on different pages or even in different books).

semibrevis (plural: *semibreves*) – a note of shorter duration than the *brevis*, introduced in **mensural notation** in the late thirteenth century. Either two or three *semibreves* were equivalent to one *brevis*.

sequence – **chant** for the Mass (see **liturgy**), using a double **versicle** form.

Spruch (plural: *Sprüche*) – German song of the **Minnesinger**, typically on a moral, political, or religious topic. Some *Sprüche* were sung to a pre-existing *Ton*, or recitational melodic formula.

staff notation – form of musical notation in which notes are arranged on a grid of horizontal lines, called a **staff** (plural: **staves**). First introduced by Guido of Arezzo in the eleventh century, staff notation allowed precise pitches to be specified (unlike in **neumatic notation**).

stanza – unit of poetry, consisting of several lines arranged in a pattern, according to features such as line length, metre, or rhyme. In **strophic form**, multiple stanzas (sometimes called **strophes**) are sung to a repeated melody.

Stimmtausch – see **voice exchange**.

strophic form – song form in which multiple **stanzas** or strophes are sung to a repeating melody.

substitute clausula (plural: **clausulae**) – **discant** passage, composed to substitute for an existing passage of **florid organum** in Notre-Dame polyphony. The substitute clausula used the same **tenor** notes as the passage it replaced, but set these in **measured rhythm**, and with a new upper voice or voices.

syllabic – **texture** in which single syllables are sung mostly to single notes, in contrast to **melismatic** music.

syncopation – rhythmic technique in which the music's overall **metre** is temporarily disrupted by the accentuation of notes that would normally be unaccented, and vice versa.

Tagelied – see *alba*

talea – in **isorhythm**, a repeated rhythmic pattern that is used to structure one or more parts of a polyphonic piece. Consisting of a pattern of note values and rests, a *talea* was often combined with a repeating melodic pattern, called a *color* (see **color – 2**).

tempus – in **mensural notation**, the relationship between the duration of the **brevis** and the **semibrevis**. In perfect *tempus*, the *brevis* was equivalent to three *semibreves*; in imperfect *tempus*, the *brevis* equalled two *semibreves* in length.

tenor – in medieval polyphony based on **chant**, the voice part that sings the chant notes. Later in the Middle Ages, the term came to denote the voice part that formed the structural basis of the composition, whether or not it derived from chant.

tenso – see *jeu-parti*

texture – combination of elements to create a particular sound quality. In this book, we use texture in two senses: **1.** the ways in which words and music map onto one another (for example, a **syllabic** texture is one in which syllables correspond to single notes, in contrast to a **melismatic** texture, in which syllables of text are spread out over many sung notes); **2.** the ways in which polyphonic parts combine with each other (for example, multiple voice parts singing independent melodies may create particularly full or rich textures, while two parts moving in **parallel motion** will give a texture that is more simple or sparse).

theory – the technical study of music and its components. Medieval **theorists** compiled their teachings on elements such as melody, harmony, and rhythm in music **treatises**.

through-composed – musical form involving no significant repetition, but changing continuously throughout its length.

Ton – *see* **Spruch**

tornada – short, concluding section (often a couplet) of a **troubadour** song, typically involving a direct address. Equivalent to the **trouvère** *envoi*.

transcription – copy of a medieval musical piece, converted into modern notation. Scholars and editors **transcribe** early musical pieces for the purposes of study, and as a preliminary stage in making an **edition**.

treatise – theoretical or educational text. Medieval music **theorists** compiled their teachings into treatises.

Trecento – Italian term for the fourteenth century. Used to apply to Italian music of that century and the beginning of the next.

triad – group of three notes each separated by a major or minor third; a triad may sound simultaneously as a chord or successively, such as when a melody or melodic passage emphasizes the notes of a particular triad.

triplum – the third voice in a polyphonic piece. In **score format**, the *triplum* is notated above the *duplum* and the **tenor**. The term *triplum* is also used as a shorthand for *organum triplum*, referring to three-part polyphony, especially of the thirteenth century.

trobairitz – female **troubadour**.

troubadour – Occitan poet-composer, primarily of vernacular song.

trouvère – Northern-French poet-composer, primarily of vernacular song.

unmeasured – music with no fixed rhythmic values. Medieval music written in unmeasured notation may have been sung with a free, flexible pace or, sometimes, in a measured rhythm that was learnt orally, rather than notated.

versarium (plural: *versaria*) – **manuscript** containing Aquitanian *versus*.

versicle – **stanza** of poetry forming a pair with the next stanza, sharing the same poetic construction and repeated music. Pairs of versicles – called **double versicles** – are the basis of song forms such as the *lai*, *Leich*, and **sequence**.

versus (plural: *versus*) – broad category of Latin songs from the early Middle Ages; religious or secular in theme, with texts in verse (as opposed to prose). More specifically, the term *versus* applies to devotional Latin songs from twelfth-century Aquitaine, using the new poetic and musical techniques of *nova cantica*.

vida – biography of a **troubadour** or **trouvère**, sometimes included in **chansonniers** along with their songs.

virelai – French song form, one of the *formes fixes*. Each **stanza** of a *virelai* has the poetic-musical structure AbbaA. Very similar forms are found in Galician-Portuguese **cantigas** and Italian *ballate*.

voice exchange (*Stimmtausch*) – swapping of musical material between two voices in a polyphonic piece. Voice exchange may be used for short passages, or – especially in English polyphony – as a way of structuring whole compositions.

volta – third section of the **stanza** of an Italian ***ballata***. The *volta* follows the two ***piede*** in the middle of the stanza and returns to the music of the ***ripresa*** which both opens the stanza and is repeated after the *volta*.

vox organalis – see **organal voice**

vox principalis – see **principal voice**

vuelta – 'turn': final section of the **stanza** in ***zéjel*** form, returning to the rhyme sounds of the ***estribillo***.

zéjel (Galician-Portuguese)/***zajal*** (Arabic) – poetic form originating in Muslim Spain; used for poetry in Arabic, Hebrew, and Galician-Portuguese, including most **cantigas**. Opens with the ***estribillo***, which is then repeated between each of the **stanzas**; followed by the ***mudanza*** and finally the ***vuelta***, which returns to the rhyme sounds of the *estribillo*.

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