Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Motet: France, Ars Nova

Philippe de Vitry

Tenor

ESTABLISHING THE PROTOTYPE: THE ROMAN DE FAUVEL

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

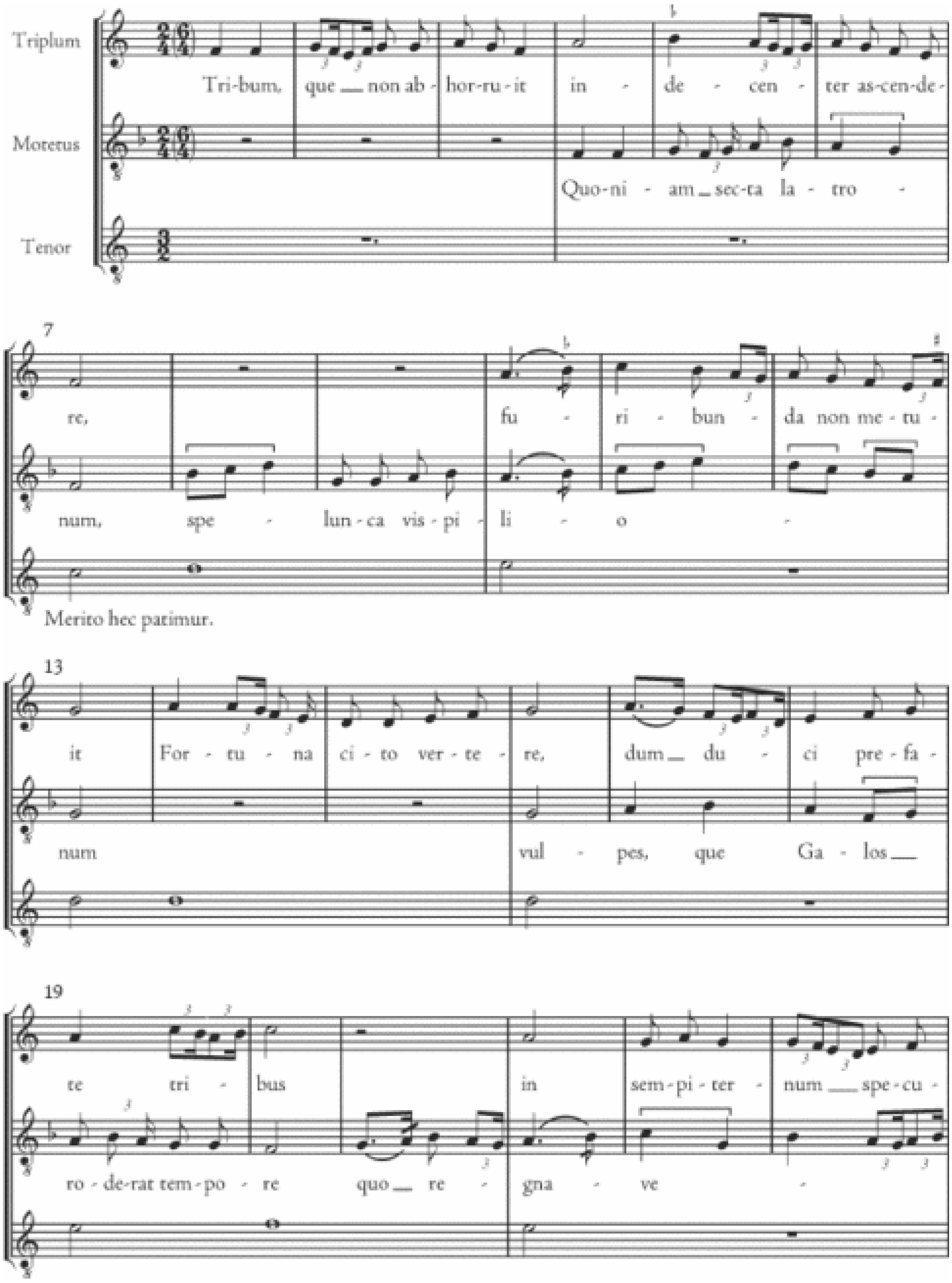
That cosmological speculation was the aim, or at least the effect, of the Ars Nova project is apparent from the music that first issued from it. The earliest genre to be affected by the Ars Nova, and the most characteristic one, was—almost needless to say—the motet, already a hotbed of innovation and already the primary site of the *discordia concors*. The fourteenth-century transformation of the motet gives the clearest insight into the nature of the Ars Nova innovations and their purposes.

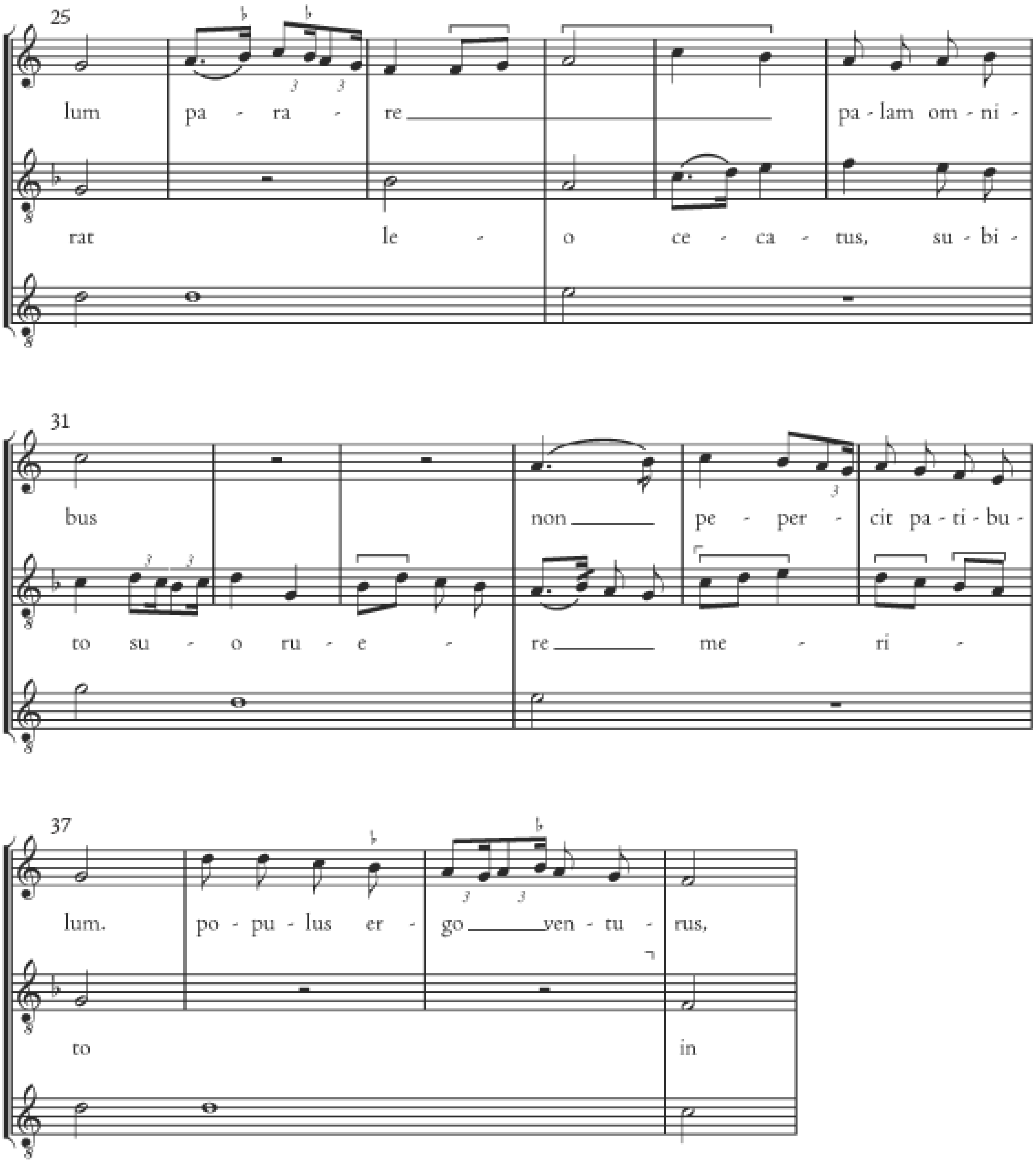
The earliest surviving pieces in which elements of Ars Nova notation are clearly discernable are a group of motets found in a lavish manuscript, compiled in or just after 1316, which contains an expanded and sumptuously illustrated version of a famous allegorical poem, the *Roman de Fauvel*. The poem, by Gervais du Bus, an official at the French royal court, is found in about a dozen sources, but this one, edited by another courtier, Raoul Chaillou, provided the poem with a veritable soundtrack consisting of 126 pieces of music ranging from little snippets of chant through monophonic rondeaux and ballades (the last of their kind) to “motetz à trebles et à tenures,” meaning polyphonic motets, of which there are twenty-four. These musical items are meant as appendages or illustrations to the poem, on a par with the luxuriant manuscript illuminations. They were probably meant to adorn recitations of the *Roman* at “feasts of the learned,” most likely at the home of some particularly rich and powerful “church aristocrat.” What links all the musical numbers despite their motley variety of style, genre, text-language, and date is their pertinence to the poem’s theme.

That theme is ferocious civil and political satire. The name of the title character, Fauvel, roughly meaning “little deerlike critter” who is *faus* and *de_vel* (false and furtive, “veiled”) and of dull fallow hue (*fauve*), is actually an acrostic standing for a whole medley of political vices, apparently modeled on the list of seven deadly sins (the ones that are not cognates below are translated):

- **F** laterie
- **A** varice
- **U** ilanie (i.e., villainy, U and V being equivalent in Latin spelling)
- **V** ariété (duplicity, “two-facedness”)
- **E** nvie
- **L** ascheté (laziness, indolence)

The manuscript illuminations represent Fauvel as something between a fawn and a horse or ass. Indeed, everyone “fawns” on him, from garden-variety nobles and clerics all the way to the pope and the French king. (Our expression “to curry favor” was originally “to curry favel,” meaning to coddle Fauvel and win his base boons.) Fauvel is practically omnipotent; his feat of placing the moon above the sun symbolized the secularism and the corruption of court and clergy. Now he wants to pay back Dame Fortune for the favors she has granted him and proposes marriage—but this, too, is a trick; once married to Fortune Fauvel will become her master as well, and truly all-powerful. Fortune refuses but gives Fauvel the hand of her daughter Vaine Gloire, through whom he populates the earth with little Fauveaux.


Triplum
Motetus
Tenor
Tri-bum, que — non ab - hor-ru - it in - de - cen - ter as-cen-de -
Quo-ni - am — sec-ta la - tro -
7
re, fu - ri - bun - da non me - tu -
num, spe - lun - ca vis - pi - li - o -
Merito hec patimur.
13
it For - tu - na ci - to ver - te - re, dum — du - ci pre - fa -
num vul - pes, que Ga - los —
19
te tri - bus in sem - pi - ter - num — spe - cu -
ro - de-rat tem - po - re quo — re - gna - ve -


25
lum pa - ra - re palam om - ni -
rat le - o ce - ca - tus, su - bi -
31
bus non pe - per - cit pa - ti - bu -
to su - o ru - e - re me - ri -
37
lum. po - pu - lus er - go ven - tu - rus,
to in

ex. 8-1 Philippe de Vitry, *Tribum/Quoniam/MERITO*, mm. 1–40

The motet, whose first half is transcribed as Ex. 8-1, appears in the section of the *Roman de Fauvel* manuscript containing the description (accompanied by an illustration; see Fig. 8-3) of the Fountain of Youth, in which Fauvel, his wife, and his entourage—Carnality, Hatred, Gluttony, Drunkenness, Pride, Hypocrisy, Sodomy, and a host of others just as attractive—bathe on the day following the wedding. (In the illustration, the bathers enter from the right, clearly aged, and emerge rejuvenated from the bath, of which the topmost decorative spouts are miniature Fauvels.)

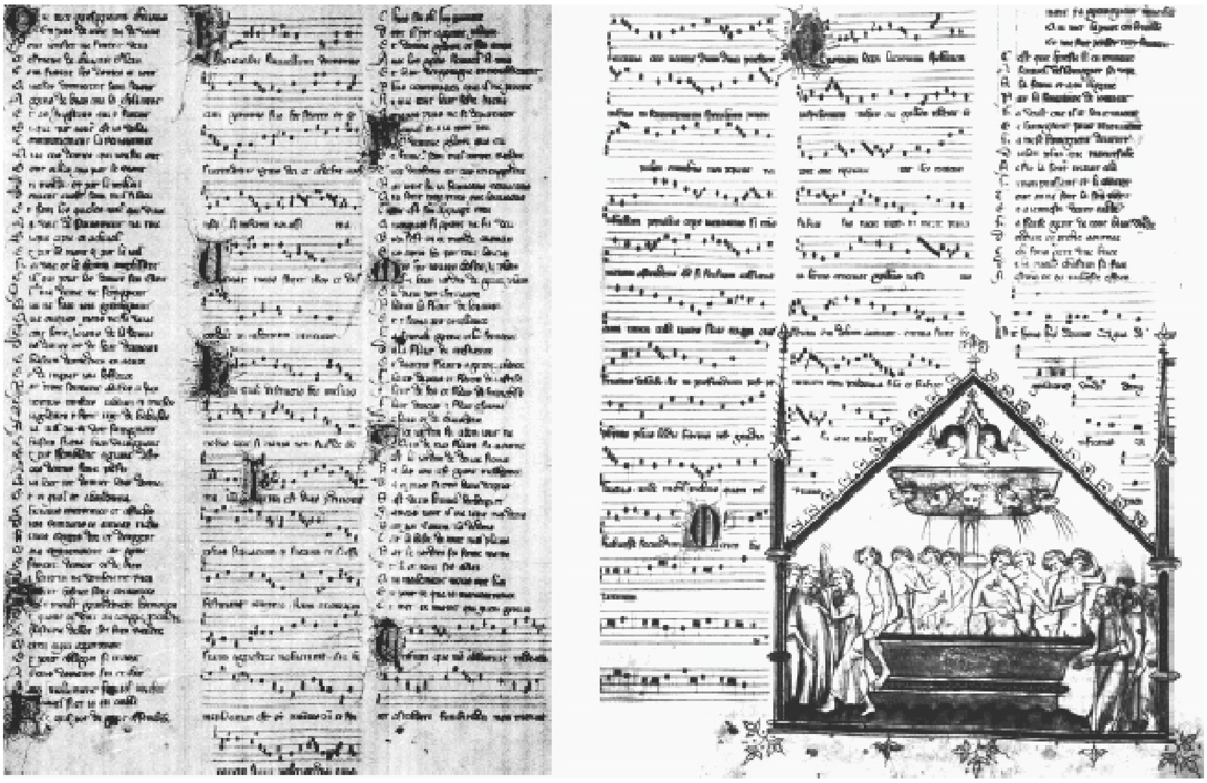


fig. 8-3 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds Français 146 (*Roman de Fauvel*), fol. 41v–42, showing most of Philippe de Vitry's motet *Tribum/Quoniam/MERITO* and an allegory of the fountain of youth.

The triplum and motetus texts are laden with Fauvel-related allegories that have been associated by historians with the fate of Enguerrand de Marigny, the finance minister to King Philippe IV (Philip the Fair) of France, who was hanged following the death of the king, on 30 April 1315. His death is held up as an object lesson (*admonitio*) concerning the whims of Fortune and the dangers of concentrating political power. (The texts thus reflect the interests of the feudal nobility who opposed and sought to limit the power of the throne and forced concessions on Philip's successor Louis X.)

Because it corresponds so closely to the rhythmic and notational features soon to be set forth in the treatise *Ars Nova* (where a passage from it is actually quoted), the music of this little political tract in tones is thought to be an early work of Philippe de Vitry, who was the contemporary of Gervaise du Bus and Raoul Chaillou, and like Gervaise a court notary in his youth. With this work and the others that he composed in his twenties, Philippe established the fourteenth-century motet as a genre and provided the prototypes for a century of stylistic development. The differences between Philippe's motet and the one by Petrus de Cruce excerpted in Ex. 7-10 will virtually define the prototype.

To begin with, the text is in Latin, not French; its tone is hortatory, not confessional; and its subject is public life, not private emotion. Moralizing texts—allegories, sermons, injunctions—such as were formerly the province of conductus, would henceforth dominate the motet repertory. In keeping with the rhetorical seriousness of the texts, and to enhance it, the formal gestures of the fourteenth-century motet became more ample, more ceremonious, more dramatic than those of its progenitor.

Whereas thirteenth-century motets, like the discant clausulae on which they were generically based, began with all the voices together, the fourteenth-century motet tended to dramatize the tenor entrance. In *Tribum/Quoniam/MERITO* (Ex. 8-1), the voices enter one by one (*seriatim*), with the tenor last. The introductory section preceding the tenor entrance became so standardized that it was given a name, one with which we are familiar in another context: it was called the *introitus*, suggesting that the entering voices formed a procession. And just as in the case of the "introit" procession at the beginning of Mass, the most important participant (the celebrant, the tenor) enters last.

The tenor is the most important voice in the motet—the *dignior pars*, to quote one theorist, the "worthiest part"—because it is literally the "fundamental" voice.[5] In fourteenth-century motets it is chosen with care to reflect its liturgical dignity on the texted parts, although the fourteenth-century motet, even when in Latin, was by no means a liturgical genre. All of this is just the opposite of the situation that obtained in the early days of the motet, when such works were clausula-derived and performed in church. In the oldest motets —"prosulated clausulae," as we called them on their first appearance—the motetus and triplum texts were ancillary glosses on the tenor in the course of an ongoing liturgical performance of the item from which the tenor was drawn. Now it is the tenor that is chosen to support and gloss the orations up above. As the theorist Aegidius of Murino put it around 1400 in a famous motet recipe, "first take for your tenor any antiphon or responsory or any other chant from the book of Office chants, and its words should accord with the theme or occasion for which the motet is being made."[6] In Ex. 8-1, the tenor is drawn from the beginning of a matins responsory that is sung during Lent, the most penitential season. Its implied words—*Merito hec patimur* ("It is right that we suffered thus")—are plainly an extra comment on just desserts, and amplify the censorious allegories running above on the fate of corrupt politicians. The fact that the tenor is not a melisma from the chant but its incipit shows that it was probably meant to be recognized, at least (or at best) by the elite initiates for whose edification or solemn entertainment the motet was composed.

One final point of comparison: Whereas the tenor in Ex. 7-10, our "Petronian" motet, was allowed to "degenerate" into an undifferentiated sequence of longs during its second cursus, the tenor in the "Vitrian" motet maintains a strong, preplanned rhythmic profile from beginning to end. (As Aegidius instructs, "then take your tenor and arrange it and put it in rhythm" as a first composing step.) The tenor in Ex. 8-1 is cast in easily recognizable (even if slowed down) "second mode" or iambic *ordines*.

In the thirteenth century, its constituent note-values would have been breves and longs arranged *BLB(rest)*. Here, the note-values have been doubled in keeping with the increased rhythmic ambit of the Ars Nova style, so that the ordines are not "modal" but "maximodal," proceeding in longs and maximas. In the transcription, the tenor is barred according to the maximodus, with one measure equaling the perfect maxima. The upper parts are barred according to the modus, with one measure equaling the long. As one can see from the time signatures employed, the modus level here is imperfect, with the long (represented in transcription by the half note) divided equally into two breves (quarters). The mensuration of the breve (i.e., the tempus) is also imperfect, with the breve dividing equally into two semibreves (eighths).

Notes:

(5) *De musica libellus* (Anonymus 7), in Coussemaker, *Scriptorum de musica medii aevi nova series*, Vol. I (4 vols., Paris, 1864–76), no. 7.

(6) Aegidius of Murino, *Tractatus cantus mensurabilis*, in Coussemaker, *Scriptorum de musica medii aevi nova series*, Vol. III, pp. 124–5; trans. R. Taruskin in *Music in the Western World*, 2nd ed., p. 57.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Roman de Fauvel

Notation: Polyphonic mensural notation, c1260–1500

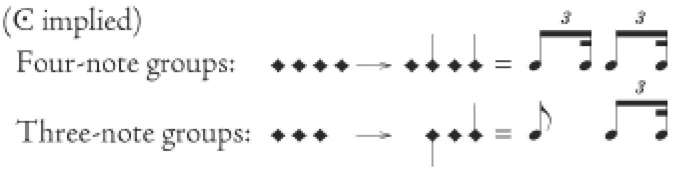
TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

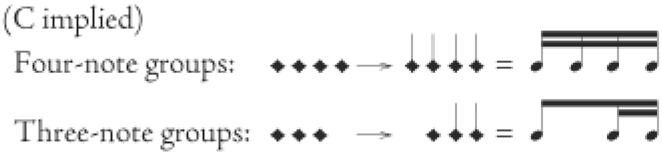
Comparing the notation of this motet as shown in Fig. 8-3, not only with later sources but with subsequent additions to the Fauvel manuscript itself, reveals the way in which Ars Nova notation emerged out of the Petronian style—a fascinating historical moment. The Fauvel manuscript is slightly earlier than the treatise of Jehan des Murs, in which the notation of the minim is introduced. In it, therefore, the level of prolation can be only indistinctly differentiated from that of tempus.

Looking closely at Fig. 8-3, in which the triplum part (*Tribum*, etc.) begins at the bottom of the third column of the left-hand page, one observes that the group of four notes over the syllable *que*, and the pair of notes immediately following, are both notated in semibreve-lozenges, even though both groups take the time of a breve. As in the Petronian motet, the breve units are marked off by “division dots” (*puncta divisionis*), there being no explicit way of showing by their shapes that the lozenges or diamonds in the first group are only half the length of those in the second. Nor can one distinguish the relative lengths of the notes in three-semibreve groups like the one on the triplum’s second staff (over the syllable -*bun*-), in which (as the transcription reveals) each note has a different length.

In a hand too faint to be discerned in Fig. 8-3, an editor familiar with the new notational principles has gone over both the triplum and the motetus and added the minim-stems that not only distinguish levels of mensuration but distinguish the Ars Nova style from its predecessors. In the four-note groups, the second and fourth are given upward minim-stems, producing lilting trochaic triplet-patterns as shown in the transcription, thus defining the level of prolation as perfect or “major” (that is, triple). The implied time signature is . In the three-note groups, the first note is given a tiny downward stem, showing that it is a perfect (or major) semibreve, while the last is given an upward stem, turning it into a minim, leaving the time of an imperfect semibreve for the stemless note (see Ex. 8-2a). The perfectly practicable alternative, within the Ars Nova system, would have been to place stems on all the notes in the four-note group, and on the second and third in the three-note groups. This would have indicated imperfect or “minor” (that is, duple) prolation, implying the time-signature C (see Ex. 8-2b).



ex. 8-2 The two alternatives and their equivalents in modern notatation a. Major prolation



ex. 8-2b Minor prolation

The “French” preference shown here for the lilting “trochaic” subdivision of the semibreve (implying that the four-lozenge groups would have been lilted that way even before the stems were added) seems to resonate both with earlier “modal” practice and with the later French convention of performing pairs of eighth-notes or sixteenth-notes with a similar, and now definitely unwritten, lilt (the so-called *notes inégales* or “unequal notes”). That practice is documented only for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it perhaps reflects a more widespread custom affecting unwritten repertories as well as written ones (compare the lilt in Viennese waltzes—or in jazz.)

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Motet: France, Ars Nova

Philippe de Vitry

MORE ELABORATE PATTERNING

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In keeping with the idea of *discordia concors*, which emphasized belief in a hidden order and unity behind the world's apparent chaos, composers of Ars Nova motets placed particular emphasis on subtle patterning that unified and reconditely organized the heterogeneous surface of their work. One can bring this aspect of *Tribum/Quoniam/MERITO* to light by comparing mm. 10–13 in the transcription with mm. 34–37. The repetition thus uncovered initiates an interlocking series of periodicities that crosscut the more obvious periodicity of the tenor. The same melodic phrases in the triplum and duplum will turn up again in mm. 58–62, and the triplum-duplum combination in mm. 22–25 will recur in mm. 46–49 and again in mm. 70–73. Every one of these spots corresponds to a progression in the tenor from E to D, which crosscuts the tenor's more obviously repeating rhythmic ordo or *talea* (since in every case the E is the end of an ordo and the D is the beginning of another). And the thrice-recurring pair of alternating repetitions in the upper voices—mm. 10–13/22–25, 34–37/46–49 and 58–62/70–73 (**ABABAB**)—crosscut the tenor's double cursus, which begins right between the members of the middle pair (just after our example breaks off). This is an especially significant hidden periodicity, for it imposes on the structure of the motet at its most encompassing level a "perfect/imperfect" duality (three repeated pairs vs. two tenor *cursus*) that reflects the duality of note-value relationships at the heart of the Ars Nova system.

That duality is "thematized"—made the subject of demonstration—in a later motet by Vitry, *Tuba sacre/In Arboris/VIRGO SUM* (Fig. 8-4; Ex. 8-3), which displays with a special elegance the peculiar, highly persuasive combination of seriousness and playfulness that was so characteristic of the Ars Nova.

Here the tenor consists of a chant fragment (*color*) bearing the incipit *Virgo sum*, ("I am a virgin"), a verse that figures meekness and purity, supporting (and "coloring," in the sense of commenting on) a pair of solemn meditations in the triplum and motetus concerning the mysteries of Christian doctrine and the necessity of reconciling faith with reason. These earnest sermons, for all their gravity, are nevertheless cast in graceful melodies full of the characteristic "prolation lilt" that we encountered in the previous motet as well, and that must reflect the style of the contemporary song repertory. (Vitry is known to have composed French songs in addition to Latin motets, but neither they nor any other French songs survive from the period of his main activity.) Also songlike are the mode and the harmonic idiom. Up to the final cadence in each cursus—which comes as a harmonic surprise—the tunes in the upper parts depart from and cadence on the note C, so that they are in the functional equivalent of our major mode. As Giraldus Cambrensis (quoted in chapter 5) remarked at the end of the twelfth century, that mode was used in unwritten musics far more prevalently than in chant-influenced literate ones. There is no better example of Vitrian C-major "poplyricism" than the unaccompanied motetus melisma that launches the *introitus* to this very high-minded motet. And no less emphatically sweet are the harmonies at strategic moments. Note the long-sustained full triads (the first we've seen) at tenor entrances and cadences such as mm. 16, 25, 43, and 46. Also self-evidently playful are the hockets between the triplum and the motetus that regularly recur at the ends of taleae. A motet with such prominent hockets (to recall a comment by Johannes de Grocheio) is at once high-minded and hot-tempered. Entertainment values are unabashedly summoned to assist lofty contemplation.

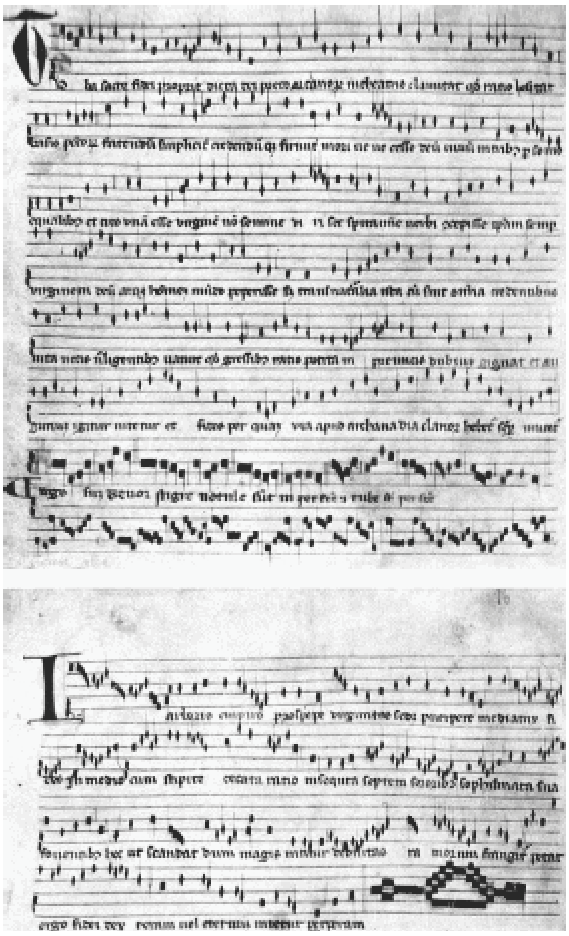
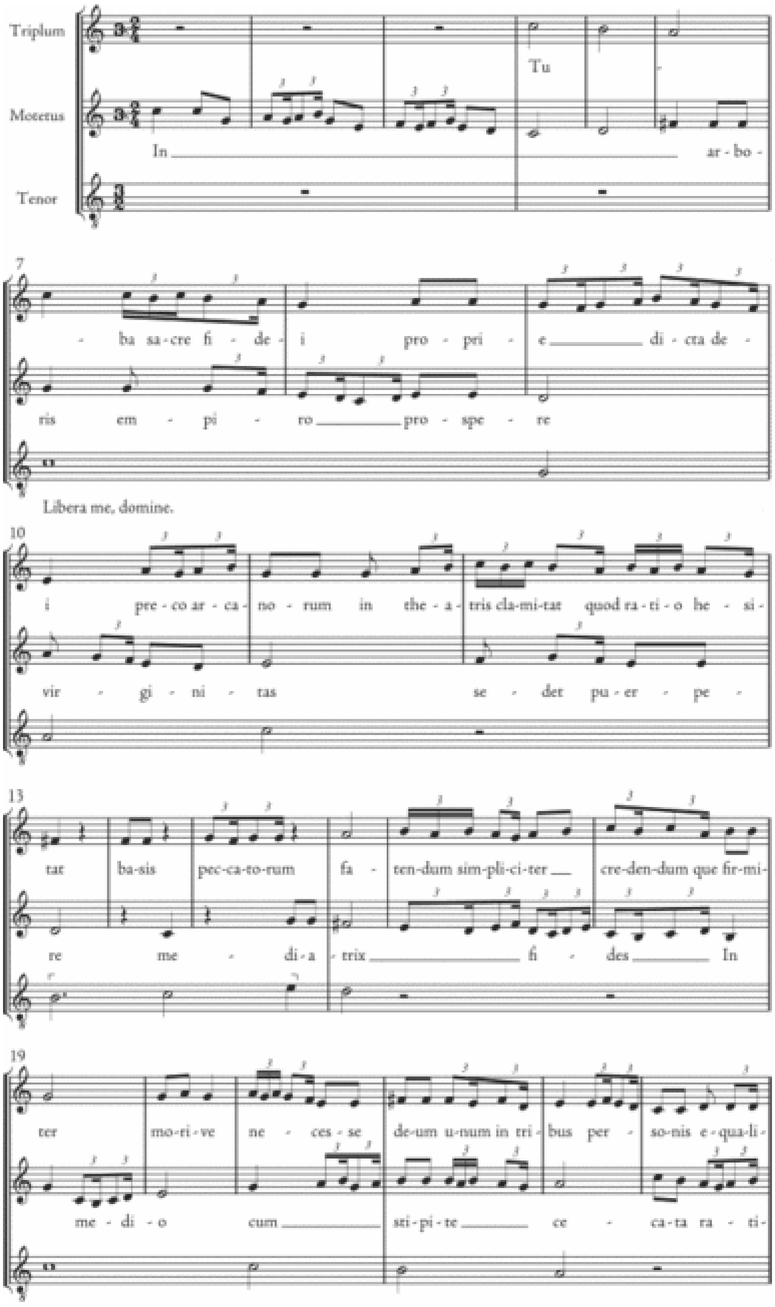
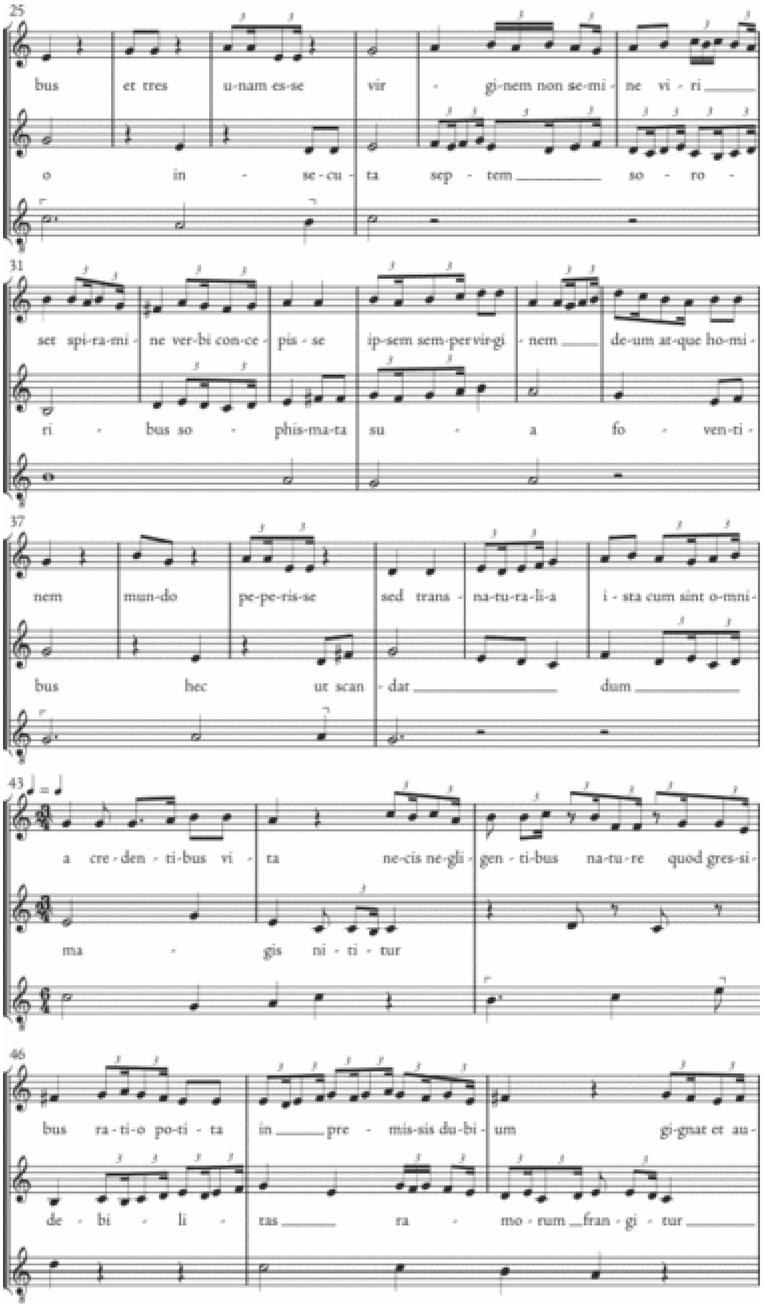
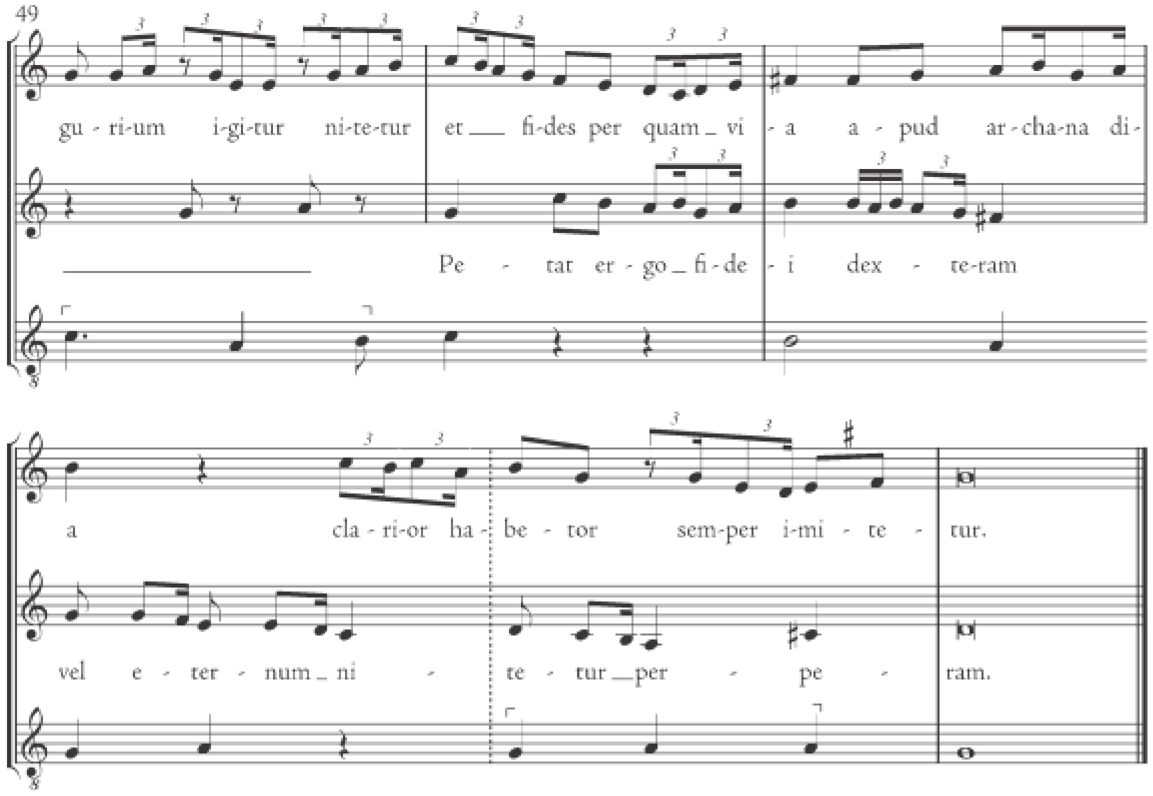


fig. 8-4 Phillippe de Vitry, *Tuba sacre/In arboris/VIRGO SUM* (Ivrea, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS 115, fols. 15v–16). The tenor notes that appear gray are notated in red ink to show a hemiola (3:2) proportion.


Triplum
Motetus
Tenor
In — ar - bo -
Tu
7
- ba sa-cre fi - de - i pro - pri - e — di - cta de -
ris em - pi - ro — pro - spe - re
Libera me, domine.
10
i pre - co ar - ca - no - rum in the - a - tris cla-mi-tat quod ra - ti - o he - si -
vir - gi - ni - tas se - det pu - er - pe -
13
tat ba-sis pec-ca-to-rum fa - ten-dum sim-pli-ci-ter — cre-den-dum que fir-mi-
re me - di - a - trix — fi - des — In
19
ter mo-ri-ve ne - ces - se de-um u-num in tri - bus per - so-nis e-qua-li-
me - di - o cum — sti-pi-te — ce - ca-ta ra - ti-


25
bus et tres u-nam es-se vir - gi-nem non se-mi - ne vi - ri
o in - se-cu - ta sep - tem so - ro -
31
set spi-ra-mi - ne ver-bi con-ce - pis - se ip-sem sem-per vir-gi - nem de-um at-que ho-mi -
ri - bus so - phis-ma-ta su - a fo - ven-ti -
37
nem mun-do pe-pe-ris-se sed trans - na-tu-ra-li-a i - sta cum sint o-mni -
bus hec ut scan - dar dum
43
a cre-den - ti-bus vi - ta ne-cis ne-gli - gen - ti-bus na-tu-re quod gres-si -
ma - gis ni - ti - tur
46
bus ra-ti-o po-ti - ta in pre - mis-sis du-bi - um gi-gnat et au -
de - bi - li - tas ra - mo-rum fran - gi - tur


49
gu - ri-um i-gi-tur ni-te-tur et __ fi-des per quam _ vi - a a - pud ar-cha-na di-
Pe - tat er - go _ fi - de - i dex - te-ram
a cla - ri-or ha - be - tor sem-per i-mi - te - tur.
vel e - ter - num _ ni - te - tur _ per - pe - ram.

ex. 8-3 Philippe de Vitry, *Tuba sacre/In Arboris/VIRGO SUM*

As for the tenor, its rhythms are cast in no simple modal ordo, but in an arbitrary arrangement of values adding up to 24 breves, as follows (a number in italics indicates a rest): 4 2 2 2 *2* 3 2 1 2 *4*. Note the odd number in the middle. The composer might have indicated that one perfect long within a prevailing duple modus by simply dotting it—as we still do, even if we do not know that we are following the method introduced by the Ars Nova for converting imperfect values into perfect ones. Another way of indicating the perfect long would have been by applying to it an explicit mensuration sign. The way that Vitry actually did it was playfully ostentatious. He supplied the tenor with a supplementary performance direction—called a *rubric* (after the red ink in which such things were often entered) or a *canon*, meaning "rule"—that reads, *Nigre notule sunt imperfecte et rube sunt perfecte* ("The little black notes are imperfect and the red ones are perfect"). Like so many of Philippe de Vitry's innovations, this one became standard practice. As a later theorist wrote, "red notes are placed in motets for three reasons, that is, when they are to be sung in some other mode, or other tempus, or other prolation than the black notes, as appears in many motets composed by Philippe."[7]

In every *talea*, then, six breves' worth of musical time is organized by perfect longs (that is, in "perfect minor modus"), requiring the use of red ink. It is here, of course, at the tenor's friskiest moment, that the hockets appear in the texted parts. Their rhythms, like the rhythm of the tenor, are the same each time. After three taleae, the note values are halved to coincide with the second cursus of the *color*, so that the tenor proceeds twice as "fast," and the red notes denote six semibreves' worth of time organized in perfect tempus. The frisky tempus shift becomes much friskier, since the perfect breve that now begins the red-ink patch crosscuts the basic tempus unit, producing a true syncopation—something that had never before been possible in notated music. Needless to say, the hockets in the upper parts get friskier, too; and again these puckish rhythms reappear each time the tenor syncopation returns. This passage introduces what was a permanent stylistic acquisition for fourteenth- and fifteenth-century music. "Coloration" (the use of a contrasting ink color, or, later, the filling in of notes ordinarily left "white") became a standard way of changing tempus in midstream to produce fascinating rhythms.

Notes:

(7) Aegidius of Murino in Coussemaker, *Scriptorum*, Vol. III, p. 125.

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Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The playful complexity of this tenor—an arbitrary (that is, "rational") talea that mixes mensurations and undergoes diminution by half—became a typical, even a defining feature of motets in the fourteenth century and beyond. Modern scholars use the term *isorhythm* ("same-rhythm") to denote the use of recurrent patterns or *taleae*, often quite long and cunningly constructed, that do not rely on traditional modal *ordines*. Motets that employ such recurrent patterns—often, as here, varied schematically on successive *colores*, or even within a *color*—are called isorhythmic motets. Despite the Greek derivation of the term, it is a modern coinage and a German one, first used by the great medievalist Friedrich Ludwig in 1904 in a pioneering study of the motets in the Montpellier Codex.

The first piece to which the term was applied, as it happens, was *On a parole/A Paris/Frese nouvele*, familiar to us from the previous chapter (Fig. 7-9/Ex. 7-9). Yet according to current standard usage, that motet is not isorhythmic; the motetus, which Ludwig mainly had in mind, moves in phrases that are rhythmically similar but not identical, and in the tenor the color and the talea are coextensive, amounting to a simple melodic repetition. As currently used, the term isorhythm implies literal rhythmic repetition that, while often coordinated with melodic repetition (chiefly in tenors), is nevertheless independently organized.

A true isorhythmic tenor, like the one in Ex. 8-3, is built on two periodic cycles, the one governing pitch, the other duration. And this implies the separate, hence abstract, conception of melodic and rhythmic successions. The passages of tenor-coloration in this motet by Vitry are accompanied, as we have seen, by rhythmic recurrences in the upper parts as well, so that this particular isorhythmic motet has patches of "pan-isorhythm," in which all the voices are bound periodically (which of course means predictably) into recurrent patterns to which the ear cannot help looking forward.

Thus isorhythm and its attendant effects have at once an embellishing and a symbolic purpose. They enhance surface attractiveness, particularly when smaller note-values and hockets are called into play. At the same time the periodicities thus set in motion reflect the periodicities of nature (celestial orbits, tides, seasons), giving the senses—and, through the senses, the mind—an intimation of the ineffable *musica mundana*. The coordination of surface and deeper structure that this motet so well exemplifies, and their conjoint appeal to sense and reason, may all be subsumed under the heading of *rhetoric*—the art of (musical) persuasion. That was the all-encompassing aim to which every detail of the ceremonious late-medieval motet was geared, whether at the level of grandiose architecture or that of seductive detail. That rhetoric found its most eloquent expression in motets of doctrinal, civic, or political cast.

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Ars Nova
Motet: France, Ars Nova

MUSIC ABOUT MUSIC

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Before turning to the most exalted specimens, however, let us have another look at the playful side of Ars Nova composition, for it will cast light on the earliest emergence within musical practice of "art" as we know it. Art, as we know it, is a self-conscious thing, as concerned with manner as it is with matter. Its Latin cognate, *ars* (as in Ars Nova) simply means "method" or "way." The title of the treatise attributed to Vitry simply means "a new way [of doing things]." That is the sense of "art" that is implied by words like "artful" and "artificial." They mean "full of method," hence "full of skill," and ultimately "full of style." What makes an *artist*, in the familiar, current sense of the word, therefore, is high consciousness of style.

The earliest musical compositions that seem to exhibit this sort of awareness on the part of their makers emerge out of the Ars Nova milieu. In the previous chapter we observed deliberate compositional *tours de force*, to be sure, and we have been observing high artistry (in the sense of high technical prowess and rhetorical eloquence) since the very beginning. But nowhere yet have we observed the kind of self-regard exemplified in Ex. 8-4, which shows the end of an anonymous motet roughly contemporary with the works of Vitry that we have been examining.

It is found in a *rotulus*, a scroll-manuscript from about 1325. Little scrolls of this kind, of which very few survive, were the sort of manuscripts from which the proudly literate singers of motets actually performed, as opposed to the lavish codices, the illuminated presentation manuscripts, that preserve most of what we call our "practical" source material (to distinguish it from "theoretical" sources like treatises). In their day such codices were not practical sources at all, but items of wealth to be stored away—which is why we have them now. *Rotuli*, meant for use, were used up.

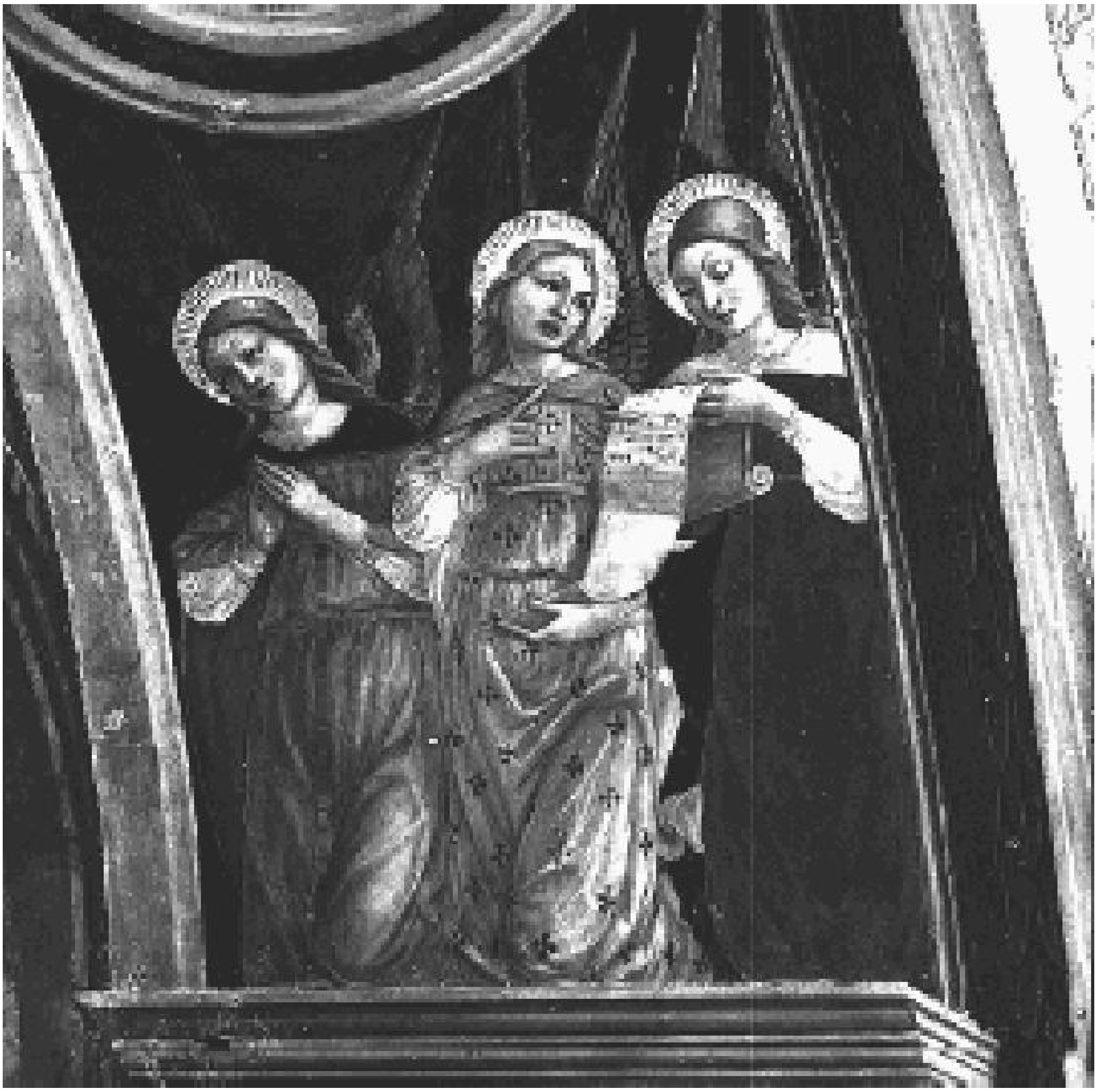
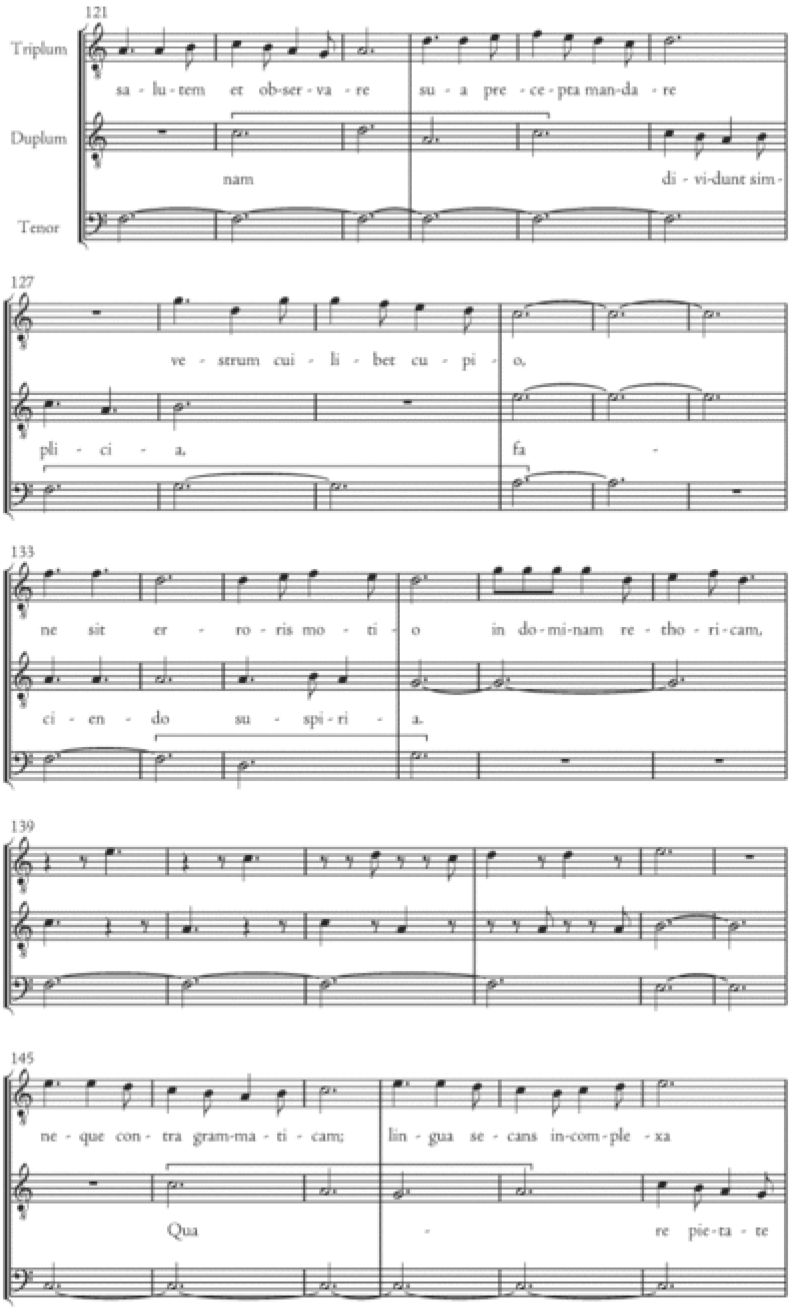
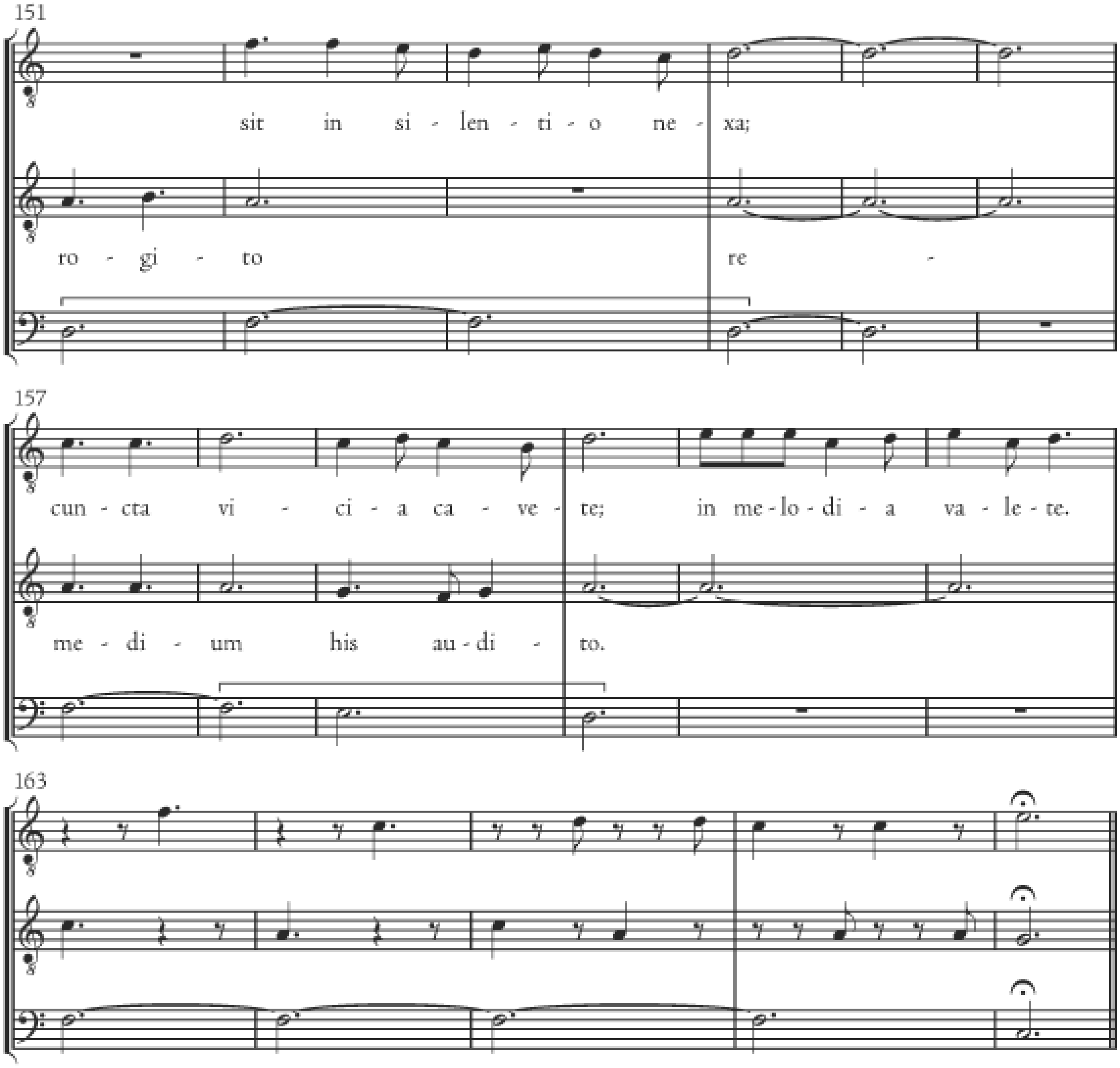


fig. 8-5 Lorenzo d'Alessandro, *Musical Angels*, a wall painting from the church of Santa Maria di Piazza, Sarnano, Italy. The angel at right is reading from a rotulus, or scroll manuscript of the kind used by singers in actual performance during the late Middle Ages.


121
Triplum
Duplum
Tenor
sa - lu - tem et ob - ser - va - re su - a pre - ce - pta man - da - re
nam di - vi - dunt sim -
127
ve - strum cui - li - bet cu - pi - o,
pli - ci - a, fa -
133
ne sit er - ro - ris mo - ti - o in do - mi - nam re - tho - ri - cam,
ci - en - do su - spi - ri - a.
139
145
ne - que con - tra gram - ma - ti - cam; lin - gua se - cans in - com - ple - xa
Qua - re pie - ta - te


151
sit in si - len - ti - o ne - xa;
ro - gi - to
re -
157
cun - cta vi - ci - a ca - ve - te; in me - lo - di - a va - le - te.
me - di - um his au - di - to.
163

ex. 8-4 ***Musicalis Sciencia/Sciencie Laudabili*****, mm. 121-67 (Paris, BN, Coll. de Picardie 67, f. 67′)**

In terms of dimensions and complexity of structure, *Musicalis Sciencia/Sciencie Laudabili* is a fairly modest motet. It has no *introitus*. The tenor, which enters immediately, is the Christmas Alleluia, *Dies sanctificatus* ("A hallowed day has dawned for us"), one of the most famous of all Gregorian chants, which may be why the composer or the scribe did not bother, in this unassuming practical source, to identify it. It is laid out in a single incomplete cursus, so that there is no *color* repetition. There is plenty of talea repetition, though: seven in all, of which Ex. 8-4 contains the last two. The syncopation at the end of each talea is produced, like the tenor syncopation in the previous example, by the use of red ink: the final maxima and long are counted in "imperfect mode." A second glance shows that the triplum and motetus voices are likewise governed by an eight-bar *talea*, so that the entire piece is "pan-isorhythmic" in seven rhythmically identical sections or strophes. Each of these strophes ends with a sort of *cauda* consisting of a melisma on the last syllable, which is held through an especially blithesome—and because of the melisma, an especially hiccupy—bunch of hockets, in which the singers have to emit single minims on open vowel sounds, without any consonants to assist in articulation. The line between virtuosity and clownishness can be a fine one.

Here are the triplum and motetus texts, abridged to eliminate a lengthy honor-roll of famous musicians:

> *Triplum*: The science of music sends greetings to her beloved disciples. I desire each one of you to observe the rules and not to offend against rhetoric or grammar by dividing indivisible syllables. Avoid all faults. Farewell in melody. *Motetus*: Rhetoric sends greetings to learned Music, but complains that many singers make faults in her compositions by dividing simple vowels and making hockets;

> therefore I request that you remedy this.

Every one of the “faults” for which singers are berated by Music and by Rhetoric are flagrantly committed by the composer. The piece is a kind of satire. But such satire requires an attitude of ironic detachment, a consciousness of art as artifice, and a wish to make that artifice the principal focus of attention. These are traits we normally (and perhaps self-importantly) ascribe to the “modern” temperament, not the “medieval” one. Only we (we tend to think), with our modern notions of psychology and our modern sense of “self,” are capable of self-reflection. Only we, in short, can be “artists” as opposed to “craftsmen.” Not so.

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Guillaume de Machaut

Motet: France, Ars Nova

MACHAUT: THE OCCULT AND THE SENSUOUS

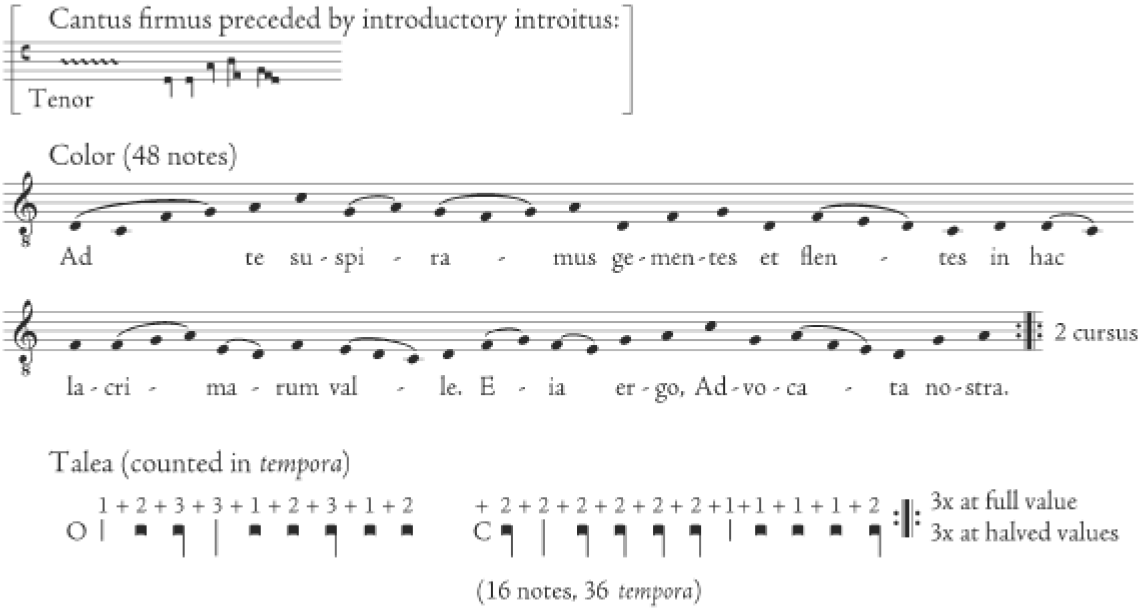
Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Formal introduction to Guillaume de Machaut (d. 1377), the greatest poet-musician of mid-fourteenth-century France, can wait until the next chapter. Suffice it for now to say that he was the chief extender of the trouvère tradition, to which he gave a new lease on life by channeling it into new styles and genres that would thrive for almost two centuries. Machaut carried on the tradition of the French love-song motet into the fourteenth century and applied to it all the new technologies of the Ars Nova. But since the Latin devout genre that stood closest to the tradition of *fine amours* was the antiphon to the Blessed Virgin Mary, it is not surprising to find that Machaut's grandest, most rigorous essay in the most exalted genre available to him was an appeal to Mary in her role of divine "neck," or intercessor.

This lofty, ambitiously structured work—*Felix virgo/Inviolata/AD TE SUSPIRA-MUS*—is harmonically amplified by a the addition of a *contratenor*, a fourth voice composed "against the tenor" and in the same range. It also has a more formal *introitus* than any we have as yet encountered: it comes to a full cadence, supported by the contratenor and the tenor, the latter playing "free" notes (that is, not drawn from the cantus firmus or *color*) for no other purpose than sonorous enhancement.

The *color*, once it gets under way, turns out to be a tune we know, albeit in a somewhat different version (or "redaction"). It is a phrase from a variant of a melody already encountered in chapter 3 (see Ex. 3-12b): *Salve Regina*, the eleventh-century Marian antiphon that stood closest, formally and melodically, to the contemporary Provençal lyric. Machaut selected a 48-note passage from the version of this dirgelike Dorian melody that he knew by heart, encompassing the words "...to you we sigh, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. O, therefore, [be] our advocate ...," and applied to it a *talea* consisting of twenty rhythmic durations (sixteen notes and four rests) encompassing 36 tempora divided into two equal parts.

The first 18 tempora are organized into 6 longs under [**O**], the sign of perfection, and the second 18 are organized into nine longs under [**C**], the sign of imperfection, as shown in Ex. 8-5. It takes three such taleae to exhaust the color (3 × 16 notes = 48 notes), following which the whole color/talea complex is repeated in diminution, so that, relative to the motetus and triplum, the tenor now moves at the level of *tempus*, in breves and semibreves.


Cantus firmus preceded by introductory introitus:
Tenor
Color (48 notes)
Ad te su - spi - ra - mus ge - men - tes et flen - tes in hac
la - cri - ma - rum val - le. E - ia er - go, Ad - vo - ca - ta no - stra.
2 cursus
Talea (counted in tempora)
1 + 2 + 3 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 1 + 2
+ 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 2
O
C
3x at full value
3x at halved values
(16 notes, 36 tempora)

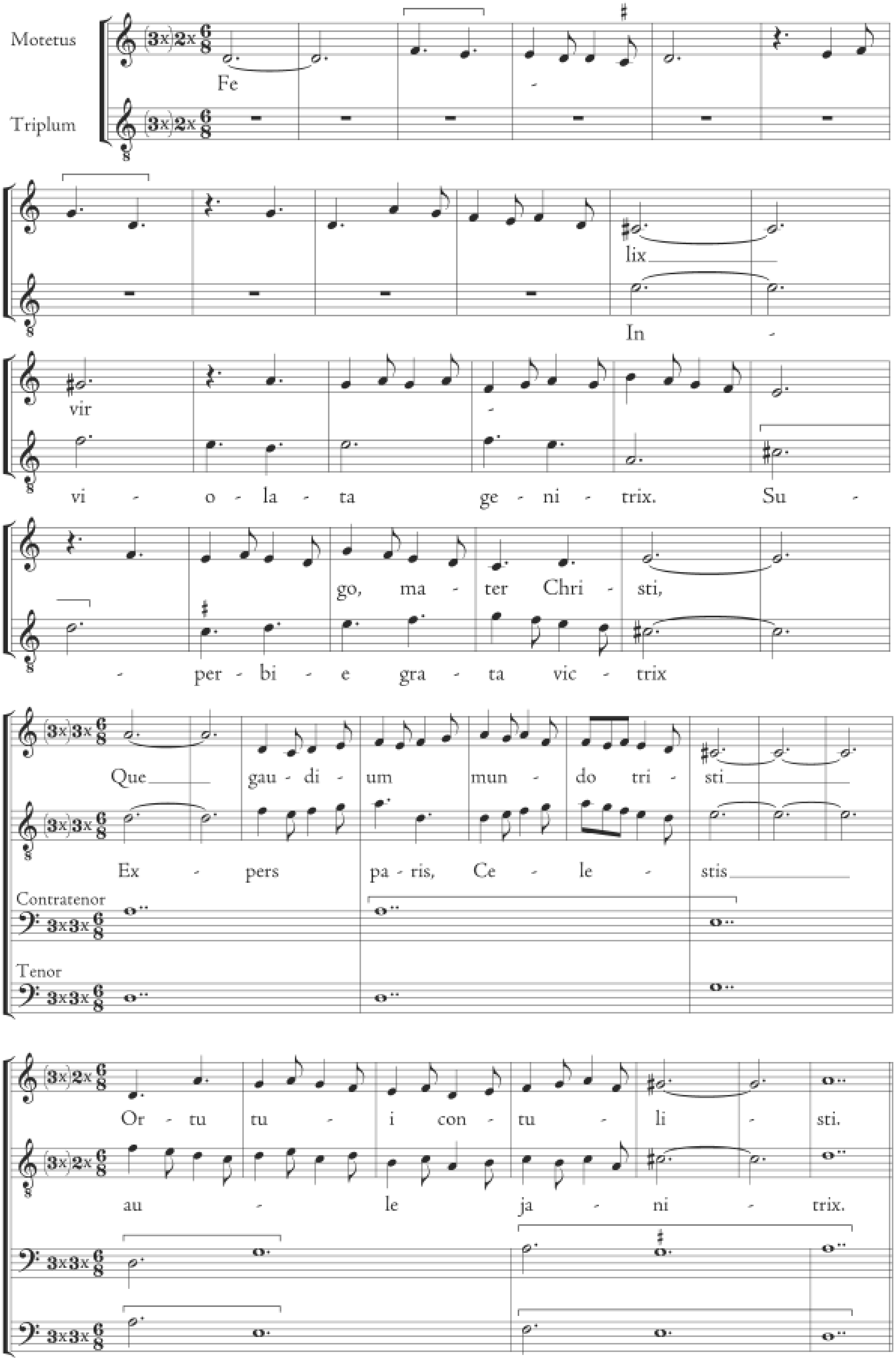
ex. 8-5 Guillaume de Machaut, *Felix virgo/Inviolata/AD TE SUSPIRAMUS*, tenor talea

Everything we have observed about the tenor is true, in this motet, of the contratenor as well. Although a newly invented part rather than a cantus firmus (something that we can state with near certainty owing to its chromatic vagaries), the contratenor consists, like the tenor, of a color that is put through a double cursus, with each cursus encompassing a three-fold talea and with the second cursus in diminution. The contratenor's talea is in fact the same as the tenor's, except that it presents the two 18-tempora halves in the reverse or reciprocal order, with the imperfect longs under [**C**] preceding the perfect ones under [**O**]. Thus there is a constant interchange of time signatures between tenor and contratenor, and a perpetually maintained "polymeter" of perfect and imperfect mensurations. Because of their close relationship, we can be sure that the contratenor was composed at the same time as the tenor, and that both parts were conjointly laid out like a foundation to govern the proportions of the whole. In extremely formalized motets like this one, architectural analogies are virtually inescapable and in all likelihood envisaged aforethought.

Although the diminution of note values in the talea is quite salient to the ear (the more so because the texted parts choose that moment to break into hockets), the "polymetrical" superimposition and exchange of perfect and imperfect mensurations in the slow-moving lower parts is not. In this it resembles the harmonious orbits of heavenly bodies, which fit together according to the divinely ordained *musica mundana*, and which according to ancient tradition emit tones that the mind can infer, but that the senses cannot experience. Like the architectural analogy, this analogy too was surely present to the composer's imagination as he planned the trajectories of his supporting voices. It reflected the neo-Platonic worldview of every master of science or *magus* (the word, not coincidentally, from which "magician" is derived.) As a magus, Machaut believed that

> the world was hierarchically ordered, with intellectual elements occupying the highest realm; that superior elements in the hierarchy influenced inferior ones; and that the wise man might ascend through the levels of the world structure (or at least interact from below with higher levels) to gain special benefit from these influences.[8]

So writes Gary Tomlinson, a scholar who by means of musical parallels has sought to penetrate the arcane world of premodern occult philosophy. The fourteenth-century isorhythmic motet, possibly the most hierarchically conceived and rigorously ordered genre in the history of European music, was more concerned than any other to incorporate a representation of the higher "intellectual" elements and their controlling influence, which, being *hidden* from the senses, were in the most literal and etymological way *occult*. That is another way of interpreting the enormous value and emphasis that was placed on the "architecture" of the motet.


Motetus
Triplum
Contratenor
Tenor
(3x)2x 6/8
(3x)3x 6/8
3x3x 6/8
Fe - lix vir - go, ma - ter Chri - sti,
In - vi - o - la - ta ge - ni - trix. Su - - per - bi - e gra - ta vic - trix
Que gau - di - um mun - do tri - sti
Ex - pers pa - ris, Ce - le - stis
Or - tu tu - i con - tu - li - sti.
au - le ja - ni - trix.

ex. 8-6 Guillaume de Machaut, *Felix virgo/Inviolata/AD TE SUSPIRAMUS*, mm. 1-40

And yet the other special attribute of the motet was its heterogeneity, its power of harmonizing contradictions. So none of what has been said about its occultism should imply neglect of the sensuous surface, which in Machaut's hands was particularly and famously seductive, especially in the *introitus*, shown in Ex. 8-6. What made it so was an extraordinary harmonic idiom that, while emulated somewhat by the next generation or two of French composers, nevertheless remained Machaut's unique and inimitable signature. It stemmed from the use of what we would call chromaticism, known in Machaut's day as *musica ficta* ("imaginary music") or *musica falsa* ("false music").

Notes:

(8) Gary Tomlinson, *Music in Renaissance Magic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 46.

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Musica ficta

Hexachord

MUSICA FICTA

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

These terms should not be taken too literally. Indeed, Philippe de Vitry himself, as reported in *Ars Nova*, cautioned that "false music" is not false but real "and even necessary." All that the name implied was that the notes involved were not part of the gamut as defined long ago by Guido d'Arezzo, and that they had no predefined "vox," or position within a hexachord. So in order to solmize them—that is, find a place for them among the ut–re–mi's of traditional sight-singing—one had to imagine a hexachord that contained them, one that may have been "fictitious" with respect to the official theory of music, but whose sounding contents were fully presentable to the senses and in that respect altogether real.

And necessary, as Philippe de Vitry allowed, when their purpose was to make perfect a diminished fifth or an augmented fourth. As we know, a certain provision of this kind was made by the earliest theorists of harmony, when they incorporated B-flat into the modal system alongside B for use in conjunction with F.

But when an E was written against the B-flat, one had to go outside the system to harmonize it. And that was musica ficta. The required E-flat was not conceptualized as we might conceptualize it, as an inflection of E. Instead, it was conceptualized as the upper member of a melodic semitone, D–E♭, for which a solmization —*mi–fa*—could be inferred. So the E♭ a semitone above D was a *fa*, which placed it in an imaginary or "feigned" (*ficta*) hexachord with *ut* on B♭. Since the flat sign was itself a variant of the letter "B" to denote a B that was sung *fa* (in the "soft hexachord" on F) instead of *mi* (in the "hard hexachord" on G), so the flat sign in and of itself denoted *fa* to a musician trained to sing in hexachords. Thus a flat placed next to an E did not mean "sing E a half step lower," it meant "sing this note as *fa*." The result may have been the same so far as the listener was concerned, but understanding the different mental process by which the E♭ was deduced by the singer will make clear the reason why in most cases musica ficta did not have to be expressly indicated by the composer with accidentals. In many contexts the chromatic alteration was mandated by rule, and the rule was fully implied in the solmization, and so any singer who thought in terms of solmization would make the chromatic adjustment without being specifically told to do so, and, it follows, without even being aware of the adjustment as "chromaticism." It was not a deviation from a pure diatonic norm, it was a preservation of pure diatonic norms (in particular, perfect fourths and fifths) where they were compromised by a well-known kink in the diatonic system.

Musica ficta introduced to preserve perfect intervals was musica ficta *by reason of (harmonic) necessity* (in Latin, *causa necessitatis*), and was considered perfectly diatonic. Just as automatic, and diatonic, was musica ficta by long-established conventions—conventions that have left a trace on familiar harmonic practice in the form of the "harmonic minor." They mainly affected the Dorian mode, the one closest to our minor mode. For example, there was a rule that a single B between two A's had to be a B-flat (and, though it rarely required any adjustment, that an F between two E's had to be F natural).

Singers learned this rule as a Latin jingle: *una nota super la/semper est canendum fa* ("One note above la is always sung fa"). This adjustment had the effect of lowering the sixth degree of the Dorian scale, turning it into a sort of appoggiatura or upper leading tone to fifth degree, A, the note that formed the boundary between the principal segments of the scale. (And it turned the Dorian scale, for all practical purposes, into the minor scale.) It was a grammatical rule, not an expressive device; it was called into play automatically, and so it did not need to be written down.

There was a similar rule affecting lower neighbors to the final in Dorian cadences. Such notes were common enough in Dorian melodies to have a name: *subtonium modi*, as we may recall from chapter 3. The rule about neighbors raised the subtonium, a whole step below the final, to the *subsemitonium*, a half step below. The effect was similar to that of borrowing a leading tone in the minor mode and served the same purpose, strengthening the grammatical function, so to speak, of the cadence. By signaling a more definite close it made the final more "final." For this purpose the auxiliary pitch had to be raised, not lowered, thus forming the lower note in a *mi–fa* pair. To indicate it, a sign was needed that would instruct the singer to "sing *mi*." That sign, é, which we call a "sharp," was originally derived from the "square B" or *b quadratum* that functioned specifically as *mi* in the "hard hexachord." In places like Dorian cadences, where the *subsemitonium modi* or leading tone was called for by the routine application of a rule, it again could "go without saying." It did not need to be explicitly notated, though (like necessary flats) it could be notated and frequently, if haphazardly, was.

So often were musica ficta adjustments taken for granted—so often, in other words, were they left to oral tradition—that the term is often loosely (and, technically, wrongly) employed to refer only to "chromatics" that were unnotated. Scholars who transcribe early polyphony for nonspecialist singers cannot assume that the singers for whom they are preparing the edition will know the oral tradition governing these adjustments, and therefore indicate them in writing (usually with little accidentals placed above the staff). They often call this procedure "putting in the ficta," thereby implying that the word "ficta" applies only to what has to be "put in" in this way. They know better, of course. A C♯ is musica ficta whether it is explicitly notated or not, because there is no such note as C♯ on the Guidonian "hand." A B♭ is not musica ficta but musica *recta* (or *vera*), again whether explicitly notated or not, because there *is* such a note on the hand.

So the accidentals that are explicitly signed, often very abundant in fourteenth century music and particularly in Machaut's music, are just as much to be considered musica ficta (unless they are B♭s) as those mentally supplied by unwritten rule. Their purpose, however, was different. Instead of being musica ficta *causa necessitatis* (harmonically necessary adjustments), or even musica ficta arising out of conventions that all competent singers knew, they represented musica ficta *causa pulchritudinis*—chromatic adjustments made "for the sake of their beauty," that is, for the sensuous enhancement of the music.

Look now at the introitus to Machaut's motet (Ex. 8-6). The triplum has a signed C♯ at the moment when the motetus enters. It follows D. If it returned to D, then strictly speaking it would not need to be expressly "signed." But it does not return to D; instead, it skips to a wholly unexpected note, G♯. This note is not called for by any rule. Its only purpose is to create a "purple patch" in the harmony, especially in view of the weird interval it creates against the F-natural in the motetus.

An augmented second is, strictly speaking, a forbidden interval on the order of the tritone (and for the same reason: one of the voices sings *mi* while the other sings *fa*). It is clearly intentional, however, and cannot be removed by adjustment *causa necessitatis*. There can be no question of adjusting the expressly signed G-sharp, of course; why sign a note only to cancel it? The F cannot be adjusted to F-sharp for two reasons. First, it would only produce another dissonance (and a worse one)—a major second instead of an augmented second. And besides, the F can be construed as a *fa* between two *la*'s (since E is la in the hard hexachord on G) and therefore cannot be raised.

So the throb is there for its own sake. It is, literally, a heartthrob, expressing love for the Virgin the way so many similar harmonic throbs express love for the lady in Machaut's French songs. But it is also there for "tonal" reasons. All of the signed accidentals in the introitus are C♯s or G♯s. These tones at once depart from and emphasize the basic Dorian pitch set because they are "tendency tones," pitches altered chromatically in such a way as to imply—hence demand—cadential resolution to crucial scale tones. When the resolution is evaded or delayed—as it is in the case of the triplum's first Cé (and even the Gé, whose resolution to A is interfered with by a rest where one is least expected)—a harmonic tension is engendered that will not be fully discharged until the introitus reaches its final cadence.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Cadence

CADENCES

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

That cadence incorporates both the Cé and the Gé, resolving in parallel to D and A, the notes that define the Dorian "pentachord." The defining or "structural" notes are each thus provided with a leading tone, the strongest possible preparation. For this reason such a cadence has been dubbed the "double leading-tone cadence." Thanks to its great stabilizing power it became the standard cadence in fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century music.

What gave it that stabilizing and articulating (form-defining) power had only partly to do with the doubled leading tone, however. More fundamentally, the structure of the cadence goes back to the earliest days of discant, when cadence was synonymous with *occursus*, the coming together of two parts in contrary motion. The earliest variation on the occursus (already endorsed by Guido in the eleventh century) was its inversion, in which the two parts moved out to the octave in contrary motion; and that basic cadential frame endured until the end of the sixteenth century. In the cadence we are now examining, at the end of the introitus to Machaut's motet, the essential two-part motion takes place between the motetus and the tenor, which move outward from the sixth e/c♯' to the octave d/d'.

No matter what else the other voices may be doing, no progression can be called cadential unless that "structural pair" is present in two voices (one of them, in keeping with the history of discant, almost invariably the tenor). The "double leading-tone" cadence, then, is only one of a number of possible ways of filling out the cadence-defining frame. It had its moment of popularity and was replaced in the mid-fifteenth century by another standard cadence type, and by the beginning of the sixteenth century by still another. We will take them up in due course, but it is worth pointing out up front that all of them incorporated—or, more strongly, were constructed around, or in various ways embellished—the old discant pair that went all the way back to Guido.

For a final technical point, it is worth observing that it was the structure of the cadence, defined by an imperfect consonance moving by step in contrary motion to a perfect one, that gave rise to the convention of *subsemitonium modi*, the use of cadential leading tones. The idea was to egg on the resolution of the imperfect consonance to the perfect one by making it larger—that is, closer in size to the perfect one. It was called, in fact, the "rule of closeness" (or, more fancily, "the rule of propinquity" after the Latin *propinque*, "near at hand").

The reason for raising C to C♯ before a cadence on D, then, was to make a major sixth with the tenor. The same effect could be achieved by lowering the tenor to E♭, making a major sixth with the unaltered triplum or motetus. There were times when that solution was preferable, but they were in the minority. The more striking alteration was the one that affected the higher part. As already noted, that type of alteration lasted into the era of "tonal" harmony in the form of the harmonic minor, which borrows its dominant function, replete with leading tone, from the major. Here we see the first step in that direction, and the reason for it.

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Motet: Italy

Johannes Ciconia

CICONIA: THE MOTET AS POLITICAL SHOW

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

As seems altogether fitting, and in retrospect inevitable, by the late fourteenth century the motet had become preeminently "a vehicle for propaganda and political ceremony," to quote Peter Lefferts, a historian of the genre.[9] That crowning period in the history of the Ars Nova motet is best exemplified by works written not in France but in Italy, albeit by composers who had emigrated there from northern Europe.

Italy at the end of the fourteenth century was a checkerboard of city-states, many of them ruled by despots who had seized power violently, and who wished to establish legitimacy by an ostentatious display of power. Legitimacy was also a major issue for the church, since this was the time of the great papal schism (1378–1417), when two (and from 1409, three) rival claimants vied for the papacy, and when all subordinate clergy had to declare their allegiances to one, to another, or (as happened briefly in France) to none. This period of political and ecclesiastical chaos was a gold mine for the arts, and especially for music.

That is because one of the chief means of asserting political power has always been lavish patronage of the arts. Music received special attention at this time (writes Julie Cumming, another motet historian), because

> Nothing made as good a show or traveled as well as musicians ready to perform in public. Dignitaries of church and state traveled with their chapels, and put on the best show possible; they also listened to the music sung by the chapels of other dignitaries, and tried to hire the best possible musicians. Musicians met, exchanged repertoire, and looked for more lucrative and comfortable employment.[10]

Composers who had training in the techniques of monumental musical architecture, and who could produce works of grandiose (and somewhat archaic, therefore venerable) design, could put on the best of all such legitimizing shows for their patrons, and found a rich market for their skills. Such composers came from the north, the land of the Ars Nova, where such techniques had been chiefly developed. That is one of the reasons why the most sought after, the best paid—and therefore in retrospect the most typical—court and cathedral musicians of northern Italy in the fifteenth century were immigrants from France and Flanders.

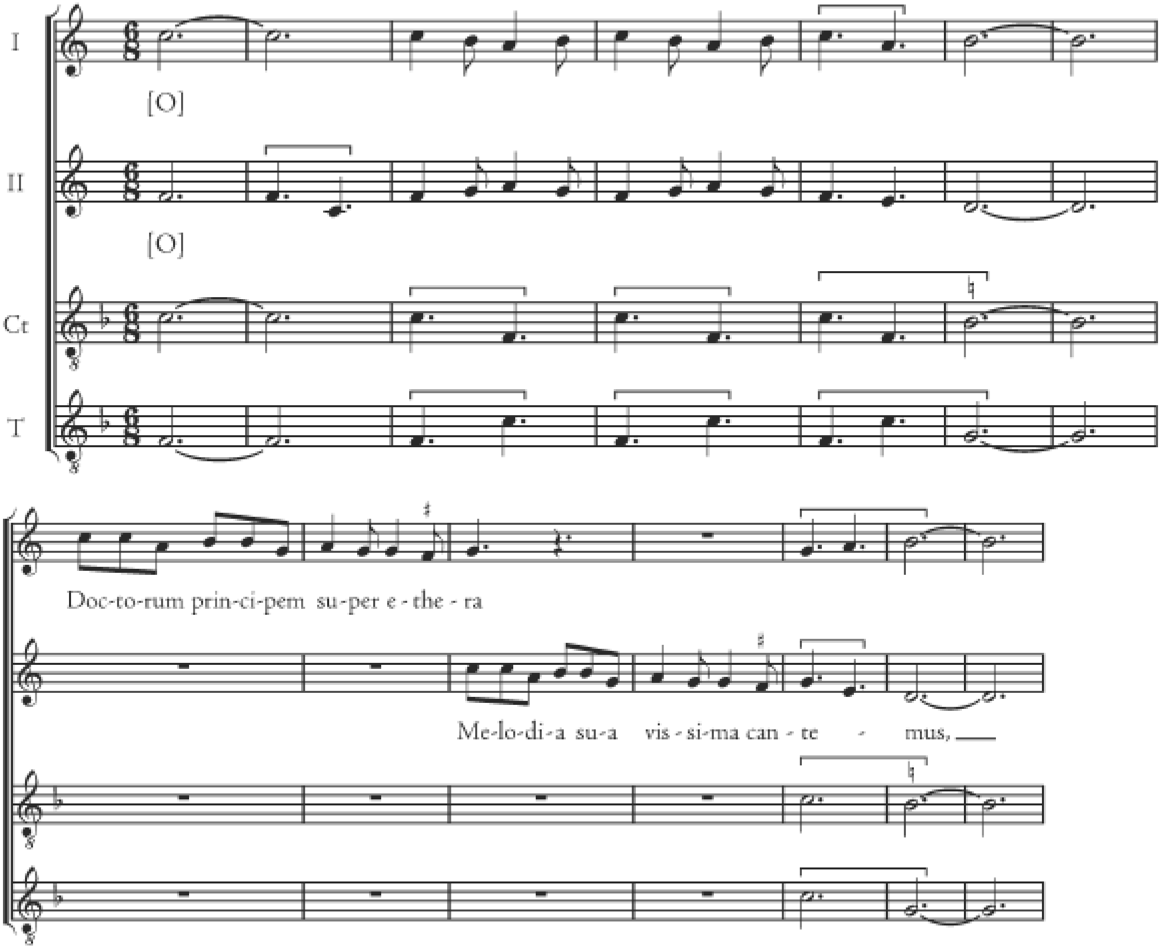
The first of this distinguished quasi-official line was Johannes Ciconia. His surname, Latin for "stork," is probably a Latinized (that is, cosmopolitanized) version of a more prosaic French or Flemish family name. He was born in the Belgian town of Liège during the 1370s and received his basic training there, but by 1401 he was employed by the municipal cathedral in the north Italian city of Padua, where he died in 1412.

His chief Paduan patron was Francesco Zabarella (1360–1417), the cathedral archpriest or chief canon, and a famous university professor of canon law, who reached the height of his career as the chief negotiator of peace between Padua and Venice after the Venetian conquest of his native city. Thereafter he served both Venice and the Roman pope John XXIII as a diplomat. John made him bishop of Florence, and later a cardinal. Zabarella played a major role at the Council of Constance, where the end of the schism was brokered. It was he who finally persuaded his own patron, Pope John, to resign in the interests of church harmony. (John, the loser in the resolution of the schism, is not a pope but an "antipope" in the official history of the Catholic church, which is why his number could be reused by a much later pope, the illustrious

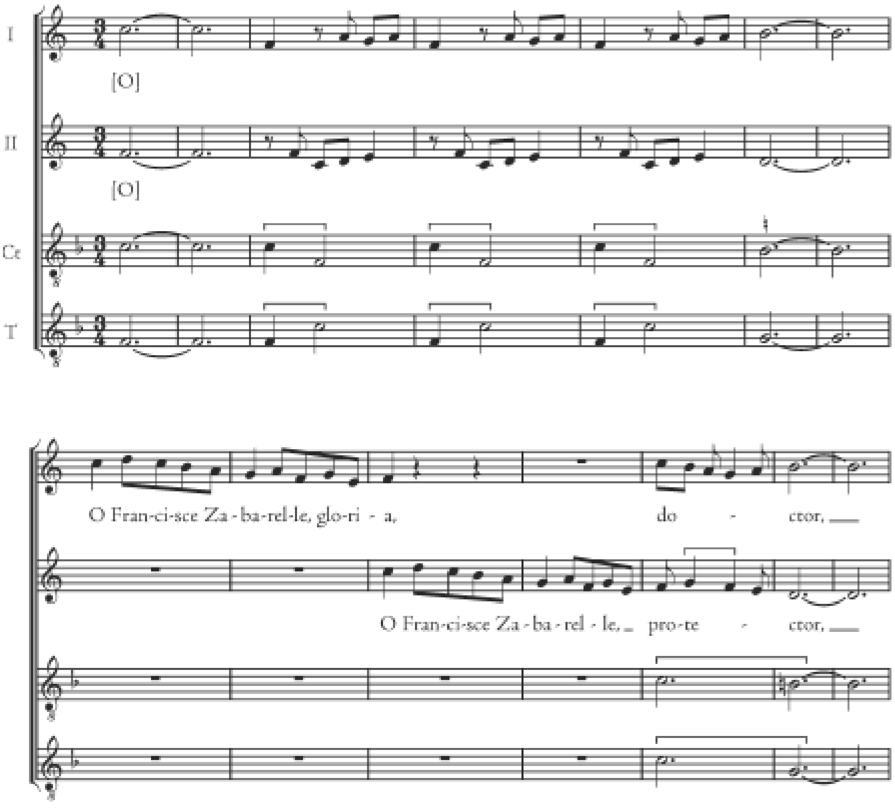
John XXIII who convened the second Vatican council in 1962, at which the Latin liturgy, and with it the Gregorian chant, were decanonized.) At the time of his death, Zabarella was widely regarded as being next in line for the papacy.

In honor of this illustrious statesman and churchman, Ciconia composed two exceptionally grand isorhythmic motets. Their style is somewhat influenced by Italian secular genres to be described in a later chapter, but their culminating place in the development of the Ars Nova motet, and their consummate embodiment of the aesthetics of their genre, make this the appropriate place to analyze Ciconia's work.

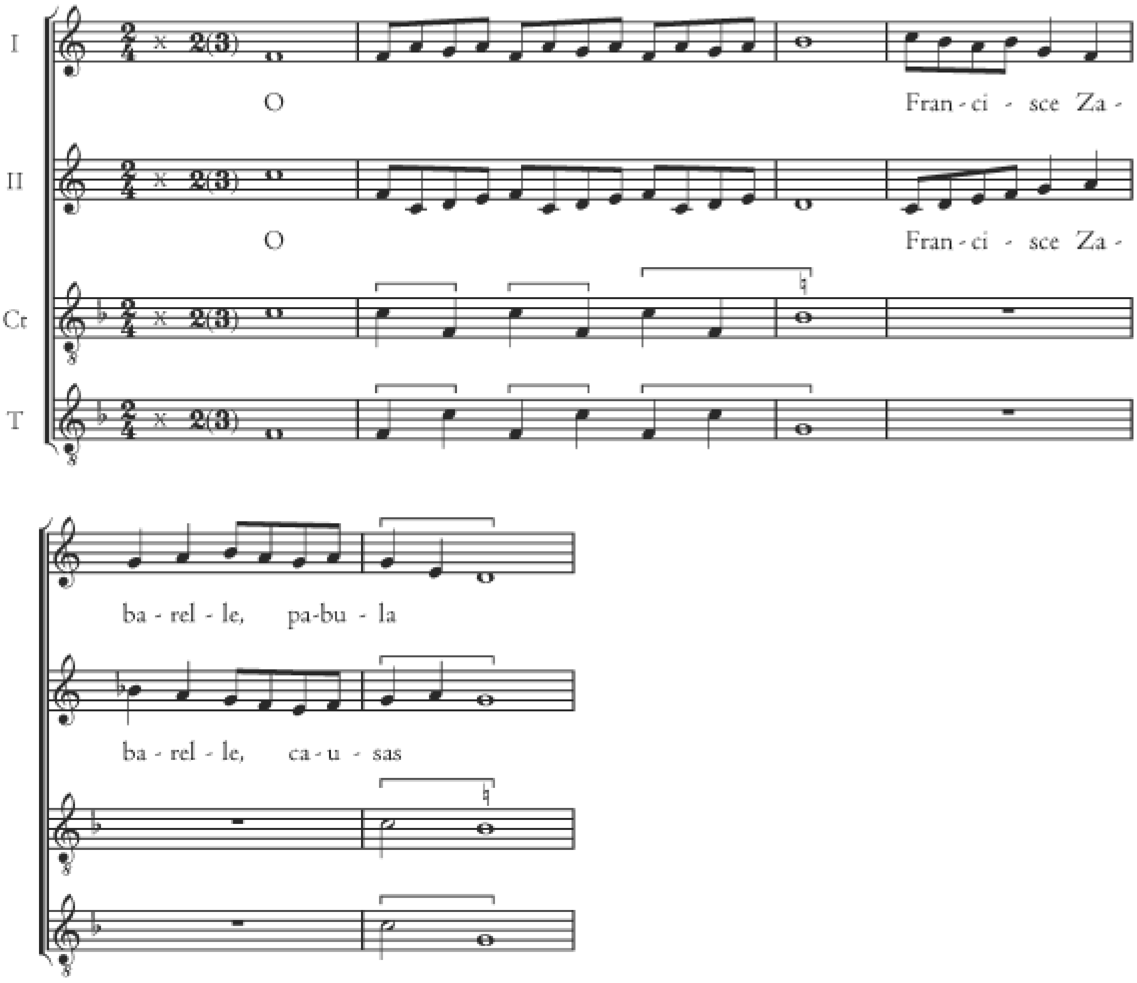
It has been suggested that *Doctorum principem super ethera/Melodia suavissima cantemus* (excerpted in Ex. 8-7), the second and more ample of Ciconia's two Zabarella-inspired motets, was composed as a send off from Padua when Zabarella left to assume his bishopric at Florence. The triplum and motetus texts are of equal length, sung at equal rates, and they actually spell one another at times so that the two texts seem to interlock like a hocket in a single encomium to the honored patron. But the tenor layout and the mensural scheme are a virtual summation of Ars Nova practices, and in their combination of diversity and comprehensiveness they symbolize the harmonizing of competing interests—the *discordia concors*—that is the primary undertaking of any diplomat, as well as any motet. This motet, then, is emblematic both of its recipient and of the genre itself, especially in this phase of its history, when it had become primarily a political instrument.


I
[O]
II
[O]
Ct
T
Doc-to-rum prin-ci-pem su-per e-the-ra
Me-lo-di-a su-a vis-si-ma can-te-mus,

ex. 8-7a Johannes Ciconia, *Doctorum principem super ethera/Melodia suavissima cantemus*, mm. 1-14


I
II
Ct
T
[O]
[O]
O Fran-ci-sce Za-ba-rel-le, glo-ri - a, do - ctor,
O Fran-ci-sce Za-ba-rel-le, pro-te - ctor,

ex. 8-7b *Doctorum principem super ethera/Melodia suavissima cantemus*, mm. 45-58



ex. 8-7c *Doctorum principem super ethera/Melodia suavissima cantemus*, mm. 89-100

The texts are laid out in three strophes, each of which is given the same highly ceremonious treatment: first a textless introitus in fanfare style, suggesting outdoor performance by wind instruments, perhaps in the Paduan cathedral square, followed by an almost homorhythmic tenor/contratenor complex in longer note-values (semibreves, breves, longs) that presents the same color and talea three times in notationally identical form.

In fact, the tenor/contratenor pair is written out only once, with a “canon” or special direction that specifies how it is to be altered on repetition. Although the tenor carries a Latin label (*Vir mitis*, “gentle man”), this seems to be nothing more than another encomium to Zabarella, not a text incipit. There is no known chant—and no conceivable chant—that bounces up and down by fifths, stutters through so many repeated whole-step oscillations, or descends by step through an entire octave the way this “melody” does. Clearly, the tenor and contratenor in this particular motet are not melodies at all, but harmonic supports.

The canon instructs the performers of the tenor and contratenor to read their parts each time under a different mensuration sign — , and , respectively. Thus despite their notational congruence, the actual rhythms of each presentation not only differ but undergo a progressive compression from perfect to imperfect time that resembles a traditional tenor diminution, but in three stages instead of two. The texted parts, meanwhile, are written chiefly in semibreves and minims, note values that are radically affected by the changing mensurations.

And yet the three stanzas are deliberately set so that they resemble each other melodically as much as possible in terms of contour, prosody (text distribution), and overall form, progressing each time from textless introitus through syllabically texted stanza to melismatic, hocket-ridden cauda. The result is a virtual set of strophic variations that in their fascinating interplay of sameness and difference symbolize the ideal of a harmoniously integrated society of free individuals—the ideal to which every northern Italian city state (or *res publica*, whence "republic") nominally aspired. Ex. 8-7 shows the fanfare-like introitus to each of the three strophes in turn.

Notes:

(9) Peter M. Lefferts, *The Motet in England in the Fourteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), p. 186.

(10) Cumming, "Concord Out of Discord," p. 173.

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Guillaume Du Fay

Motet: Middle Ages

DU FAY: THE MOTET AS MYSTICAL SUMMA

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Guillaume Du Fay (ca. 1397–1474) lived almost exactly a century later than his namesake Guillaume de Machaut, and like Machaut he will be reintroduced in a later chapter. It is very important to consider at least one of his works right here, however, in order to appreciate the direct generic and stylistic continuity that linked Du Fay's creative output with that of his fourteenth-century precursors.

The reason for speaking in such urgent terms is that the beginning of "The Renaissance," for music, is often—though, as we will see, arbitrarily—placed around the beginning of the fifteenth century, and major historiographical divisions like that can act as barriers, sealing off from one another figures and works that happen to fall on opposite sides of that fancied line, no matter how significant their similarities. Not only that, but (as already observed in a somewhat different context) an appearance of stylistic backwardness or anachronism—inevitable when sweeping categories like "Medieval" and "Renaissance" are too literally believed in—can easily blind us to the value of supreme artistic achievements such as Du Fay's isorhythmic motets. They are not vestigial survivals or evidence of regressive tendencies, but a zenith.

The fact is, Du Fay's career was very much like Philippe de Vitry's a century earlier. He was a university-educated ordained cleric—in short, a *literatus*—whose musical horizons had been shaped by Boethius, by Guido … and by Philippe de Vitry. Like his predecessors, he thought in scholastic terms about his craft but in Platonic terms about the world. For him, no less than for the founders of the Ars Nova, the world was materialized number, and the highest purpose of music was to dematerialize it back to its essence.

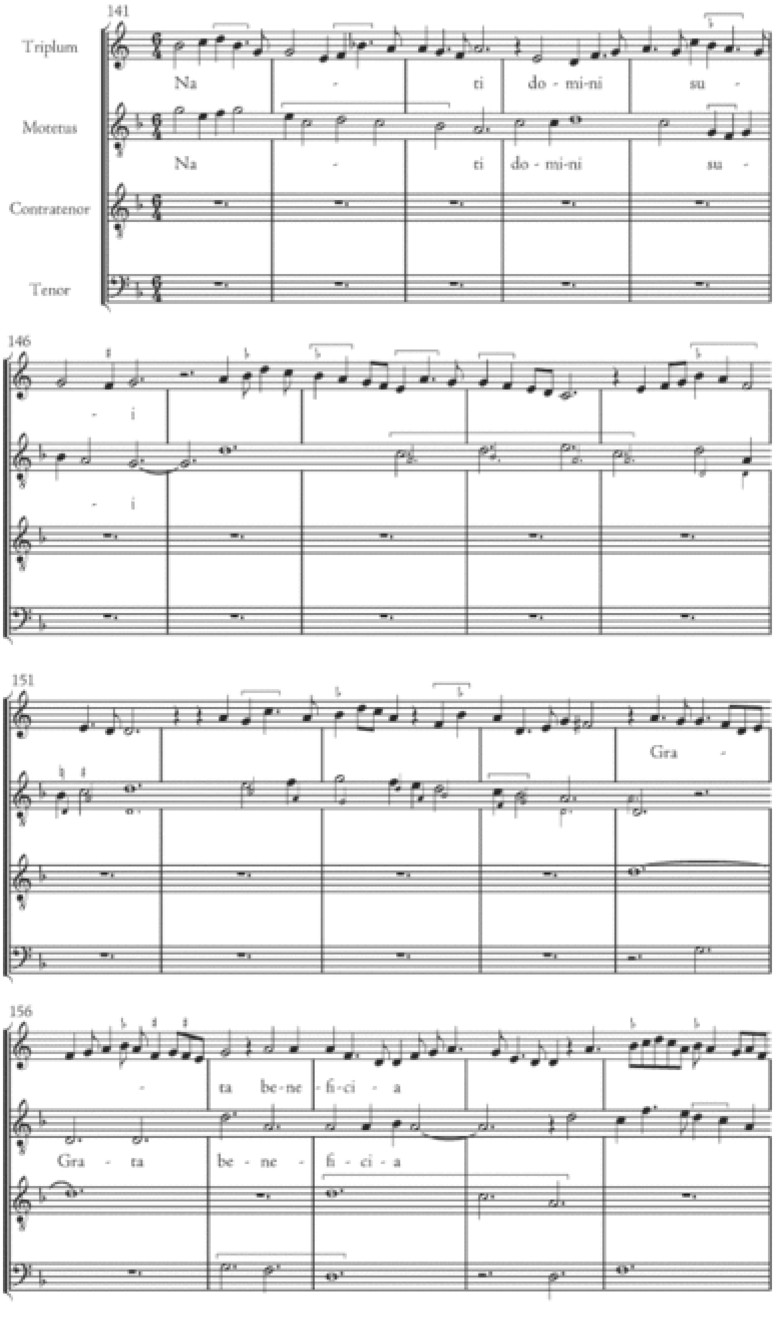
Born in French-speaking Cambrai, near the border with the low countries, Du Fay followed in Ciconia's footsteps to early employment in Italy. He may have first gone down there as a choirboy in the entourage of the local bishop, who attended the Council of Constance, where Francesco Zabarella, Ciconia's patron, had shone. By 1420, when he was about 23, Du Fay was employed by the Pesaro branch of the notorious Malatesta family, the despots of the Adriatic coastal cities of east-central Italy. He joined the papal choir in 1428, and evidently formed a close relationship with Gabriele Cardinal Condulmer, who in 1431 became Eugene IV, the second pope to reign over the reunited postschismatic church.

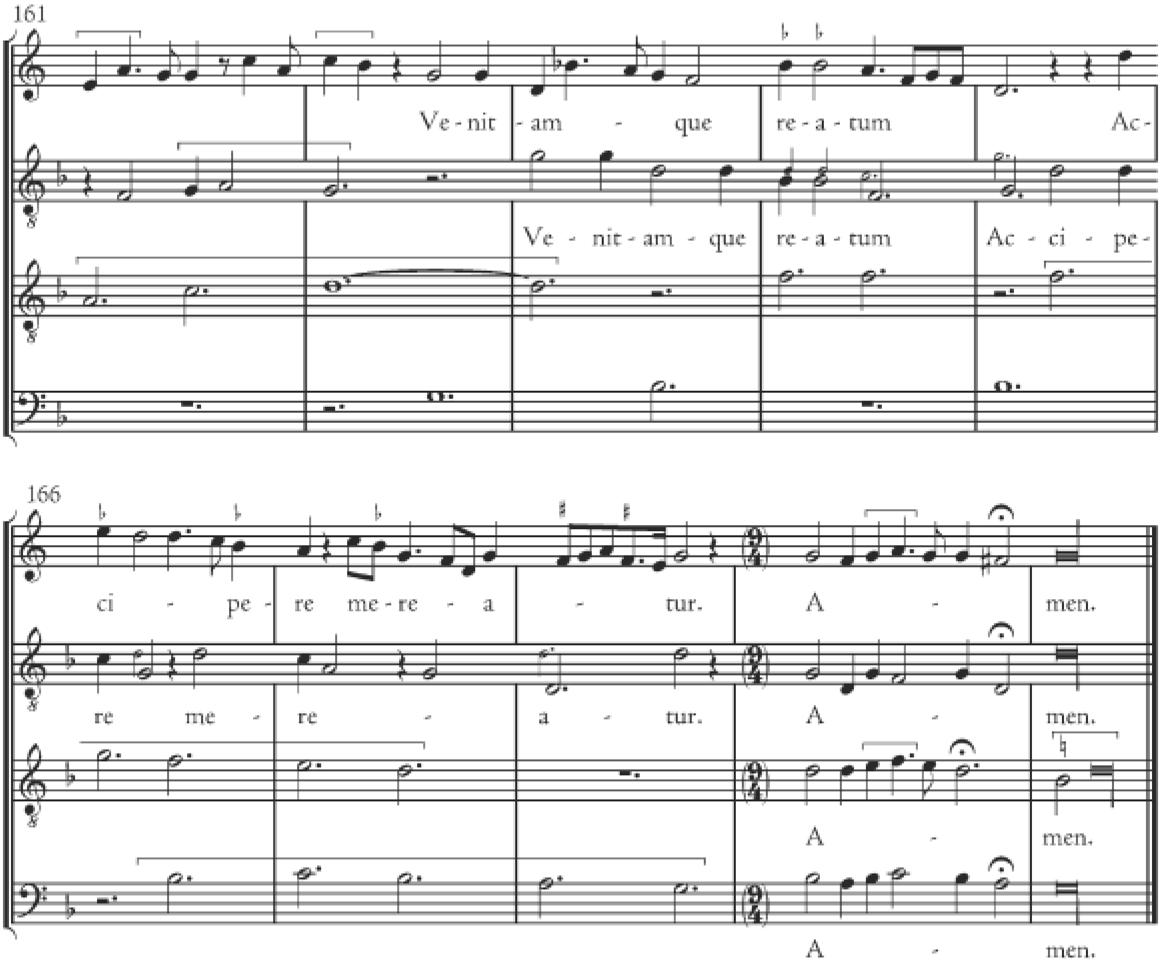
Du Fay wrote three grandiose motets in honor of Pope Eugene. The first, *Ecclesie militantis Roma sedes* ("Rome, seat of the Church militant"), was composed shortly after the pope's election, at a very precarious moment for the papacy. That motet, expressive of the political conflicts that beset the new pope, is a riot of discord, with a complement of five polyphonic parts (three of them texted), and a sequence of no fewer than six mensuration changes. The second motet for Eugene, *Supremum est mortalibus bonum* ("For mortals the greatest good") is a celebration of a peace treaty between the pope and Sigismund, the Holy Roman Emperor. It is an epitome of concord, employing only one text and using a novel, sugar-sweet harmonic idiom of which (as we will see in chapter 11) Du Fay may have been the inventor. Near the end the names of the protagonists of the peace are declaimed in long-sustained consonant chords—concord concretized.

The third motet Du Fay composed for Eugene, *Nuper rosarum flores* ("Garlands of roses," of which the dazzling close is shown in Ex. 8-8), is the most famous one because of the way it manipulates symbolic numbers. In 1434, the pope, exiled from Rome by a rebellion, had set up court in Florence. In 1436, the

Florence cathedral, under construction since 1294, was finally ready for dedication. A magnificent neoclassical edifice, crowned by a dome designed in 1420 by the great architect Filippo Brunelleschi, it was dedicated, under the denomination Santa Maria del Fiore, to the Virgin Mary. Pope Eugene IV, resident by force of circumstances in Florence, performed the dedication ceremony himself, and commissioned a commemorative motet for the occasion from Du Fay. This was to be the musical show of shows.

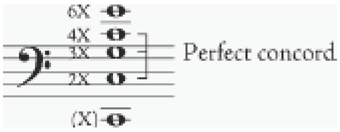
Nuper Rosarum Flores is cast in four large musical sections, plus an "Amen" in the form of a melismatic cauda. The layout is remarkable for its symmetry. The first and longest section begins with an introitus for the upper (texted) voices lasting twenty-eight *tempora*. The Gregorian cantus firmus, the fourteen-note incipit of the introit antiphon for the dedication of a church (*Terribilis est locus iste*, "Awesome is this place"), now enters, carried by a pair of tenors that present it in two seven-note groups, answering each to each as in biblical antiphonal psalmody.




161
Ve - nit - am - que re - a - tum Ac -
Ve - nit - am - que re - a - tum Ac - ci - pe -
166
ci - pe - re me - re - a - tur. A - men.
re me - re - a - tur. A - men.
A - men.
A - men.

ex. 8-8 Guillaume Du Fay, *Nuper rosarum flores*, mm. 141-70

Each of the succeeding sections presents the same 7 + 7 disposition of the tenor, and the same balanced alternation of duo and full complement (28 + 28 tempora, or 4 times 7 + 7). As in Ciconia’s motet, the pair of tenors is written out only once, with directions to repeat. And again as in Ciconia’s motet, each tenor statement is cast in a different mensuration: and (the part given in Ex. 8-8) . These mensurations stand in a significant proportional relationship to one another. A breve or tempus of contains six minims; a breve of has four. The line through the signature halves the value of the tempus, so that a breve under contains three minims as sung by the texted parts running above, and a breve under contains two. Comparing these signatures in the order in which Du Fay presents them, they give the durational proportions 6:4:2:3. As anyone trained in the quadrivium would instantly recognize, these are Pythagorean proportions. In musical terms they can easily be translated from durations into pitch, for they describe the harmonic ratios of the most consonant intervals. Given a fundamental pitch X, Du Fay’s numbers represent the octave (2X), the compound fifth, or twelfth (3X), the double octave (4X) and the twice-compound fifth (6X), as shown in Ex. 8-9.



ex. 8-9 Proportional numbers in *Nuper rosarum flores* represented as pitch

intervals

Perfect concord

Moreover, the complex of durational ratios also contains a symbolic perfect fifth (3:2) and a perfect fourth (4:3), all of it summed up in the final chord of the piece. Thus Du Fay's motet embodies a hidden Pythagorean *summa*, or comprehensive digest of the ways in which music represents the enduringly valid harmony of the cosmos. With its four different integers, it is the most complete symbolic summary of its kind in any isorhythmic motet. (By way of comparison, the proportional ground plan of Ciconia's motet, 3:2:2, incorporates only two integers, one of them repeated. The only harmonic intervals it can be said to express are the unison and the fifth.)

But that is by no means all. As Craig Wright has shown in detail (far more of it than we can pursue at the moment), the number symbolism in Du Fay's motet, reaching far beyond the specifically musical domain, makes contact with a venerable tradition of biblical exegesis that bears directly on the circumstances that inspired the work and the occasion that it adorned.[11] As we read in the second book of Kings, where the building of the great temple of Jerusalem is described, "the house which king Solomon built to the Lord, was three-score cubits in length, and twenty cubits in width, and thirty cubits in height" (2 Kings 6:2); that the inner sanctum, the "Holy of Holies," was forty cubits from the doors of the temple (2 Kings 6:18); and that the feast of dedication lasted "seven days and seven days, that is, fourteen days" (2 Kings 8:65). These, of course, are precisely the numbers that have figured in our structural analysis of Du Fay's motet. The durational proportions of the tenor *taleae* are precisely those governing the dimensions of Solomon's temple (60:40:20:30 cubits:: 6:4:2:3 minims to a breve); and the length and layout of the chant fragment chosen as *color* correspond to the days of the dedication feast (7 + 7 = 14). The relationship of all of this to the dedication feast for the Florence cathedral could hardly be more evident—or more propitious, in view of the Christian tradition that cast Rome as the new Jerusalem and the Catholic church as the new temple of God.

And yet there is more. The Florence cathedral was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, as the motet text affirms. That text is cast in a rare poetic meter with seven syllables per line. The introitus before the tenor entrance in each stanza lasts 28 (4 × 7) tempora, and the section following the tenor entrance likewise lasts 4 × 7. Seven is the number that mystically represented the Virgin in Christian symbolism, through her sevenfold attributes (her seven sorrows, seven joys, seven acts of mercy, seven virginal companions, and seven years of exile in Egypt). Four is the number that represented the temple, with its four cornerstones, four walls, four corners of the altar, and—when translated into Christian cruciform terms—four points on the cross, the shape of the cathedral floor plan. Four times seven mystically unites the temple with Mary, who through her womb that bore the son of God was also a symbol of Christian sanctuary.

All of this is mystically expressed in the occult substructure of Du Fay's motet, while on the sensuous surface, according to the testimony of the Florentine scholar Giannozzo Manetti, an earwitness,

> all the places of the Temple resounded with the sounds of harmonious symphonies as well as the concords of diverse instruments, so that it seemed not without reason that the angels and the sounds and singing of divine paradise had been sent from heaven to us on earth to insinuate in our ears a certain incredible divine sweetness; wherefore at that moment I was so possessed by ecstasy that I seemed to enjoy the life of the Blessed here on earth.[12]

What could better serve the church, better spiritually nourish its flock, or better assert its temporal authority?

Notes:

(11) C. Wright, "Dufay's *Nuper rosarum flores*, King Solomon's Temple, and the Veneration of the Virgin," *JAMS* XLVII (1994): 395–441.

(12) Giannozzo Manetti, quoted in G. Dufay, *Opera omnia*, ed. Heinrich Besseler, Vol. II (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1966), xxvii.

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A FINAL WORD FROM DANTE

Chapter: CHAPTER 8 Business Math, Politics, and Paradise: The *Ars Nova*
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

That was the net effect, and the net aim, of the *discordia concors* that the motet so consummately symbolized. The ultimate verbal expression of the effect at which musicians aimed in the fourteenth century and its immediate aftermath was given by the greatest literary genius of the age, the poet Dante Alighieri, in his *Divine Comedy*. Significantly enough, it is in the third and last section—*Il Paradiso*, a description of heaven—that the motet is heard and described. The great poet's view of the peak musical genre of his day here coincides with that of the courtier Manetti, quoted above. Dante, who wrote around the time of Philippe de Vitry and the *Roman de Fauvel*, used a description of the motet as a metaphor for a world government of perfect justice, wholly attuned to the divine will, that perfectly harmonized multifarious humanity in bonds of social concord.

Dante portrays the sixth sphere of heaven as the abode of all the just rulers in the history of the world (Charlemagne among them, along with his biblical forebears Joshua and Judah Maccabee), who appear to him as singing stars. They assemble into a constellation in the form of an eagle, symbolizing the Roman Empire and its successor, Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire, which had given the exiled Dante refuge after the Florentine wars of the Guelphs and Ghibellines.

In Canto XIX the eagle sings in the composite voice of "the congregated souls of rulers," and, says Dante, "I heard the beak talk and utter with its voice 'I' and 'mine' when its meaning was 'we' and 'ours.' ... Wheeling, then, it sang, then spoke: 'As are my notes to thee who canst not follow them, such is the Eternal Judgment to you mortals."' In the next canto the Eagle falls silent and the starry lights that constitute it burst into a multitude of simultaneous songs. Dante is reminded of the sunset, when the brightness of the one great heavenly orb is replaced by the myriad tiny points of astral illumination: "... and this change in the sky came to my mind/when the standard of the world and of its chiefs/was silent in the blessed beak./For all those living lights,/shining still more brightly, began songs/that slip and fall from my memory." As Julie Cumming comments, for Dante,

> total comprehension of text or music is not necessary for appreciation. He describes in these passages the sublime musical experience of the inexpressible. This description of the musical experience is also a way of describing the apprehension of God: God's will is not comprehensible, but nevertheless it is possible to believe in it and appreciate it.[13]

This, at last, may be the answer to the riddle of polytextuality, to us perhaps the most salient feature of the French thirteenth- and fourteenth-century motet because it is the most uncanny. We need not assume that proper performance practice or greater familiarity rendered comprehensible to contemporary listeners that which is incomprehensible to us. The mind-boggling effect of the fourteenth-century ceremonial motet, confirmed by numerous witnesses, may have actually depended on the sensory overload delivered by its multiplicity of voices and texts. If so, it was not the first time that what we would call esthetic value and power would be extracted from the inscrutable. (A large part of the esthetic value, as well as the sacredness, of the earliest melismatic chant derived from what Dante might have called its slipperiness.) And it certainly will not be the last. Whenever the "sublime" is valued as an artistic quality, so is awe. And what produces awe must be unfathomable as well as thrilling.

Notes:

(13) Cumming, “Concord Out of Discord,” pp. 83–4.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny

Machaut's Songs and Mass; Music at the Papal Court of Avignon; Ars Subtilior

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

MAINTAINING THE ART OF COURTLY SONG

Guillaume de Machaut may not have been the most prestigious French poet and musician of his time. In terms of contemporary renown, he may have been outshone by Philippe de Vitry. He is certainly the most important to us, however, and the most representative, owing to the extraordinary fullness of his legacy, a fullness that stands in stark contrast to the meagerness of Vitry's. Certain aspects of Machaut's legacy, moreover, lived on for a century and more in the work of later poets and musicians who definitely saw themselves as his creative heirs.

The first half of Machaut's long life was spent in service, chiefly as secretary to John of Luxembourg (1296–1346), a son of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII, who succeeded his father-in-law Wenceslaus as king of Bohemia in 1310. Machaut, who like his patron was born around the turn of the century, came from the environs of the ancient cathedral town of Reims in the north of France, not far from Luxembourg. There is actually a town called Machault about twenty-five miles from Reims, but there is no evidence to support the tempting assumption that it was the poet's birthplace.

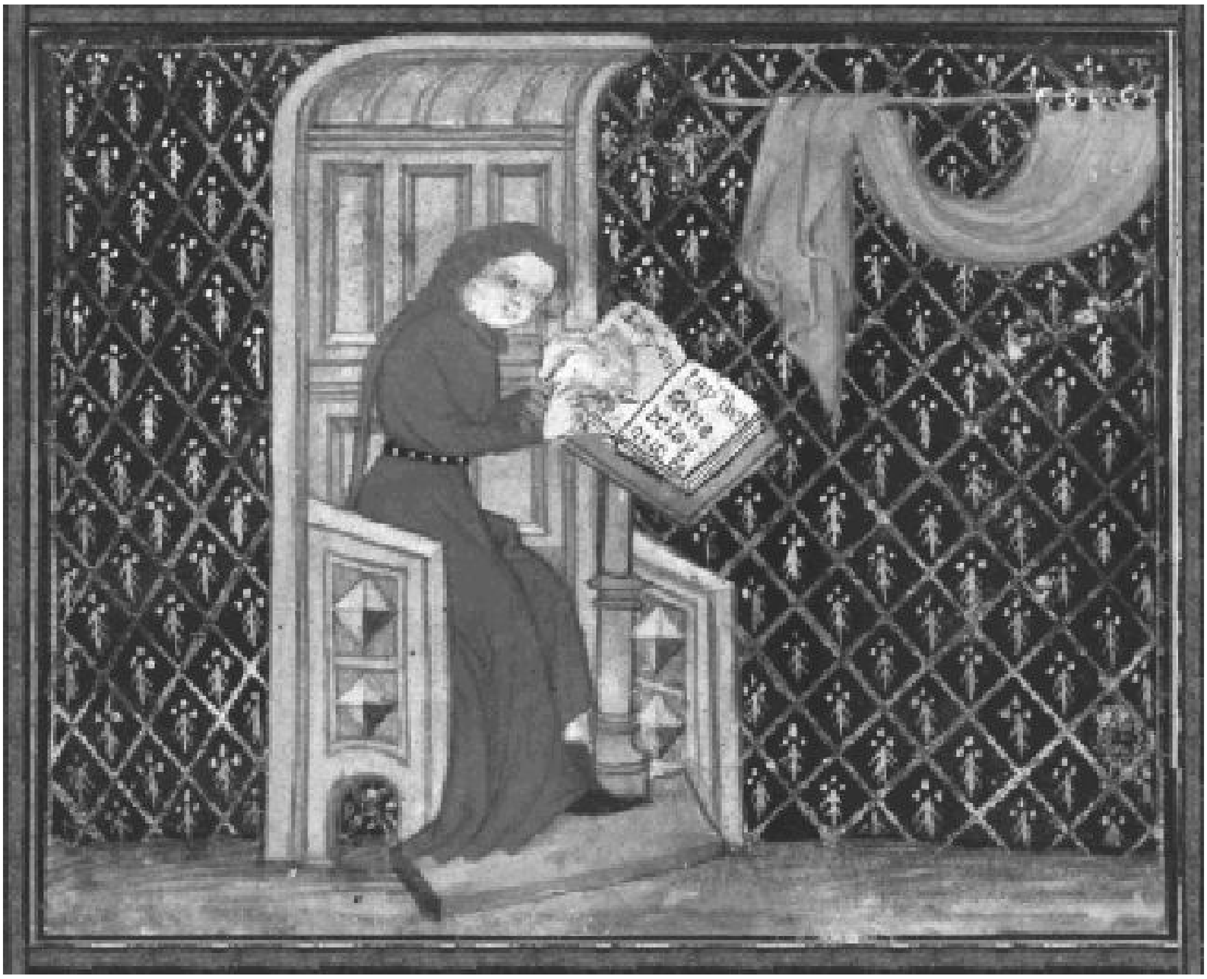

fig. 9-1 Illumination from the largest of the "Machaut manuscripts" showing the poet composing *Les nouveaus dis amoureus* ("New Poems in Honor of Love").

He was in the peripatetic John's service by 1323 and traveled widely with him on campaigns across northern and eastern Europe, including Silesia, Poland, Prussia, and Lithuania, as well as the Alpine areas of Lombardy and Tyrol, which John briefly ruled. After his patron's spectacularly violent death, tied blind to his horse on the battlefield of Crécy, Machaut returned to Reims and lived out his last three decades as a tonsured cathedral canon, with few official duties beyond singing some minimum number of Masses and Offices each year. He was in effect a wealthy man of leisure, free to pursue his artistic callings. He died in 1377, remarkably aged for a man who lived during the century of the great plagues.

As his reputation as a poet grew, Machaut was commissioned by several kings and dukes to write *dits*, lengthy allegorical poems, in their honor. For these patrons and others, Machaut also supervised the copying of his complete poetical and musical works into rich manuscripts, several of which survive, making him, along with the much less prolific Adam de la Halle, one of the earliest musical *literati* whose works come down to us in what amounts to an authorized collected edition.

Like the trouvères, his most kindred antecedents, Machaut belongs as much or more to literary as to musical history. He is universally regarded by today's literary historians as the greatest French poet of his age; his poetry is studied alongside that of Chaucer (whom he knew and influenced) and Dante, even if, unlike theirs, Machaut's literary output no longer enjoys a wide general readership. He is best known to today's connoisseurs for his music, not his poetry; since the revival of performing interest in "early music," he has come to enjoy a place in the concert hall and in recordings somewhat comparable to Chaucer's on the bookshelf.

His longest and most impressive works are nevertheless works of verbal art: extended narrative poems, much prized and cited in their day, in which the lyric compositions we now prize served as occasional interpolations. The earliest of these grand narratives, *Le Remède de Fortune* ("Fortune's remedy"), composed around 1349, has been compared to an *ars poetica*, a didactic treatise or compendium on lyric poetry, since it contains exemplary specimens of all the main genres, placed within a story that defines their expressive content and social use.

The poem's very plot is motivated by poetry. The poet anonymously composes a *lai* in honor of his lady, who discovers it, bids him read it to her, and asks who wrote it. Embarrassed, he flees her presence and addresses a *complainte* to Love and Fortune. Hope, fortune's remedy, appears and comforts him with two ballade-type songs in praise of love: a *chanson royal* and a *baladelle* (the latter a poem in what much later was known as "binary form," with a stanza in two repeated sections with complementary rhyme schemes). The poet expresses his gratitude in a standard *ballade*. He seeks his lady out, finds her dancing, and accompanies her movements with a *virelai*. He confesses authorship of the lay, she receives him as her lover, and, after a day spent together at her chateau, they exchange rings and he expresses his joy in a *rondeau*.

This narrative followed and amplified the typical blueprint of a troubadour (or trouvère) *vida* of old. With it, Machaut deliberately gave the moribund art of the knightly poet-lover a new birth, distinguished in part—specifically, in the baladelle, the ballade, and the rondeau—by the use of polyphonic music in the latest style. The fact that these were the sections so favored points to an important difference between Machaut's courtly poetry and that of the trouvères. While operating on as lofty and aristocratic a plane as the knightliest trouvères, as a composer he preferred the "fixed forms"—that is, the dance songs with refrains. These, we may recall, had originally come into their own when the courtly art of the trouvères had moved from castle to city and became the property of the guilds. Machaut reinvested the urbanized, "popular" genres of *fine amours* with privileged (now we'd call it "chic") refinement.

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Guillaume de Machaut

Motet: France, Ars Nova

Chanson

REDEFINING (AND RE-REFINING) A GENRE

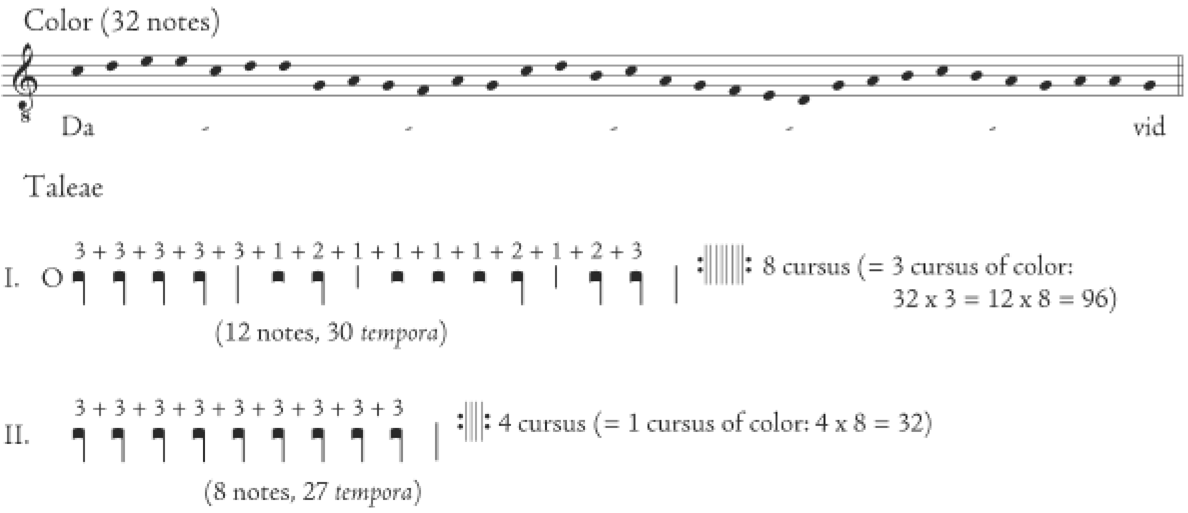
Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

That reinvestment was accomplished not by a stylistic revival but a thorough stylistic renovation. Machaut was able to reelevate and recomplicate the style of courtly love poetry, even while retaining its more popular forms, because he possessed a polyphonic craft that went far beyond the attainments of any previous courtly *or* urban love-singer. Where Adam de la Halle's polyphonic rondeaux were cast in as simple and straightforward a polyphonic texture as could be—that of the syllabic *versus* or conductus setting—Machaut's were subtle, ornate, and full of a very recondite lyricism that made telling decorative use, as we have seen, of musica ficta "causa pulchritudinis."

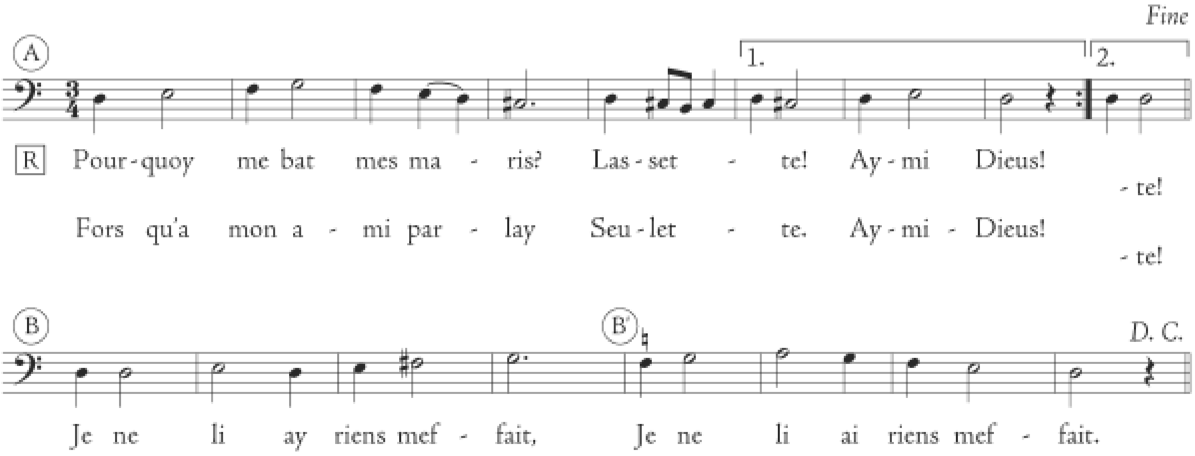
We have already inspected one of Machaut's motets (*Felix virgo/Inviolata/AD TE SUSPIRAMUS*, Ex. 8-6) and seen how fully he had mastered the craftsmanly and constructive techniques of the Ars Nova. Ars Nova techniques, which had been developed specifically to serve the purposes of the motet genre, were "bottom-up" techniques. That is, they were techniques geared toward the erecting of highly stratified polyphonic superstructures over artfully contrived and elaborated foundations. And the foundations were wrought in turn from cantus firmus melodies appropriated, as a rule, from the high-authority repertoire of canonized church chant.

Machaut wrote some real masterpieces in this very formalized and architectonic idiom, the most extended being a giant *hoquetus* on the melisma DAVID that comes at the end of the Gregorian Alleluia *Nativitas* for the feast of the Virgin Mary's Nativity, already the basis (as Machaut surely knew) of a grandiose, "classic" setting in the Notre Dame style. (We know it, too: see Ex. 6-5.) Machaut's hoquetus was not meant as an appendage to that venerable composition, however. The DAVID melisma is sung not by the soloist(s) but by the choir, and so would not have been performed polyphonically in church. This was still music for "feasts of the learned," who delighted in high-spirited intellectual games.

As shown in Ex. 9-1, Machaut divides his 32-note *color* by a twelve-note talea lasting 30 tempora, and lets the two repetition-schemes run their course until they come out even (or in more evocatively "Boethian" terms, lets the two bodies orbit in musical space until they come into alignment). It takes three cursus of color and eight of talea, thus: 32 × 3 = 12 × 8 = 96. Then, as a sort of cauda, he sets the color going once more to a shorter talea that divides its 32 notes evenly (8 notes in 27 tempora). Laying out the ground plan just described had to precede the composition of the hocketing upper parts, just as the foundation of an architectural edifice had to be laid before the rest could be erected. Instead of a full score, Ex. 9-1 gives just the foundational materials, the color, and the taleae. They can be followed, tracking each with one hand, while listening to a recorded performance. This will give a vivid idea of Ars Nova "isorhythmic" foundational architecture at its grandest.

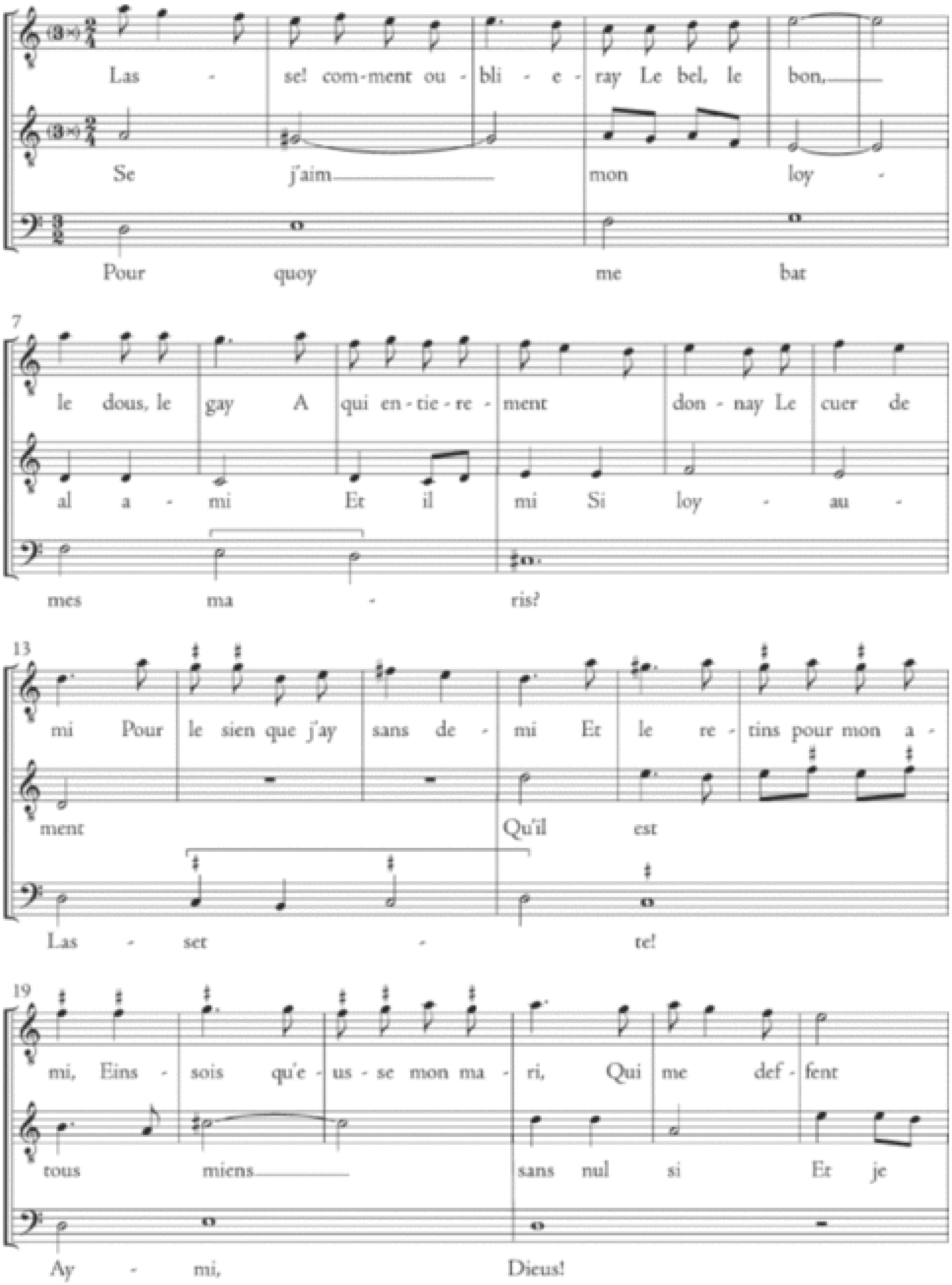

Color (32 notes)
Da - - - - - vid
Taleae
I. O
3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 3
(12 notes, 30 tempora)
8 cursus (= 3 cursus of color: 32 x 3 = 12 x 8 = 96)
II.
3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3
(8 notes, 27 tempora)
4 cursus (= 1 cursus of color: 4 x 8 = 32)

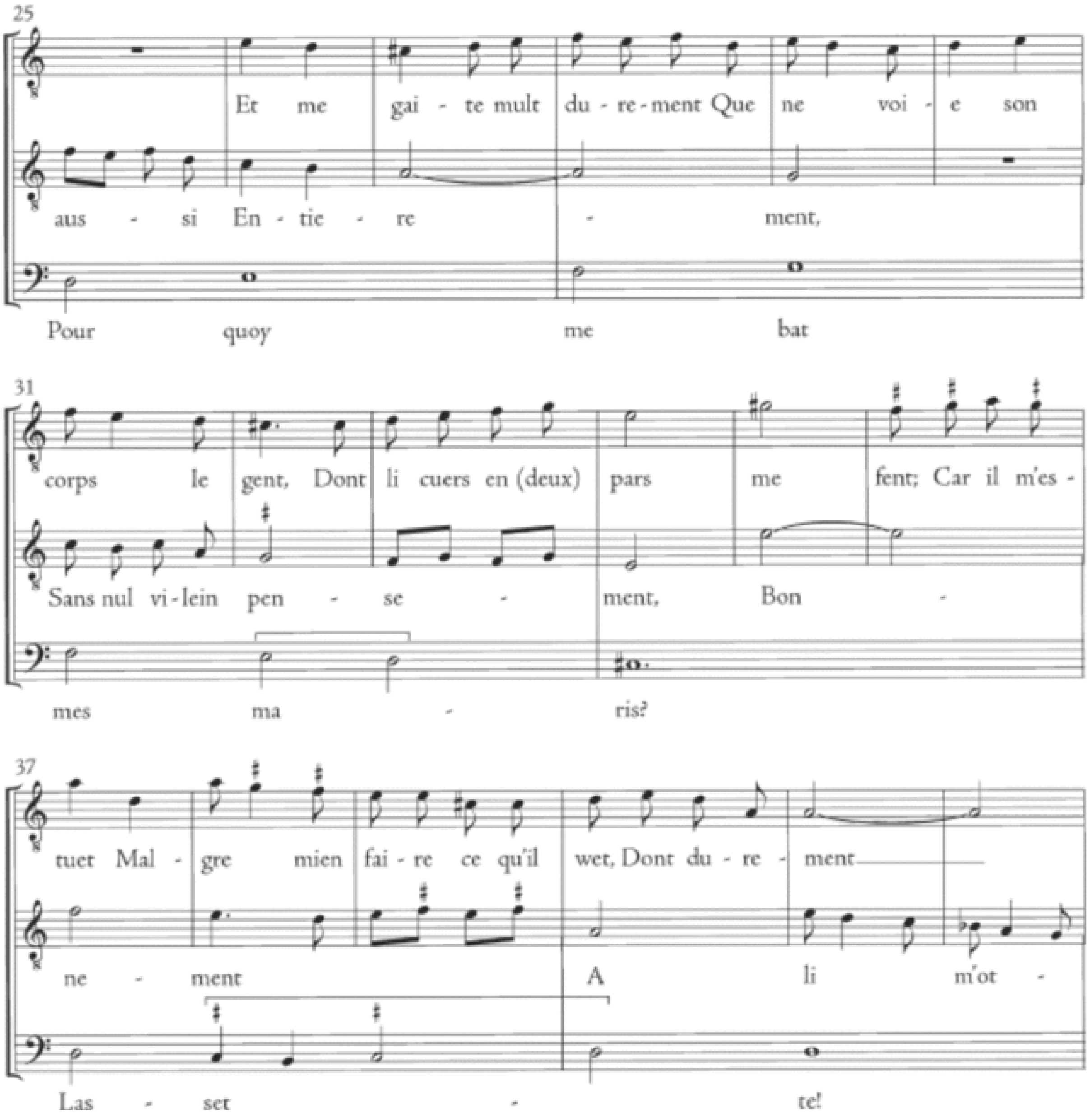
ex. 9-1 Guillaume de Machaut, hoquetus "DAVID," color and taleae


Fine
A
1.
2.
R
Pour - quoy me bat mes ma - ris? Las - set - te! Ay - mi Dieus! - te!
Fors qu'a mon a - mi par - lay Seu - let - te. Ay - mi - Dieus! - te!
B
B'
D. C.
Je ne li ay riens mef - fait, Je ne li ai riens mef - fait.

ex. 9-2 Guillaume de Machaut, *Pourquoy me bat mes maris*, tenor

By way of transition from the more speculative Ars Nova genres to the lyric genres more peculiar to Machaut, we may cast a sidelong glance at a whimsical hybrid: a motet in three texted parts, all in French, in which the tenor is not a Gregorian chant but instead a traditional *chanson balladé* ("danced song") or *virelai* (Ex. 9-2: *Lasse/Se j'aime/POURQUOY*). The song Machaut chose to do tenor duty was almost as "canonical" as a chant, however, having a textual pedigree going back to the thirteenth century. It satirizes courtly love as mere marital infidelity ("Oh God, why does my husband beat me? All I did was talk to my lover"). Ex. 9-2 shows Machaut's tenor in compressed note values (Machaut's are longs and breves, typical "tenor" values), with the constituent parts of the virelai—AbbaA, with "A" the refrain—labeled. The upper parts, meanwhile, behave in characteristic motet fashion. They are rhythmically stratified—the motetus moving in breves, semibreves, and occasional minims; the triplum in minims, semibreves, and occasional breves—and serve as glosses (here, ironic rhymed ones) on the tenor: "Alas, how can I forget/the handsome, the good, the sweet, the merry/[youth] to whom I've completely given/this heart of mine?" "If I love him truly, and he truly loves me, do I deserve to be treated so?" Ex. 9-3 shows the portion of the whole polyphonic texture corresponding to the tenor's first refrain.


Las - se! com-ment ou - bli - e - ray Le bel, le bon,
Se j'aim mon loy -
Pour quoy me bat
7
le dous, le gay A qui en-tie-re - ment don - nay Le cuer de
al a - mi Et il mi Si loy - au -
mes ma - ris?
13
mi Pour le sien que j'ay sans de - mi Et le re - tins pour mon a -
ment Qu'il est
Las - set - te!
19
mi, Eins - sois qu'e - us - se mon ma - ri, Qui me def - fent
tous miens sans nul si Et je
Ay - mi, Dieus!


25
Et me gai - te mult du - re - ment Que ne voi - e son
aus - si En - tie - re - ment,
Pour quoy me bat
31
corps le gent, Dont li cuers en (deux) pars me fent; Car il m'es -
Sans nul vi - lein pen - se - ment, Bon -
mes ma - ris?
37
tuet Mal - gre mien fai - re ce qu'il wet, Dont du - re - ment
ne - ment A li m'ot -
Las - set - te!

ex. 9-3 Guillaume de Machaut, *Lasse/Se j'aime/POURQUOY*, mm. 1-42

There is good reason to suspect that even if the tenor's text is traditional, its tune is Machaut's, or else heavily edited by Machaut to accord with his own composing style (or, at very least, with contemporary performance practice; note, among other telltale signs, the musica ficta calling for the *subsemitonium modi*, the borrowed leading tone). Machaut's own virelais are very similar. Most of them are monophonic, presumably because of the three main fixed forms the virelai was the one that continued most often to serve a traditional social function—the *carole* or public (social) dance—and was most often performed by minstrels. Mensurally notated monophonic dances and dance-songs proliferated in written sources throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, beginning with the famous "Manuscrit du Roi," which contains eight *estampies royals*, long "stamping dances" in open-and-shut couplets, already mentioned in chapter 4 (and shown in Fig. 4-8). That being the case, *Lasse/Se j'aime/POURQUOY* might be looked upon through the other end of the telescope, so to speak: not so much as a motet built over a virelai, but rather as a polyphonically dressed-up virelai of an especially elaborate sort, in which the techniques of the motet serve to embellish a courtly dance.

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Guillaume de Machaut

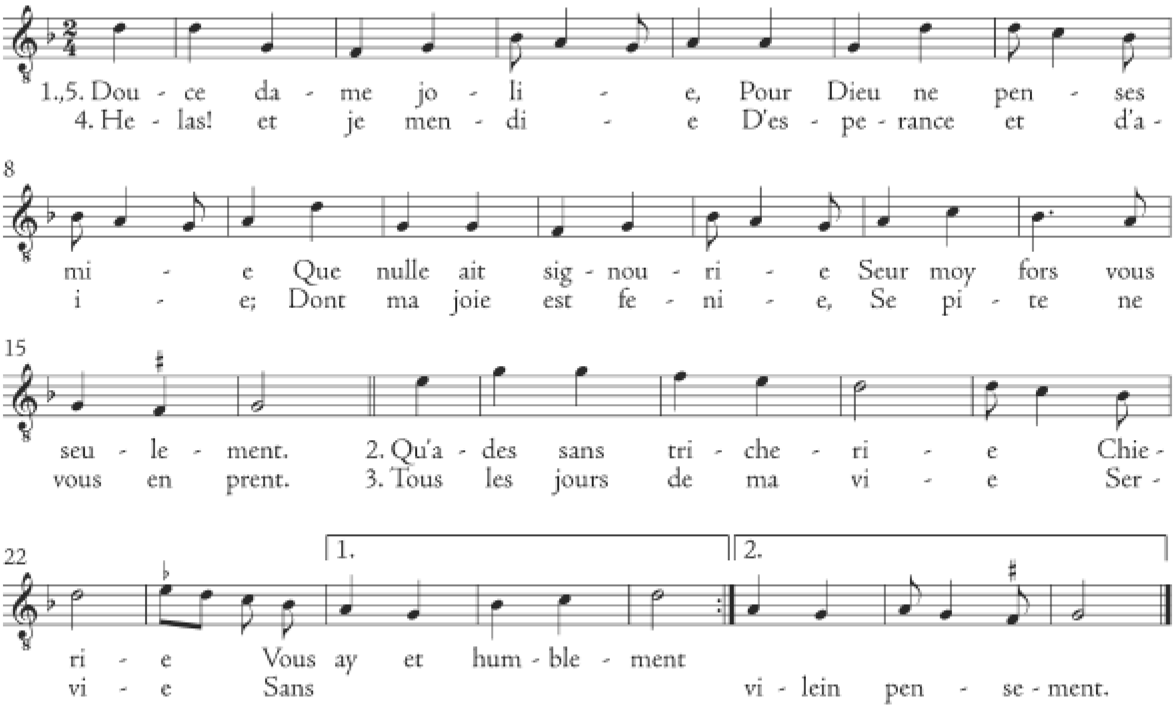
Virelai

THE TOP-DOWN STYLE

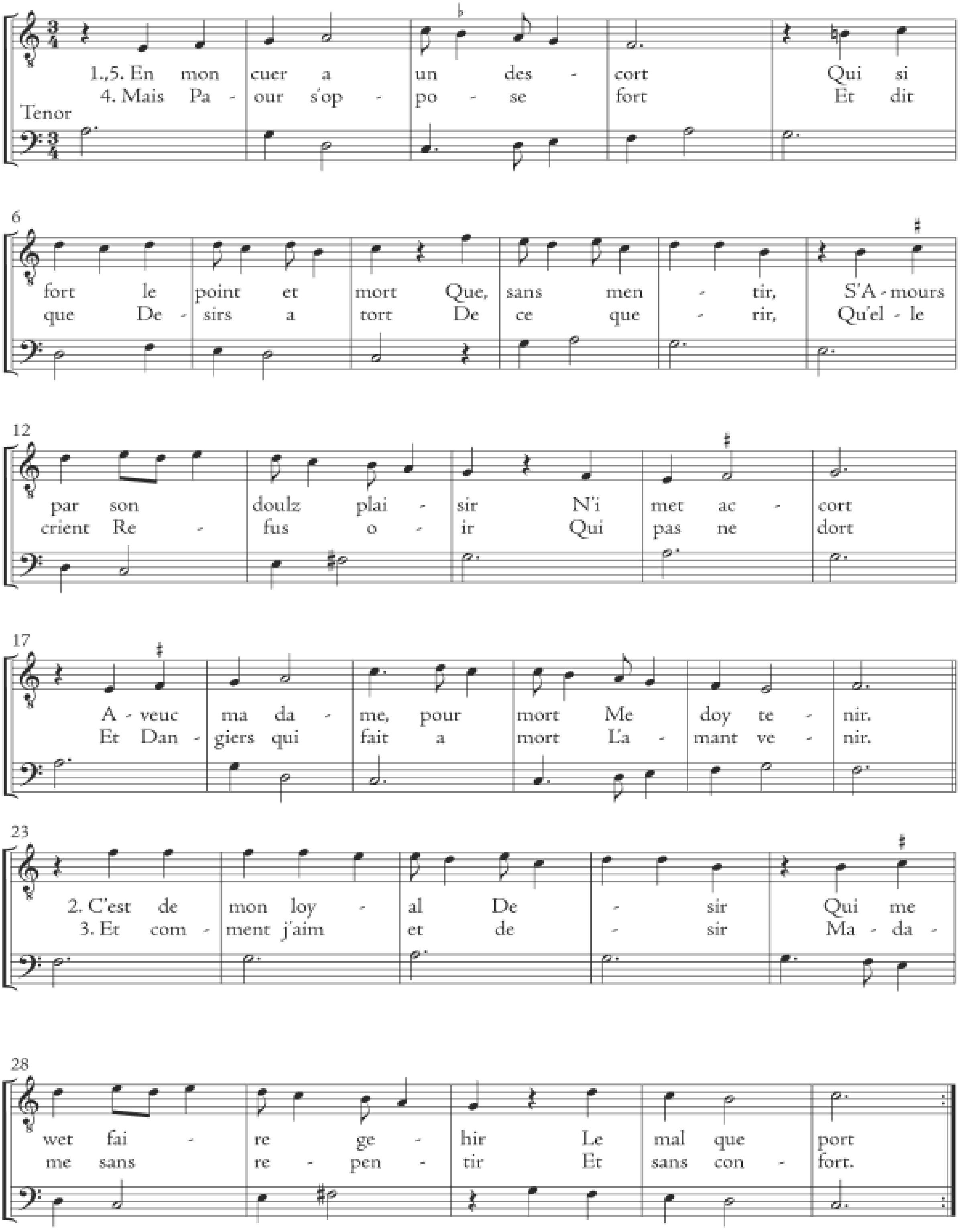
Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Mixing the attributes of the motet and chanson genres was a highly unusual effect. The genres were more typically thought of as distinct to the point of contrast—a contrast conditioned above all by their methods of composition. To appreciate the difference, and the new way of composing Machaut seems to have pioneered in his chansons, we will do best to begin with a monophonic composition—say, a typical virelai.

One of Machaut's best known virelais, because it is so frequently performed by modern minstrels in "early music" ensembles, is the catchy *Douce dame jolie* (Ex. 9-4). It is a very early instance of a literate composition that is in duple time on all levels of mensuration. The purposely varied detail-work discloses the song's literate origins: the first three lines of the poem are set to what are in essence three repetitions of a single musical phrase, but each of them is subtly distinguished from the others. In the original notation the music begins with rests, even though there are no accompanying parts, because without bars the only way in which an initial upbeat could be indicated was by showing the silent part of the hypothetical first measure. Like many duple-metered pieces of the time, it especially emphasizes syncopes.


1.,5. Dou - ce da - me jo - li - e, Pour Dieu ne pen - ses
4. He - las! et je men - di - e D'es - pe - rance et d'a -
8
mi - e Que nulle ait sig - nou - ri - e Seur moy fors vous
i - e; Dont ma joie est fe - ni - e, Se pi - te ne
15
seu - le - ment. 2. Qu'a - des sans tri - che - ri - e Chie -
vous en prent. 3. Tous les jours de ma vi - e Ser -
22
ri - e Vous ay et hum - ble - ment
vi - e Sans vi - lein pen - se - ment.
1.
2.

ex. 9-4 Guillaume de Machaut, *Douce dame jolie* (monophonic virelai)


Tenor
6
12
17
23
28
1.,5. En mon cuer a un des - cort Qui si fort le point et mort Que, sans men - tir, S'A - mours par son doulz plai - sir N'i met ac - cort
4. Mais Pa - our s'op - po - se fort Et dit que De - sirs a tort De ce que - rir, Qu'el - le crient Re - fus o - ir Qui pas ne dort
A - veuc ma da - me, pour mort Me doy te - nir.
Et Dan - giers qui fait a mort L'a - mant ve - nir.
2. C'est de mon loy - al De - sir Qui me wet fai - re ge - hir Le mal que port
3. Et com - ment j'aim et de - sir Ma - da - me sans re - pen - tir Et sans con - fort.

ex. 9-5 Guillaume de Machaut, *En mon cuer* (virelai a 2)

Eight—only eight—of Machaut's thirty-nine virelais are polyphonic. Of these, six are in two voices only, a texted "cantus" ("song" or "singer") part and an untexted tenor. The nomenclature already suggests that a tenor has been added to a "song," or in other words, that the song existed as a monophonic composition before it was made polyphonic by a lower accompanying voice. This is just the opposite from the procedure we have observed in all the polyphonic genres of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—organum, clausula, even the homorhythmic conductus, which had no preexisting tenor but created its own from scratch. Above all, adding a tenor to a preexisting cantus was the very antithesis of motet composition. Starting "at the top" was a whole new concept of composing—within the literate tradition, anyway (for we have always recognized the possibility, indeed the strong probability, that “accompanied song” was a minstrel specialty at least from the time of the troubadours.) Two kinds of additional evidence clinch the notion of “top-down” composition. One is the state of the musical sources. The virelai *En mon cuer* (“In my heart,” Ex. 9-5), for example, is found as a two-voice composition in all the composer-supervised “collected editions” of Machaut’s works—all, that is, except the one generally considered to be the earliest such manuscript, where its “cantus” is entered, like the other virelais in that manuscript, as a monophonic dance song. That was how it must have been originally composed. It is self-sufficient as a single voice. That is, it has a stable and satisfying cadence structure, and unlike its eventual accompanying tenor, it has enough notes to accommodate all the syllables of the text.

The remaining piece of evidence that Machaut wrote his songs from the top down, beginning with the self-sufficient cantus, comes from another of his famous narrative poems, *Le Voir Dit* (“The true tale”), composed in the early 1360s. This, too, is ostensibly an autobiographical poem, far less conventional in its scenario than *Le Remède de Fortune* and possibly, therefore, more reliable as autobiography. Its ten thousand lines embody, along with the narrative itself, some forty-six ultraliterary love letters exchanged between the sexagenarian poet and a precocious lass of nineteen, Péronne (or Péronnel) d’Armentières, whom he is pursuing as courtly lover. Along with the letters there are some lyric poems addressed by Machaut to his callow beloved, of which a few are set to music. In one of the letters accompanying a song Machaut tells Peronelle that he will send another as soon as he has put a tenor and a contratenor to it. Peronelle may not have been particularly interested in the implications of that statement, but to us they are profoundly revealing.

The upshot of all this scattered evidence is that *any* of Machaut’s two-part virelais could have started out, and probably did start out, as monophonic songs, to which tenors were added later. A corollary implication is that monophonic performance was probably a standard option for all of Machaut’s virelais. Another is that polyphonic performance was likewise a standard option: any monophonic virelai, that is, was eligible for accompaniment by a tenor, whether set down in writing or extemporized. And because Machaut’s monophonic melodies had to be eligible for accompaniment in this way, they had to differ fundamentally in style from all previous monophonic melodies we have encountered.

Here is why: Whether set down or extemporized, any tenor had to make correct counterpoint with its “cantus.” In addition to observing the rules of consonance, this meant making the proper kind of cadence —i.e., a discant cadence. A discant cadence, as we recall, either moved by contrary motion inward to a unison (i.e., made an *occursus*) or moved out by contrary motion to the octave. The latter type was by far the more common, owing to the fact that most discants were constructed over a Gregorian cantus firmus in the lower voice; and Gregorian melodies, as a result of their characteristic arch shape, almost always made their last approach to the final as a stepwise descent. For that reason, the usual *vox organalis* or *duplum*, just as characteristically, made its last approach to the final from below, via the *subsemitonium* or leading tone.

As we may remember from chapter 4, high “Latinate” troubadour and trouvère melodies were often all but indistinguishable, stylistically, from the late Frankish chants that were being composed at the same time. Accordingly, they too made their final approach to the final from above. That is the way unaccompanied melodies traditionally worked.

But now compare an unaccompanied (or a potentially unaccompanied) melody by Machaut. Both *Douce dame jolie* and *En mon cuer* make their cadential approaches not from above but via the *subsemitonium*. They are composed, in other words, on the model of a *duplum*, not a tenor, and they established a basic melodic type for courtly songs that would last for several centuries. They are, in short, monophonic melodies that were conceived in the context of polyphony, by a composer whose musical imagination had been definitively shaped by polyphony. Even the tenor melody in *Lasse/Se j’aime POURQUOY* (Ex. 9-3), that whimsical virelai-motet hybrid, makes its final cadences from below (see Ex. 9-2). In other words, it does not really behave like a tenor. Its eccentricity forces a peculiar cadence structure on the polyphonic texture that adds another level of irony to the piece.

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<http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-div1-009003.xml>.
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Cantilena

CANTILENA

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The new style of song-melody, composed with polyphonic accompaniment in mind, was called *cantilena*. By itself the melody was sufficient, making correct (*subsemitonium*) cadences and fitting the words. With the addition of a tenor, a self-sufficient two-part discant texture was achieved, in which cadences (to octaves or, more rarely, to unisons in contrary motion) were still correct according to the rules of discant. With the addition of a third voice, whether a texted triplum in the range of the cantus or an untexted contratenor in the range of the tenor, the two-part structure was sonorously enhanced and the harmonies made “sweet.”

The most usual way of sweetening the harmony was to amplify the imperfect consonances into full triads; and the most characteristic place to observe this is, again, at cadences. A typical three-voice cadence in cantilena style has the cantus and the tenor describing their characteristic progression from sixth to octave, with a contratenor (or, less often, a triplum) doubling the cantus at the lower fourth (if a contratenor) or upper fifth (if a triplum), thus creating what we have already learned to identify as the “double leading-tone” cadence.

This full harmonic texture began to influence the composition of motets, as we saw in the previous chapter, when contratenors were added to the vocal complement. Although we now associate the contratenor-enriched texture primarily with Machaut, it may actually have been yet another innovation of Philippe de Vitry. Several of his extant motets do have contratenors; and, although they do not survive, Vitry is known to have written ballades, probably in the 1320s (when the polyphonic ballade is described as a popular novelty by Jacques de Liège), some twenty years before Machaut’s earliest three-part cantilenas began appearing, at first in the *Remède de Fortune*.

One of the manuscripts containing the virelai *En mon cuer*, which we have considered in one part and in two, contains some extra ruled lines reserved for a triplum Machaut never got around to writing. That would have created three interchangeable versions of the song—or rather, three performance possibilities: cantus alone, cantus plus tenor, cantus plus triplum and tenor. Any of these possibilities is harmonically/contrapuntally correct; none of them can claim to be, in any exclusive sense, the “real thing.” Again we are reminded that the line between creation and performance was still a blurry, permeable one. Machaut corroborates this in an odd way when he asks Péronelle, in one of the *Voir Dit* letters, to receive a special song from him and have it played by her minstrels “just as it is, without adding or taking away.” For the sake of their special relationship, in other words, he was asking for something exceptional.

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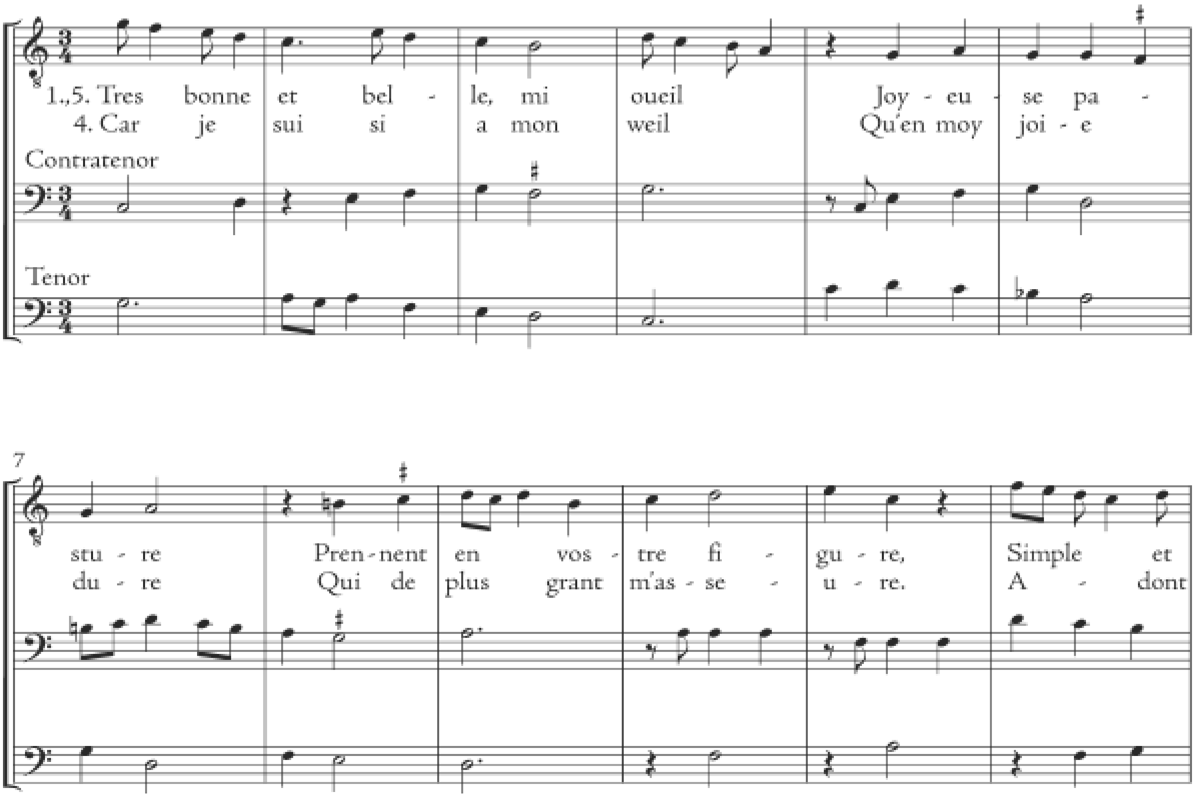
Guillaume de Machaut

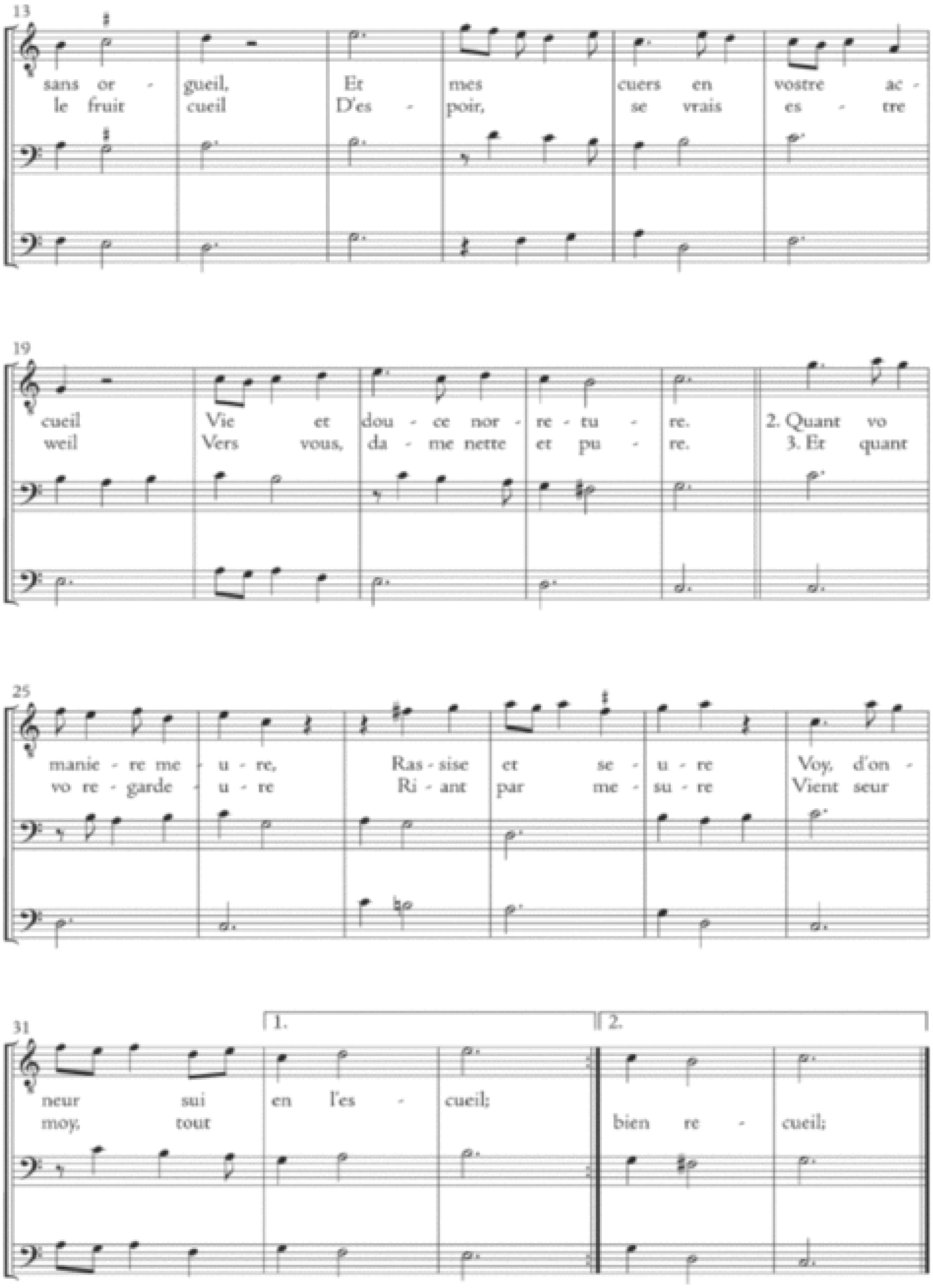
Virelai

FUNCTIONALLY DIFFERENTIATED COUNTERPOINT

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

As an example of the standard cantilena texture "just as it is, without adding or taking away," we can look at yet another Machaut virelai, *Tres bonne et belle* (Ex. 9-6), the only one to come down in all its sources, exceptionally, as a three-voice composition. The final is C, putting the song in what we would call the major mode (and what Machaut, if he thought about it at all, would probably have called a transposition of the Lydian mode, normally pitched on F). The texted part or cantus has a plagal ambitus that puts the final smack in the middle of its range. The lower tenor and contratenor share a single authentic ambitus, from c to d'.


1.,5. Tres bonne et bel - le, mi oueil Joy - eu - se pa -
4. Car je sui si a mon weil Qu'en moy joi - e
Contratenor
Tenor
7
stu - re Pren - nent en vos - tre fi - gu - re, Simple et
du - re Qui de plus grant m'as - se - u - re. A - dont


13
sans or - gueil, Et mes cuers en vostre ac -
le fruit cueil D'es - poir, se vrais es - tre
19
cueil Vie et dou - ce nor - re - tu - re. 2. Quant vo
weil Vers vous, da - me nette et pu - re. 3. Et quant
25
manie - re me - u - re, Ras - sise et se - u - re Voy, d'on -
vo re - garde - u - re Ri - ant par me - su - re Vient seur
31
1.
2.
neur sui en l'es - cueil;
moy, tout bien re - cueil;

ex. 9-6 Guillaume de Machaut, *Tres bonne et belle* (virelai a 3)

Although they occupy the exact same pitch space, however, the tenor and contratenor are not equivalent parts. Each of them behaves, so to speak, according to its station within the textural hierarchy. It is the tenor and only the tenor that makes the true discant cadence against the cantus, moving out from sixth to octave, whether on the final (mm. 3–4, 23–24, 34–35) or on some subsidiary degree (D in mm. 8–9 and 13–14, E in m. 32–33, the "open" cadence of the middle section). At such moments the behavior of the contratenor is also mandated: it invariably fills in the middle of the double leading-tone cadence. That is what defines it as a contratenor. A contratenor (or a tenor, or a cantus) is as a contratenor (or a tenor, or a cantus) does.

Thus, even if Machaut wrote all the parts in one sitting, and there is no reason to suppose that he did not, he nevertheless provided three grammatically viable or correct performance possibilities. Writing in this way—so that the cantus can be sung either alone, or in a duet with the tenor, or in a trio with tenor and contratenor—is often called "successive composition." We imagine the composer writing the cantus first, then adding the tenor, and finally the contratenor. We have already seen lots of evidence that this was often enough the actual procedure. But it does not follow that the composer had to write the parts separately, or that he could not conceive of a three part texture in a single act of composing.

Interpreting the idea of “successive composition” too literally can lead us into making unwarranted and probably fallacious assumptions about the way in which people “heard” music in those days—for example, that they did not “hear” harmony the way we “hear” it, but only an interplay of contrapuntal voices that just happens now and then to produce (as if by accident) what we call “chords.” (The quotes around “hear,” of course, are there to show that what is meant is not just hearing but conceptualizing on the basis of hearing.) What we call “successive composition,” then, is merely the process of assigning strictly defined roles to the various parts in a contrapuntal texture. The reason for it does not seem to have much to do with how one “heard,” but rather with the fluid and practical attitude that demanded not a single idealized text but a variety of performance possibilities for any song.

And that is why, even if he conceived all the parts in a song like *Tres bonne et belle* as a single harmonic unit, Machaut needed to differentiate the tenor and the contratenor in terms of function, if not style. For them to alternate roles on successive cadences, for example, would preclude a two-part performance of the piece, for in that case not all of the cadences would be properly enunciated no matter which of the two accompanying parts were used. And yet the fact that the tenor and contratenor had to be functionally distinct seems to have led to their being stylistically distinct as well. The contratenor, being in quasi-architectural terms the least “structural” voice (in that the other two voices could perform the piece without it), became willy-nilly the most “decorative” one—at once liveliest in rhythm (replete with hockets and syncopes) and most capricious in contour (leaping freely by sixths).

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Guillaume de Machaut

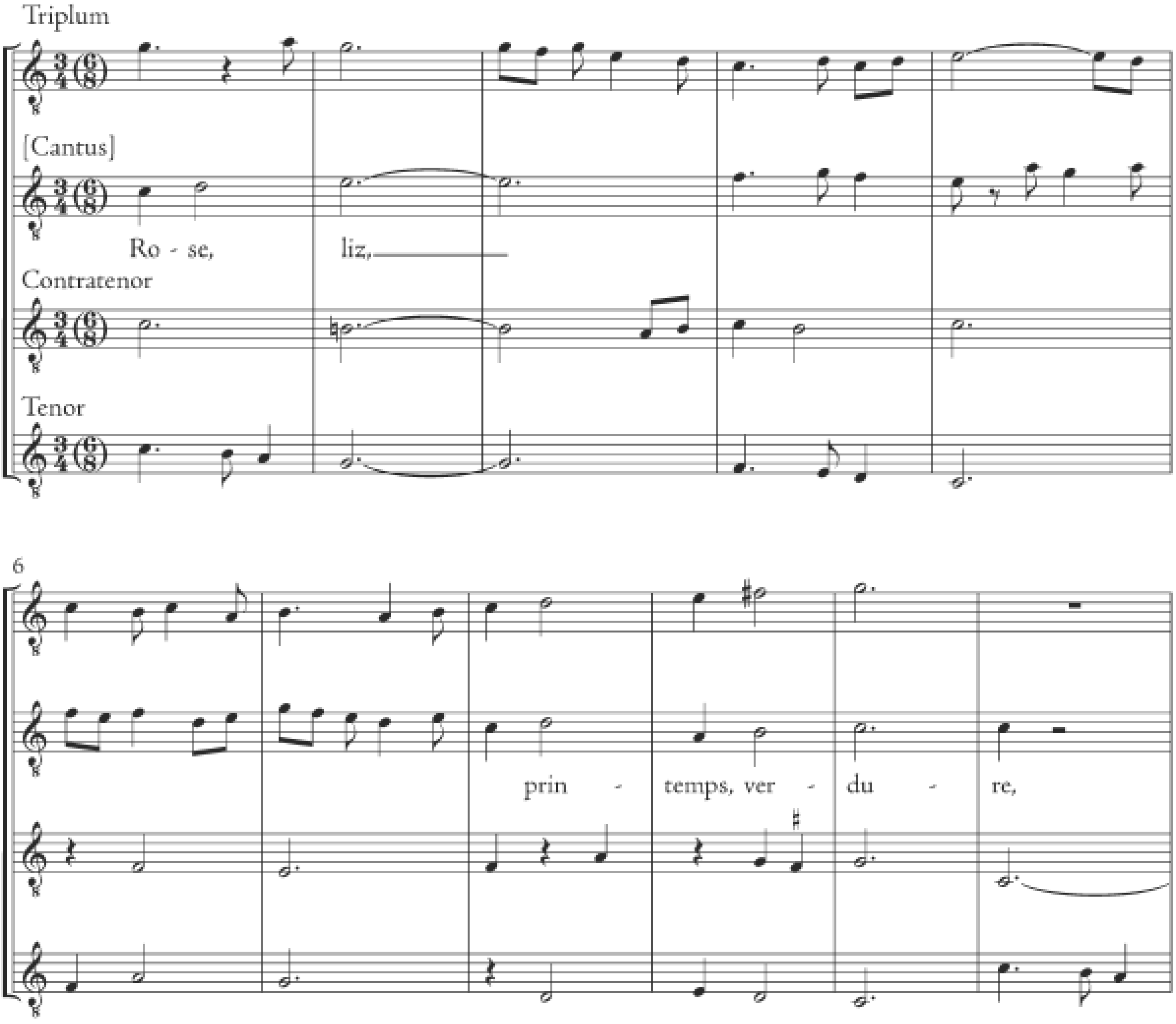
Rondeau

THE LUXURIANT STYLE

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

At their most luxuriant, Machaut's textures could accommodate four voices: the "structural" cantus/tenor pair, accompanied by both a triplum and a contratenor. This texture, which we have already observed in Ex. 8-6, was in effect a blending of the traditional motet complement (which included a triplum) with the newer cantilena complement (which included a contratenor). It was a rich all-purpose texture that could be adapted either to motet or to chanson designs.

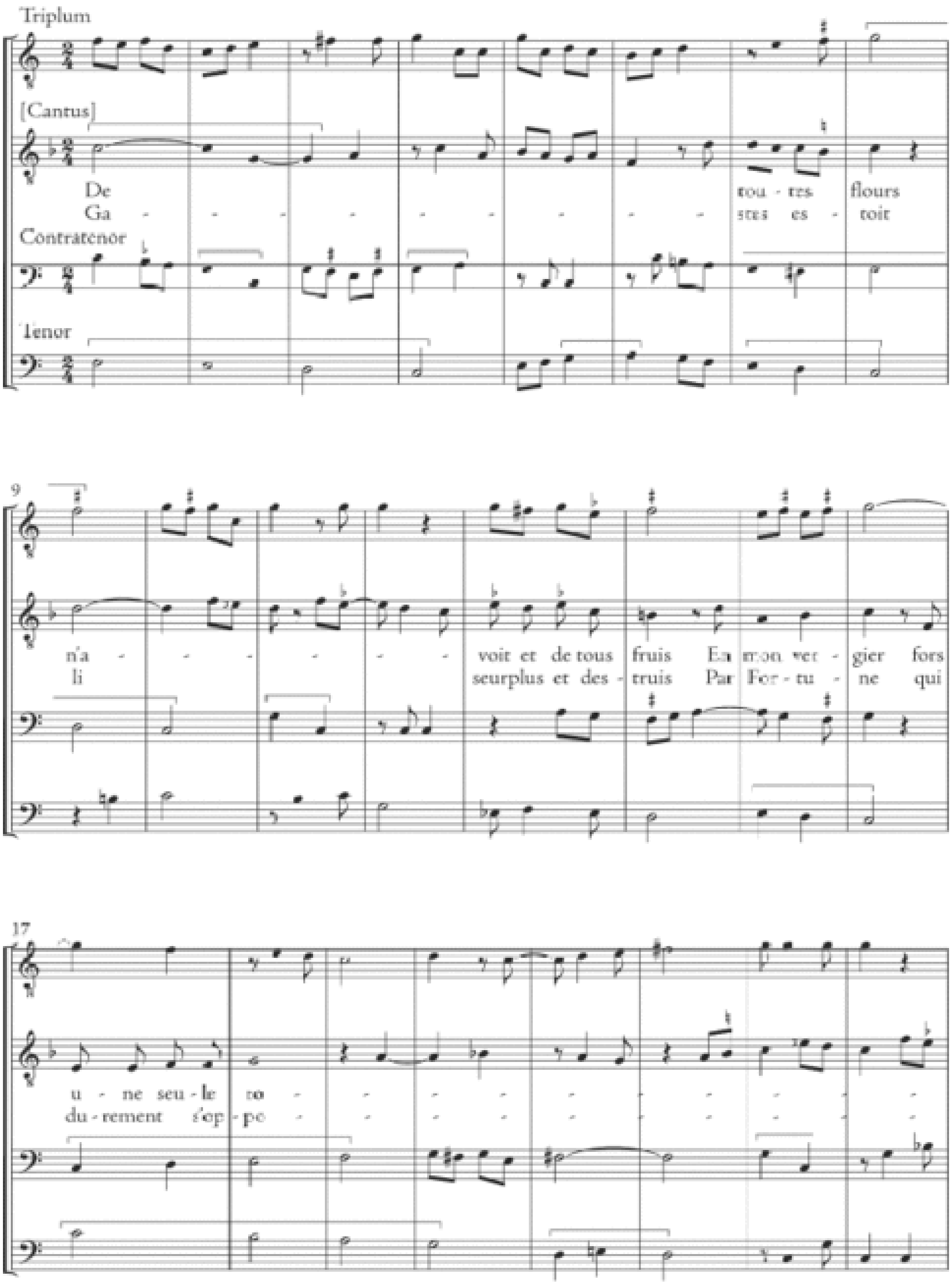
The rondeau *Rose, liz* ("The rose, the lily") is found in all its composer-supervised manuscript sources with a full four-part complement. Ex. 9-7 shows the opening of the piece, up to the first cadence. Because the parts are still functionally differentiated within a structural hierarchy, there are four viable performance options: take away the triplum and the remaining voices will produce a texture like that of Ex. 9-6; take away the contratenor and the remaining texture will be like that of Ex. 9-5; take away the tenor and the cantus can stand alone, as in Ex. 9-4.

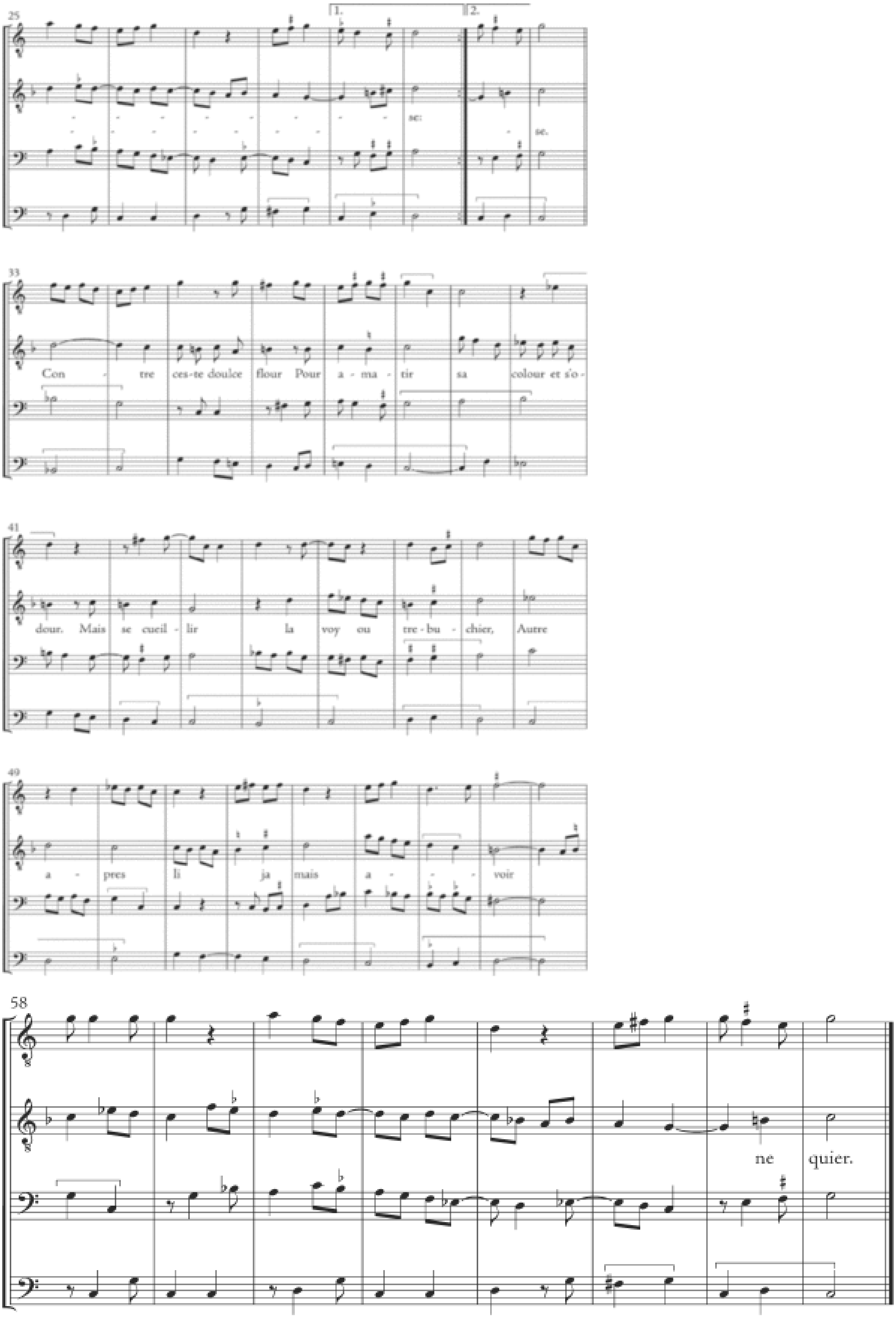


ex. 9-7 Guillaume de Machaut, Rondeau no. 10, *Rose, liz, printemps*, mm. 1-11

Note that the triplum and the contratenor behave similarly at the cadence. Both supply the “second leading tone,” F♯, each in its respective register, producing parallel octaves. (The same was true of the cadences in the Machaut motet examined in the previous chapter.) The four-part texture is thus a sonorously amplified—and functionally redundant—version of the three-part texture. A functionally differentiated four-part harmony would not make its appearance for another century.

Of all the fixed forms, the ballade in three stanzas was for Machaut and his followers the noblest and most exalted—and musically, therefore, the most elaborate. In the manuscripts Machaut oversaw, the section containing ballades was headed, “Ci comencent les balades ou il ha chant,” meaning, “Here begin the ballades or high song” (recall the *grand chant* of the trouvères). “Highness” (*hauteur*, whence “haughty”) was expressed in the traditional way: by the use of an especially melismatic style. The ballade *De toutes flours* (“Of all the fruits and flowers in my garden”; Ex. 9-8), certainly exemplifies this. Otherwise it is very similar to *Rose, liz*, both in subject matter and (no surprise) in mode.


Triplum
[Cantus]
De toutes flours
Gastes estoit
Contratenor
Tenor
9
n'a voit et de tous fruis En mon vergier fors
li seurplus et des truis Par Fortune qui
17
une seule ro
durement s'oppo


25
1.
2.
se:
se.
33
Con - tre ces-te doulce flour Pour a - ma - tir sa colour et s'o-
41
dour. Mais se cueil - lir la voy ou tre - bu - chier, Autre
49
a - pres li ja mais a - - - voir
58
ne quier.

ex. 9-8 Guillaume de Machaut, Ballade no. 31, *De toutes flours*

Mode, in this style, still means more than a scale and a final. It is still to some extent a formula family. The chief formula, of course, is the cadence: note the same doubled F♯ s between the two “accompanying” voices (contratenor and triplum). And another important formula is the overall tonal progression. It is easiest to see this in a ballade, since the repeated opening section has the same sort of “open” (*ouvert*) and “closed” (*clos*) cadences we found in the monophonic songs of the trouvères, only now harmonically amplified. The first ending makes its open (or “half”) cadence on what we would call the supertonic, and the second makes its closed (or “full”) cadence on the final. The progression supertonic to final is also the way the tenor itself moves at the full cadence, and so the overall tonal progression is a kind of magnification of the full cadence.

Machaut reinforces the sense of cadential closure and rounds the whole piece off by means of a musical rhyme. Not only the final cadence but the whole final phrase of the first section returns at the end of the second (compare the first section from m. 22 with the second from m. 57); the repetition is made extra conspicuous by the use of an ear-catching syncopation in the tenor, preceded by a prolonged imperfect consonance (doubly prolonged in the second section!) that arrests the harmonic motion precisely when the doubled leading tone is sounding and demanding resolution (compare mm. 22, 56–57). In addition, the final line of poetry, which carries the musical rhyme, is a refrain uniting all three stanzas. Music and text thus work in harness to delineate the form and heighten its rhetoric.

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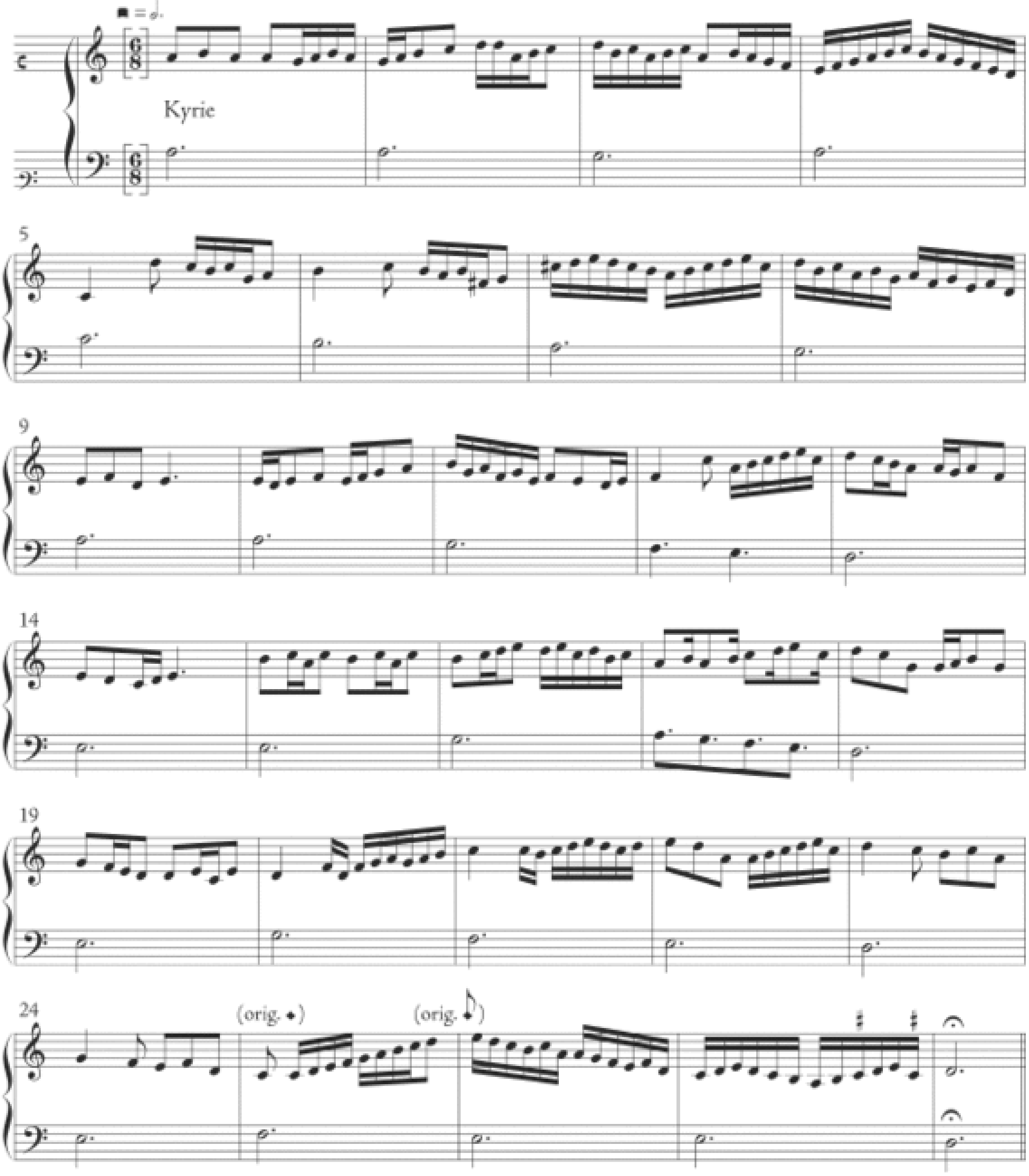
Mode

Sources, MS: Renaissance polyphony

WHAT INSTRUMENTALISTS DID

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Proof of this ballade's distinction (or at least its popularity) is its inclusion, a generation or more after the composer's death, in a north Italian manuscript from about 1415 that is the earliest extant source of music composed or arranged for keyboard instruments. It is called the "Faenza Codex" after the Italian town to whose public library it now belongs. It may originally have been prepared by or for a church organist, because it contains a certain amount of service music, including an arrangement of the Kyrie *Cunctipotens genitor*, with which we are already familiar in both its original form (Ex. 2-14b) and as adapted for polyphonic performance (Ex. 5-8). The organ arrangement in the Faenza Codex is somewhat like the latter in concept. It is arranged in score, with the lower staff (left hand part) confined to the plainsong melody, held out as a tenor, while the right hand part carols away in a very florid counterpoint. Ex. 9-9 contains the first section.



ex. 9-9 *Cunctipotens genitor* from Faenza Codex

The arrangement of Machaut’s *De toutes flours* follows the same idea. Ex. 9-10 gives the “A” section. It adapts Machaut’s tenor as a cantus firmus, meanwhile transposing it up a fifth, lightly decorating it, and recasting its rhythms from simple-into-compound-duple patterns (or, in Ars Nova terms, changing the prolation from minor to major). Over it the right hand plays a version of Machaut’s cantus that is so overgrown with embellishment as to be scarcely recognizable. (It is easiest to recognize at the musical rhyme: compare Ex. 9-10 at mm. 23 ff and 56 ff with the corresponding passages of Ex. 9-8.)

This arrangement (or *intabulation*, as arrangements for keyboard are often called) is extremely suggestive. It gives us grounds for surmising what instrumental virtuosos did at a time when practically no instrumental music was written down. Instrumental music, too, started out as an “oral” culture, if the term oral can be expanded to encompass the digital, based on listening, practicing, and emulating; and it left few traces before the sixteenth century for historian-sleuths to interpret. A book like the Faenza Codex, therefore, is a precious document. It reveals the way in which “standard”—or “classic”—vocal compositions may have provided highly skilled instrumentalists (like today’s—well, yesterday’s—jazz virtuosos) with a repertoire for specialist improvisation.

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MACHAUT’S MASS AND ITS BACKGROUND

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

By a curious twist of fate, Guillaume de Machaut—best known in his day as a poet and, secondarily, as a composer of courtly songs—is best known today for what seems an entirely uncharacteristic work: a complete polyphonic setting of the Ordinary of the Mass. Machaut’s *Messe de Nostre Dame* (“Mass of Our Lady”) is in fact the earliest such setting to survive from the hand of a single known author. What might otherwise seem a liturgical anomaly in an otherwise basically secular career has instead loomed disproportionately large both within Machaut’s output and in music historiography itself, because the “cyclic Mass Ordinary” (that is, a setting of the mostly nonconsecutive items of the Ordinary liturgy as a musical unit) became the dominant musical genre of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Machaut seems willy-nilly its prophetic harbinger.

The actual history of the polyphonic Mass Ordinary, while it might seem to diminish Machaut’s legendary stature, is a much more interesting story than the myth of its single-handed invention by Machaut might suggest. The rise of polyphonic Ordinaries was a by-product of one of the most turbulent periods in the history of the Roman church—the phase during which, briefly, the church was not Roman.

Citation (MLA): Richard Taruskin. "Chapter 9 Machaut and His Progeny." *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press. New York, USA. n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2011. <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-div1-009008.xml>.
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Guillaume de Machaut

Mass

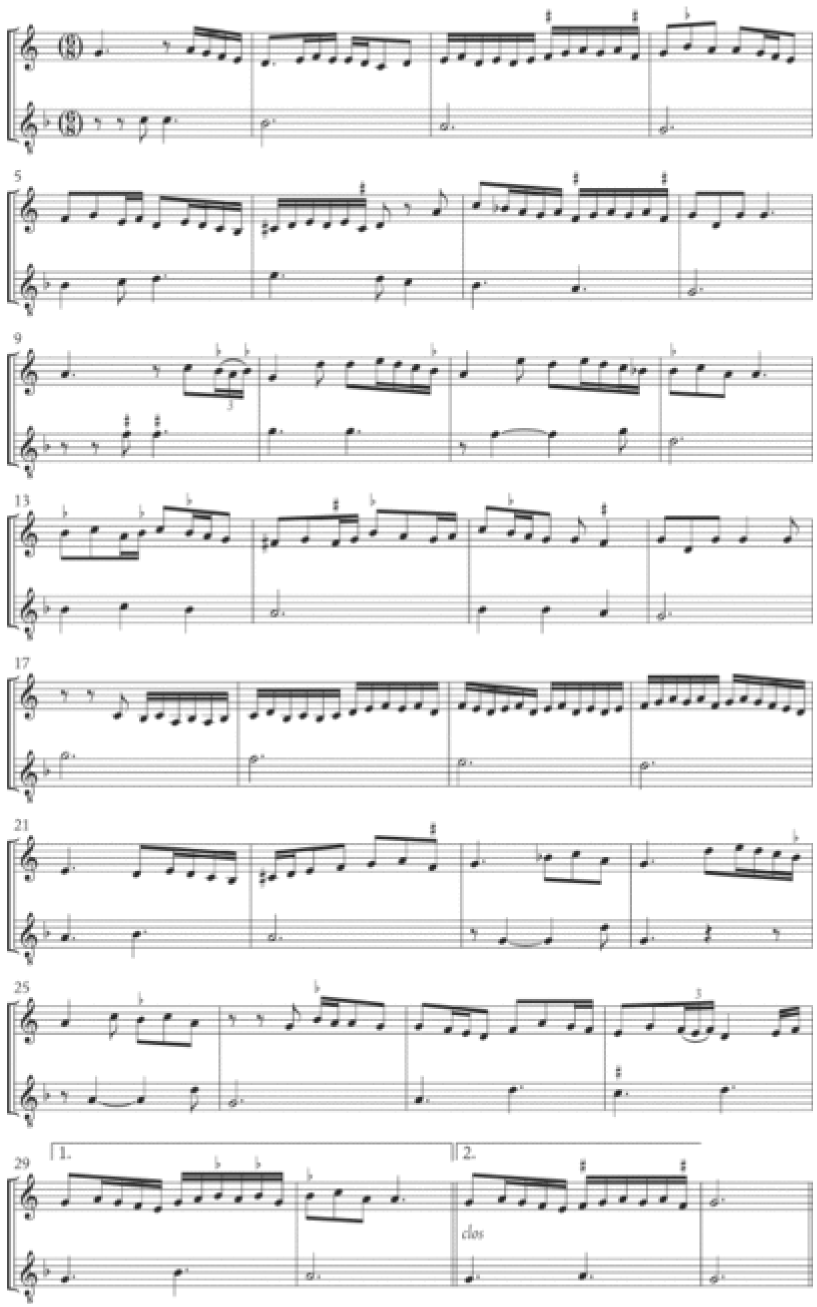
Ordinary chants

Avignon

Mass: Rise of the polyphonic Mass Ordinary in the 14th century

AVIGNON

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin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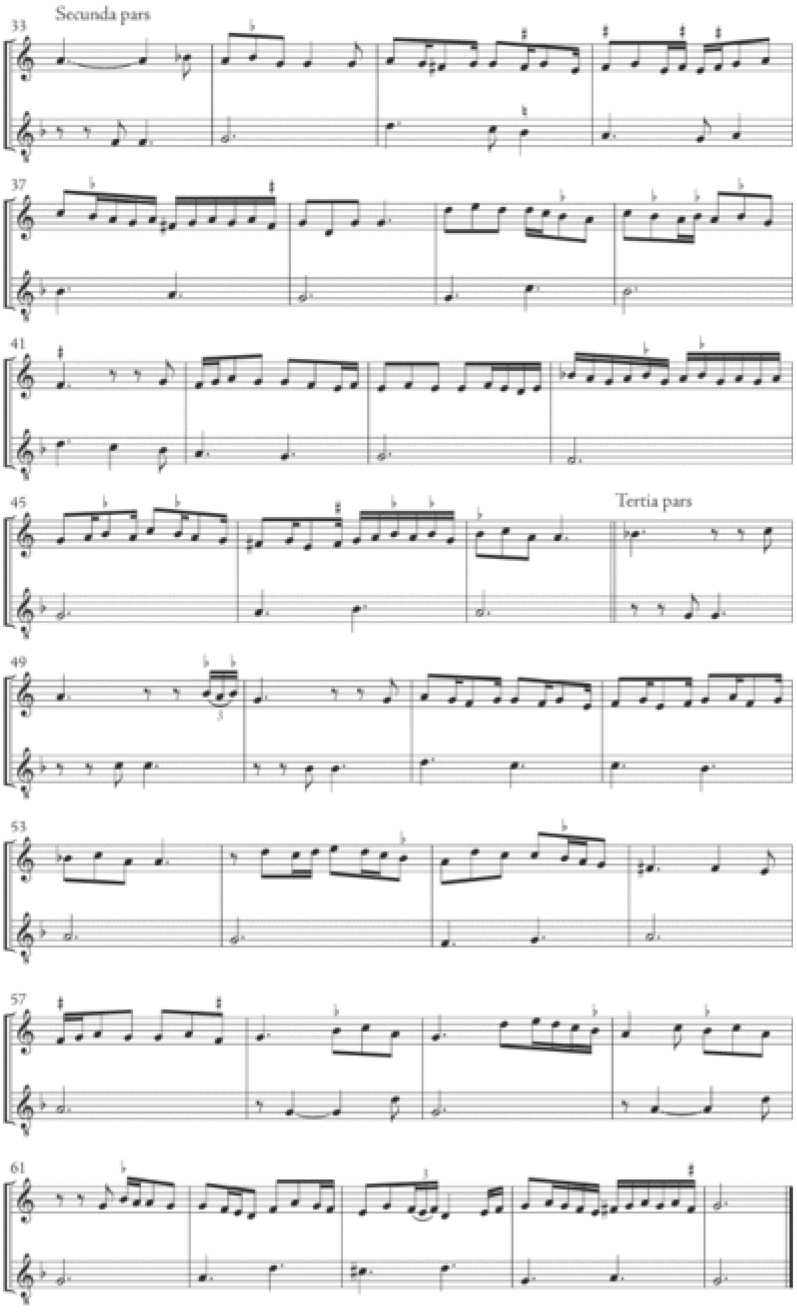


ex. 9-10 Guillaume de Machaut, *De toutes flours* as arranged in the Faenza Codex

Until the fourteenth century polyphonic settings of the Mass Ordinary, or any part of it, were uncommon. In eleventh- and twelfth-century Aquitaine, as we know, one could find occasional polyphonic settings of the Kyrie. But these were fully "prosulated" Kyries, with syllabic verses that were "proper" to specific occasions or the places where they were sung, not "ordinary" (in the sense of all-purpose). At Notre Dame de Paris, as we know, only the responsorial chants of the Mass Proper and the Office were set, and of these only the soloist's portion. The Ordinary was sung by the musically unlettered choir, and for that reason alone might well have been thought off-limits to polyphonic treatment. Therefore, before the fourteenth century one simply does not find settings of melismatic ("untroped") Kyries, to say nothing of the remaining motley assortment of Ordinary chants—the Gloria (an acclamation), the Credo (a contract), the Sanctus (an invocation of the heavenly choir), the Agnus Dei (a litany), or the "Deo Gratias" response to the Ite (dismissal formula).

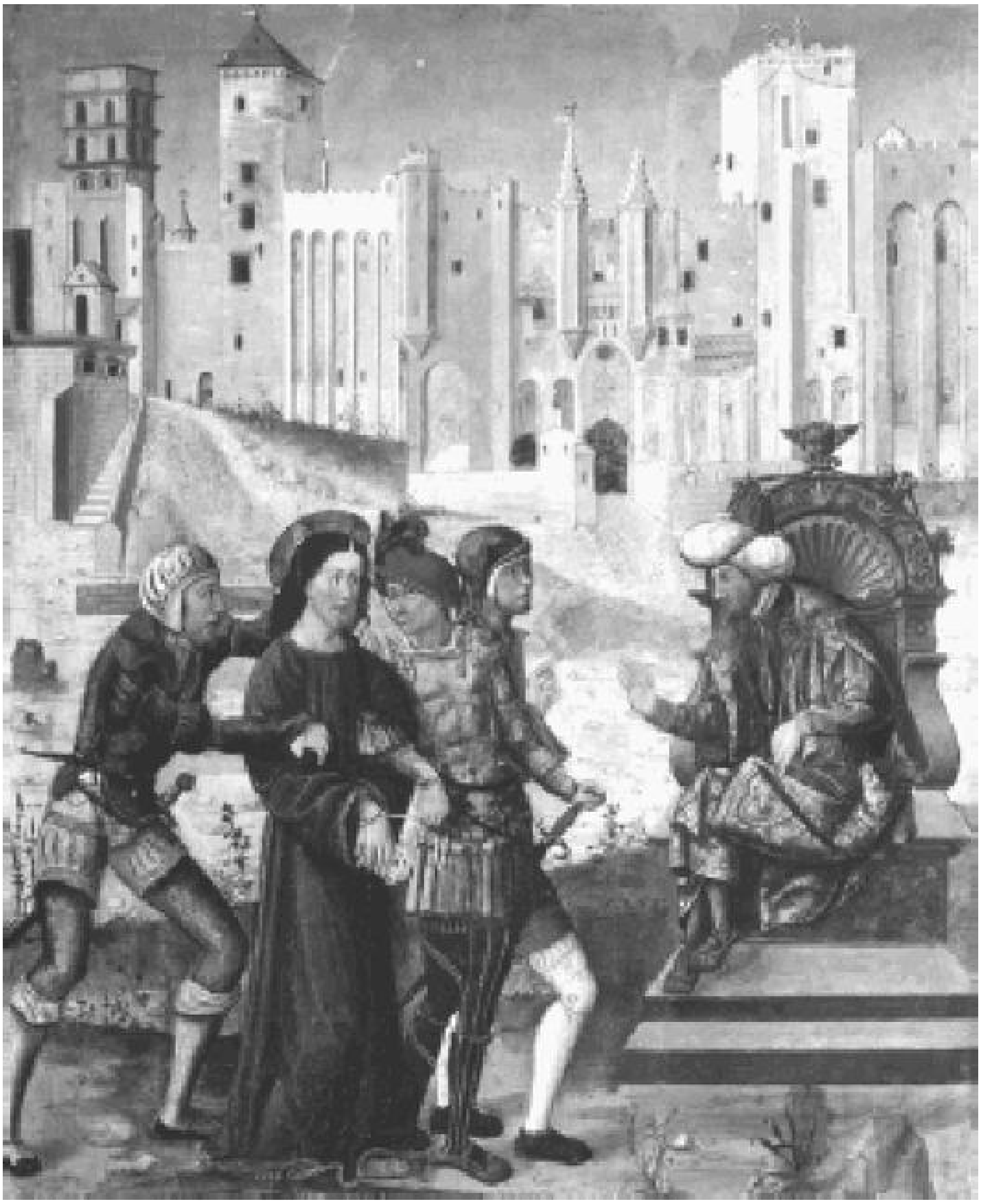


fig. 9-2 An echo of the "Babylonian captivity," this altarpiece, executed ca. 1520 by the Venetian painter Antonio Ronzen for the church of Sainte Madeleine in Saint Maximin, France, shows Christ in chains before Herod against a background fancifully depicting the old papal palace at Avignon, the seat of the antipopes.

The first center where Mass Ordinary settings began to proliferate was the papal court at Avignon. One of the larger cities in the southeastern corner of France, Avignon had become the papal see in 1309, when Pope Clement V, a Frenchman (born Bernard de Got), abandoned Rome at the behest of the French king, Philip the Fair. The next six popes after Clement were also French and also subservient to their kings. This virtual "capture" of the papacy by the French crown was dubbed the Babylonian Captivity by disapproving Italians like the poet Petrarch, who coined the phrase (but who nevertheless found profitable employment at Avignon in his youth). In 1378 Pope Gregory XI was prevailed upon to move the papacy back to Rome, touching off the Great Schism. It was more a national than a religious dispute. The French popes who, under royal protection, were elected to continue the line of Clement at Avignon, were later decanonized—ruled "antipopes"—at the Council of Constance that ended the Schism in 1417 and brought the papacy back within the Italian orbit where it remained almost without interruption until the election of Pope John Paul II, a Pole, in 1978.

Two surviving manuscripts, both of them full of Ordinary settings, comprise what music remains from the papal liturgical repertory at Avignon. These manuscripts are called the Apt and Ivrea codices after the towns where they may have originated, but where they are in any case kept today. Apt is close by Avignon to the east; Ivrea, a bit farther east, is now across the Italian border near Turin. Just why it should have been at Avignon that settings of the Ordinary began to flourish has never been fully explained. But it may have had something to do with the general Frenchification of the papacy during the Babylonian Captivity. The Apt and Ivrea settings employ textures associated with other genres popular in France and may have been deliberately modeled on them.

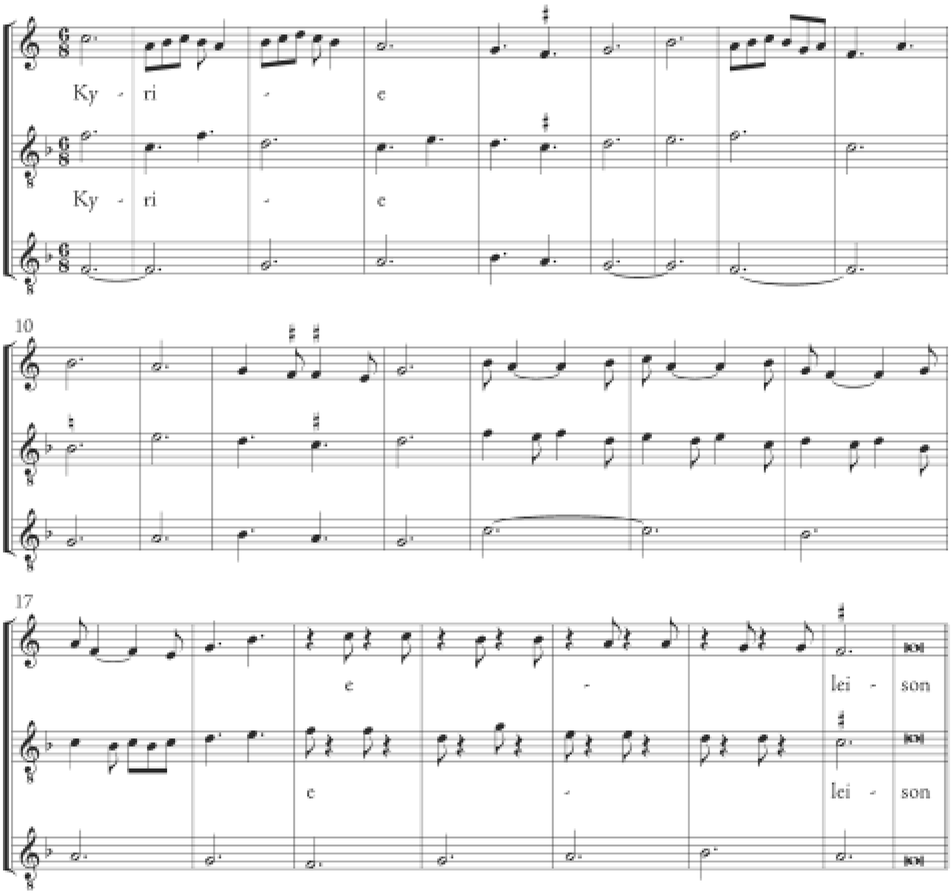
The most elaborate are in motet (or, when particularly melismatic, in hocket) style, built up from a cantus firmus that is often cast in isorhythmic taleae. The other characteristic “Ordinary” textures were far simpler and increasingly prevalent as the Avignon repertory developed. One was the homorhythmic (or “simultaneous”) style previously associated with the conductus. It was often used for the wordier texts, such as the Gloria and Credo, where syllabic texting helped expedite their recitation. But most characteristic of all was the specifically French and originally secular three-voice “cantilena” (a.k.a. “ballade”) style, composed in the top-down fashion we have associated with Machaut. Thus, even as the Latin-texted motet was becoming more brilliant and impressive than ever over the course of the fourteenth century (and more and more firmly associated with occasions of civic and ecclesiastical pomp), within the confines of the actual service liturgy there seems to have been a countervailing tendency toward modesty and simplification. This, too, may have been among the factors conducive to Ordinary settings, which were as liturgically bare as one could get.

It was one of the early Avignon popes who issued the most famous of all antimusical screeds. Pope John XXII, Clement’s successor, was born Jacques Duèse in 1244, in the Provençal town of Cahors (a little to the north of Toulouse), and reigned from 1316 to his death in 1334. His bull, *Docta sanctorum*, promulgated in 1323, complained bitterly about hockets, “depraved” discants, and “wanton” polytextuality (“upper parts made of secular songs”).[1] These motettish extravagances were to be condemned, but “consonances” that respected the integrity of the sacred texts were judged desirable, because music, in moderation, can “soothe the hearer and inspire his devotion, without destroying religious feeling in the minds of the singers.” John might have been describing the Ordinary settings in the Apt and Ivrea codices.

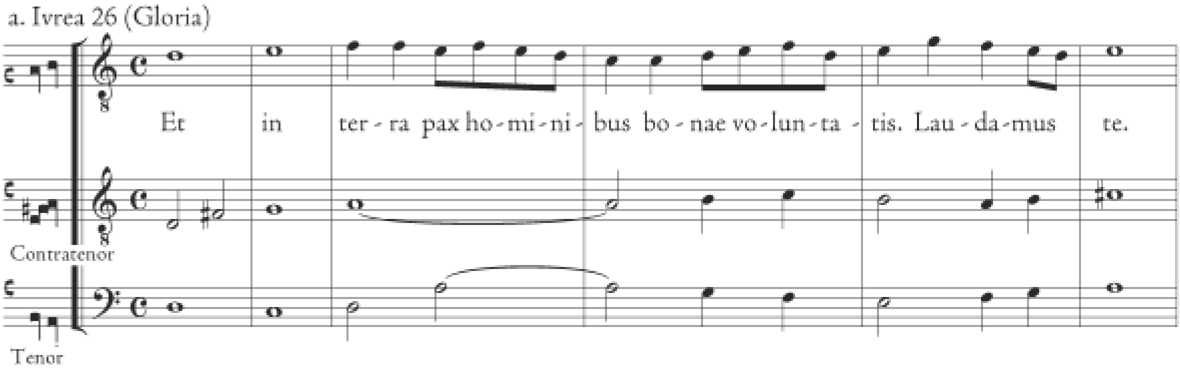
Both manuscripts were fairly late artifacts of papal Avignon. Ivrea, the earlier of the two, was compiled around 1370. We have already encountered it as a source for one of Philippe de Vitry’s motets (Ex. 8-3; Fig. 8-4). Apt was not put together until the time of the antipopes, about thirty years later. The music these sources contain could have been composed at any time up to the date of its inscription. That music consists not of complete or “cyclic” ordinary settings but of individual items (“Mass movements,” as they are sometimes called, rather misleadingly) and occasional pairs. As a sample of Avignon service music, Ex. 9-11 contains the first section of a Kyrie from the Apt Manuscript. Motet-style hockets make an occasional appearance, and John XXII might not have entirely approved, but they are sung in the course of a melisma and no words are obscured. The piece is attributed to a local composer named Guymont.

When Ordinary settings were paired, it was primarily on the basis of shared textual characteristics, only secondarily on musical grounds. That is to say the Gloria and Credo, which contrast with the other Ordinary items by virtue of their lengthy prose texts, were a natural pair. Another natural pair were the Kyrie and the Agnus Dei, both of which are repetitive petitions or litanies. The Sanctus, though not a prayer, has a short repetitive text and could make an effective pair with either the Kyrie or the Agnus Dei. Finally, the Kyrie and the dismissal (*Ite, missa est*) were frequently set to the same chant melody and could thus easily be paired in polyphonic settings. Once selected for pairing, ordinary settings were furnished with shared musical characteristics like those of the Kyrie and Ite, ranging from the general (common mode, similar vocal complement, and ranges) to the more particular (common textural styles, mensuration schemes, or even, occasionally, a joint fund of melodic ideas).

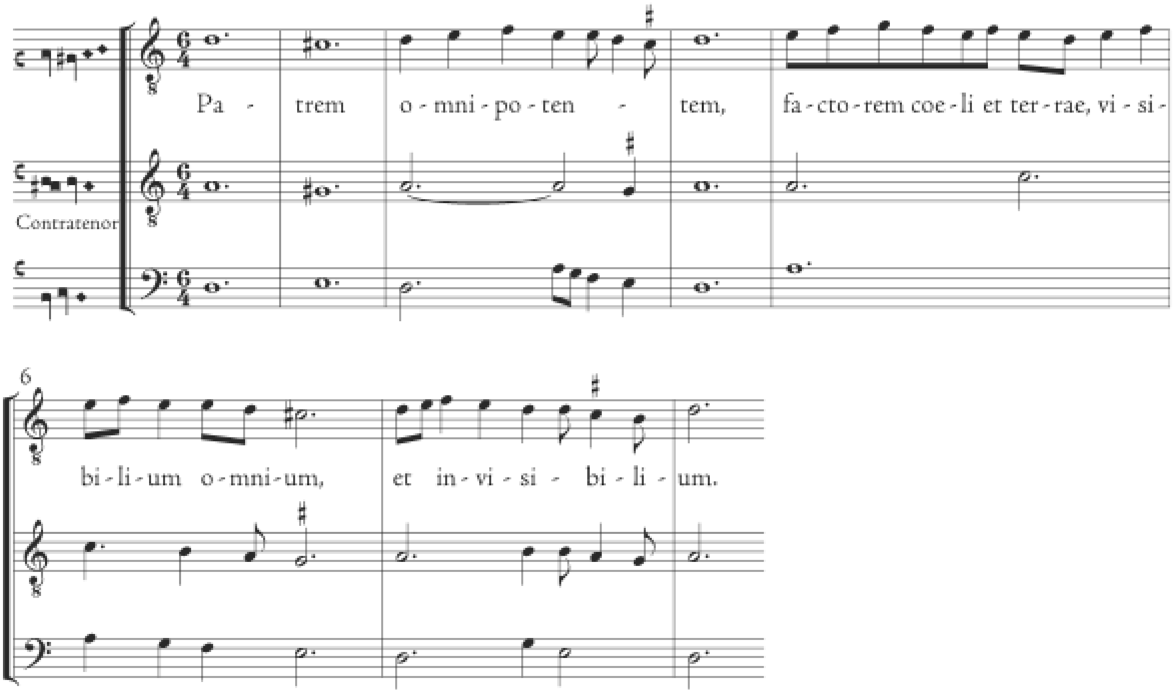
A Gloria and a Credo from the Ivrea manuscript show many of these common features. They were in all likelihood conceived and executed as a pair by the anonymous composer, although they are not presented that way in the manuscript, where all the Kyries are grouped together for ease of reference, followed by a section of Glorias, one of Credos, and so on. Their beginnings, together with an incipit showing the original clefs and mensuration signs, are given in Ex. 9-12.


Ky - ri - e
Ky - ri - e
10
17
e - lei - son
e - lei - son

ex. 9-11 Guymont, Kyrie

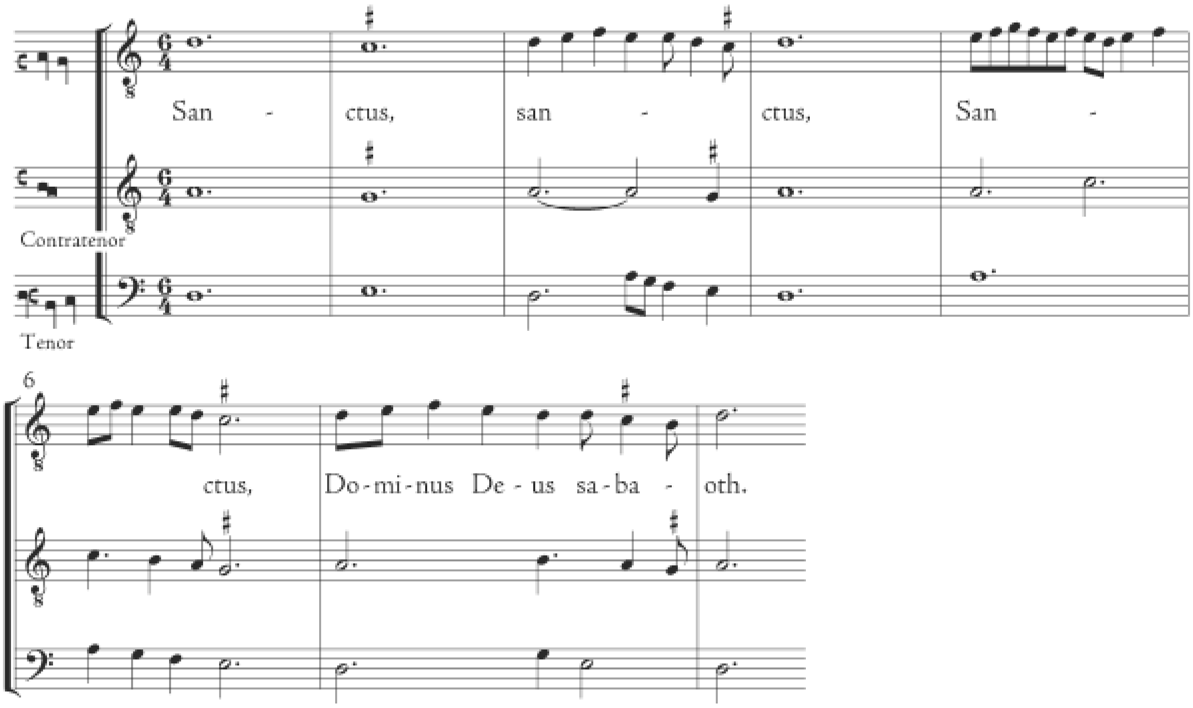

a. Ivrea 26 (Gloria)
Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis. Lau - da - mus te.
Contratenor
Tenor

ex. 9-12 Original incipits and opening phrases in transcription


Contratenor
6
Pa - trem o - mni - po - ten - tem, fa - cto - rem coe - li et ter - rae, vi - si - bi - li - um o - mni - um, et in - vi - si - bi - li - um.

ex. 9-12b Ivrea 52 (Credo)

The clefs (which determine the vocal ranges) and the mensurations are among the factors linking them. They also share a final (D, making them Dorian or “minorish” pieces), which means that they will also share characteristic melodic turns and cadential patterns. Finally, they are both cast in the top-down cantilena texture. Only the top part is texted, which of course favors clarity of enunciation. The tenor and contratenor were probably meant to be vocalized, but the church organ could also have been used to accompany a soloist. Scholars are still debating this and many other points of “performance practice.”


Contratenor
Tenor
6
San - ctus, san - ctus, San - ctus, Do - mi - nus De - us sa - ba - oth.

ex. 9-13 Incipit and beginning of A siglum. Apt 27 (Sanctus)

Of course the two pieces do not have everything in common. Each has its distinguishing characteristics, each makes its own expressive gestures. And yet the similarities between the settings far outweigh their differences, and quite deliberately so. Pairing like this served a purpose. The Gloria and the Credo sampled in Ex. 9-12 enclosed between them a significant portion of the service: the *synaxis*, given over to scriptural readings. The recurrence of familiar musical sounds to pace and punctuate the service added an extra level of inspiring ceremonial to it. There is a Sanctus in the Apt manuscript—see Ex. 9-13 for its incipit and opening phrase—that is even more similar in its melodic contents to certain portions of the Ivrea Credo than the Ivrea Gloria. It might well have been modeled on the Credo, to secure an additional return to familiar sounds that would thus inspiritingly organize even more of the service, encompassing the beginning of the Eucharist as well. Basing one polyphonic piece on another like this was called *parody*, from the Greek for “alter the song.” It did not at this point have any connotation of satire.

By the “middle third” of the century (ca. 1335–70), the Avignon styles had spread throughout France. The Agnus Dei sampled in Ex. 9-14 comes from a manuscript that originated in Cambrai, at the far northern end of the kingdom, near the border of what was then the Duchy of Burgundy. It is in the “simultaneous” or homorhythmic style reminiscent of the conductus, and like the conductus it carries a single liturgical text in all voices. That, plus the uniform rhythm producing chord progressions in which the individual lines are blended, suggests the possibility of choral performance. If that was indeed an option for this music, then we are dealing with the earliest choral polyphony in the European tradition. (Still, the earliest explicit call for *chorus*—as opposed to *unus*, “one” singer—in polyphonic church music is not found until nearly a century later, in Italian manuscripts of the 1430s.)

Notes:

(1) The translation is by H. E. Wooldridge, in *The Oxford History of Music*, Vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901), pp. 294–96.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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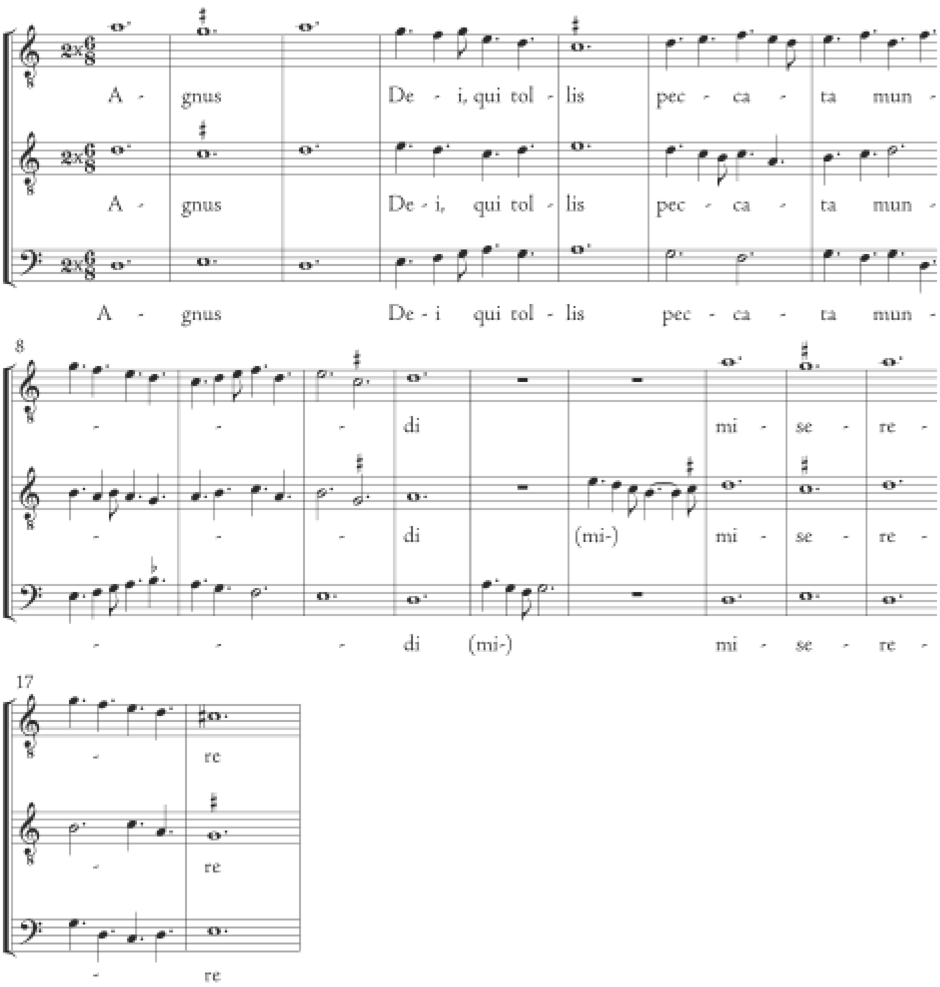
Votive ritual

Mass: Rise of the polyphonic Mass Ordinary in the 14th century

VOTIVE FORMULARIES

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Another spur to the composition of Mass Ordinary settings was the growth of votive Masses—Masses celebrated not according to the church calendar but on special occasions. Such an occasion might be institutional, such as the dedication of a church or the installation of a bishop. Or it might be personal, marking the Christian sacraments or rites of passage (birth, christening, marriage, burial). Or—and this was the most frequent reason of all—it might be a posthumous memorial service. To have such a Mass celebrated in church on one’s own behalf or on behalf of a loved one, one had to purchase it with a donation. Many votive Masses were “Lady Masses,” Masses in honor of “Our Lady” (Notre Dame) the Virgin Mary, the intercessor supreme.


A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun -
A - gnus De - i, qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun -
A - gnus De - i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun -
8
- - - di mi - se - re -
- - - di (mi-) mi - se - re -
- - - di (mi-) mi - se - re -
17
- re
- re
- re

ex. 9-14 Agnus Dei from Cambrai, 1328 (Fascicle IV, no. 1), mm. 1-18

The earliest complete polyphonic Mass Ordinaries were votive formularies that were collected together and copied into special manuscripts for use in memorial chapels where votive Masses were offered on behalf of donors. Polyphonic votive Masses were the deluxe models, available to major donors who could afford the extra expense of skilled singers along with the best quality vestments, incense, altar cloths, and communion fare. The same manuscripts that contain them often contain monophonic formularies as well, for the less powerful or pecunious. The polyphonic Mass Ordinary, in short, was one of the finer fruits of a somewhat dubious practice—the practice of buying and selling the good offices of the church that, grown into an abuse, became one of the precipitating causes of the sixteenth-century Reformation.

Polyphonic Ordinaries for use at votive services come down to us in manuscripts from several ecclesiastical centers within the Avignon orbit. There is a “Mass of Toulouse” from the old capital of Languedoc, a hundred miles or so to the west of Avignon itself. There is a “Sorbonne Mass” from Paris. There is a “Barcelona Mass” from below the Pyrenees. They vary somewhat in their specific contents, but all of them contain a Kyrie, a Sanctus, and an Agnus Dei as a nucleus. The Barcelona Mass has a Gloria and a Credo as well, and the Toulouse Mass ends with a motet laid out over the Deo Gratias.

These were not cyclic compositions, however, but composites. They were not composed by a single author, or even composed for the specific purpose at hand. Their components were merely selected and assembled from the general fund of Avignon-style Mass Ordinary settings; individual items from these Masses turn up elsewhere, in other formularies or in miscellanies like the Apt and Ivrea codices.

The most complete and elaborate of these composite Mass-assemblages, one that Machaut must surely have known and possibly taken as a model, was the so-called “Mass of Tournai” from a Belgian (then Burgundian) cathedral town not at all far from Machaut’s home city of Reims. A full set of six items, it was gathered together in 1349 for use at Lady Masses that were available to donors at a special altar that had been set aside for the purpose in the right transept or side-wing of the Tournai cathedral building.

The Mass is a stylistic hodgepodge of local favorites. The Kyrie is uncomplicated and somewhat archaic: its note-against-note homorhythm is practically virgin-pure and its durational patterns are virtually modal (iambic, or “second mode”). Given a syllabic text it might have passed for a century-old conductus. Like the simplest chant Kyries it contains four brief musical sections to fill out a ninefold repetition scheme: a Kyrie for singing threefold; a Christe for singing threefold; a second Kyrie to be repeated once; and a final, somewhat more elaborate Kyrie to conclude. Its final is G.

The Gloria is cast in a texture that straddles the line between homorhythm and cantilena. What tips the balance in favor of the latter is the spread of vocal ranges, with the somewhat more active top voice occupying the octave above middle C, and the other two voices overlapping a somewhat lower tessitura, as a tenor/contratenor pair would do. There is a lengthy, melismatic Amen with motetlike features including a rhythmically stratified texture and some little bursts of hocket. The final of the Gloria is F.

The Credo is unambiguously homorhythmic, the three voices spitting out the lengthy text in lockstep, often in strings of uniform semibreves. The punctuation of the text is faithfully followed, each sentence being marked off from the surrounding ones by little textless bridge passages in the two lower voices. The final is D.

The Sanctus and Agnus Dei were pretty clearly composed as a pair. They collectively revert to the archaic style of the Kyrie, but their final is F, not G. And then, all of a sudden, the response to the Ite missa est is cast, as in the Toulouse Mass, as a full-fledged isorhythmic motet over a liturgical cantus firmus. It would have made Pope John XXII see red, for it sports an “upper part made of secular songs” in the form of a French-texted triplum about self-abasing service to the ladylove (here, of course, to be taken metaphorically as addressed not to the poet’s lady but to Our Lady). The Latin motetus contains a more straightforward votive prayer on behalf of the donor, uttered, significantly, not to the Virgin but to her minions, the “lords” of the church, from whom indulgences and benefices flowed.

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Guillaume de Machaut

CI COMMENCE LA MESSE DE NOSTRE DAME

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

“Here beginneth the Mass of Our Lady,” reads the heading following the motet section in one of Machaut’s most sumptuous personally supervised manuscripts. It, too, was a votive Mass, one that the composer himself endowed with a bequest, to serve as a memorial to “Guillaume and Jean de Machaux [*sic*], both brothers and canons of the church of Our Lady (*l’eglise de Notre Dame*) of Reims.” So reads the preface to an eighteenth-century copy of the composer’s cathedral epitaph, which went on to quote a provision of his will stating that he had left three hundred florins to ensure “that the prayer for the dead, on every Saturday, for their souls and for those of their friends, may be said by a priest about to celebrate faithfully, at the side altar, a Mass *which is to be sung*” (italics added). In fact, the will was honored (though not with the music originally provided) until the middle of the eighteenth century.

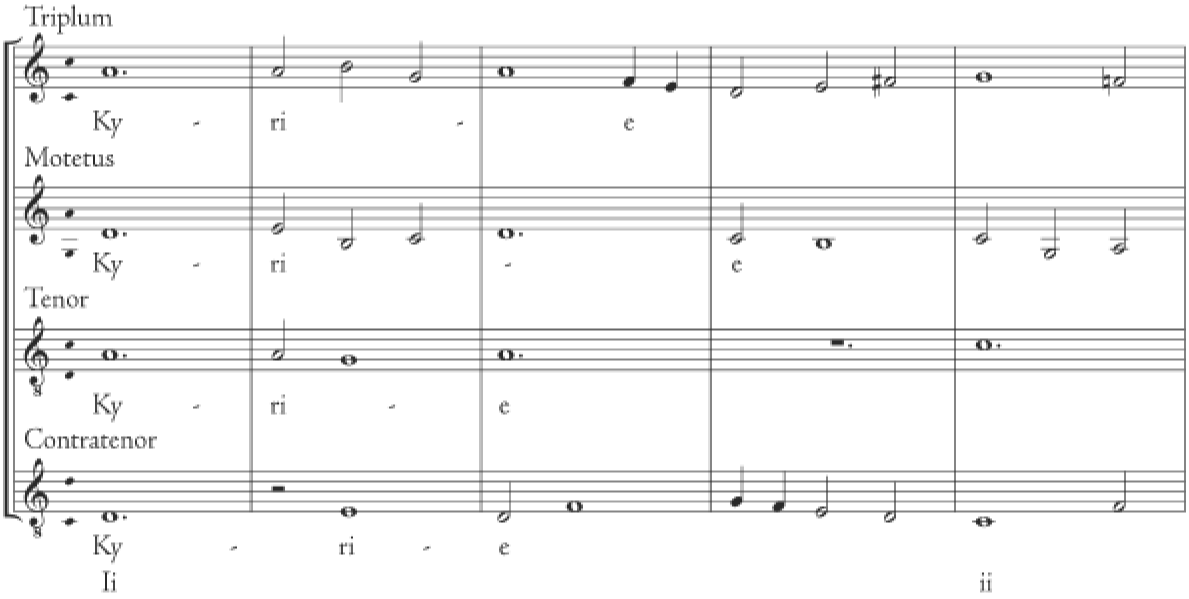
So Machaut’s Mass was intended to serve the same purpose as were the other Ordinary formularies of the period. (The familiar conjecture that it was composed for the Coronation of Charles V of France, which happened to take place at Reims in 1364, is still occasionally repeated but has long been discredited). And the detailed description of the Mass of Tournai given above is also, to an astonishing degree, a description of Machaut’s Mass.

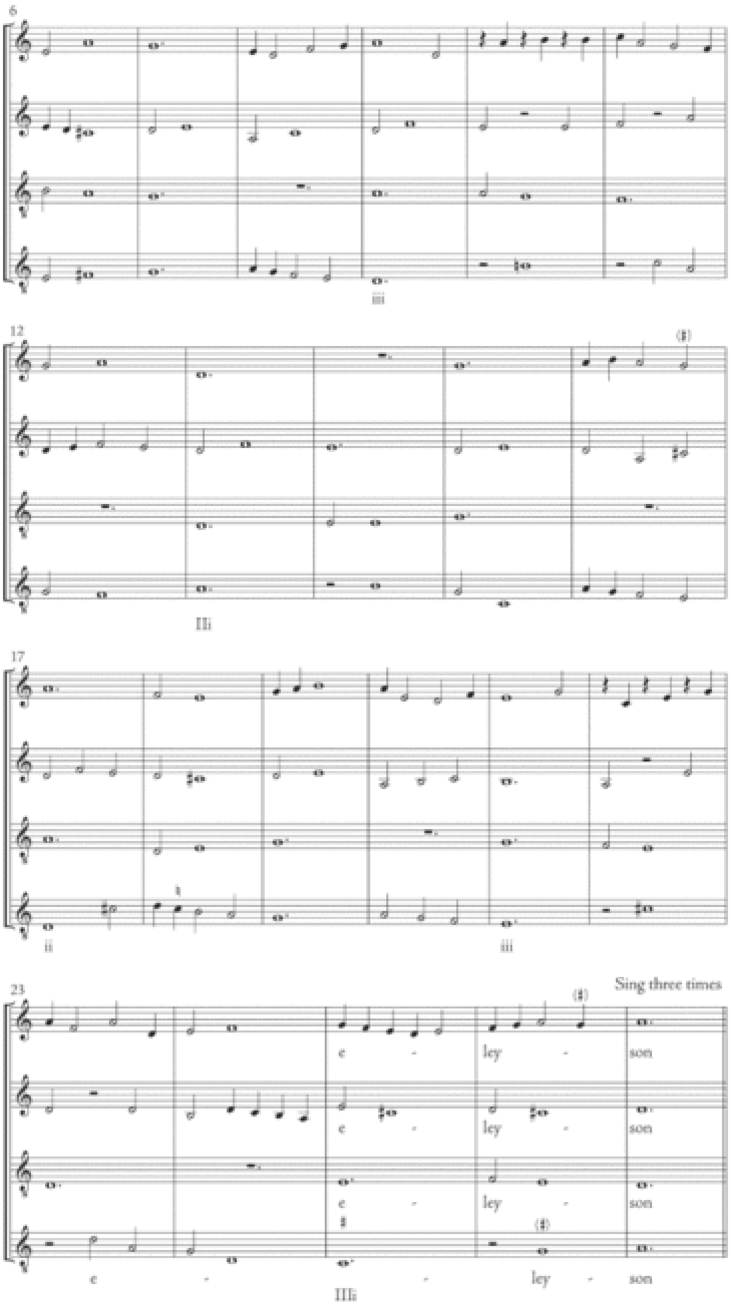
Although it is the work of a single author, it is no less a composite than the other Ordinaries of its time. Like the others, it is modally disparate: the final of the first three sections is D (minorish), while that of the last three is F (majorish). Like the Tournai Mass, it has a Gloria and Credo that contrast stylistically with the other components, and contrast in precisely the same way. The Gloria is a cantilena bordering on homorhythm, but with a grand motetlike Amen replete with hockets; the Credo is in a more rigorously homorhythmic style. Both movements have the same textless bridging passages as in the Tournai Credo. Again as in the Tournai Mass, the Sanctus and the Agnus Dei form an actual pair and are stylistically related to the Kyrie—but in a different mode. Yet again as in the Tournai Mass, the Kyrie is composed in four sections whose repetitions fill aninefold scheme.

fig. 9-3 Reims Cathedral, where Machaut lived and worked during the last thirty years of his life.

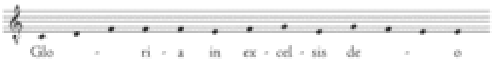
Yet however similar it may be to its predecessors and counterparts, Machaut's Mass is incomparably more ambitious. Although it lacks an actual motet (say, for the dismissal, where the singing of motets had apparently become customary), it has, throughout, a "specific gravity," so to speak, that bears comparison with contemporary motet composition, and in this it stood alone among the Ordinary settings of the fourteenth century. Partly that gravity is the result of the heightened emphasis given motetlike architectonics: the Kyrie, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, and Ite missa est are all based on isorhythmic tenors derived from canonical plainchant; within these large divisions, moreover, several subsections are pan-isorhythmic, with repeating taleas in all parts.

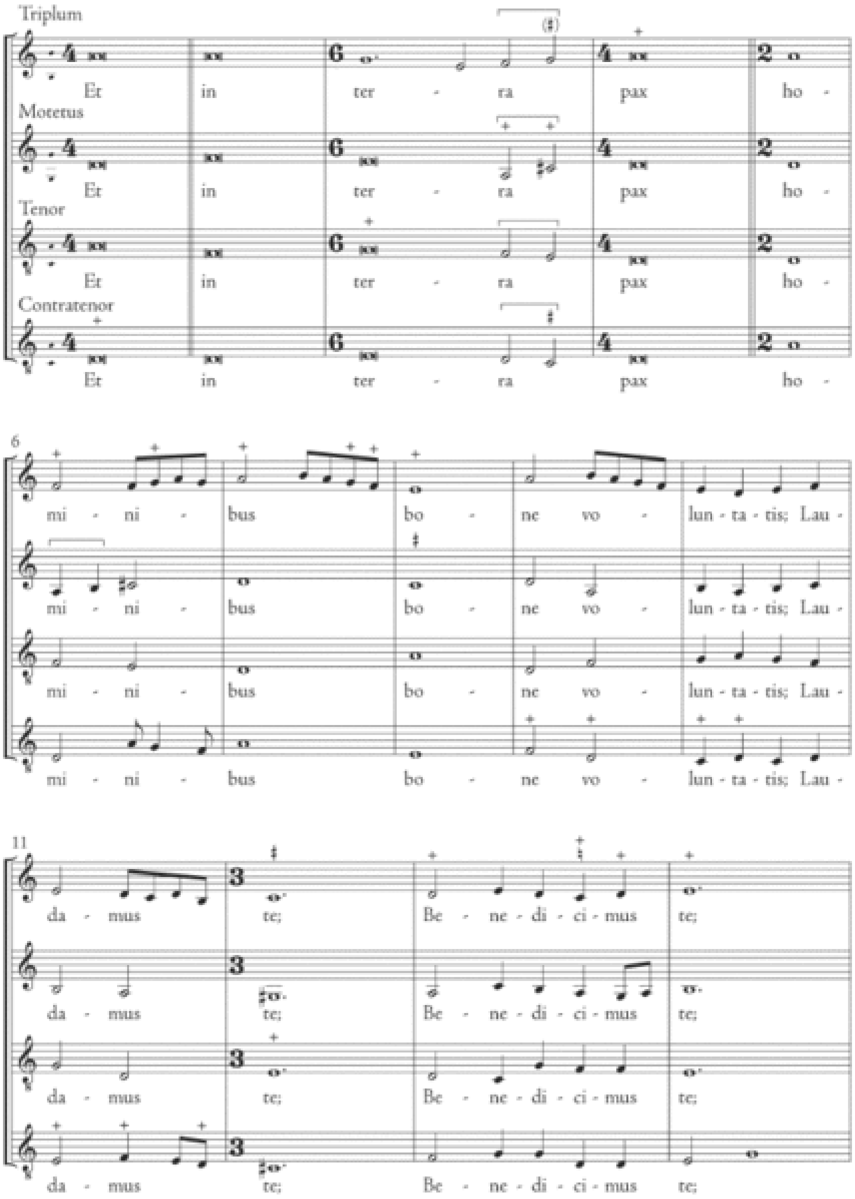
But architectural design and duration are not the only dimensions in which Machaut's Mass is remarkably big. The work is more sonorous than any of its counterparts as well, being cast throughout in the four-part texture identified in the previous chapter as the "luxuriant" style. It is a texture that crosscut traditional genres, adding both a high supplementary voice (endemic to the motet) and a low one (endemic to the cantilena) to round out the essential counterpoint of cantus (here called the triplum) and tenor.

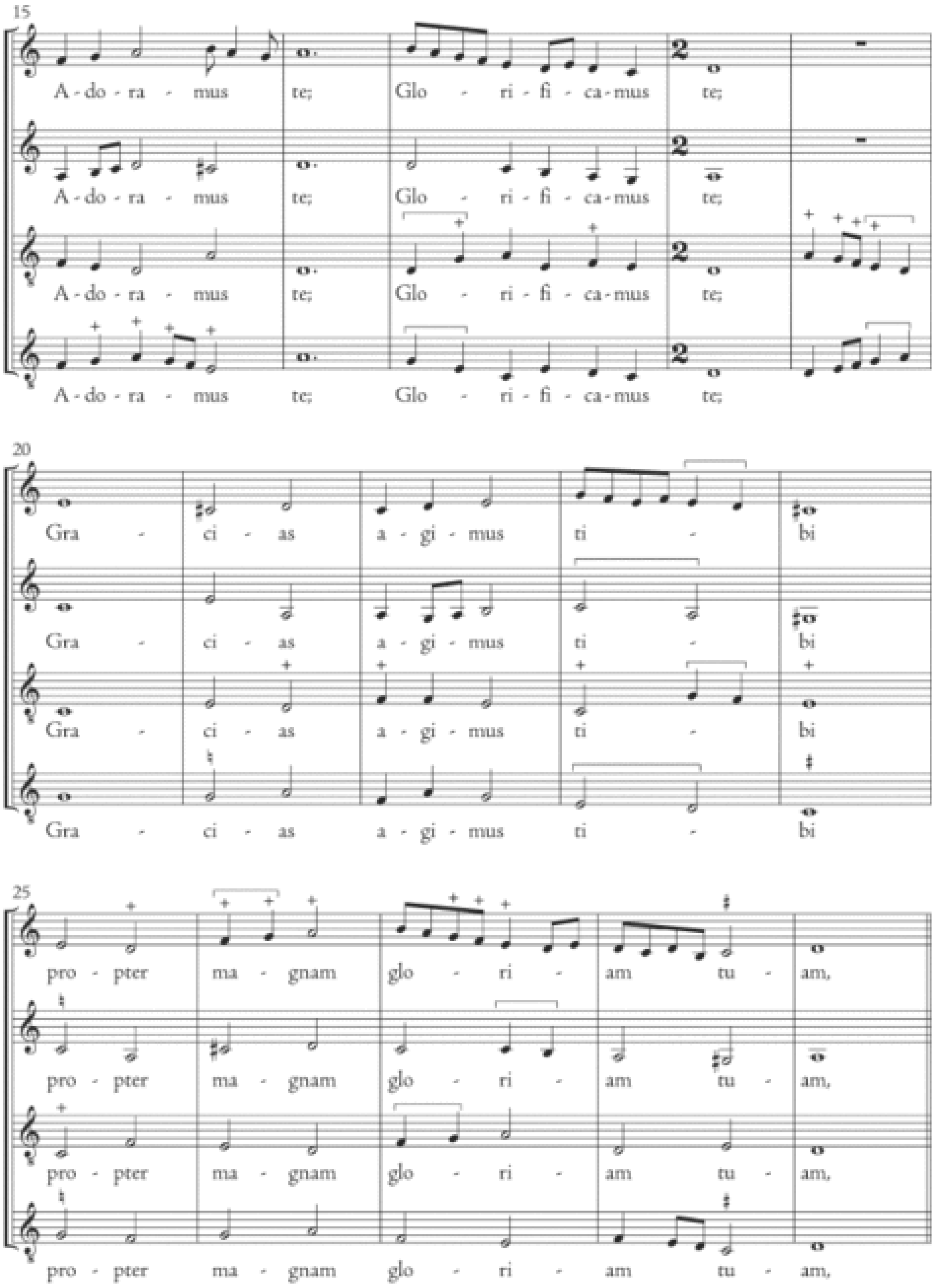

Triplum
Ky - ri - e
Motetus
Ky - ri - e
Tenor
Ky - ri - e
Contratenor
Ky - ri - e
Ii
ii


6
iii
12
(♯)
IIi
17
ii
iii
23
Sing three times
(♯)
e - ley - son
e - ley - son
e - ley - son
♯
(♯)
e - ley - son
IIIi

ex. 9-15 Guillaume de Machaut, *La messe de Nostre Dame*, Kyrie, mm. 1-27


Glo - ri - a in ex - cel - sis de - o


Triplum
Motetus
Tenor
Contratenor
Et in ter - ra pax ho -
6
mi - ni - bus bo - ne vo - lun - ta - tis; Lau -
11
da - mus te; Be - ne - di - ci - mus te;


15
A-do-ra-mus te; Glo-ri-fi-ca-mus te;
20
Gra-ci-as a-gi-mus ti-bi
25
pro-pter ma-gnam glo-ri-am tu-am,

ex. 9-16a Guillaume de Machaut, *La messe de Nostre Dame*, Gloria, mm. 1-29

With four elaborate movements in motet style, one quasi cantilena, and one quasi conductus, Machaut's Mass stands as a summa of contemporary compositional technique. Historically speaking, it is much more tellingly viewed as a culmination of a half-century of Avignon-oriented liturgical composition than as a dry run at the fifteenth century's cyclic Masses. Yet it is nevertheless something more than a summary of existing possibilities. The unprecedented four-part chordal textures of the Gloria and Credo explore novel sonorities and establish new possibilities. An attempt to account for a work of such heterogeneous complexity in all of its historical and technical dimensions is beyond the scope of a chapter like this, but sampling the strikingly contrasting Kyrie (Ex. 9-15) and Gloria (Ex. 9-16a), the only sections of the Ordinary that are performed in direct sequence, will in their very contrast at least register the Mass's stylistic extremes. The little dismissal response (Ex. 9-17) has been thrown in, too, as a reminder of the Mass's modal heterogeneity, and its consequent status as an irreducible sum of functional parts rather than the kind of unified whole we may be more in the habit of seeking (and therefore finding) in a work reputed to be a masterpiece.

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Mass

Kyrie eleison

KYRIE

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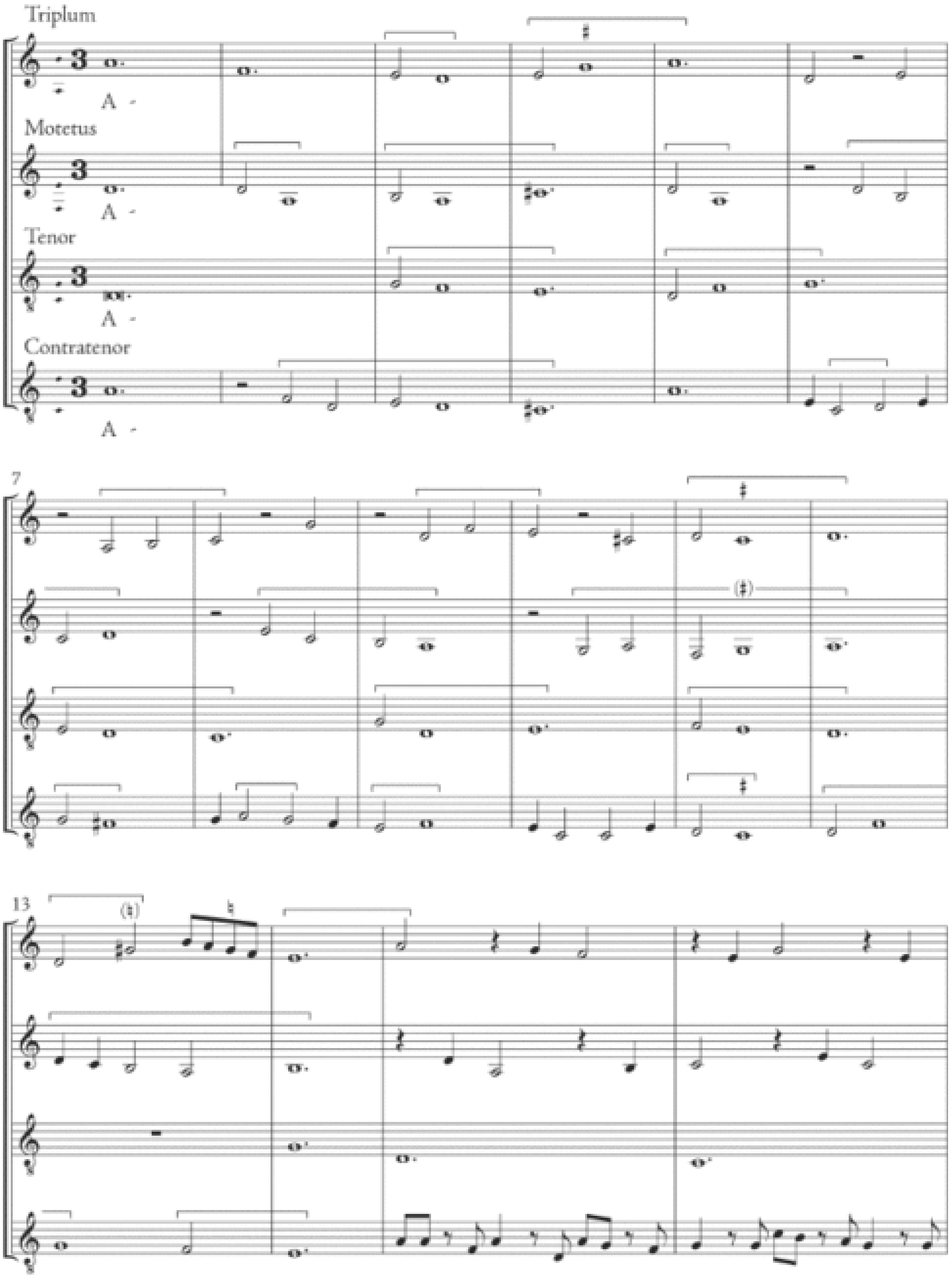
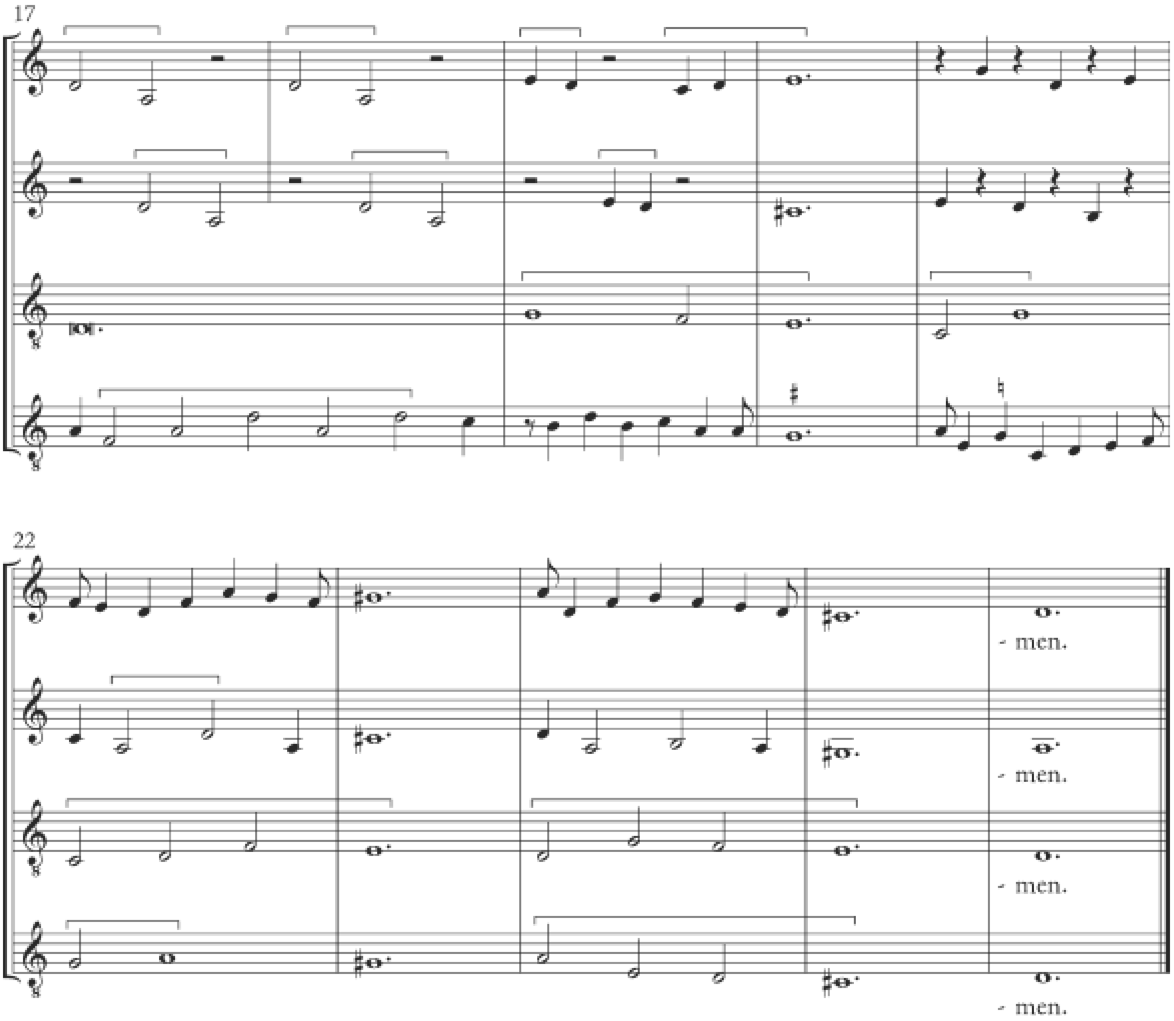
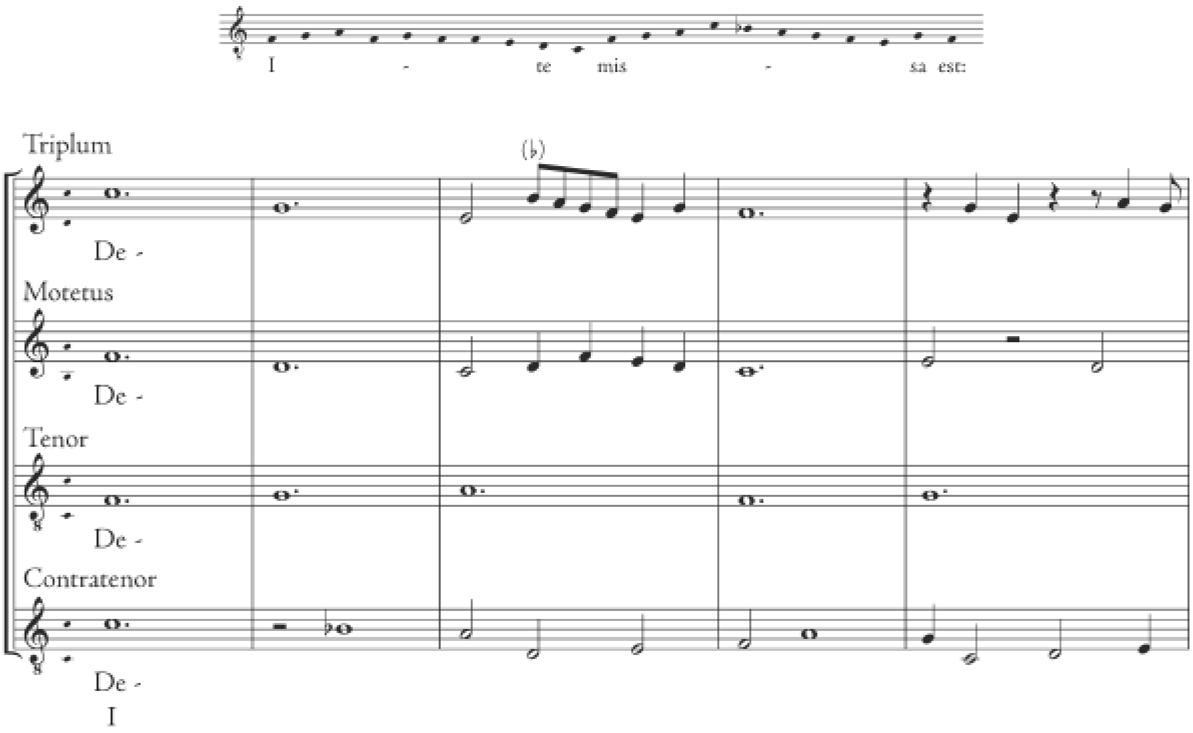
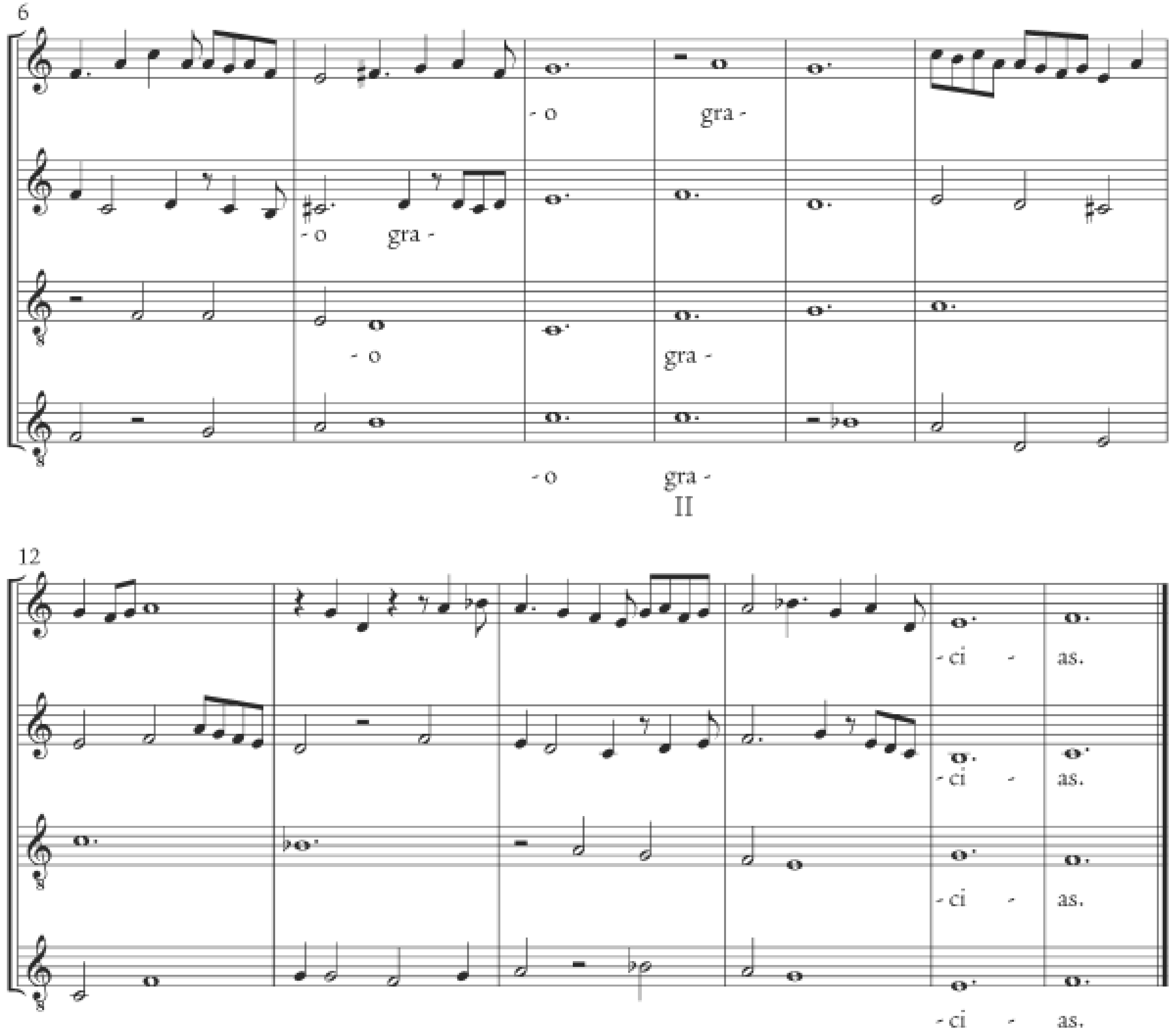
Author(s): Richard Taruskin


Triplum
A -
Motetus
A -
Tenor
A -
Contratenor
A -
7
(♯)
13
(♮)


17
22
- men.
- men.
- men.
- men.

ex. 9-16b Guillaume de Machaut, *La messe de Nostre Dame*, Gloria, final Amen


I - te mis - sa est:
Triplum
(♭)
De -
Motetus
De -
Tenor
De -
Contratenor
De -
I



ex. 9-17 Guillaume de Machaut, *La messe de Nostre Dame: Ite, missa est*

The Kyrie is built around the same cantus firmus as the Kyrie from the Faenza Codex sampled in Ex. 9-9: the famous *Cunctipotens genitor* melody, which we have encountered by now in several guises. In the *Kyriale*, the official book of Ordinary chants, it is assigned to Mass IV, a lavish tenth-century formulary reserved for feasts of “double” rank. The fact that a setting of it is found in Faenza raises the possibility of *alternatim* performance with Machaut’s Kyrie—a kind of responsorial performance in which sections sung in polyphony alternate with sections played on the organ or sung in plainchant. The Faenza setting is in fact the earliest presumed documentation of the practice, which became very widespread in the fifteenth century, especially in Italy and Germany.

This is not to imply that Machaut had any intention or premonition of such a thing. On the contrary, his unambiguous use of repetition signs shows clearly that his intention was to repeat his polyphonic settings rather than interpolate organ verses according to a practice he may or may not have known about. And yet the choice of the same cantus firmus for the Kyrie in Faenza, which contains other compositions by Machaut and his contemporaries, nevertheless suggests the possibility that the Faenza Kyrie may have been intended for insertion—or at least that it could have been inserted—into Machaut’s very distinguished Mass. Despite its fame, in the early fifteenth century nobody regarded the work as an inviolable or canonical “classic” in our current sense of the word; such a concept did not yet exist. Machaut’s Mass—any Mass—was functional music and as such was adaptable to circumstances and to local requirements.

In the first section of Machaut’s setting (shown in Ex. 9-15) the *Cunctipotens genitor* melody, carried of course by the tenor, is cut up into bite-sized taleae of archaic cast: they actually correspond to “third mode”

(LBBL) *ordines* as described a century earlier by Garlandia, with whose treatise a well-educated musician like Machaut had to be familiar. The contratenor, too, is composed of short recurring rhythmic "cells," although they are not strictly enough organized to be considered isorhythmic. Isorhythmic or no, there is a great deal of rhythmic repetition: the rhythmically active triplum at mm. 7–12, for example, a passage encompassing two measures of syncopation and one of hocket, is exactly mimicked by the rhythms in mm. 20–24; moreover, two measures in the same repeated passage—compare mm. 10–11 and mm. 22–23—are pan-isorhythmic (rhythmically identical in all parts).

The Christe section introduces a new level of rhythmic energy—syncopated, hockety minims—into the two uppermost parts. In the triplum it is the extremes of rhythmic activity—full-measure longs and rapid hockets—that recur most strictly. The most striking rhythmic effect—and a characteristic one—is that of wild activity regularly hitting the brick wall of utter stasis. Machaut was far from the only composer of his time to revel in this sort of radical rhythmic contrast. It displays the potentialities of the Ars Nova at maximum strength.

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Guillaume de Machaut

Gloria in excelsis Deo

GLORIA

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

As a result of several recent discoveries, the Gloria of Machaut's Mass has emerged as perhaps the most fascinating "movement" of all. It was long thought to be a conductus-style setting like the Credo (perhaps modeled, like it, on the Credo of the Mass of Tournai). Recently, however, it has been demonstrated—by the American scholar Anne Walters Robertson, a historian of medieval musical liturgies—that it is a polyphonic setting of the Gloria that follows the Kyrie Cunctipotens in Mass IV, the same tenth-century "doubles" formulary.[2] The reason Machaut's use of this melody went undetected so long is that the version he used was the version he knew: that of the Reims service books of his time, not the reconstructed "original" version found in the printed chant books of the twentieth century.

Following on this initial discovery was an even more remarkable one, that Machaut did not use the preexisting tune in the traditional manner of a cantus firmus but instead paraphrased it—a technique that involved both embellishing and streamlining it, making it yet harder to detect—and, rather than confining it to the tenor, allowed it to migrate freely throughout the texture. A paraphrased chant is not only embellished but also cast in a rhythmic and melodic style approximating that of the contemporary "song" or (or *cantus*) style; that is one reason why Machaut's Gloria now tends to get classified as a cantilena rather than a conductus. Another is its pattern of open and closed cadences, which seems to fall into an AAB pattern repeated fourfold, reminding scholars of a strophic canso or ballade. Yet the work does not really conform to any ready-made category; it is a unique synthesis. The first of its main (AAB) sections is given in Ex. 9-16a.

Like all polyphonic settings of the Gloria, it begins with the words *Et in terra pax* ("And on earth, peace..."), because that is where the choir began to sing. (The opening phrase, "Glory to God in the highest," was traditionally an intonation sung by the priest or "celebrant," and so it had to remain in any properly liturgical setting.) In the score given in Ex. 9-16a, the polyphonic paraphrase is indicated by the use of little crosses ('+') above the chant-derived notes. Machaut was not in any real sense "quoting" the Gregorian chant, and it is altogether questionable whether he meant the paraphrase to be detected. It was, rather, a scaffolding device—there for the sake of (and of concern to) the builder, not the eventual users of the building.

The Amen (Ex. 9-16b) is a different story. From a fairly short chant melisma Machaut generated a very lengthy polyphonic one in "pseudomotet" style. "Pseudo" because the tenor is not really based on the plainsong but consists, rather, of a series of free variations on the plainsong's basic melodic shape, a leap up a fourth from the final and a stepwise return. And although the texture clearly reverts to the motet style of the Kyrie, with the tenor in lengthy note values that suggest bottom-up cantus firmus technique, there is no actual isorhythm, and no necessity therefore, of laying the tenor out as an actual foundation. The steady rhythmic diminution from a beginning in longs and breves to a concluding blaze of hocketing and syncopating minims (with an especially conspicuous flurry just where one least expects it, in the contratenor) is another playfully motettish touch: it mimics the behavior of a motet without actually being one.

Notes:

(2) Ann Walters Robertson, “The Mass of Guillaume de Machauit in the Cathedral of Reims,” in *Plainsong in the Age of Polyphony*, ed. T. Kelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 100–39.

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DISMISSAL

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The tiny dismissal response (Ex. 9-17), like the penultimate section of the Kyrie, is a sixteen-measure composition exactly bisected into two taleae (plus the unmeasured final note, conventionally written as a long but held like a fermata until cut off). The tenor and contratenor are once again the most rigorously isorhythmic voices, with the others most apt to repeat their rhythms when those rhythms are most distinctive. The second half of each talea (mm. 5–8 and 13–16), where most of the hockets and syncopes occur, is fully pan-isorhythmic. Balancing that, during the first three measures of each talea (mm. 1–3, 9–11) the tenor and contratenor are briefly identical in pitch as well as rhythm. Near symmetry, near congruence, near uniformity—that is the very interesting interactive space, between sameness and difference, that Machaut loved to explore.

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Guillaume de Machaut

Ars Subtilior

SUBTILITAS

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Machaut's art, like all "high" art in aristocratic France, was a connoisseur's art: an art of *literati* whose tastes were flattered by tours de force. Such a taste flattered the artist as well, and encouraged the fashioning, even in "secular" contexts, of complex artworks full of hidden meanings and arcane structural relationships. One might even look upon the musico-poetic legacy of the Ars Nova as another resurgence of the *trobar clus* favored by the noblest troubadours—"artistic art," as an early twentieth-century philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, put it in trying to come to grips with the artistic avant-garde of his own day. The seeming redundancy of the expression is actually very apt. As Ortega explained, indulging his own elitism by using a fashionably obscure Greek term for "the common people," artistic art is "an art for artists and not for the masses, for 'quality' and not for *hoi polloi*." Its outstanding feature is *subtilitas*.

The easiest way of translating the word *subtilitas* into English would be to give its cognate, "subtlety." The word literally denotes fineness and delicacy, which are already aristocratic values (as anyone knows who knows the story of the princess and the pea). From the artistic point of view, even more pertinent are the word's connotations—the meanings it suggests by analogy or indirection. These include both allusiveness and elusiveness, qualities that point to something easily missed (as when we speak of "subtle wit" or "subtle irony"); or something faint and mysteriously suggestive (as when we speak of "a subtle smile"); or something requiring mental acuteness or agility to perceive (as when we speak of "a subtle point" in argument). In most general terms, the word suggests a focus on the small, on details.

Machaut created several works notable for intellectual cleverness and intricacy of detail. Of these the most famous was a "rondeau," the complete text of which reads as follows:

A *Ma fin est mon commencement*	*My end is my beginning*
B *et mon commencement ma fin*	*and my beginning my end*
a Et teneure vraiement.	And this holds truly. (Or: And truly the tenor.)
A *Ma fin est mon commencement*	*My end is my beginning.*
a Mes tiers chans trois fois seulement	My third voice gets to reverse itself only
b se retrograde et einsi fin.	three times before the end.
A *Ma fin est mon commencement*	*My end is my beginning*
B *et mon commencement ma fin.*	*and my beginning my end.*

But this is not really a rondeau at all, nor is the text really a text. The original notation of the piece, as entered in one of Machaut's personally supervised manuscripts, is shown in Fig. 9-4. The whole piece is transcribed as Ex. 9-18. For maximum amusement, compare the explanation that follows with the original notation before looking at the transcription.

The "text," although it makes reference to a famous religious proverb about eternity, is really a description of the piece, or a direction (rubric) for performance. The piece is notated as a rondeau among Machaut's other rondeaux as a sort of joke. The whole point of the piece is the strange way in which its first half ("my beginning") relates to its second half ("my end"), the rondeau being the one fixed form whose two halves, unlike those of the ballade, are played straight through, and whose final cadence, unlike the virelai's, comes at the end of the second half.

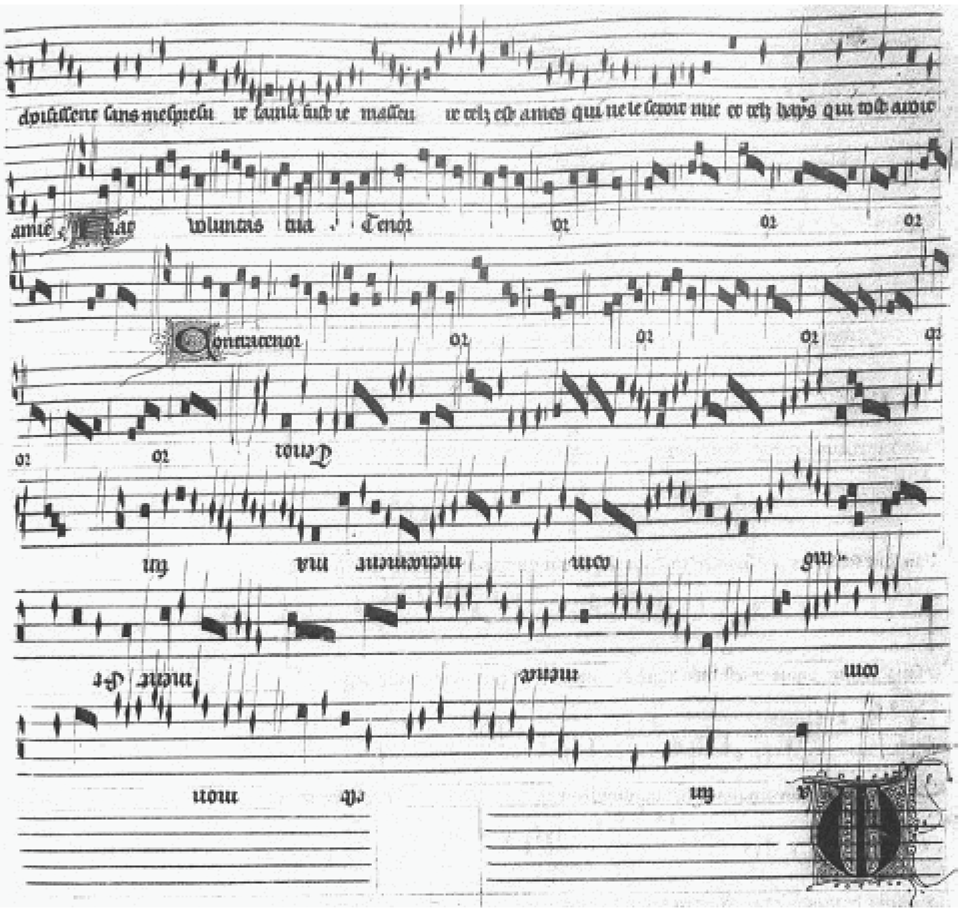
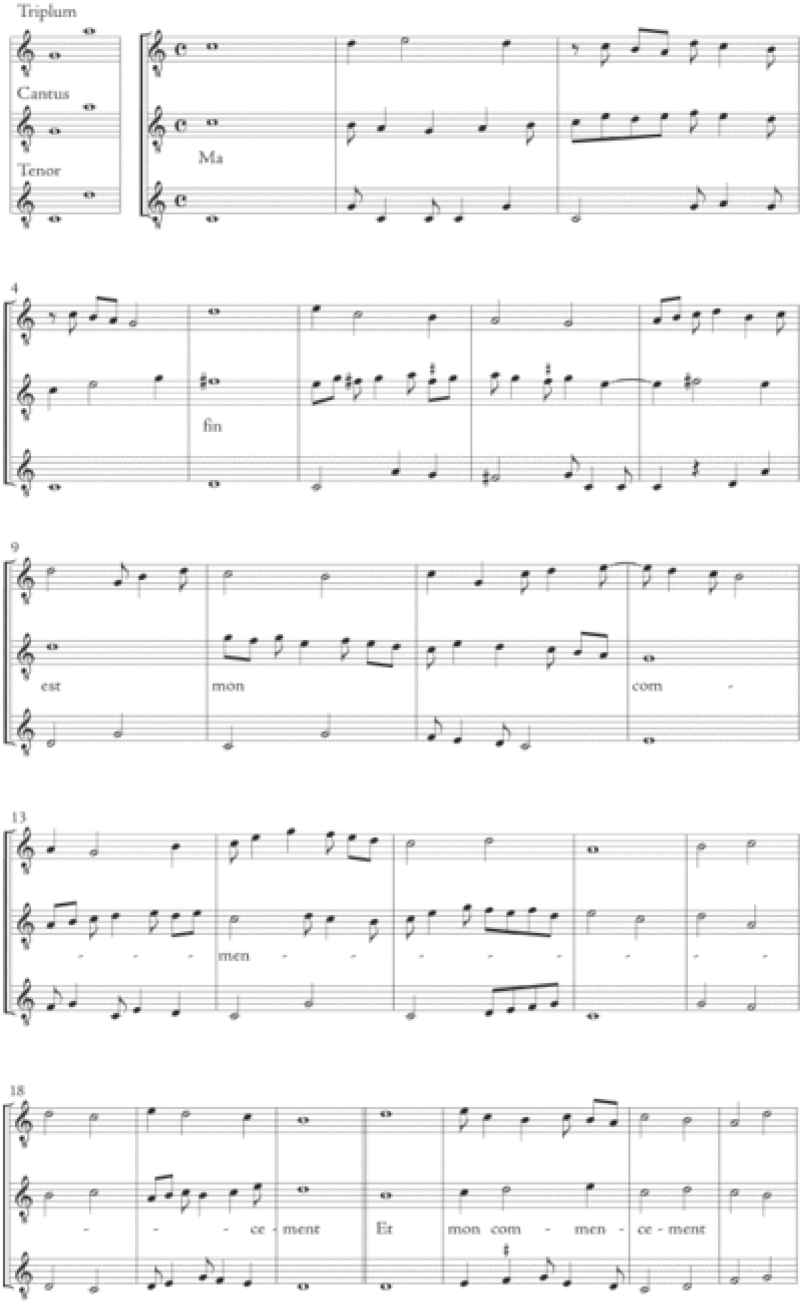
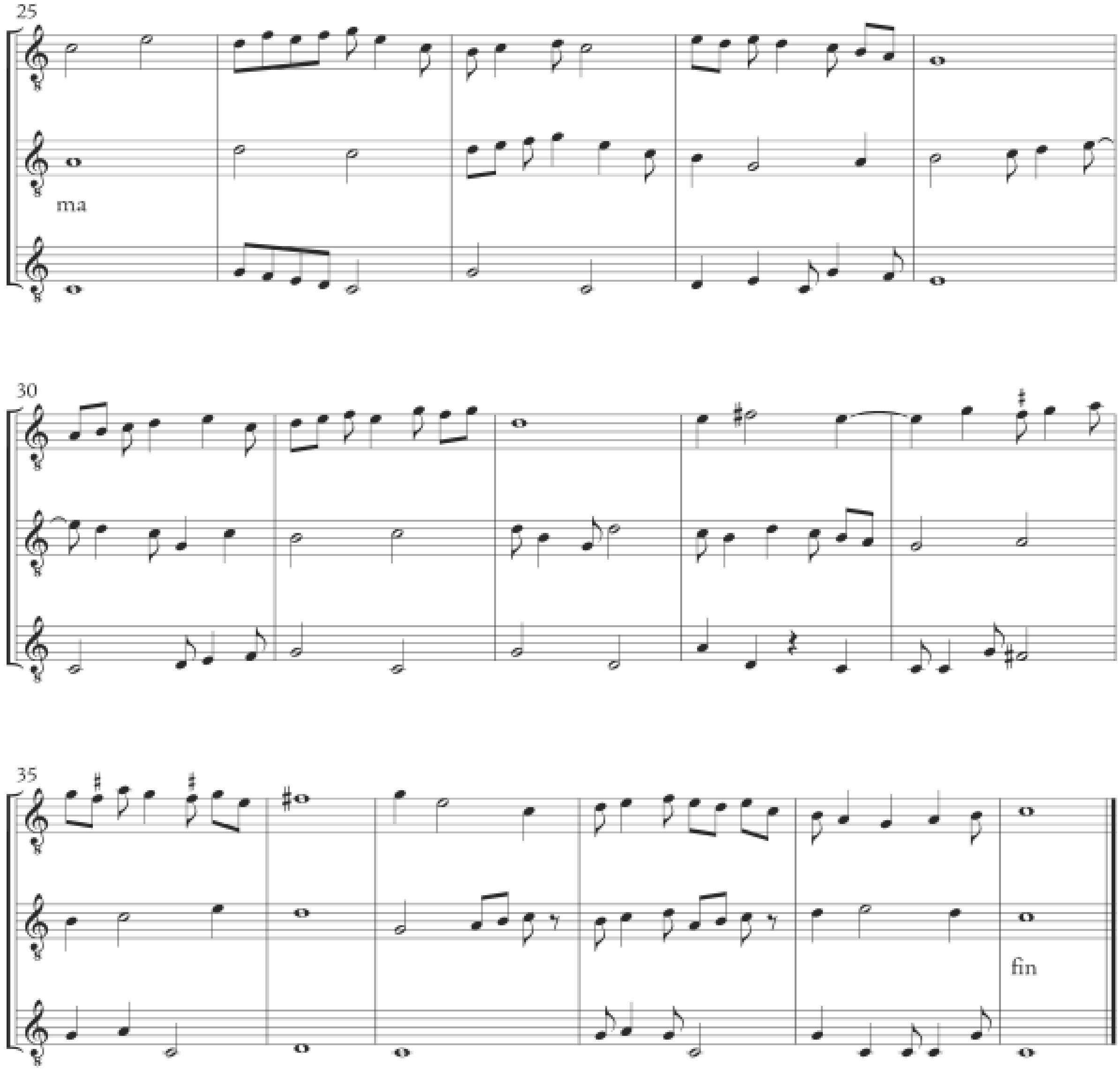


fig. 9-4 Guillaume de Machaut's rondeau *Ma fin est mon commencement*, as it appears on folio 136 of Paris , Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Fonds Français 9221, a manuscript containing the collected works of Machaut, copied for Jean Duc de Berry (d. 1416). The song begins on the fourth notated line. Only two of its three parts are written down: one without text (incorrectly labeled "Tenor" in this source; it should read "Contratenor," as it does in other manuscripts); the other with the text upside down and to be read backward (forming the tenor), while another performer reads it normally (forming the cantus). Only the first half of the (contra)tenor is given. At the point where it ends (the three-note ligature at the beginning of the fifth notated line), the musician reading it is to reverse direction and perform it again from back (*fin*) to front (*commencement*).

The piece is notated in two parts, but the text refers to the "third part," so we know that there is an unnotated part. That third part is labeled contratenor, so we know that the unnotated part is the tenor, of which we read that its end is its beginning. The contratenor is only half as long as the other notated part (the cantus), and we are told that it reverses itself. So we have a hint that it must double back on itself for "complete" statements of the two halves (AB) within the rondeau form, of which (the text reminds us) there are three. So this doubling-back or going backwards must also be the way the unnotated tenor is to be derived from the notated cantus. (Proceeding backward was known as *cancrizans* motion after the word for “crab,” an animal evidently thought in those days to walk backward rather than sideways.) Thus the whole song can be “realized” from the rubric: Accompany the cantus with its own cancrizans (and note that when this is done, the tenor actually behaves like a tenor at the final cadence), and supplement the contratenor with *its* cancrizans to fill out the required length.





ex. 9-18 Guillaume de Machaut, *Ma fin est mon commencement* in transcription

The result is what is given in the transcription. It is the sort of thing Machaut would have called a *resolutio*: an explicitly written-out (therefore “unsubtle”) solution to a puzzle he expected adept musicians to solve directly from his incomplete notation and the textual hints. The joy of the piece consists not only in the enjoyment of its pretty sounds but in the triumph over unnecessary but delightful obstacles. One enjoys the puzzle-solving process as well as the result. Without the process the result would not be as enjoyable, just as without the hurdles an obstacle race would not be as exciting. And there we see the relationship between art and sport, something else that can be done (when not done “professionally”) entirely for its own sake, and which, since it requires skill, is most thrilling to doer and spectator alike when it is most difficult. That principle of creative virtuosity is the root principle of *trobar clus*.

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Canon

Guillaume de Machaut

CANON

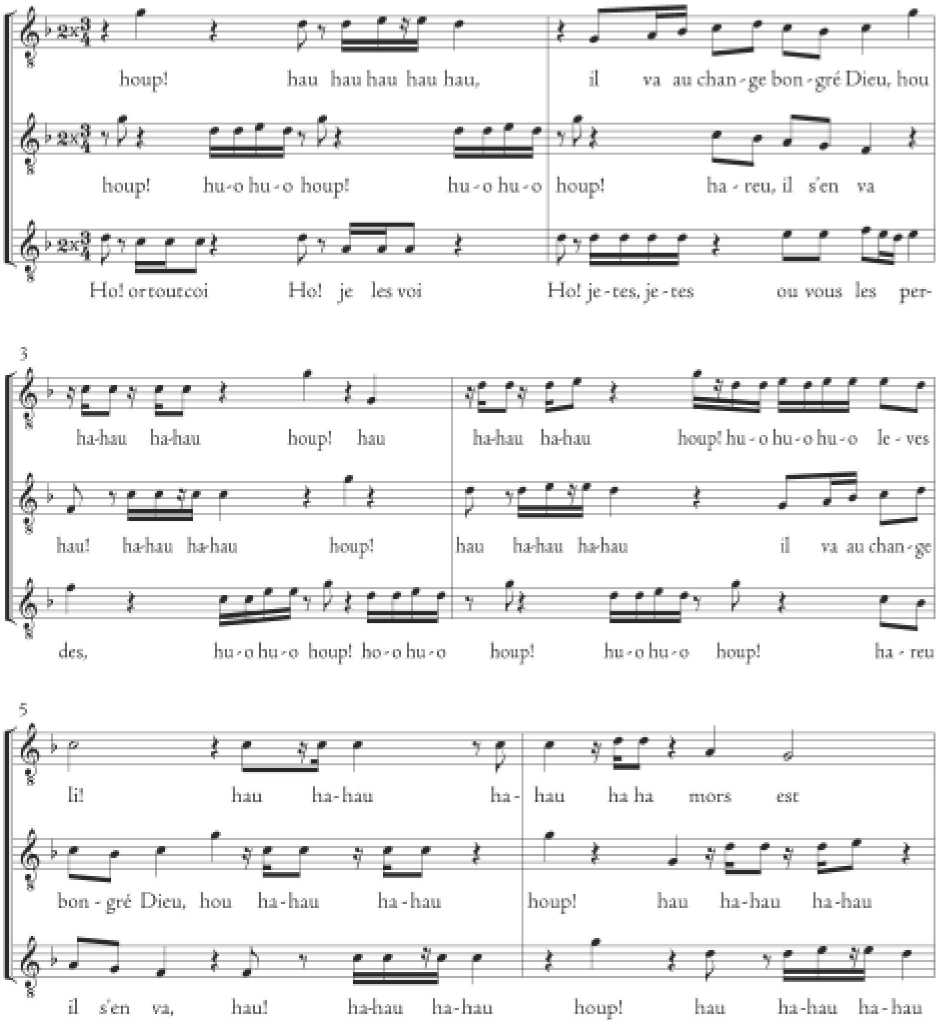
Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

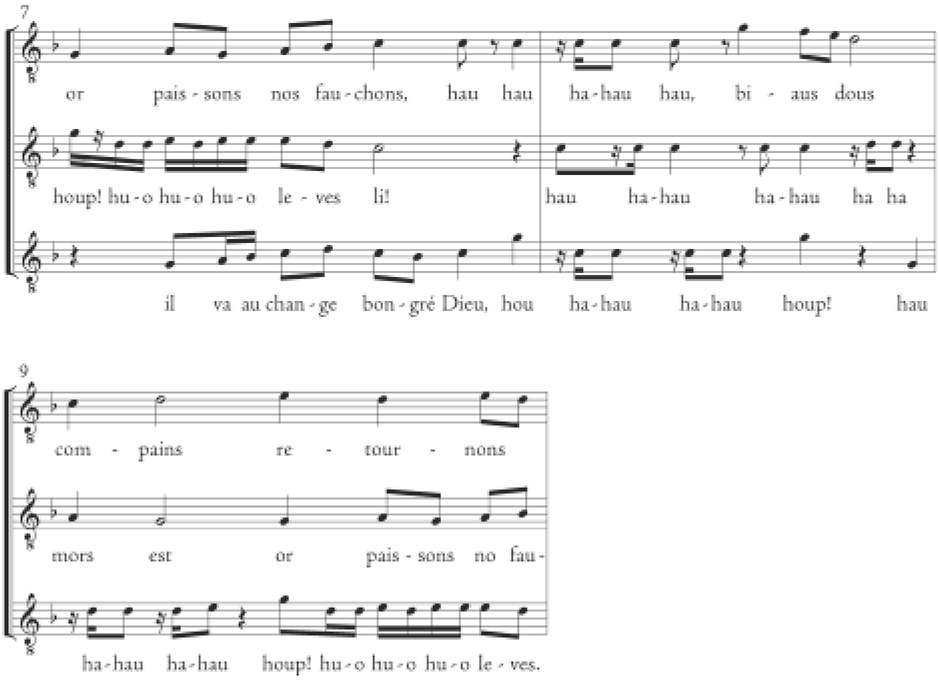
Another word for a rubric like the “text” in this eccentric “rondeau”—especially one that, as here, enables the reader to deduce a concealed (because unnotated) voice-part—is *canon*. It is a Latinized Greek word that originally meant a stiff straight rod, and by extension came to mean, in the first place, a measuring rod, then anything that sets a standard or imposes a rule.

We know the word “canon” best, of course, in a different connection: to us it means a composition in which at least two parts are related by strict melodic imitation. But that modern, familiar musical meaning is actually a direct extension of the earlier meaning, since when two parts are in strict imitation, only one of them need be written down. The other can be “deduced” with the aid of a rubric or some other sign that directs one performer to sing the same part as another but enter later; or enter later and a fifth higher; or enter later, a fifth higher, and twice as slowly; or enter later, a fifth higher and twice as slowly, beginning with the last note and proceeding to the first with all the intervals inverted. To realize the unnotated part you have to follow the directions given by the “canon.” A piece with parts in strict imitation was thus “a piece with a canon,” and eventually just “a canon.”

There is of course a large unwritten repertory of simple imitative pieces sung for amusement. Anyone reading this book probably has known at least a few since childhood: “Row, row, row your boat,” or “Frère Jacques,” or “Hi ho, nobody home.” They are the simplest of all polyphonic pieces for a group of children to learn, because you only have to learn one melody to sing all the parts. And while they have a definite beginning, they have no end—or rather, no composed ending. (They usually end in giggles or elbows-jabbed-in-ribs rather than in cadences.) Such songs just go round and round—whence their name, of course. (The Latin for a “round” is *rota*; we will encounter a famous example shortly.) What we call canons are usually far more complex and artful—often artful to the point of tour de force—and depend on writing both to get made and to get learned. They are fully finished works with composed endings as well as beginnings. And sure enough, such pieces came into their own, along with so many other tour-de-force genres, precisely in the fourteenth century. The original French name for them was *chace* (compare *chasse* in modern French), and it was a pun. The word is a cognate of the English “chase,” which describes the behavior of the successively entering voices in a canon, each running after the last. The primary French meaning of *la chasse*, however, is “the hunt,” and it is reflected in the novel subject matter of several *chaces* (and even more so, as we shall see, in the cognate Italian genre, the *caccia*).

There are four chaces in the Ivrea manuscript which, as we know, otherwise contains mainly Mass ordinary settings for the use of Avignon. One of them, *Se je chant mains*, begins with ironic reflections on its own departure from the customary topic of courtly song: “If I sing less of my lady than usual... it is for love of falcons.” What follows is a three-part description of a falcon hunt, in which the middle section is truly a tour de force, but of a wholly new and off-beat type: a riot of hockets set to “words” mixing French, bird-language, and hound-language in an onomatopoetical mélange (Ex. 9-19). The interval of imitation in this *chace* is represented in the transcription as 2½ measures; hence, the music sung by the top voice at the beginning of Ex. 9-19 turns up in the second voice in the middle of the third bar, and in the third voice at the beginning of the sixth bar. The use of onomatopoeia (imitation of natural sounds) in the hocket-ridden middle section of a *chace* became a standard feature: one of the other chaces in Ivrea has cuckoo calls in that place, and a third, *Tres dous compains, levez vous* (“Dearest companions, get up”), has an elaborate *carole* or circle dance for a middle section, replete with imitations of rustic instruments. (To a noble aesthete, one should realize, dancing peasants and the music they played were a part of “nature”—an attitude that persisted at least until the eighteenth century.)


2x3/4
houp! hau hau hau hau hau, il va au chan - ge bon - gré Dieu, hou
houp! hu - o hu - o houp! hu - o hu - o houp! ha - reu, il s'en va
Ho! or tout coi Ho! je les voi Ho! je - tes, je - tes ou vous les per-
3
ha-hau ha-hau houp! hau ha-hau ha-hau houp! hu - o hu - o hu - o le - ves
hau! ha-hau ha-hau houp! hau ha-hau ha-hau il va au chan - ge
des, hu - o hu - o houp! ho - o hu - o houp! hu - o hu - o houp! ha - reu
5
li! hau ha - hau ha - hau ha ha mors est
bon - gré Dieu, hou ha - hau ha - hau houp! hau ha - hau ha - hau
il s'en va, hau! ha-hau ha-hau houp! hau ha-hau ha - hau

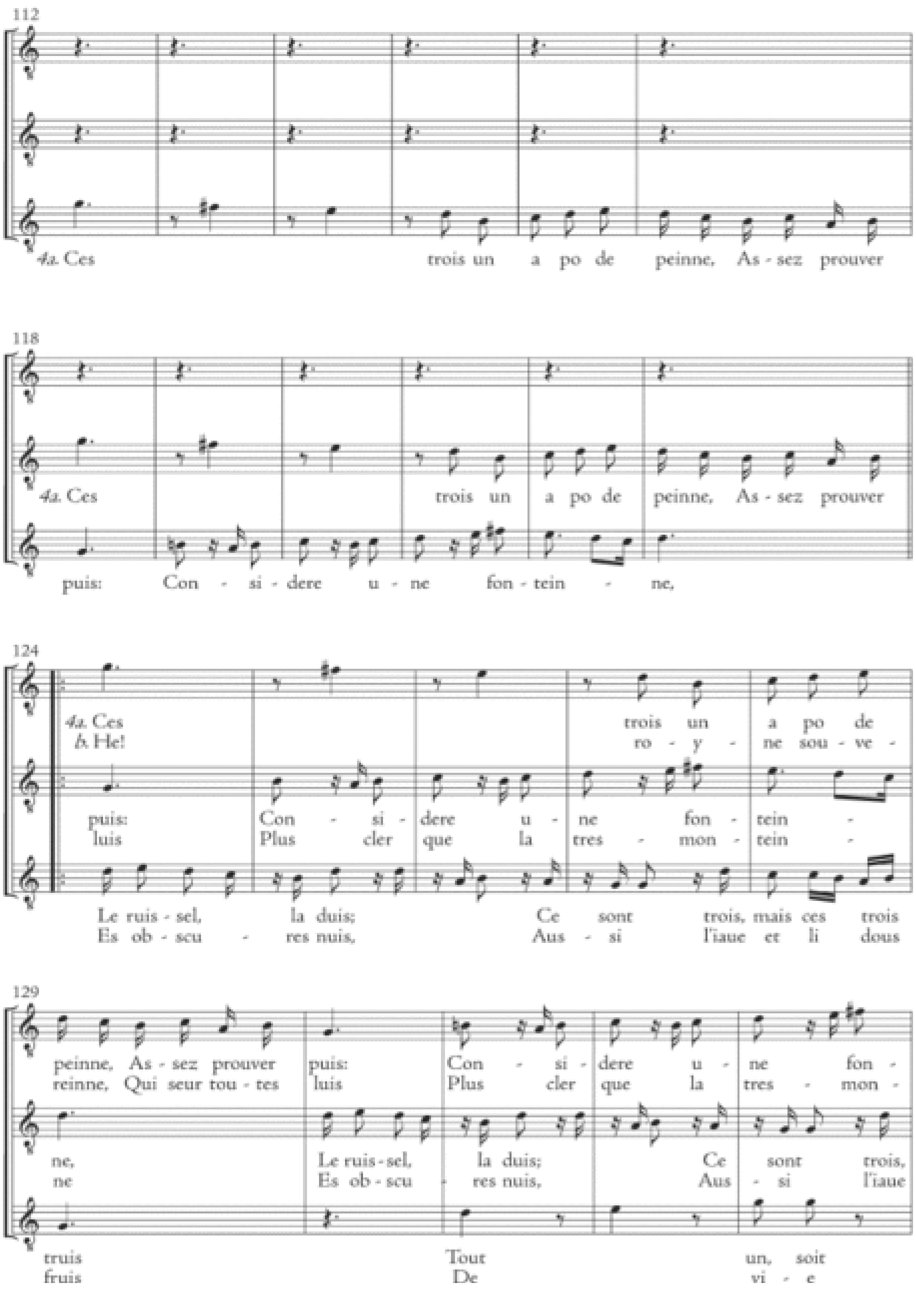

7
or pais - sons nos fau - chons, hau hau ha - hau hau, bi - aus dous
houp! hu - o hu - o hu - o le - ves li! hau ha - hau ha - hau ha ha
il va au chan - ge bon - gré Dieu, hou ha - hau ha - hau houp! hau
9
com - pains re - tour - nons
mors est or pais - sons no fau -
ha - hau ha - hau houp! hu - o hu - o hu - o le - ves.

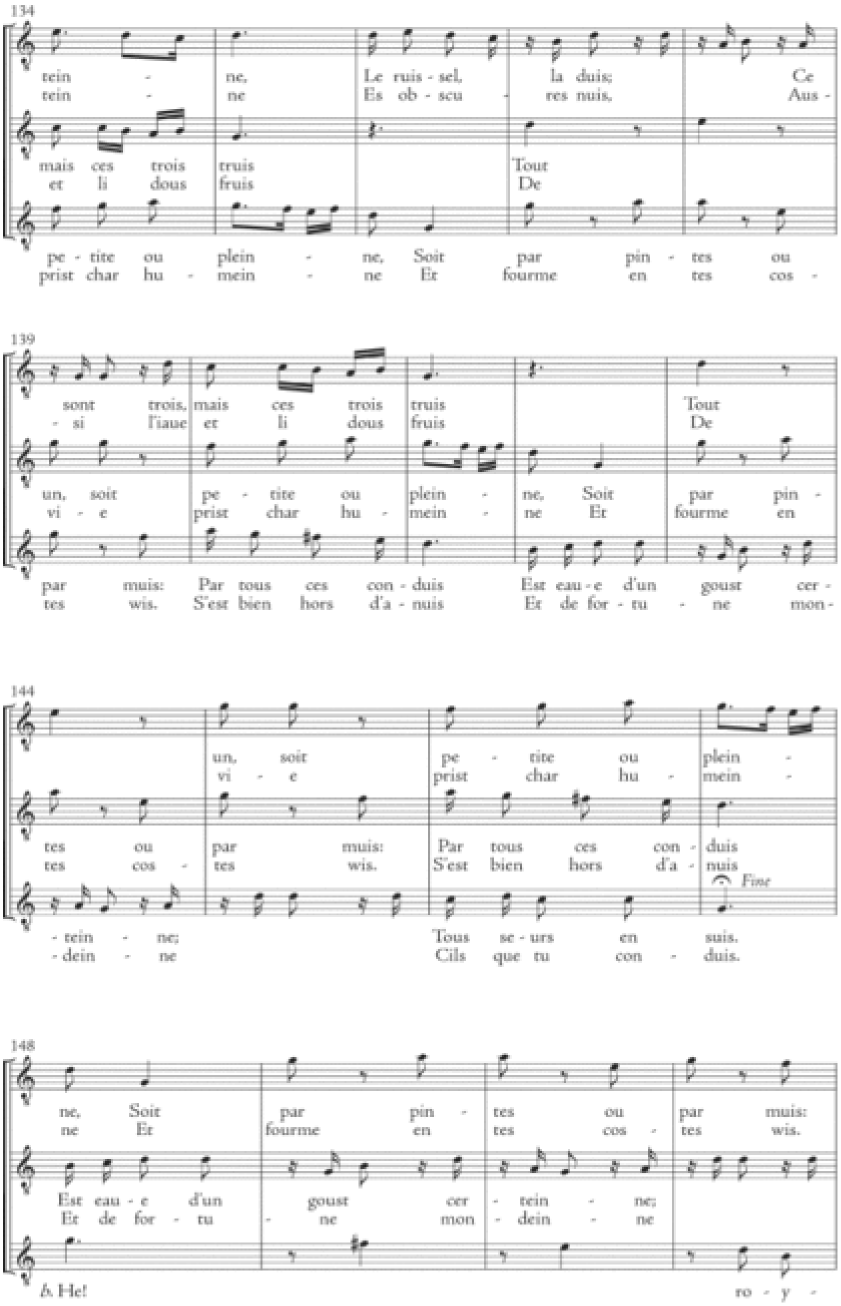
ex. 9-19 *Se je chant mains,* middle section

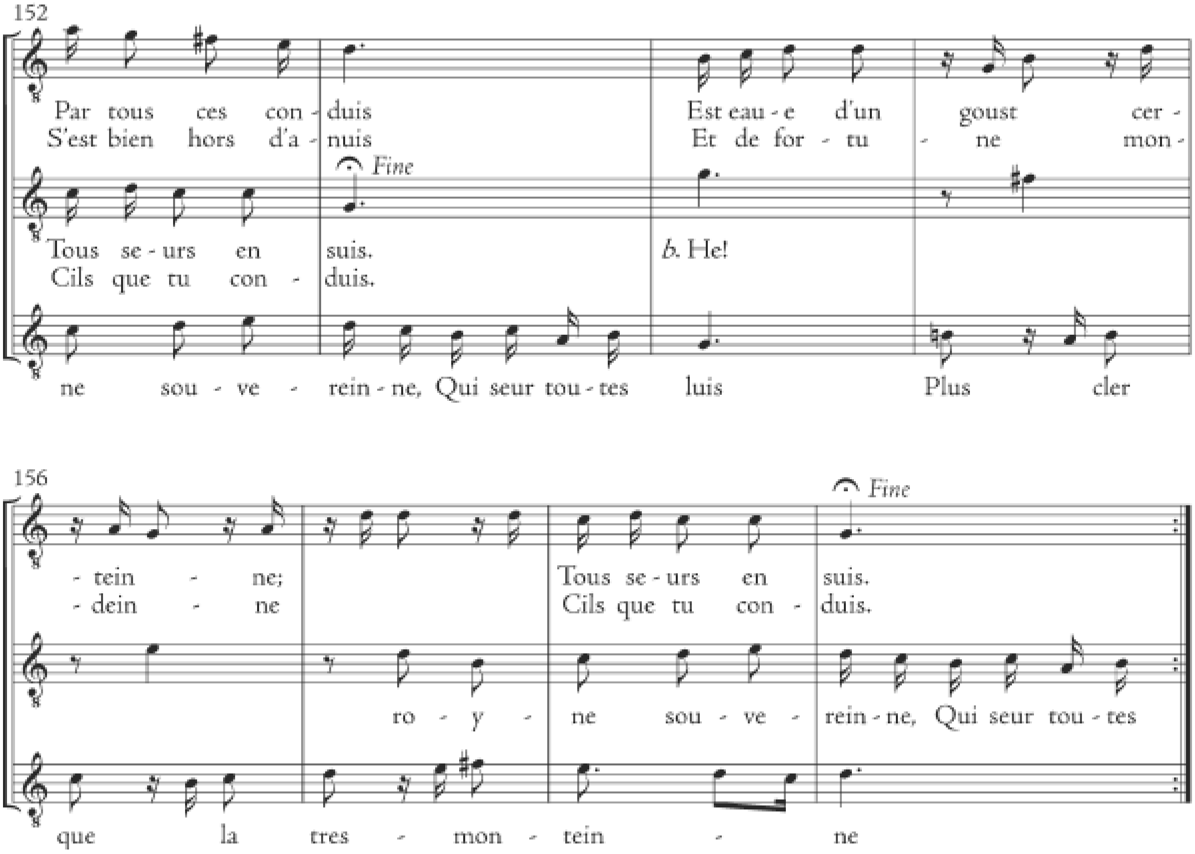
The chace reached a pinnacle with Machaut, who incorporated it into two of his nineteen narrative and descriptive poems known as *lais*. The form of a lai, one may recall, was similar to that of the liturgical sequence, consisting of a series of paired versets or couplets, each pair set to a new melody or formula. In his *Lai de confort* ("Lay of Succor"), Machaut allowed the form of the poem to be entirely absorbed into a continuous three-part *chace* texture. In the *Lai de la fonteinne* ("Lay of the fountain"), only the even-numbered couplets are set as chaces, so that the use of the polyphonic genre actually serves to articulate and highlight the poetic form.

And not only the form but the sense as well, which it symbolizes on an allegorical plane transcending the "materialistic" onomatopoeia of the Ivrea chaces. Machaut's Lay of the Fountain is a meditation, by a lover whose lady has rejected him and who seeks solace in divine love, on the mysteries of the Virgin birth and the consubstiantiality of the Holy Trinity—three Persons in one Godhead. The image of the fountain appears in the fourth pair of verses, the second to be set as a chace. It is a trinitarian metaphor: "Imagine a fountain, a stream, and a canal; they are three, but the three make one; a single water through all three must run." Just so, the chace serves as the metaphor's metaphor: a single melody running through all three voices in a musical representation of *trinus in unitate* ("three in one"), the verbal emblem of the Trinity (Ex. 9-20).

The manuscript source contains only the single melody, with signs near the beginning to indicate the second and third entrances, and another set of signs near the end to indicate the finishing notes for the second and third voices. Possibly another level of trinitarian symbolism, but certainly a source of aural delight, is the elegant use of hockets. A single line, of course, can no more sing hockets than a single hand can clap. The line is full of strategically placed rests, however; when it is sung by itself it seems full of holes that are plugged by the other voices when the hocket texture is complete. Thus, the single line attains fullness only when complemented by its two canonic counterparts, as the full concept of Godhead subsumes the three persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The theological message is entrancingly—yes, sensuously—delivered by the delicately wrought contrapuntal texture, the three statements of the tune fitting together like pieces in an aural jigsaw puzzle. That is *harmony* in the most literal, etymological sense. Like the Trinity itself, a well-wrought chace can be far more than the sum of its parts; and this particular chace is possibly Machaut's greatest feat of *subtilitas*.


112
4a. Ces trois un a po de peinne, As - sez prouver
118
4a. Ces trois un a po de peinne, As - sez prouver
puis: Con - si - dere u - ne fon - tein - ne,
124
4a. Ces trois un a po de
b. He! ro - y - ne sou - ve -
puis: Con - si - dere u - ne fon - tein -
luis Plus cler que la tres - mon - tein -
Le ruis - sel, la duis; Ce sont trois, mais ces trois
Es ob - scu - res nuis, Aus - si l'iaue et li dous
129
peinne, As - sez prouver puis: Con - si - dere u - ne fon -
reinne, Qui seur tou - tes luis Plus cler que la tres - mon -
ne, Le ruis - sel, la duis; Ce sont trois,
ne Es ob - scu - res nuis, Aus - si l'iaue
truis Tout un, soit
fruis De vi - e


134
tein - ne, Le ruis - sel, la duis; Ce
tein - ne Es ob - scu - res nuis, Aus -
mais ces trois truis Tout
et li dous fruis De
pe - tite ou plein - ne, Soit par pin - tes ou
prist char hu - mein - ne Et fourme en tes cos -
139
sont trois, mais ces trois truis Tout
- si l'iaue et li dous fruis De
un, soit pe - tite ou plein - ne, Soit par pin -
vi - e prist char hu - mein - ne Et fourme en
par muis: Par tous ces con - duis Est eau - e d'un goust cer -
tes wis. S'est bien hors d'a - nuis Et de for - tu - ne mon -
144
un, soit pe - tite ou plein -
vi - e prist char hu - mein -
tes ou par muis: Par tous ces con - duis
tes cos - tes wis. S'est bien hors d'a - nuis
Fine
- tein - ne; Tous se - urs en suis.
- dein - ne Cils que tu con - duis.
148
ne, Soit par pin - tes ou par muis:
ne Et fourme en tes cos - tes wis.
Est eau - e d'un goust cer - tein - ne;
Et de for - tu - ne mon - dein - ne
A He! ro - y -


152
Par tous ces con - duis
S'est bien hors d'a - nuis
Fine
Est eau - e d'un goust cer -
Et de for - tu - ne mon -
Tous se - urs en suis.
Cils que tu con - duis.
b. He!
ne sou - ve - rein - ne, Qui seur tou - tes luis
Plus cler
156
- tein - ne;
- dein - ne
Tous se - urs en suis.
Cils que tu con - duis.
Fine
ro - y - ne sou - ve - rein - ne, Qui seur tou - tes
que la tres - mon - tein - ne

ex. 9-20 Guillaume de Machaut, Chace 4 from *Lai de la fonteinne*

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online
Ars Subtilior

Philippus de Caserta

ARS SUBTILIOR

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The *subtilitas* with which Machaut expressed his implicitly aristocratic outlook on art and culture took an explicit and even somewhat technocratic turn in the work of the generations of poets and musicians who followed him, and who looked upon him as a creative father. One of the leading French poets at the end of the fourteenth century, Eustache Deschamps (ca. 1346–ca. 1407), the author of over a thousand ballades, actually labeled himself Machaut's apprentice, successor, and heir.[3] (According to at least one authority he was even more than that: he was reputed to be Machaut's nephew.) In his treatise *Art de Dictier et de Fere Chançons* ("The art of poetry and making songs") of 1392, Deschamps purported to transmit his master's teachings.

Most of the book concerns what Deschamps called *musique naturele* or "natural music," meaning poetic versification. (This was a time-honored use of the word "music"; recall St. Augustine's treatise *De Musica*, which concerned nothing but the meters of what we would call spoken poetry.) Nor is Deschamps known to have been what we would call a composer. But in one passage he juxtaposes *musique naturele* with *musique artificiele* or "artful music," that is, music as we would use the term. While either music can be practiced by itself, and while either is pleasant to hear, they achieve their fullest beauty, Deschamps maintains, in "marriage," through which "melodies are more ennobled and made more seemly with the words than they would be alone," and "poems are made more delightful and embellished by the melody and the tenors, trebles, and contratenors of music." This may seem an early enunciation of the idea that the various art media are mutually reinforcing and achieve their full potential in synthesis—an idea now typically associated with Romanticism and with Richard Wagner, an opera composer who wrote his own librettos. More likely Deschamps was merely invoking what he and his contemporaries took to be the normal state of affairs, in which poetry implied music and vice versa. The division of the two was an arbitrary rhetorical device that enabled Deschamps to specify what it was that each component—the verbal and the musical—contributed to the overall effect.

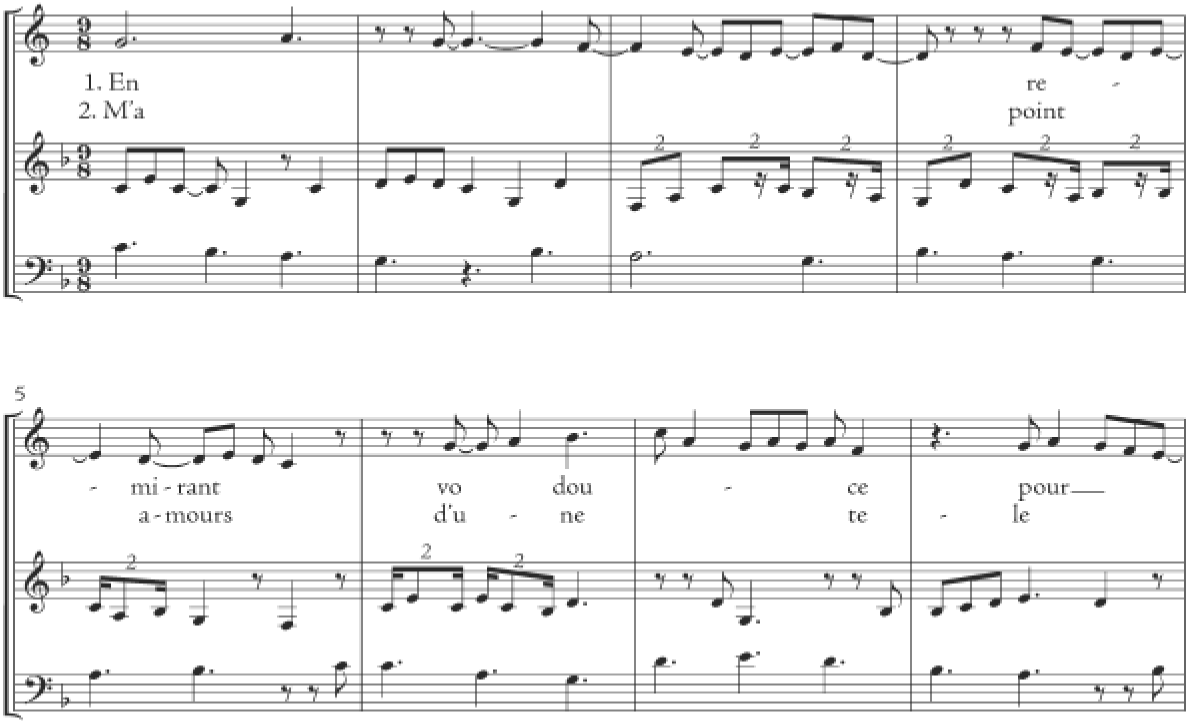
So it is noteworthy that the words are described as the bearers of gentility and seemliness—moral qualities—and the notes are the agency of artifice, embellishment, and delight. The period in which Deschamps lived was the period of the final (some say decadent) phase of the Ars Nova—an explosion of convoluted musical artifice and intricate embellishment that, it is often said, reached a height of sumptuous complexity unrivaled until the twentieth century.

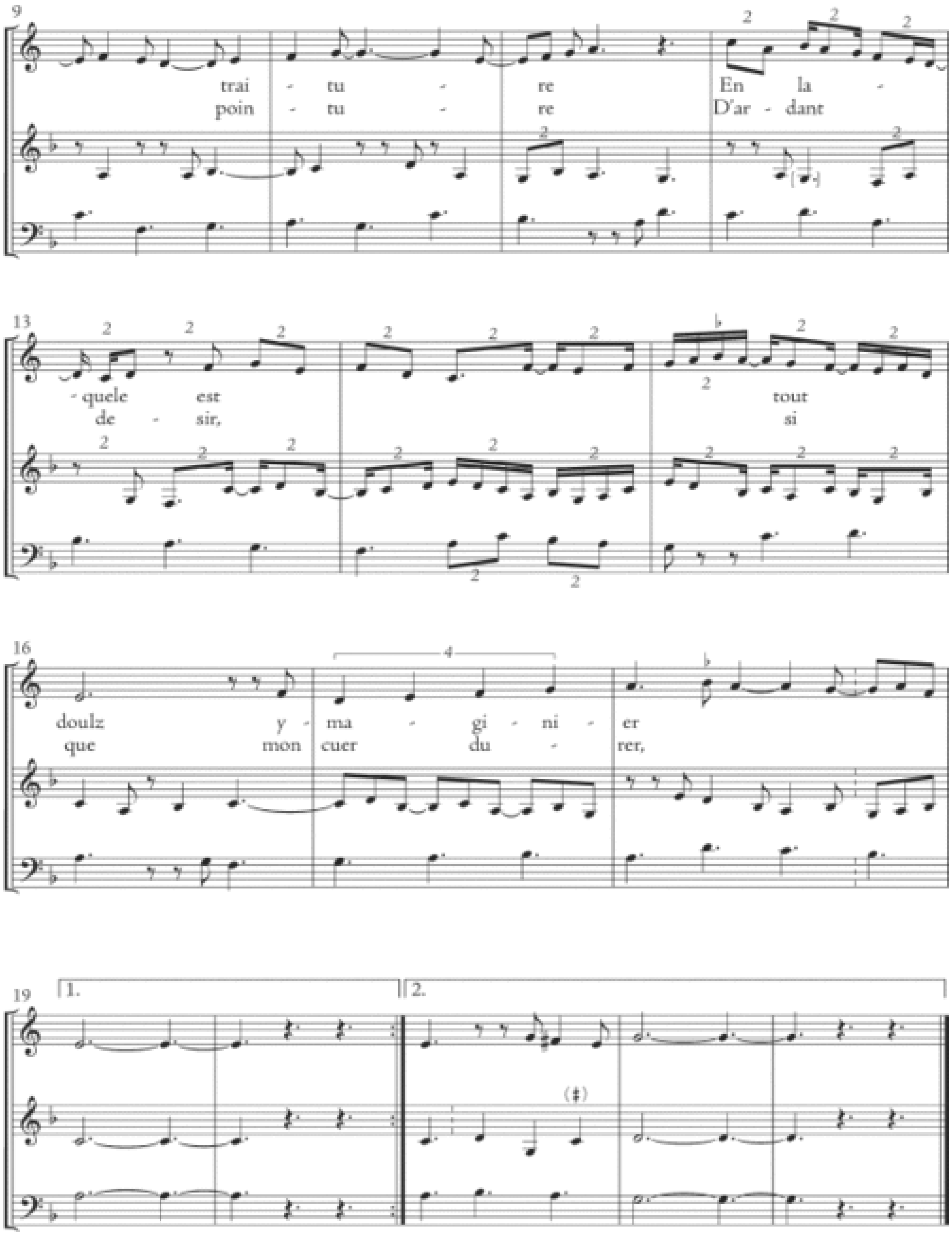
To speak of rivalry in this case is quite appropriate, since the whole "explosion" was predicated on the idea of emulation—not just imitation, but the effort to surpass. And since contests of this sort can be objectively won or lost only on the basis of technique, technical virtuosity—in the handling of complex contrapuntal webs, in the contrivance of new rhythmic combinations, in the invention of new notational devices for representing them—became the primary focus. In the name of *subtilitas*, composers at the end of the fourteenth century became involved in a sort of technical arms race.

A treatise on advanced notation (*Tractatus de diversis figuris*) attributed to Philippus (or Philipoctus) de Caserta, an Italian-born composer who flourished around 1370–1390 at the papal court of Avignon, spelled it all out. Philippus wanted to go beyond the limits of Philippe de Vitry's practice, as set out in the *Ars Nova* treatises (and as exemplified by the motets in Ex. 8-1 and 8–3). Where Philippe had posited his four basic tempus/prolation combinations as alternatives, Philippus wanted to be able to combine them all "vertically," that is, as simultaneous polymeters.

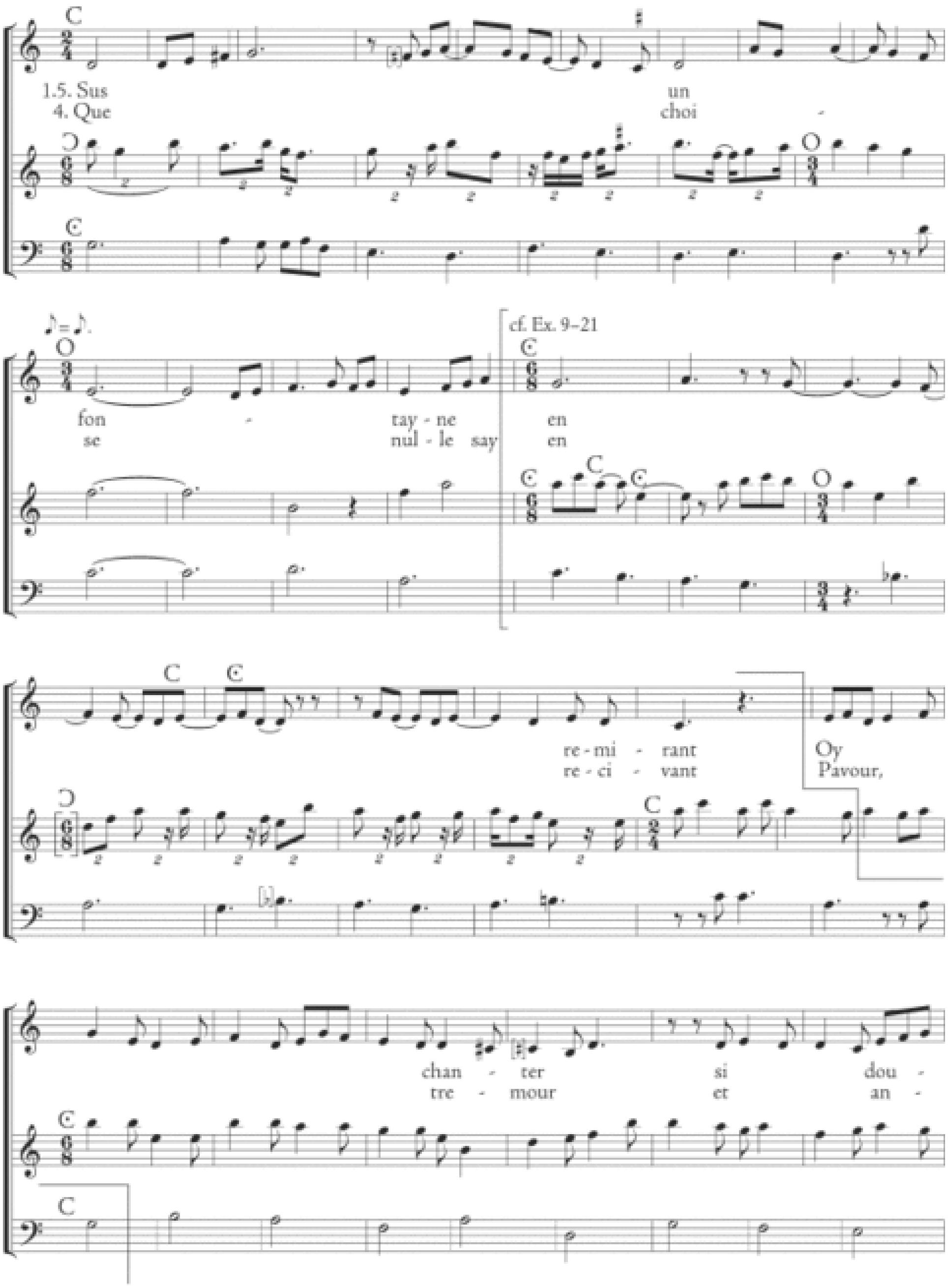
To make these polymeters as explicit and unambiguous as possible, Philippus compiled or invented a great slew of bizarre note-forms to supplement the standard time signatures; they involved two (or even three) ink colors, filled and void note-heads, all kinds of tails and flags, sometimes employed in tandem (one extending upward from the note-head, the other down or to the side). He did all this, he said, to achieve a *subtiliorem modum*, a style or way of composing with greater *subtilitas*—with greater refinement, greater decorativeness, greater sophistication, and especially with ever more flamboyant technique. Since the 1960s this style has been called the "Ars subtilior" after Philippus's assertion, following a suggestion by the German musicologist Ursula Günther.[4] Previously it had been called the "mannered style," after the standard—that is, nineteenth-century—terminology of Germanic art history. That name obviously connoted a certain disapproval of excess; the idea of discarding it seemed remarkably timely in the 1960s, when many contemporary composers, especially in the academy, were enthusiastically advancing an *ars subtilior* of their own.

Philippus cast himself demonstratively as Machaut's heir by quoting the text incipit from one of Machaut's ballades, and the refrain of another, in a ballade of his own, *En remirant* ("While gazing at your darling portrait"), of which the first section is shown in Ex. 9-21. The choice of genre was significant: the grand strophic ballade had replaced the motet as the supreme genre for *ars subtilior* composers. The incipit of Philippus's ballad (both words and music) was later quoted in turn by Ciconia, the migrant Fleming whom we met in chapter 8, and who may have been Philippus's pupil. Thus did composers seek to establish and maintain dynasties of prestige. Ex. 9-22 shows the quotation from *En remirant* in Ciconia's virelai *Sus un fontayne* ("Beneath a spring..."). The quotations from Machaut come in the third strophe of Philippus's text, not shown in the example.




9
trai - tu - re En la -
poin - tu - re D'ar - dant
13
- quele est tout
de - sir, si
16
doulz y ma - gi - ni - er
que mon cuer du - rer,
19
1.
2.

ex. 9-21 Philippus de Caserta, *En remirant* (ballade)



ex. 9-22 Philippus de Caserta, quotation from *En remirant* in Ciconia's virelai *Sus un fontayne*

The other way in which composers established prestige, of course, was through the sheer virtuosity of their composing, manifested at once in their contrapuntal control of very complex rhythmic textures and in their notational ingenuity. Fig. 9-5 shows the original notation of Philippus's ballade. It is not a particularly outlandish example of *ars subtilior* notation, but a representative one. Comparison with Ex. 9-21 will show the kinds of rhythmic stunts composers like Philippus enjoyed contriving and how they were achieved. As usual in this style, the tenor plays straight man to the cantus and contratenor, its relatively steady tread supplying an anchor to ground their rhythmic and notational subtleties.

The latter were of four main types. There are lengthy passages in syncopation initiated by innocent-looking little "dots of division," like the one that comes after the second note in the cantus. There is interplay of perfect and imperfect note values, represented by contrasting ink colors (red standing for the opposite of whatever the prevailing mensuration happens to be). The groups of three red semibreves near the beginning of the contratenor (third line from the bottom), and in the tenor (its single color shift), show this relationship of perfect and imperfect in most basic terms: the three red (imperfect) semibreves equal the same length of time as two black (perfect) ones. This very common and characteristic 3:2 proportion was called *hemiola* (from the Greek) or *sesquialtera* (from the Latin), both meaning “one-and-a-half”

There are superimposed and juxtaposed time signatures throughout. Most of them involve the two signatures that represented the extremes of mensural practice: , which denoted perfection at every specified level, and , which denoted imperfect divisions at every specified level. The latter signature, moreover, is reversed to , a diminution (reduced value) sign that could have various meanings depending on the context. Here it means that all values are halved, so that there are four minims rather than two in the time of a normal semibreve. There is a lovely little passage in which the three voices all go into diminished imperfect time, but not together: first the cantus (near the end of the first line in fig. 9-5, on the words “en laquel”); then the contratenor, near the end of *its* first line (third up from the bottom of the page); and, finally, even the tenor, as if nudged by the other parts, bestirs itself for just four notes, its one and only signature change.

Finally, there are the *ad hoc* note shapes without which no self-respecting *ars subtilior* composition would be complete. There are two such shapes in *En remirant*, both borrowed, as it happens, from the Italian-style notation at which we will take a look in the next chapter. What seem like minims with stems down (near the end of the “A” section in the cantus, and again on its “rhyming” repeat near the end of the “B” section) are *sesquitertia* semibreves, meaning that four of them take the normal time of three. And the curious red notes with stems both up and down (called *dragmas*) near the end of the second line in the cantus are *sesquitertia* minims, reproducing the same 4:3 relationship at a higher level of rhythmic activity.

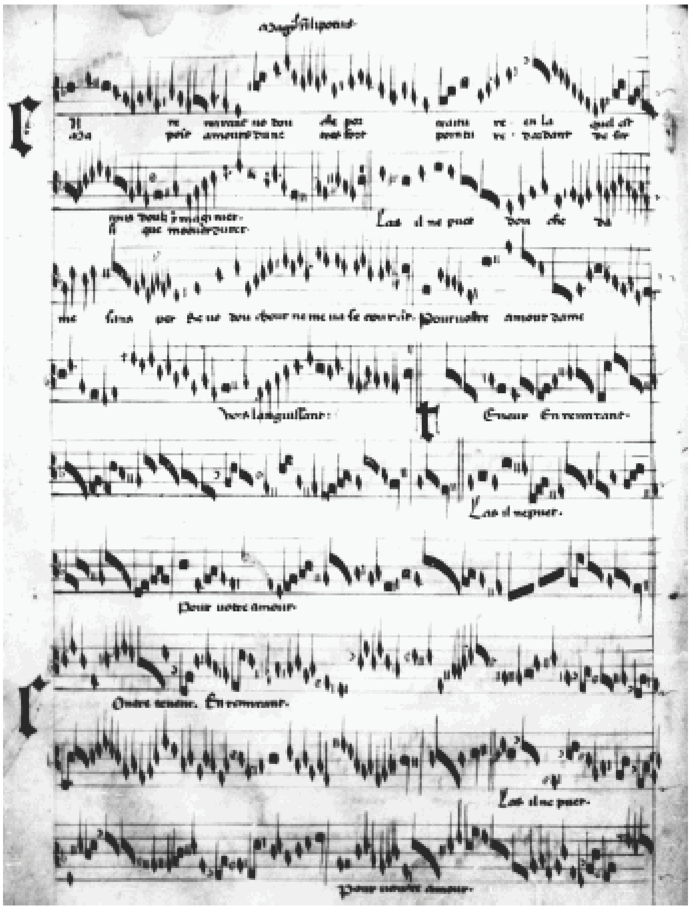


fig. 9-5 *Ars subtilior*. Philippus de Caserta’s ballade *En remirant*, as notated in Modena, Biblioteca Estense, MS α.M.5.24, copied in Bologna ca. 1410 (fol. 34v). The notes that look gray were entered in red ink.

Perhaps you have noticed that the red dragmas mean the same thing as minims under . Such redundancy is typical of *ars subtilior* notation and proves that notation as such was for composers like Philippus a focus of "research and development" in its own right. That kind of showy overcomplexity is just the sort of excess—an excess of fantasy, perhaps, or maybe just an excess of one-upsmanship—that earned the *ars subtilior* its reputation as a "mannered" or "decadent" style. Many modern scholars seem to find it annoying as well as fascinating (perhaps because overcomplexity is a vice from which scholars have not invariably been immune). Contemporary audiences seem to have found it agreeable.

Notes:

(3) See Chistopher Page, "Machaut's 'Pupil' Deschamps on the Performance of Music," *Early Music* V (1977): 484–91.

(4) See Ursula Günther, "Die Anwendung der Diminution in der Handschrift Chantilly 1047," *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* XVII (1960): 1–21.

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Ars Subtilior

Solage

BERRY AND FOIX

Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But of course sobriquets like "decadent" imply judgment not only on the music, the musicians, and the notation they employed, but also on the audiences, which is to say the society that supported such a rarefied art. *Ars subtilior* composition flourished in two main centers. One was the south of France, the territory of old Aquitaine, whose traditions of *trobar clus* it was in a sense upholding. This territory included papal Avignon, as we know, as well as the duchy of Berry and the county of Foix at the foot of the Pyrenees, where Gaston III (known as Fébus, after Phoebus Apollo, the Olympian sun god), governor of Languedoc, maintained a court of legendary extravagance. The chronicler Jehan Froissart, one of Gaston's protégés, endorsed his patron's boast, made about 1380, that during the fifty years of his lifetime there had been more feats and marvels to relate than in the preceding 300 years of history. The *ars subtilior* is best understood, perhaps, as an expression of that culture of feats and marvels.

Like Froissart, many of the poet-composers of the *ars subtilior* worked under Gaston's protection and memorialized him in their work. One such court composer—Jehan Robert, who in the riddling spirit of the times signed his work "Trebor"—proclaimed in a grand ballade, suitably full of marvelous feats of syncopation and polymeter, that "if Julius Caesar, Roland, and King Arthur were famous for their conquests, and Lancelot and Tristan for their ardor, today all are surpassed in arms, renown and nobility by the one whose watchword is 'Phoebus, advance!'"

That ballade, like most of the grandiose dedicatory ballades that survive from its time and place, is found in a marvelous late fourteenth-century manuscript, a real feat of calligraphy that, having once belonged to Le Grand Condé, the great seventeenth-century general, is now kept at the Musée Condé in Chantilly, to the north of Paris. Its southern origins are well attested by its contents: besides the pieces in honor of Gaston Fébus, there are several dedicated to Jean, the Duke of Berry, whose court, located in the city of Bourges, rivaled Gaston's in magnificence. (Jean's fantastically sumptuous breviary or prayer book, known as the "Très riches heures" after the "hours" of the Office, is a well-known testimony to that magnificence; see fig. 9-6.)

The poet-composer most closely associated with Jean's court, it appears, was a man named Solage, whose dates and even whose first name are unknown, but all ten of whose surviving works are found in the Chantilly codex. Seven of the ten are ballades (three of them making reference to the patron), but Solage's best known work is a bizarre rondeau called *Fumeux fume* ("Smoky smoke"; Ex. 9-23). It stands out from the whole *ars subtilior* repertory for the way its composer makes a tour de force out of chromatic harmony (or *musica ficta causa pulchritudinis*) with the same exploratory intensity that drove his contemporaries to their recondite mensural caprices.

Such outlandish chromaticism (as observed in chapter 8) was another legacy of Machaut, whose style Solage seems deliberately to have copied in several works. The "smoke" connection was another link, albeit an indirect one, with the earlier master. The *fumeux* were a sort of waggish literary guild or club, presided over by none other than Eustache Deschamps, Machaut's self-designated poetic heir. According to Deschamps's biographer Hoepffner, this society of whimsical eccentrics met at least from 1366 to 1381, striving to outdo one another in “smoky”— recondite or far-out—fancies and conceits.

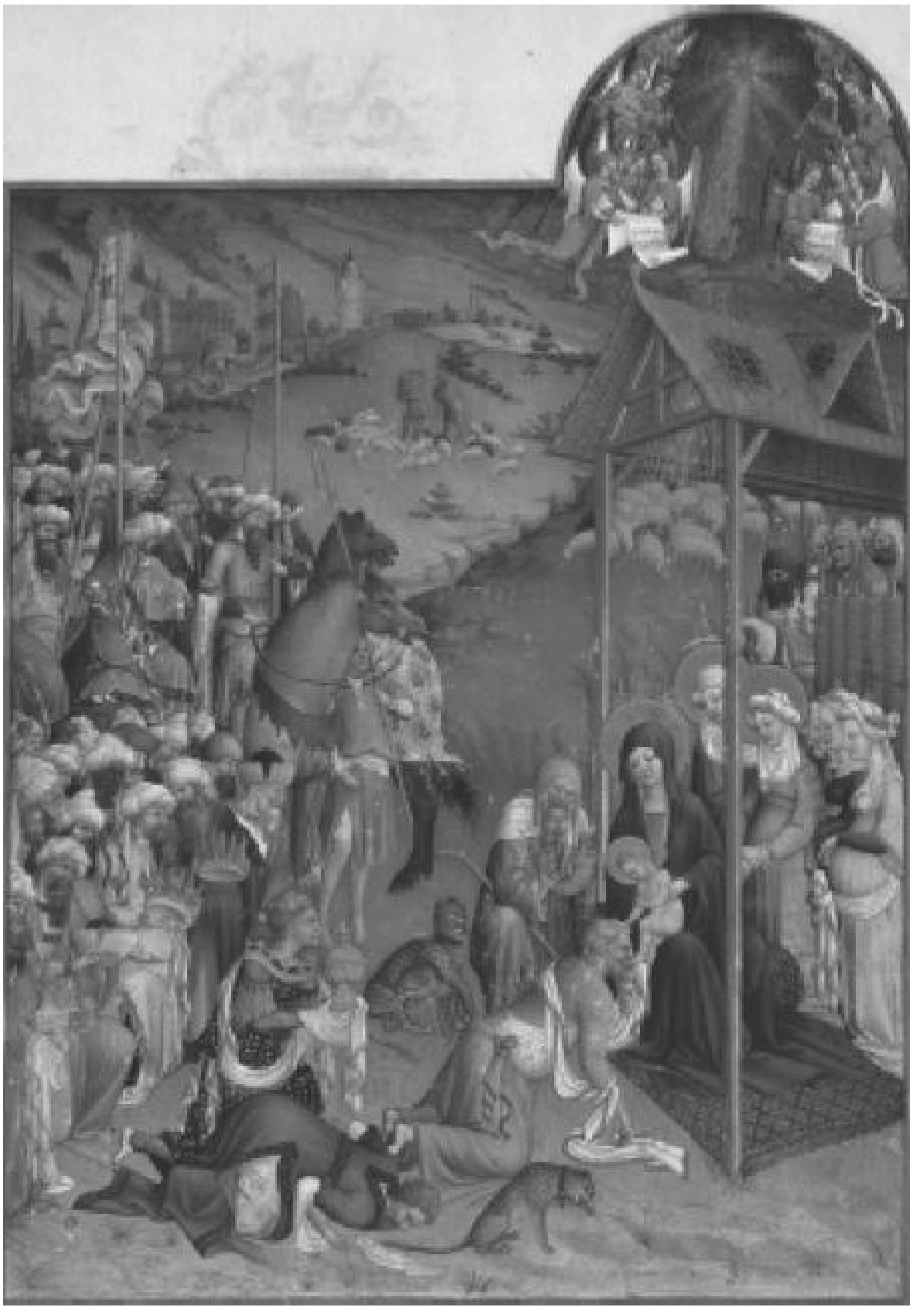
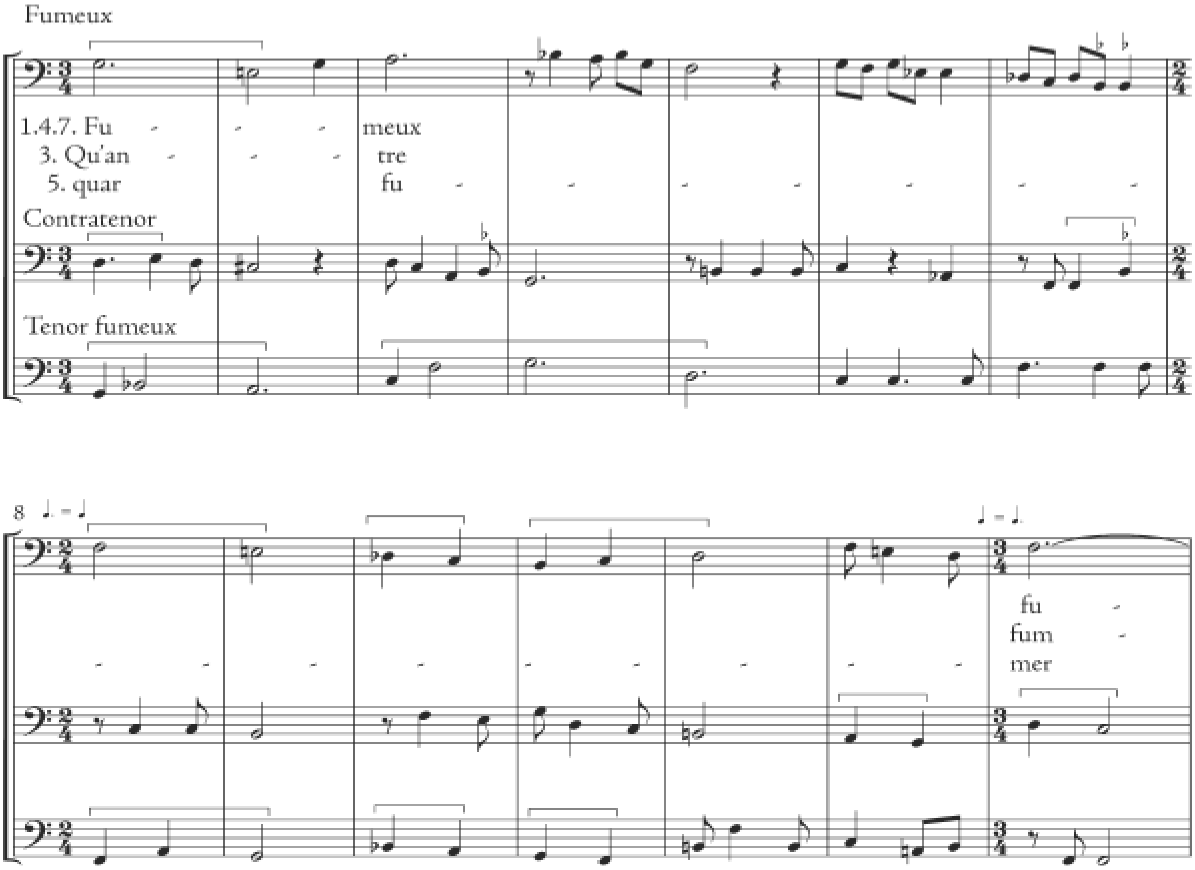
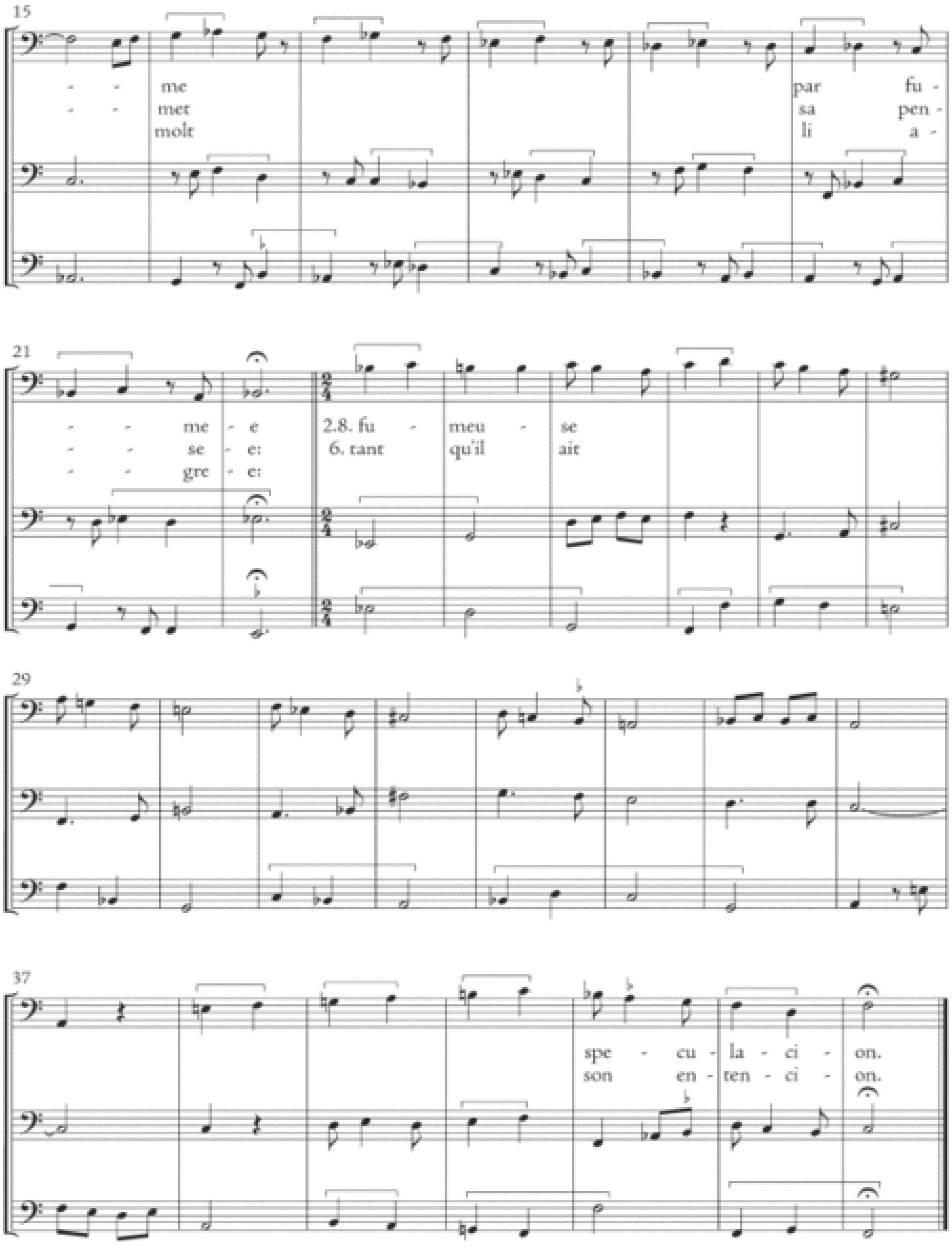


fig. 9-6 “The Adoration of the Magi,” from the *Très riches heures du duc de Berry* (1416).


Fumeux
1.4.7. Fu - - - meux - - - - - - - -
3. Qu'an - - - tre
5. quar fu -
Contratenor
Tenor fumeux
8
♩. = ♩
♩ = ♩.
fu -
fum -
mer



ex. 9-23 Solage, *Fumeux fume* (rondeau)

Solage, with his smoky harmonies and smokier tessitura, may have outdone them all. Note, as one particular *subtilitas* that distinguishes this droll composition, that the accidentals drift flatward ("fa-ward") in the first section and sharpward ("mi-ward") in the second. The question of mode is altogether to laugh. The music begins on a concord of G, ends on F, with a middle stop on a ficta note, E-flat—"smoky speculation" indeed!

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Cyprus

Poland: Art music to 1600

Nicolaus de Radom

OUTPOSTS

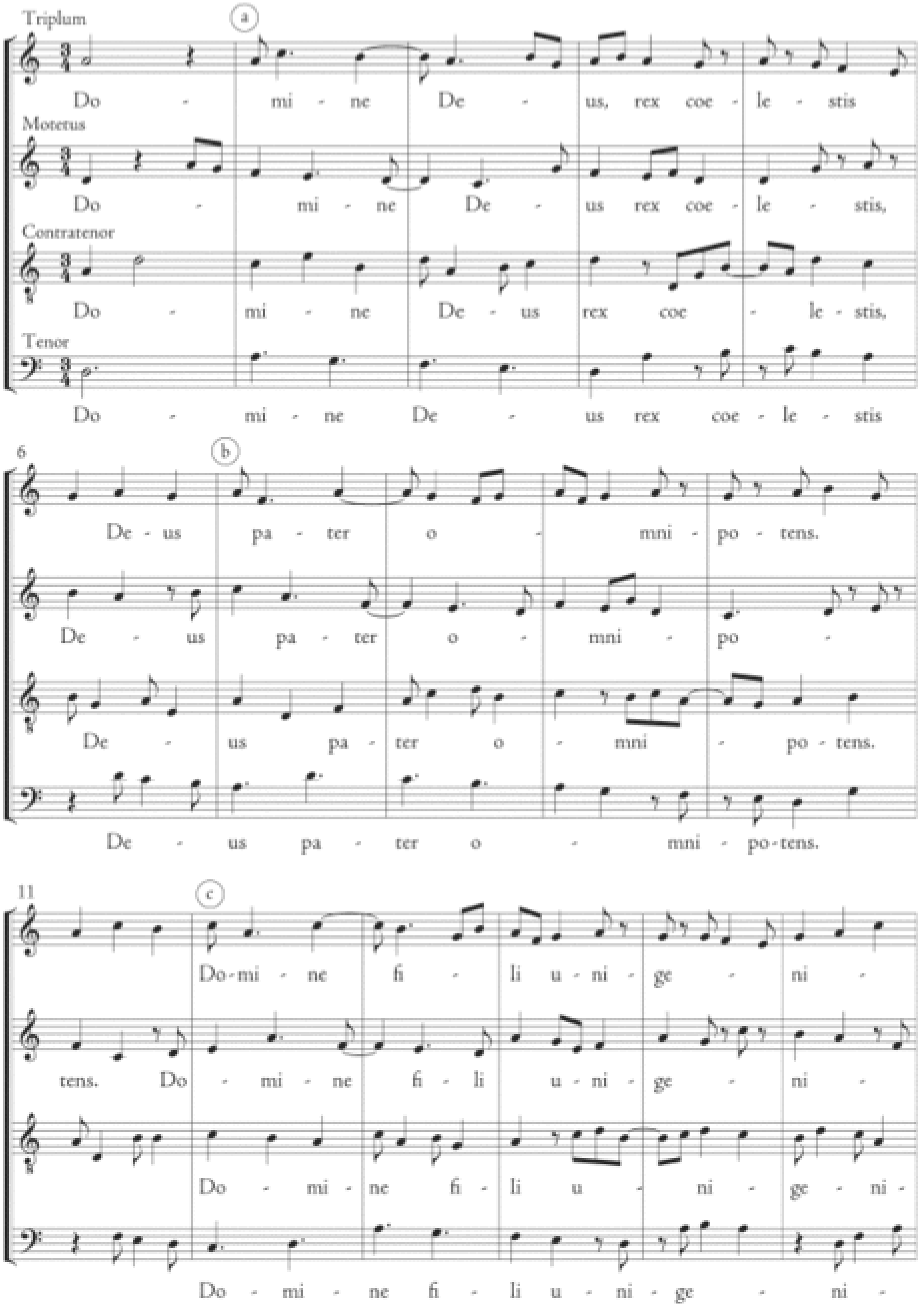
Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

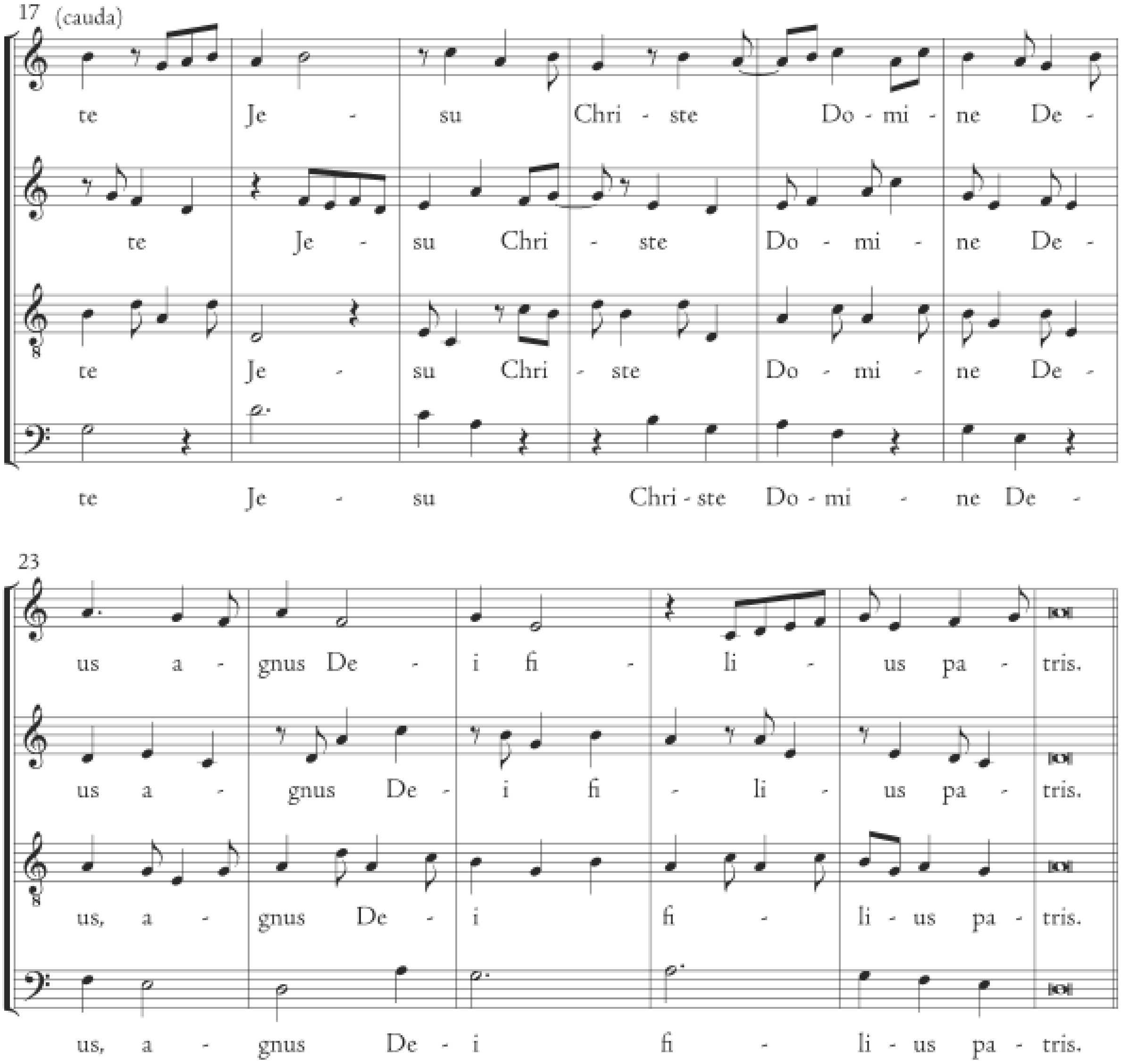
As unpredictable as the final of *Fumeux fume* was the location of the other main center of *ars subtilior* composition. Cyprus, the most easterly of the major Mediterranean islands, off the southern coast of Turkey and the western coast of Syria, had been conquered during the Third Crusade in 1191 by an army under Richard Lion-Heart, who then bestowed it as a sort of consolation prize on Guy of Lusignan, the deposed ruler of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. The French-speaking Lusignan dynasty ruled Cyprus until 1489 when the island fell under the rule of the city-state of Venice. The highpoint of Cypriot French culture was reached at the end of the fourteenth century under King Janus (reigned 1398–1432), who in 1411 married the princess Charlotte de Bourbon whose entourage included a musical chapel.

The decade between their marriage and Charlotte's death in 1422 was a period of intense musical activity on the island, memorialized for us by a huge manuscript containing plainchant Masses and Offices and 216 polyphonic compositions in every contemporary French genre—Mass Ordinary settings, Latin and French motets, ballades, rondeaux, and virelais. (The manuscript is now kept at the National Library of Turin in northern Italy.) Although produced entirely by imported French musicians, it was a wholly indigenous repertory, and (with a single exception) a wholly anonymous one. Not one composition from the Cypriot manuscript turns up in any other source.

Ballades are predictably the most numerous genre. The 102 specimens in the Cypriot manuscript are the handiwork of supremely sophisticated craftsmen; one of them, *Sur toutes flours* ("Above all other flowers"), is well known to generations of struggling musicology trainees as the single most ferocious specimen of *ars subtilior* puzzle-notation in existence. The most distinguished body of French-Cypriot music, however, is the group of Mass Ordinary settings, consisting entirely of Glorias and Credos, most of them in musically linked pairs that (unlike such pairs in Western European sources) are entered consecutively, as actual pairs, in the manuscript.

One pair is unified by more than the usual common mode, meter, tessitura and texture. In addition to these, there is also a recurrent pan-isorhythmic passage that crops up twice in the Gloria and three times in the Credo. All the parts go into a threefold talea, jam-packed with syncopations, hemiolas, and hockets between the triplum and the tenor, that lasts an asymmetrical five tempora, followed by a cauda whose rhythms also recur on each appearance of the passage. The tenor, which moves more slowly than the other voices and has a very well-shaped melodic line, is not known to be a cantus firmus, but it may well be a paraphrase of an indigenous French-Cypriot plainchant. Example 9–24 contains the first occurrence of the common pan-isorhythmic passage in the Gloria.


Triplum
a
Do - mi - ne De - us, rex coe - le - stis
Motetus
Do - mi - ne De - us rex coe - le - stis,
Contratenor
Do - mi - ne De - us rex coe - le - stis,
Tenor
Do - mi - ne De - us rex coe - le - stis
6
b
De - us pa - ter o - mni - po - tens.
De - us pa - ter o - mni - po -
De - us pa - ter o - mni - po - tens.
De - us pa - ter o - mni - po - tens.
11
c
Do - mi - ne fi - li u - ni - ge - ni -
tens. Do - mi - ne fi - li u - ni - ge - ni -
Do - mi - ne fi - li u - ni - ge - ni -
Do - mi - ne fi - li u - ni - ge - ni -


17
(cauda)
te Je - su Chri - ste Do - mi - ne De -
te Je - su Chri - ste Do - mi - ne De -
te Je - su Chri - ste Do - mi - ne De -
te Je - su Chri - ste Do - mi - ne De -
23
us a - gnus De - i fi - li - us pa - tris.
us a - gnus De - i fi - li - us pa - tris.
us, a - gnus De - i fi - li - us pa - tris.
us, a - gnus De - i fi - li - us pa - tris.

ex. 9-24 Pan-isorhythm in a French-Cypriot Gloria-Credo pair (MS. Torino, f. 32-33, 34-35)

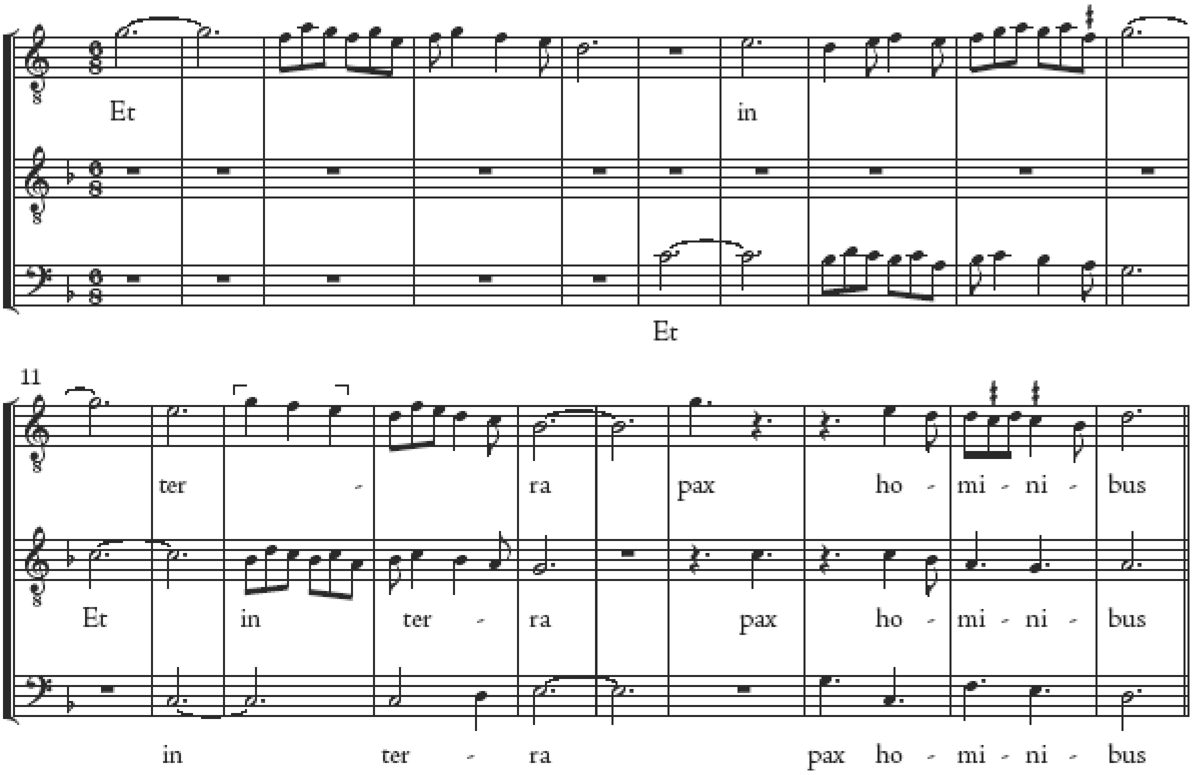
Three Gloria-Credo pairs from a manuscript roughly contemporaneous with the Cypriot codex, by a composer who signed his name "Nicolaus de Radom," bear witness to the spread of Ars Nova styles and genres to the northeast as well as the southeast. Radom is a town midway between Kraków and Warsaw in central Poland, and the manuscripts that contain the works of this Nicolaus (or Mikolaj, as he would have been christened) were associated with the royal chapel at Kraków, the seat of the joint Polish-Lithuanian Jagiellonian dynasty, one of the great ruling houses of Europe.

The reduced circumstances of present-day Poland—to say nothing of the periods of "partition" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when its more powerful neighbors divided its territory among themselves and the country simply disappeared from the map—make it all too easy to forget Poland's time in the sun, under the Jagiello kings. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the joint kingdom of Poland and Lithuania was a great European power, maintaining an empire that reached from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.

As a result of its status, and its diplomatic ties with western Europe, Poland had for centuries been an avid importer of polyphonic music from the West. There is even an indigenous Polish manuscript containing Notre Dame compositions of the "Leonin" and "Perotin" generations. Beginning around 1400, however, native Polish musicians began to produce advanced polyphonic music as well as consume it.

Foreign travel in the service of the church may have given them their earliest opportunity to master new styles. Ties between the Polish court and the papacy—and during the Schism, with Rome—were particularly strong. Nicolaus Geraldi de Radom, it so happens, is the name of a priest who was a member of the Roman *curia*, the administrative arm of the papal court, under Pope Boniface IX (reigned 1390–1404). If that is the same Nicolaus de Radom who wrote the Glorias and Credos that were entered into the Kraków manuscripts two decades later, it would explain not only his mastery of the burgeoning international style of his day but several musical details as well.

It has been pointed out, for example, that certain Glorias written in Italy at the height of the Great Schism seem to call attention to it, and to efforts toward its reconciliation, by ejaculating the word *pax* ("Peace!") as a hocket in three voices, each possibly standing for one of the rival claimants to the papal throne, or their negotiators. To the sue-for-peace Glorias in Italian sources—including one by Johannes Ciconia, whose connection with the conciliation of the schism we have already noted—we can add one by Nicolaus de Radom (Ex. 9-25).



ex. 9-25 Nicolaus de Radom, Gloria, mm. 1-20

Nor is this by any means the sort of provincial or primitive composition we might be inclined to expect from an "outlander." Such expectations, being prejudices, need to be faced and fought along with all our other preconceptions about the "main stream" of culture. As if expressly to disprove them, Mikolaj's Gloria is uniquely original among the Mass Ordinary settings we have encountered, for the clever—or should we say "subtle"—way it incorporates the characteristic opening gambit of the *chace*. But that very uniqueness is in its way typical—the typically playful Ars Nova attitude to genres and their potential cross-fertilization. Also typically playful is the rhythmic detail, especially the frequent hemiola shifts—three imperfect semibreves in the time of two perfect ones, indicated in the original with red ink and signaled in the transcription with brackets. Rhythms like these make implicit reference to the dance.

Citation (MLA): Richard Taruskin. "Chapter 9 Machaut and His Progeny." *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press. New York, USA. n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2011. <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-div1-009019.xml>.
Citation (APA): Taruskin, R. (n.d.). Chapter 9 Machaut and His Progeny. In *Oxford University Press, Music from the Earliest Notations to the Sixteenth Century*. New York, USA. Retrieved 27 Jan. 2011, from http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-div1-009019.xml
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Chapter: CHAPTER 9 Machaut and His Progeny
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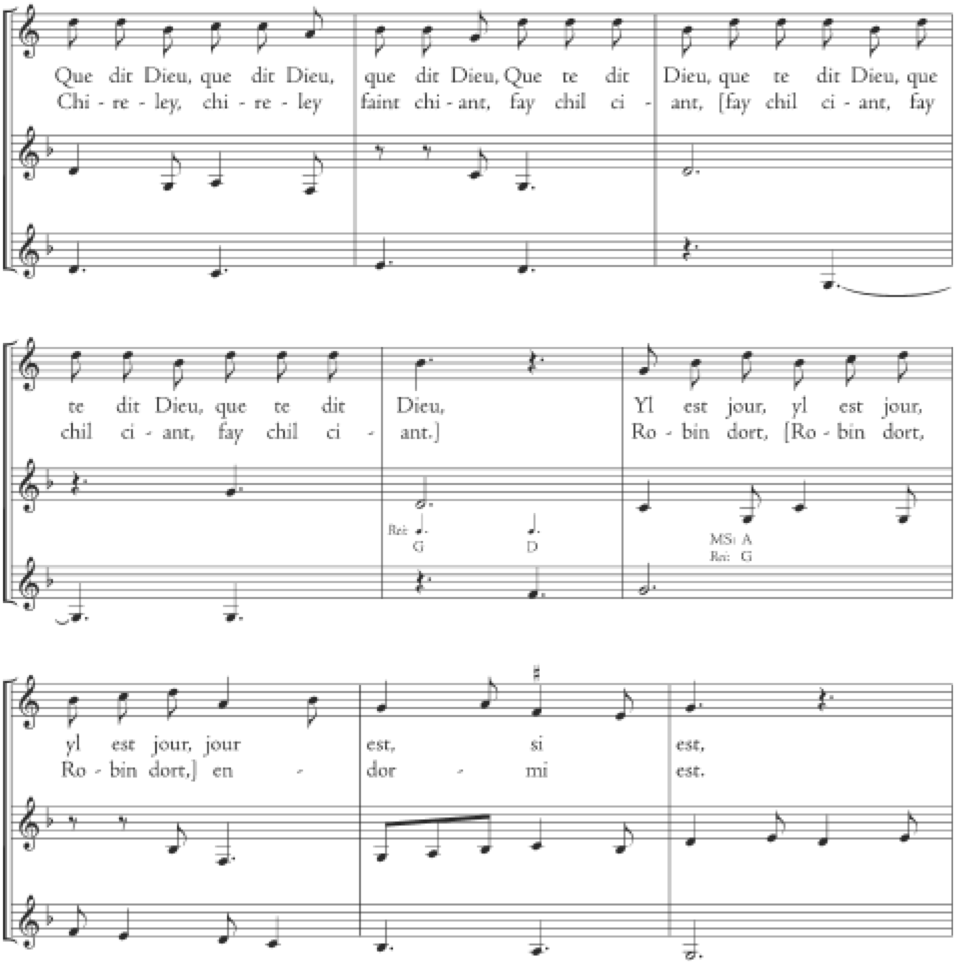
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Such references were made explicit in a special subgenre of chansons that stood at the opposite end of the rhetorical spectrum from the high-flown ballades associated with the *ars subtilior*. From the beginning the ballade was the loftiest of the fixed forms—the direct descendent of the noble *canso*, whose stanza structure it retained. The virelai was always the humblest, descending from the *pastorela*, later the *chanson baladé*—the literally danced songs with refrains that accompanied the carole. As we know, even in Machaut's time the virelai remained a largely monophonic genre. By the last quarter of the fourteenth century, even the lowly dance song had begun to put forth some *ars subtilior* plumage—but its "subtleties" were of a sort that accorded with its content. The virelai became the site of sophisticated, even virtuoso, parodies of rustic and "natural" music.

Just as it had been in troubadour times (and just as it would be, say, in the time of Marie Antoinette with her little "peasant village" for rustic play-acting on the palace grounds at Versailles), we are dealing here with the esthetic appropriation of a lifestyle. Adam de la Halle's "Play of Robin and Marion," we may recall, was played neither by nor for Robin and Marion. It was played by professional minstrels for a noble audience who enjoyed sentimentally contrasting the "simplicity" of the happy rustics on display with the artifice and duplicity of their own privileged lives. The anonymous virelai *Or sus, vous dormez trop* ("Get up, Sleepyhead"; Ex. 9-26), with characters suitably named Robin and Joliet, is another happy exercise in unrealistic "naturalism."

We have already noted some of its naturalistic (onomatopoetic) devices in the context of the *chace*, especially the ones in the Ivrea manuscript; and sure enough, Ivrea is among this popular virelai's numerous sources. Everything in it seems drawn from life: the mock-carole in the inner verses (the "B" section), where the text mentions drums (*nacquaires*) and bagpipes (*cornemuses*), and all three parts begin imitating them, even down to the bagpipe's drone in the contratenor; or the punning bird calls, in actual bird-French, in the "turnaround" (*volte*) and refrain (the "A" section), where the lark sings "what God is telling you" (*Que-te-dit-Dieu*), and the goldfinch is heard "making his song" (*fay-chil-ciant*).

Precisely where the birds take over, of course, we get a typical rhythmic "subtlety"—reiterated groups of four minims in the cantus part against a beat of perfect (three-minim) semibreves. This ornithological *sesquitertia* (4:3) proportion, a virtuoso turn for composer and singer alike, is a perfect paradigm of the *faux-naïf*, or patrician mock-simplicity: sophisticated artlessness, high-tech innocence—or, to quote Debussy joshing Stravinsky after seeing the latter's *Rite of Spring*, "primitive music with all modern conveniences."


Que dit Dieu, que dit Dieu, que dit Dieu, Que te dit Dieu, que te dit Dieu, que
Chi - re - ley, chi - re - ley faint chi - ant, fay chil ci - ant, [fay chil ci - ant, fay
te dit Dieu, que te dit Dieu, Yl est jour, yl est jour,
chil ci - ant, fay chil ci - ant.] Ro - bin dort, [Ro - bin dort,
Rei: G D
MS: A
Rei: G
yl est jour, jour est, si est,
Ro - bin dort,] en - dor - mi est.

ex. 9-26 Anon., *Or sus, vous dormez trop* (virelai), mm. 22-30

This virelai, with its vivid, somewhat hedonistic portrayal of benign nature as something to enjoy rather than (as the contemporary motet would have it) to stand in awe of, makes a fitting close to this chapter—not just because it signals a new or a changed esthetic outlook that will find further expression in the music that will follow, but also because it reminds us that we need to take a closer look at the contemporaneous vernacular music of Italy, where throughout the fourteenth century composers had been celebrating “pleasant places” in song.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento

Italian Music of the Fourteenth Century

Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

VULGAR ELOQUENCE

As we know, the rise of European vernacular literatures began in Aquitaine, toward the end of the eleventh century, with the troubadours. By the end of the twelfth century, there was a significant body of vernacular poetry in French. By the end of the thirteenth century, the current had reached Germany. In all cases, the rise of a vernacular literature was accompanied by the development of song genres as the medium for its performance and dissemination.

Why then, with the marginal (that is, marginally literate) exception of the *lauda*, did Italy wait until the fourteenth century before developing a vernacular literature with its attendant music? The answer seems to be that for a long time the Italian aristocracy preferred their courtly songs in the “original”—that is, Occitan (or, less precisely, Provençal), the language of southern France. Throughout the thirteenth century, Aquitainian troubadours, some of them refugees from the Albigensian Crusades, were officially attached to the feudal courts of northern Italy and to the royal court of Sicily down below, where their work was imitated by local poets who took over not only their models’ subject matter and their forms but their language as well. Even Dante, in his unfinished treatise *De vulgari eloquentia* (“On high style in the vernacular”) of 1304–1306, tells us that, before making up his mind that it would after all be possible to write poetry of profound intellectual substance in the Tuscan dialect of his native Florence, he, too, had at first planned to use the time-honored and internationally prestigious Occitan tongue.

And yet Dante was also among the earliest writers to attempt a separation of poetry and music, holding that for stylistically ornate, philosophically weighty “cantos” (*canzoni*) in high style, the decorative addition of music would only be a distraction. He advocated the creation of special “mediocre” (that is, “in-between”) genres of pastoral *poesia per musica*—bucolic, descriptive poetry that would not be the main attraction, so to speak, but would furnish an elegant pretext for the creation of a secular music that, unimpeded by great verse, might itself aim higher than ever. Thus the Italian song genres, when they were at last established in the fourteenth century, gave rise from the beginning to a predominantly polyphonic and exceptionally decorative repertory.

That repertory had its own notation and its own generic forms, related by a common ancestry to those of contemporary France, but nevertheless distinctive and in some ways mysterious. It has been likened to a meteor or even a nova, “suddenly flaming into existence against an obscure background and, its fireworks spent, disappearing just as abruptly,” in the words of its leading recent historian, Michael P. Long.[1] Thanks to Long’s own research and that of several other scholars, that background is no longer quite as obscure as it once seemed.

The characteristic song-poem of “*trecento*” music—so-called after the Italian word for the fourteenth century (the “[one-thousand-and-]three hundreds”) to distinguish it from contemporary French “ars nova” developments—was called the *madrigale* (in English, madrigal). The name evidently descends from the Latin *matrix* (womb), the root of the Italian word for “mother-tongue” (*matricale*, whence *cantus matricalis*, “a song in the mother tongue”), and thus simply means a poem in the vernacular. It consisted of two or more three-line stanzas called *terzetti* (tercets), which are sung to the same music, and a single concluding one- or two-line “ritornello” in a contrasting rhyme scheme or meter. (The familiar sonnet form associated with Petrarch, and later of course with Shakespeare, is a related form that substitutes quatrains for tercets.)

The use of the word *ritornello*, seemingly a diminutive form of the word *ritorno* (“return”), to denote the one part of the song that does *not* repeat seems paradoxical on its face. The word is more likely derived not from *ritorno*, but from the Provençal *tornada* (“turnaround” or flourish), the “sendoff” verse that ended a stanzaic troubadour poem—for example, the *sestina*, a particularly dazzling *trobar clus* genre that had been invented by the twelfth-century troubadour Arnaut Daniel, for Dante the model of models (as he tells us in his *Purgatorio*.)

A striking confirmation of Dante’s view of Arnaut Daniel as the supreme forerunner or progenitor of Italian mother-tongue literature is an illustration, discovered by the musicologist Kurt von Fischer, from a Bolognese legal treatise (Fig. 10-1).[2] It shows the three main practitioners of the early madrigal—Giovanni de Cascia, a certain “Maestro Piero,” and in the middle, standing on a pedestal and with arm raised triumphantly, Jacopo of Bologna, the greatest musician of his generation. The three madrigalists are flanked, on the right, by a group of chanting monks, evidently representing music at its highest and best; on the left, they are flanked by Arnaut Daniel.

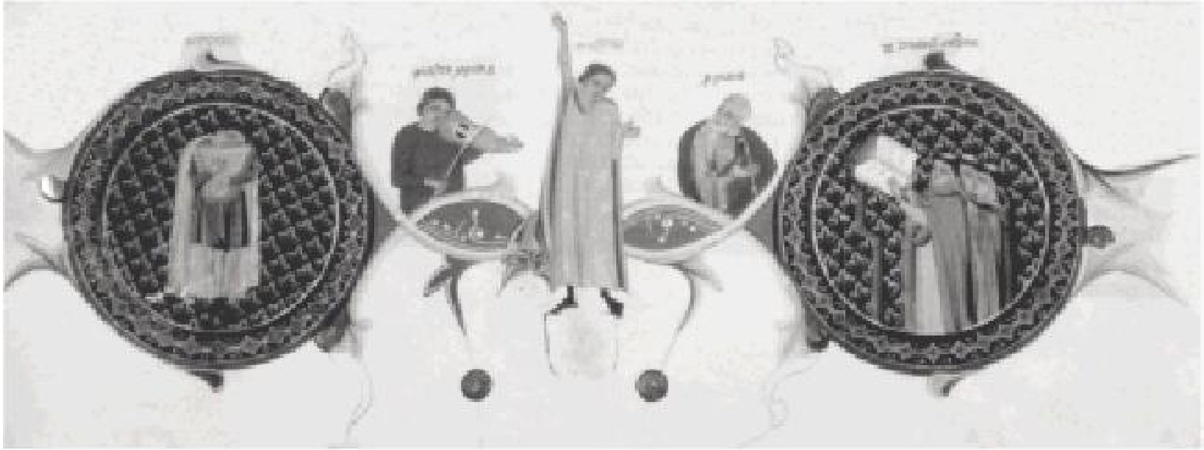

fig. 10-1 The troubadour Arnaut Daniel and his madrigalist offspring, Giovanni da Cascia, Jacopo da Bologna, and Master Piero, depicted in a fourteenth-century Bolognese legal treatise now in the Hessian Provincial Library at Fulda, Germany.

The three madrigalists, Piero, Giovanni, and Jacopo (to put them in order of apparent descending age), served side by side during the 1340s and early 1350s at the two richest north Italian courts, that of the Viscontis in Milan and that of the Scalas in Verona. Giovanni is shown holding a vielle or fiddle, which indicates that these poets may have performed their own songs as entertainers. The fact that they sometimes set the same texts suggests that they competed, as the troubadours had done, for prizes and favors. Their songs often address the same putative patrons—particularly a certain ANNA, whose name, though often concealed within other words like a troubadour *senhal* or code-name, is always written in the manuscripts in majuscules that proclaim her high birth and importance.

And sure enough, the Florentine chronicler Filippo Villani, in his *Liber de civitatis Florentiae famosis civibus* (“Book of famous citizens of the city of Florence”), tells us that Giovanni da Cascia, who came from the environs of Florence, “when visiting the halls of Mastino della Scala, lord of Verona, in search of a position, and competing in artistic excellence with Master Jacopo of Bologna, who was most expert in the art of music, intoned (while the lord spurred them on with gifts) many madrigals [and other songs] of remarkable sweetness and of most artistic melody.” The sources of trecento polyphony often look like the big presentation chansonniers in which the music of the troubadours was retrospectively preserved. In particular this is true of the so-called Squarcialupi Codex (named after a famous organist who was one of its early owners), a magnificent compendium that was put together around 1415 as a memorial to the art of the trecento when that art was moribund or, possibly, already dead. Its expensive materials and lavish illuminations make it literally priceless; but it is priceless in another sense as well: it preserves dozens of compositions that would otherwise have been lost. Its contents are organized, like troubadour chansonniers, by authors, each section being introduced by a (no doubt fanciful) portrait of the composer. (Compare the “portrait” of Bernart de Ventadorn from the Paris 12473, Fig. 4-2.) Nowhere do we get a more vivid sense of how consciously the poet-musicians of the trecento thought of themselves as the inheritors and reanimators of the lost art of Aquitaine.

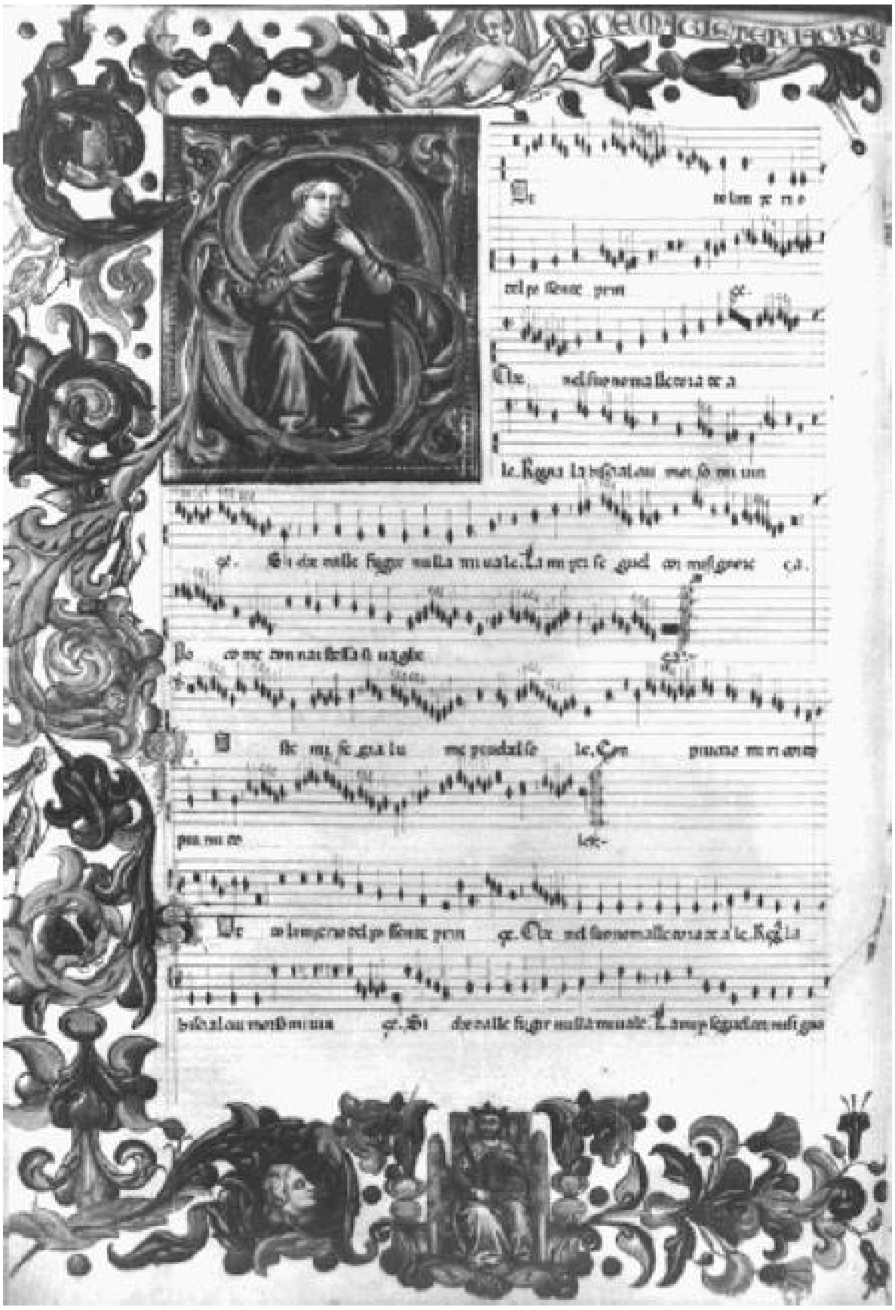

fig. 10-2 Jacopo da Bologna’s portrait page in the huge retrospective anthology of trecento polyphony known as the Squarcialupi Codex after one of its owners (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS. Palatino 87).

Notes:

(1) Michael Long, “Trecento Italy,” in *Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. J. McKinnon, *Music and Society*, Vol. I (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1991), p. 241.

(2) Kurt von Fischer, “‘Portraits’ von Piero, Giovanni da Firenze und Jacopo da Bologna in einer Bologneser-Handschrift des 14. Jahrhunderts?” *Musica Disciplina* XXVII (1973): 61–64.

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Madrigal

Marchetto da Padova

MADRIGAL CULTURE

Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But unlike the troubadours these Italian composers worked as polyphonists from the beginning: indeed, the earliest definition of madrigals, from a treatise on poetry dating from the early decades of the century, calls them “texts set to several melodies, of which one is primarily of longs and is called tenor, while the other or others is primarily of minims.”[3] And unlike the troubadours, but like the Parisian composers of motets going back to the thirteenth century, the madrigalists seem to have practiced their art, at the beginning, largely as an aspect of university culture.

Jacopo of Bologna, universally recognized as the leading composer of his generation, came from the most venerable of all the Italian university towns. (The University of Bologna, founded in 1088, grew out of a school of Roman law that went all the way back to the fifth century ce.) The fact that Jacopo, in addition to his poems and songs, wrote a treatise on discant suggests that he may have actually been a university teacher. Bologna’s only rival for academic eminence was Padua, site of Italy’s second oldest university, founded in 1222 by refugees who had fled Bologna in the course of the long struggle between papal and imperial power known as the War of the Guelphs and Ghibellines. And thus it is probably no coincidence that the basic treatise on the theory and notation of trecento music was the work of a Paduan musician.

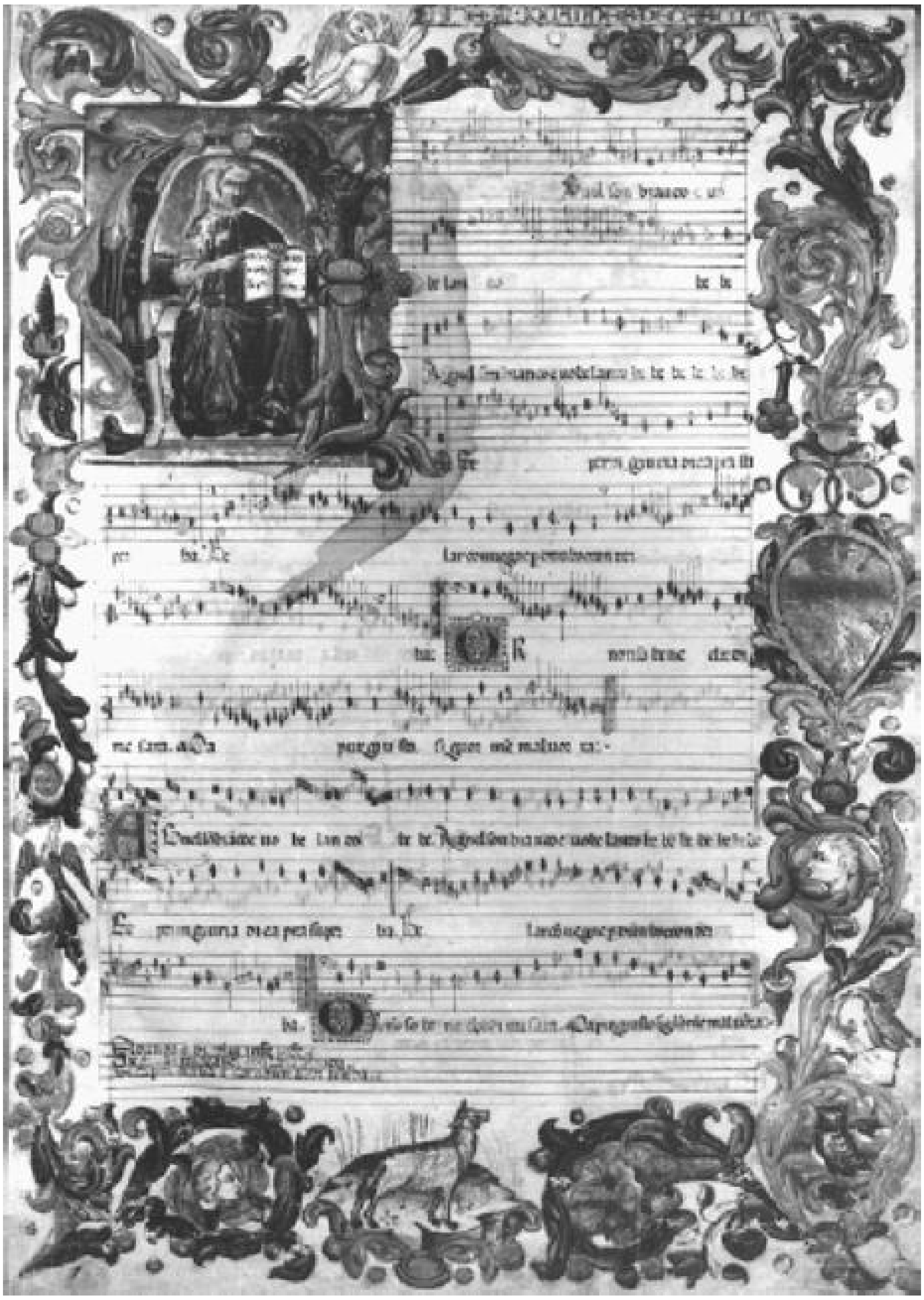

fig. 10-3 Giovanni da Cascia, from the Squarcialupi Codex.

Marchetto of Padua (d. 1326) acknowledged the assistance of a Dominican monk, Syphans de Ferrara, in organizing his treatise, called *Pomerium*—“The Fruit Tree,” containing the *flores et fructus*, the “flowers and fruits” of the art of mensural music—along scholastic lines. It is not clear whether Marchetto actually invented the notational system he expounded in this text completed in 1319 or just systematized it. Although he himself was a cathedral musician (his three surviving compositions are all motets, two of them Marian), his notational system was appropriated almost exclusively by the madrigalists and their thoroughly secular successors, which again implies dissemination through “liberal arts” rather than ecclesiastical channels.

The differences between the Italian and the French systems of notation, and they were considerable, may be explained by viewing the Ars Nova as a direct outgrowth of the “Franconian” notation of the thirteenth century, while the trecento system continued and refined the somewhat offbeat “Petronian” tradition—the tradition of Pierre de la Croix, the composer of those late thirteenth-century motets (like Ex. 7-10) that divided the breve into freely varying groups (or *gruppetti*, as we now call such things) of semibreves.

Marchetto classified all the possible meters of music into varying divisions of the breve. The short–long "Franconian" pairing of semibreves within a perfect breve Marchetto called "natural divisions" (*divisiones via naturae*, "dividing things nature's way"). Other divisions—long short, equal (imperfect), and the like—were classified as *divisiones via artis* ("dividing things up by way of art") or "artificial divisions," and were represented by modifying the "natural" note shapes with tails. A descending tail doubled the length of a semibreve; an ascending tail halved it, producing the equivalent of a French minim. When it came to grouping the minim-shaped notes, the basic distinction was between what the French called major and minor prolation, what we call compound and simple meters, and what the users of Marchetto's system distinguished as *gallica* and *ytalica*—"French" and "Italian" styles.

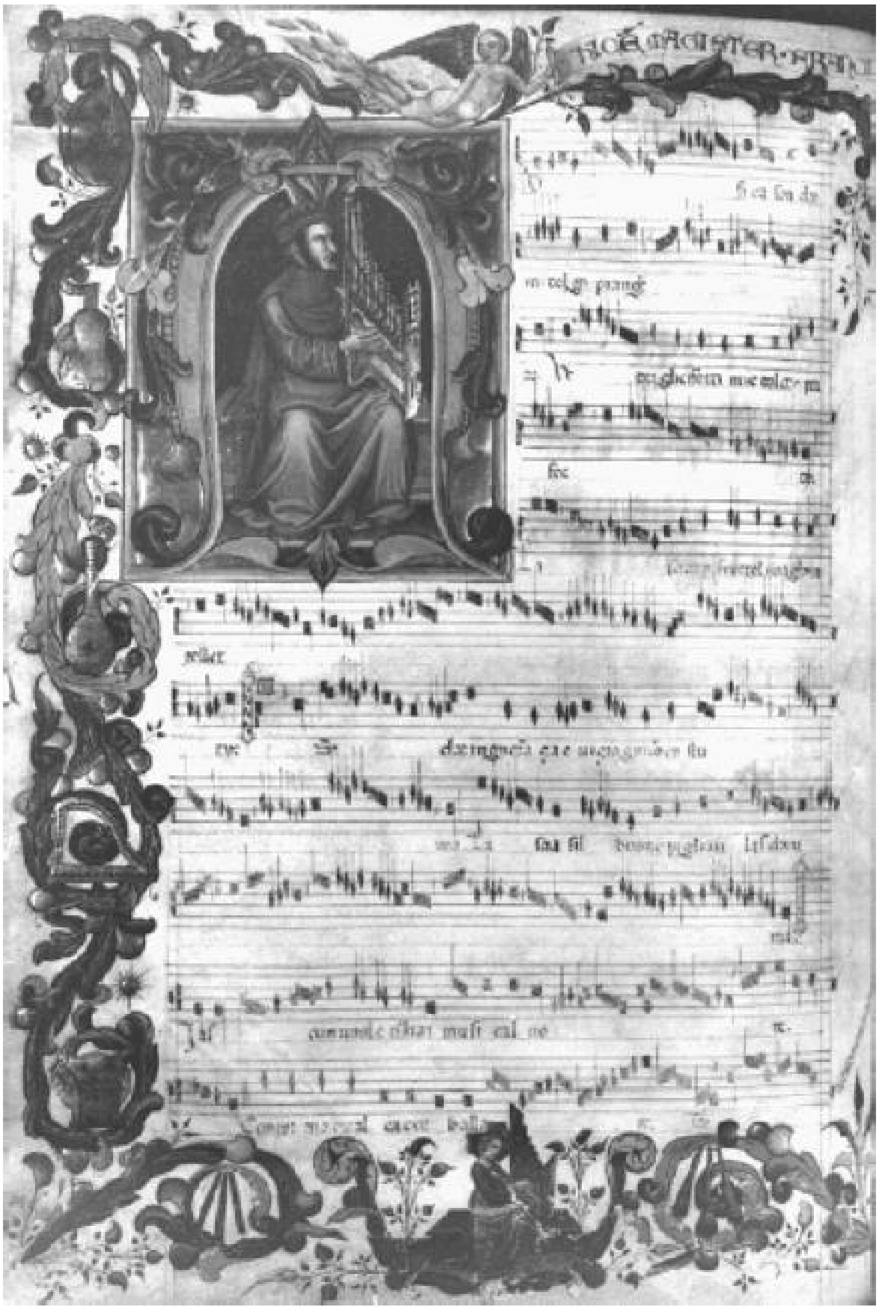

fig. 10-4 Francesco Landini wearing a laurel crown, from the Squarcialupi Codex. Although the piece that the portrait illuminates, the three-voiced motetlike madrigal *Musica son* ("Music Am I"), is one of Landini's most complex, the great majority of his works were in the less venerable genre of the dance song (*ballata*).

When it came to varying the rhythms that occurred within a basic meter or *divisio*, the Italian system, with its wide variety of tailed note shapes, was exceedingly supple and precise. At least one of these special Italian note-shapes—the single eighth note with a “flag” (the unit value of the so-called *octonaria* meter that divided the breve by eight)—has survived into modern notation. The rarer Italian shapes were a major source for the novel signs used by *ars subtilior* composers—including, for example, the double-stemmed notes called dragmas, which we encountered in Fig. 9-5. But of course many of the *ars subtilior* composers (including Philippus de Caserta, their leading theorist) were Italians working in France. They were actually drawing to a large extent upon their native traditions. So what used to be called the “mannered” notation of the late fourteenth century was in fact a conflation of French and Italian practices that widened the possibilities of both.

Notes:

(3) *Capitulum de vocibus applicatis verbis* (ca. 1315), quoted in Long, “Trecento Italy,” p. 248.

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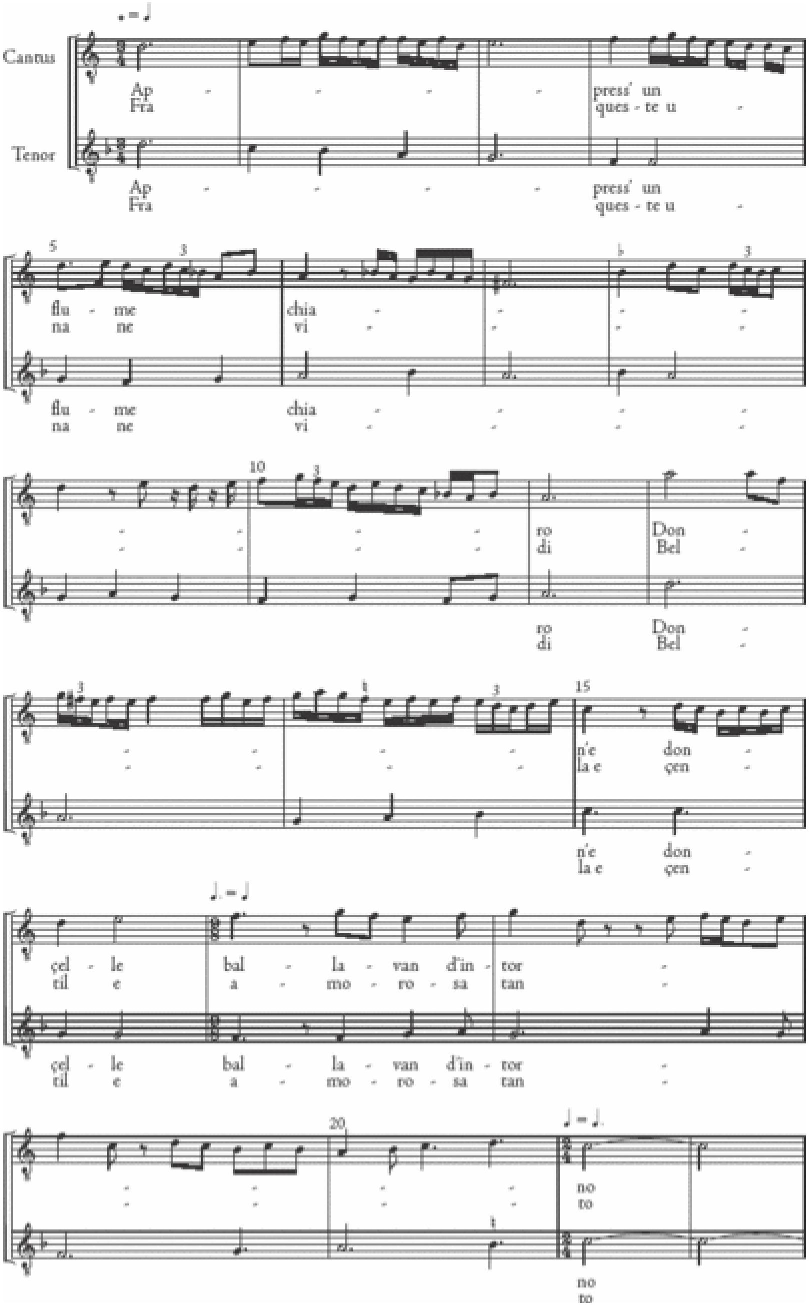
A NEW DISCANT STYLE

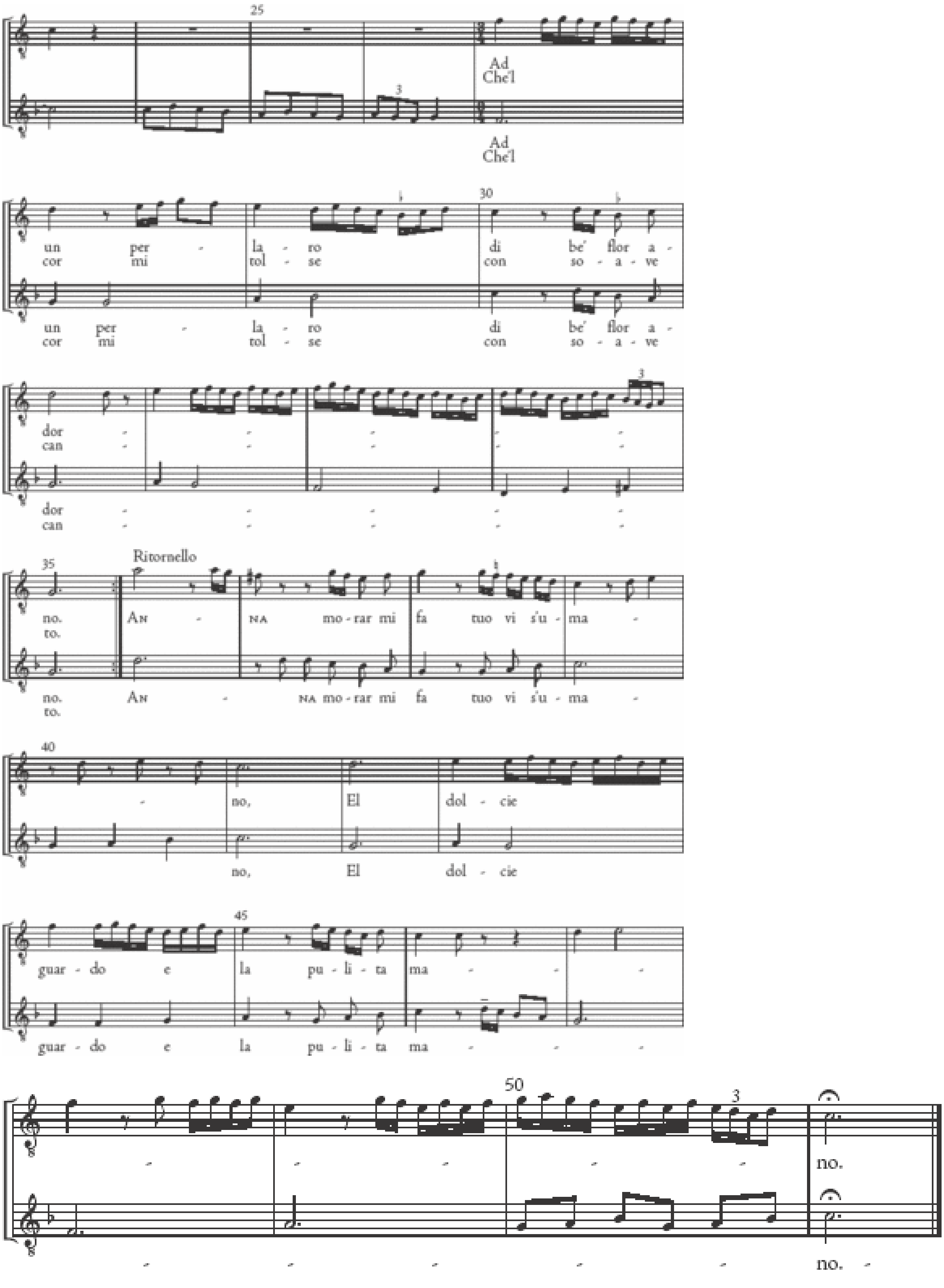
Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Giovanni de Cascia’s madrigal *Appress' un fiume* (“Hard by a stream”) shows every distinctive feature of the budding trecento style (Ex. 10-1). The opening stanzas (tercets) enumerate a veritable shopping list of the ingredients that went into defining the bucolic scene—the “pleasant place” (in Latin, *locus amoenus*) inherited from the classical authors of’ “idylls” and “eclogues” like Virgil and Theocritus—within which all pastoral lyrics were set: a stream, a shade tree, flowers in bloom. It is the setting familiar from paintings and tapestries of noble outings, the same noble villas and their grounds where these agreeable songs were generally performed. The human ingredients are likewise idyllic: a beautiful lady, her graceful dance, her sweet song. In the ritornello the lady—Anna, of course—is secretly named within the word “fall in love” (an[n]amorar).

The setting is for two supple men’s voices whose ranges lie about a fifth apart, with a common fifth in the middle that enables them to make cadences by *occursus*—that is, to the unison. Two-part discant counterpoint with *occursus* is something we have not seen in France since the twelfth century, and never in secular music. It is *the* characteristic madrigal texture. But it is no throwback. Everything else about the style is so new and fresh that the texture, too, is best seen in context as an Italian innovation—or, if you like, a reinvented wheel.

The way in which the music clothes the text is likewise characteristic. It is descriptive on several levels. Every line of the poem starts with a small melismatic flourish on the first accented syllable and ends with a large one on the last accented syllable, with most of the words occurring midway, in a clump. The words and music thus “alternate,” so that the melismatic singing does not unduly interfere with verbal comprehension. We habitually call such singing “florid,” perhaps without even realizing that the word derives from *flos* (plural *flores*), Latin for flower. The fourteenth-century Italians were in no doubt about this. Their word for “florid” singing was (and is) *fioritura*, “putting forth flowers,” and Michael Long is surely (and illuminatingly) right to compare the obligatory melismas to “audible projections of the flowery landscapes of madrigal poetry,” and to suggest that “the music of the madrigal was draped across its text like the floral garlands of which poets and theorists were so fond.”[4]


Cantus
Tenor
Ap - press' un flu - me chia - ro Don - n'e don - çel - le bal - la - van d'in - tor - no
Fra - ques - te u - na - ne vi - di Bel - la e çen - til e a - mo - ro - sa tan - to
5
10
15
20


25
Ad Che'l
Ad Che'l
30
un per - la - ro di be' flor a -
cor mi tol - se con so - a - ve
dor - - - - -
can - - - - -
35
Ritornello
no. An - na mo - rar mi fa tuo vi s'u - ma -
to.
40
no, El dol - cie
45
guar - do e la pu - li - ta ma - - -
50
3
no.

ex. 10-1 Giovanni de Cascia, *Appress' un fiume* (madrigal)

It was to accommodate this kind of floral music that Italian musicians developed their lengthiest and most elaborate meters. *Appress' un fiume* is composed in what Marchetto and his followers called *duodenaria* —division by twelve. In transcription the breve is represented by the full measure (dotted half note) and the most characteristic melismatic motion is by sixteenths grouped in fours, making twelve to a bar in all. (The occasional triplets were designated by special curlicues—they even look like floral fronds!—added to the note-stems.) But look what happens in m.17, when the text describes the ladies' dance: the meter changes (from .d. to .n. in the original notation), duodenaria (3 × 4) giving way to *novenaria* (3 × 3)—motion by triplets (that is, *alla gallica*, “Frenchwise”). Even then “French” meant “fancy.”

Notes:

(4) Long, “Trecento Italy,” p. 253.

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See also from Grove Music Online
Jacopo da Bologna

Caccia

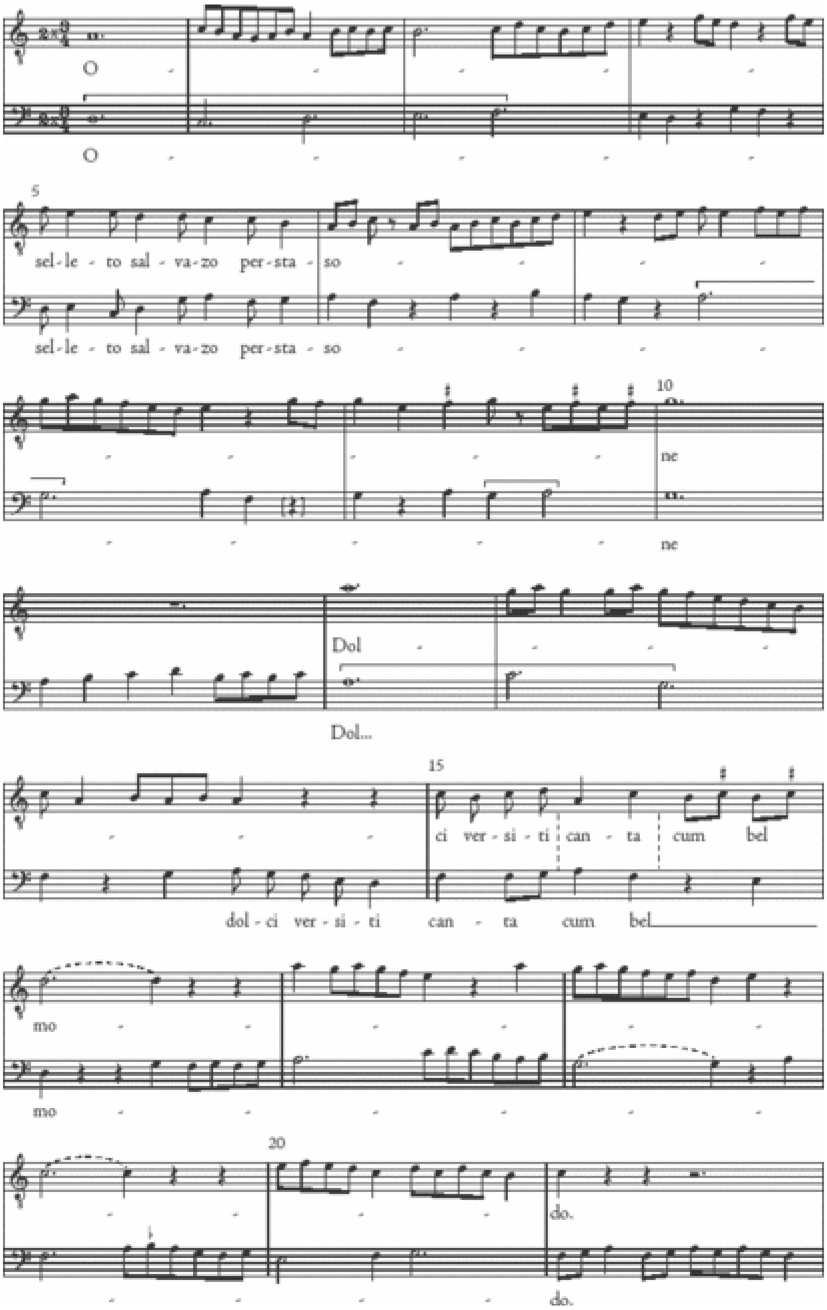
THE “WILD BIRD” SONGS

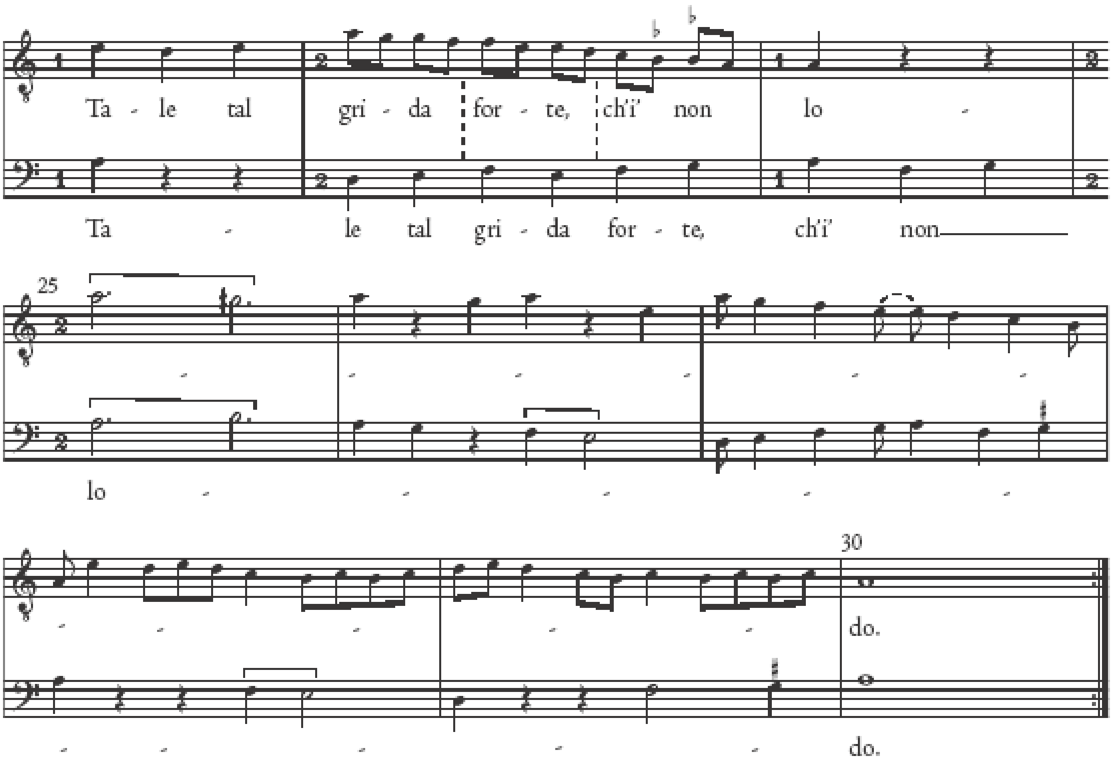
Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Jacopo da Bologna’s madrigal *Oselleto salvagio* (“A wild bird”), of which the first tercet is shown in Ex. 10-2a, is one of those music-about-music pieces that cast such a fascinating sidelight on the esthetics of fourteenth-century art. One also gets from it a sense of what are sometimes called “the uses of convention.”

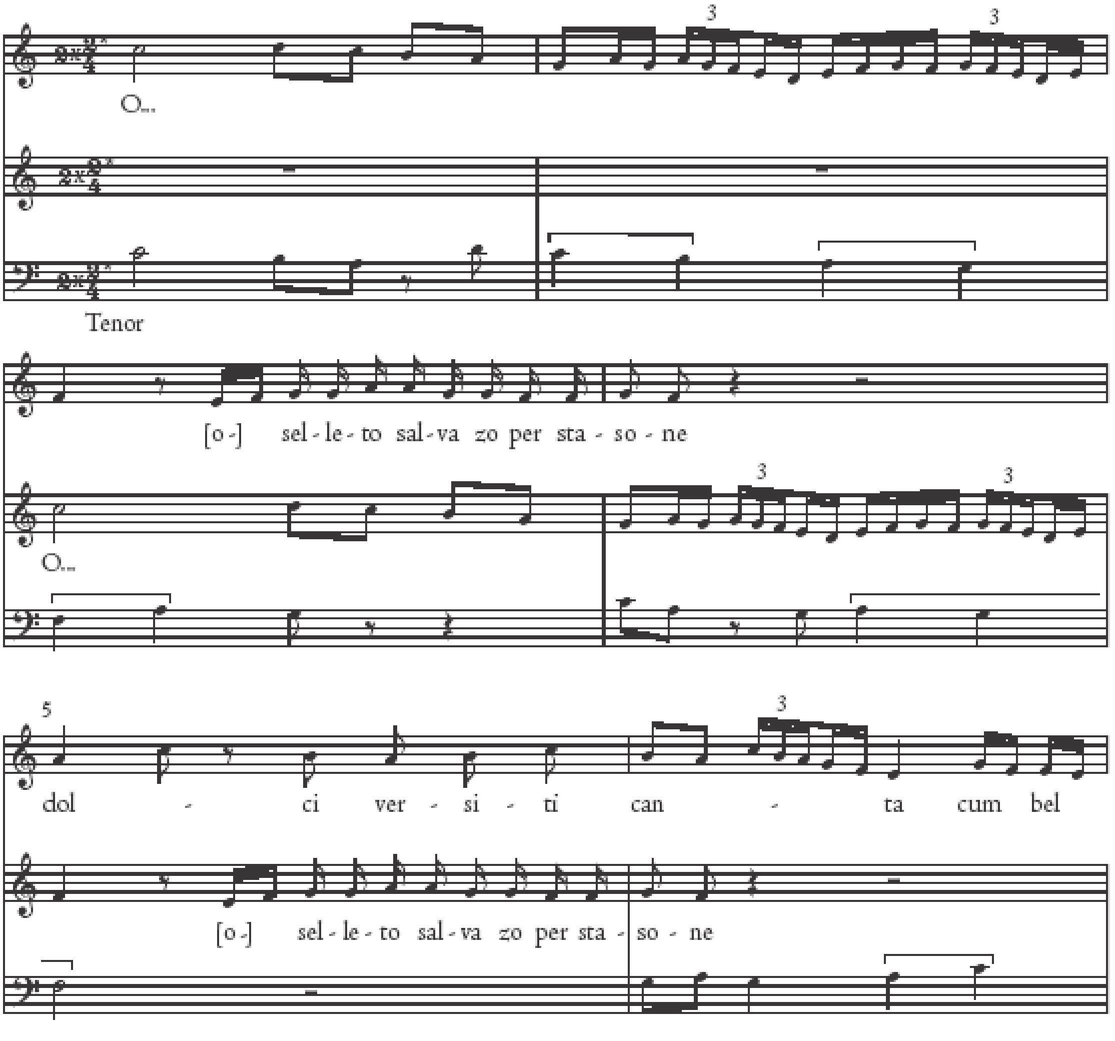
Romantic esthetics (which we have inherited) tends to disparage conventions as being nothing but constraints on creative freedom. All that a convention is, however, is something agreed upon in advance by all parties. A contract—obviously a constraint—would be one sort of example, but so is language, especially in its semantic aspect. (Words mean what they do because we have tacitly agreed upon their definition—that is, by convention.) And so is an established artistic genre.

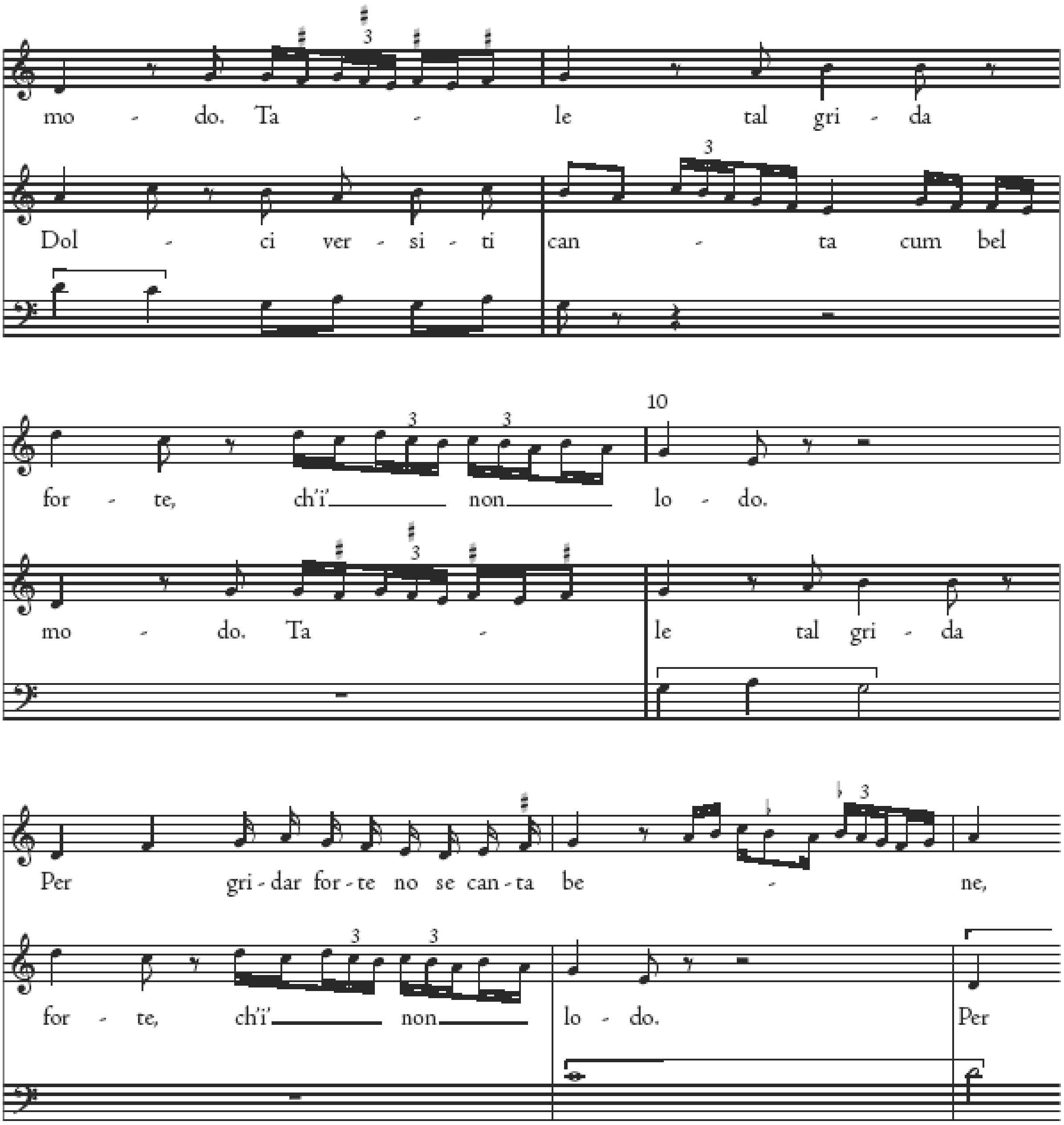
When artists work within well-established genres, they have made an unspoken contract with their audience, and, like the parties to a legal contract, have an awareness of what is expected from them. Yet there are many ways of honoring an expectation, in art if not in law. Not all of them are straightforward. Agreements can be honored “in the breach” as well as in the observance. Thus artists who work within established genres have the possibility of teasing their audience’s expectations and producing irony. (There can be no irony, or even humor, in the absence of conventional expectations, as a moment’s reflection will confirm.)


O
O
5
sel-le-to sal-va-zo per-sta-so
sel-le-to sal-va-zo per-sta-so
10
ne
ne
Dol
Dol...
15
ci ver-si-ti can-ta cum bel
dol-ci ver-si-ti can-ta cum bel
mo
mo
20
do.
do.


Ta - le tal gri - da for - te, ch'i' non lo -
Ta - le tal gri - da for - te, ch'i' non
25
lo
30
do.
do.

ex. 10-2a Jacopo da Bologna, *Oselleto salvagio*, set as madrigal, mm. 1-30


O...
Tenor
[o -] sel - le - to sal - va zo per sta - so - ne
O...
5
dol - ci ver - si - ti can - ta cum bel
[o -] sel - le - to sal - va zo per sta - so - ne


mo - do. Ta - le tal gri - da
Dol - ci ver - si - ti can - ta cum bel
10
for - te, ch'i' non lo - do.
mo - do. Ta - le tal gri - da
Per gri - dar for - te no se can - ta be - ne,
for - te, ch'i' non lo - do. Per

ex. 10-2b Jacopo da Bologna , *Oselleto salvagio*, set as caccia, mm. 1-12

Jacopo's poem begins as if setting the expected pastoral scene. The wild (or forest) songbird is a standard ingredient of "pleasant places." But having introduced the bird, the poet immediately turns it into a metaphor for song and proceeds to deliver a little sermon on the art of singing—an entirely nonconventional use of a conventional genre, but one that is tied intelligibly to the convention that is being "bent" or "sent up." By being the medium for a discourse on good singing, Jacopo's music thus becomes "exemplary." It must demonstrate the sweetness and moderation it proclaims.

Therefore it eschews the kind of "florid" virtuosity we saw in Giovanni's madrigal. It is cast in a meter—*senaria perfecta*, as Italian theorists would have called it—that characteristically moves exactly twice as slowly as Giovanni's *duodenaria*. In Jacopo's very lyrical setting, the fixed breve is divided into six semibreves grouped in pairs (rather than twelve grouped by four), hence eighth notes within time in transcription. One particular melodic feature that is especially characteristic of trecento music arises directly out of the *senaria perfecta* division. Note how frequently the paired notes take the form of descending seconds in the cantus part, cast in sequences (or, to revert to the familiar analogy, strung in garlands) with the first note in each pair repeating the second note of its predecessor in a sort of stutter. (The first instance is the delightfully syncopated initial “clump” of words in m. 5; compare it with the rhythmically more straightforward and typical clump in m. 23.)

This type of melodic motion may have been considered symbolically expressive; in later music it is called a “sigh-figure,” which puts it in the category of “iconic” representation. That is, it symbolizes emotion by mimicking the behavior of a person responding to emotion. The idea that art expresses through imitation is an old Greek idea (hence the word *mimic* itself, one of several English words that come from the Greek *mimesis*, “imitation”; others are “mime,” “mimetic,” even “[m]imitation,” which lost its initial *m* by being filtered through Latin). But it does not contradict the imitation theory in the slightest if we also notice that the sigh-figure falls very naturally under the hand of somebody playing on an *organetto*, a tiny “portative” (portable) organ held perpendicular to the body and played with one hand on the keyboard, the other on the bellows. To judge from the illuminations in the Squarcialupi Codex (including two given here as illustrations), rare was the trecento composer who did not play it. (To judge by the more detailed depictions of the portative in fifteenth-century paintings, it was fingered 2–3–2–3, etc., which would make a sequence of “sighs” virtually the easiest thing in the world to produce on it.)

But now a new irony, a new twist: Jacopo ostensibly eschewed virtuosity in his “wild bird” madrigal only to indulge it to the hilt in another setting of the same poem, in which the text is spat out so quickly that the first tercet (shown in Ex. 10-2b) takes only 12 measures in transcription. This version of *Oselleto salvagio* is a *caccia*. The word being so clearly cognate to the French *chace*, we may expect a canon. And a canon it is, albeit with a difference. For Italian poet-musicians the *caccia* was a type of madrigal (which is why Jacopo could recycle a madrigal poem in writing one). That meant a form in two sections (*terzetti* and *ritornello*), and it meant a texture consisting of a cantus (in this case running against itself in canon) over a tenor. So the Italian *caccia*, unlike the French *chace*, always had a “free” part.

But of course it was not literally free, since it had to concord harmonically with the canon that it accompanied. In fact it was more “bound,” which is to say constrained harmonically and contrapuntally, than the canon itself. For obvious reasons, a voice accompanying a canon is generally written last. So the caccia was, of all fourteenth-century genres, the most necessarily and rigorously (and literally) “top-down” in compositional or generative method. Unlike the tenors of madrigals, those of caccias never carry the text. Does that mean that they were performed by instruments? The musicological jury is still out on that one, but it is clear enough that assumptions are risky. There are many proven instances in which the presence or absence of text is not a reliable indicator of performance medium. It is worth mentioning, therefore, that literary references to the performance of madrigals or caccias never use any verb but “sing.”

Like the word *chace*, the word *caccia* had a built-in “extramusical” association, and so its subject matter frequently involved the hunt. (And like the chace, it frequently resorted to onomatopoeia, dog-language, and the like; compare Ex. 9-19 with Ex. 10-3). So again, the standard definition of the genre enabled a sophisticated composer like Jacopo to ring ironic changes on the genre’s implications. A “wild bird” in the context of a caccia meant something different from what it meant in the context of a madrigal: not song but prey. But here, too, the topic was appropriate and relevant, and so its instant metaphorization is again suitably ironic.

Also ironic, of course, is the insistence on sweet, soft, and elegant singing, since the usual caccia text (like the one tendentiously excerpted in Ex. 10-3, replete with quail, dogs, and hunter’s horn) contained so many invitations to “loud shouting.” To sing the virtuosic music in Jacopo’s caccia smoothly and in “lovely” fashion requires (as the poem warns) the ultimate in vocal control. Notice, too, that in the caccia setting of *Oselleto salvagio* the *octonaria* semibreve (that is, one-eighth of a breve, represented in transcription by a sixteenth note) gets to carry individual syllables of text. (In Giovanni de Cascia’s madrigal, that level of duration was found only in melismas.) In its caccia guise, Jacopo’s song could well have been a test for singers—or (as we have every reason to suspect) a contest piece.

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Ballata

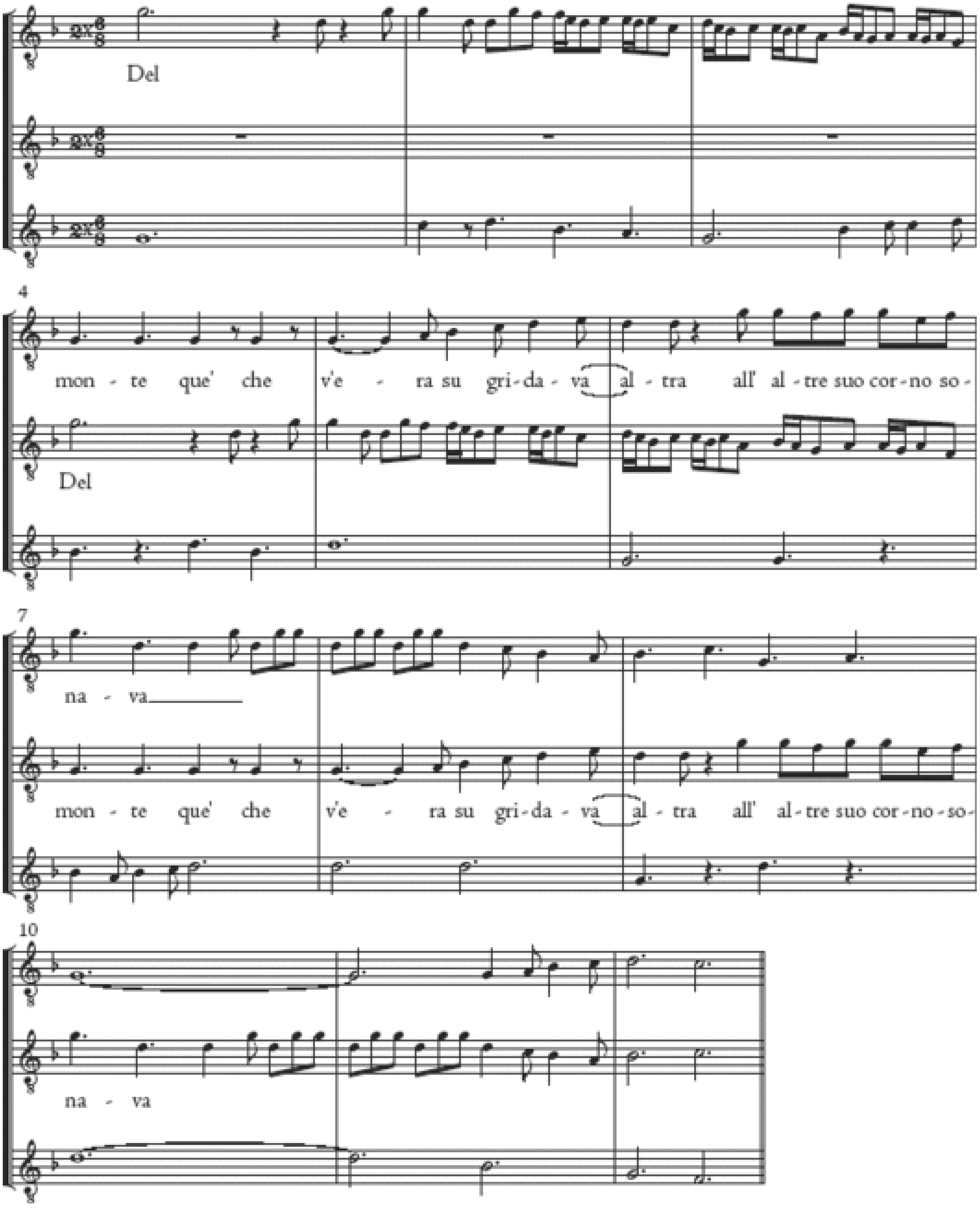
Jacopo da Bologna

BALLATA CULTURE

Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Besides motets and madrigals, Jacopo mentions a third musico-poetic genre in the *Oselleto salvagio* text—the *ballata*, which gradually stole pride of place from the madrigal over the course of the century. *Ballata* is the past participle of *ballare*, “to dance,” identifying the genre as a dance(d)-song with refrain, thus associating it with the French *chanson balladé* or virelai. The French and Italian dance songs were counterparts in every way, and there is good evidence that as an “art” genre the ballata was directly influenced by the virelai.

Unlike the “learned” madrigal, cultivated in universities, the ballata began as a folk or popular genre, which is to say an oral and monophonic one. The beginnings of its literate tradition can be found in a favorite book of the period, the oft-translated *Decameron* by the Florentine Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75), the trecento’s great prose classic. Like Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (for which it served as model), the *Decameron* is a collection of tales motivated by a situation that brings together a social microcosm, whose members regale one another with titillating, often ribald stories that vividly expose contemporary mores and social attitudes.


Del
4
mon - te que' che v'e - ra su gri-da - va al - tra all' al - tre suo cor-no so-
Del
7
na - va
mon - te que' che v'e - ra su gri-da - va al - tra all' al-tre suo cor-no-so-
10
na - va

ex. 10-3 Gherardello da Firenze, *Tosto che l'alba* (caccia)

The setting is Florence in 1348, the year of the plague. A group of seven young ladies and three young gentlemen have fled the infested city to the suburbs, where they go from villa to villa, enjoying the sybaritic pleasures of the countryside as they wait out the epidemic. On each of ten days each member of the party tells a tale, and the day's entertainments are formally concluded with the performance of a ballata—either one known by heart or, in some cases, one improvised on the spot—by a member of the company, accompanied by others (again, extemporaneously) on various instruments. It was in ostensibly "transcribing" the fruits of the oral culture, as it were, that Boccaccio made literary genres out of the secular prose tale, on the one hand, and the ballata, on the other.

The ten *ballate* inset within Boccaccio's narrative consist of strophic stanzas with a refrain that either frames the lot or comes between each stanza and the next. (As usual, the oral tradition is not fully known to history.) One of them (*Io me son giovinetta*, "A girl am I [and gladly do rejoice at springtime]"), became a "classic," widely set by composers of a later age (beginning in the sixteenth century), when *ballate* were no longer used for actual dancing, and when (therefore) their form as such was no longer heeded by composers who set them to music.

Only one ballata by Boccaccio (not in the *Decameron*) was set by a contemporary: *Non so qual i' mi voglia* ("I know not which I would"; Ex. 10-4), with music by a Florentine composer who went by the name of Lorenzo Masini ("Lawrence, son of Thomas," d. 1372 or 1373). Like the virelai as practiced by Machaut, the ballata remained at first a largely monophonic genre even when written down by artistically trained composers.

Non so qual i' mi voglia resembles the ballate in the Decameron, and thus might be thought of as the "purebred" Italian ballata. But it was precisely Lorenzo's generation of trecento composers that began showing symptoms of musical Francophilia (as a credential, perhaps, of literacy and learnedness). Lorenzo wrote a famous caccia called *A poste messe* ("After Mass") in three parts, all of them canonic—in other words (but for the language of the text and the form of the poem) a *chace*. He also wrote a madrigal over an isorhythmic tenor in which each phrase is immediately followed by a syncopated rhythmic diminution—in other words, a madrigal-motet. And he even wrote a ballata to a French text—in other words a *virelai*.

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Francesco Landini

Ballata

Landini cadence

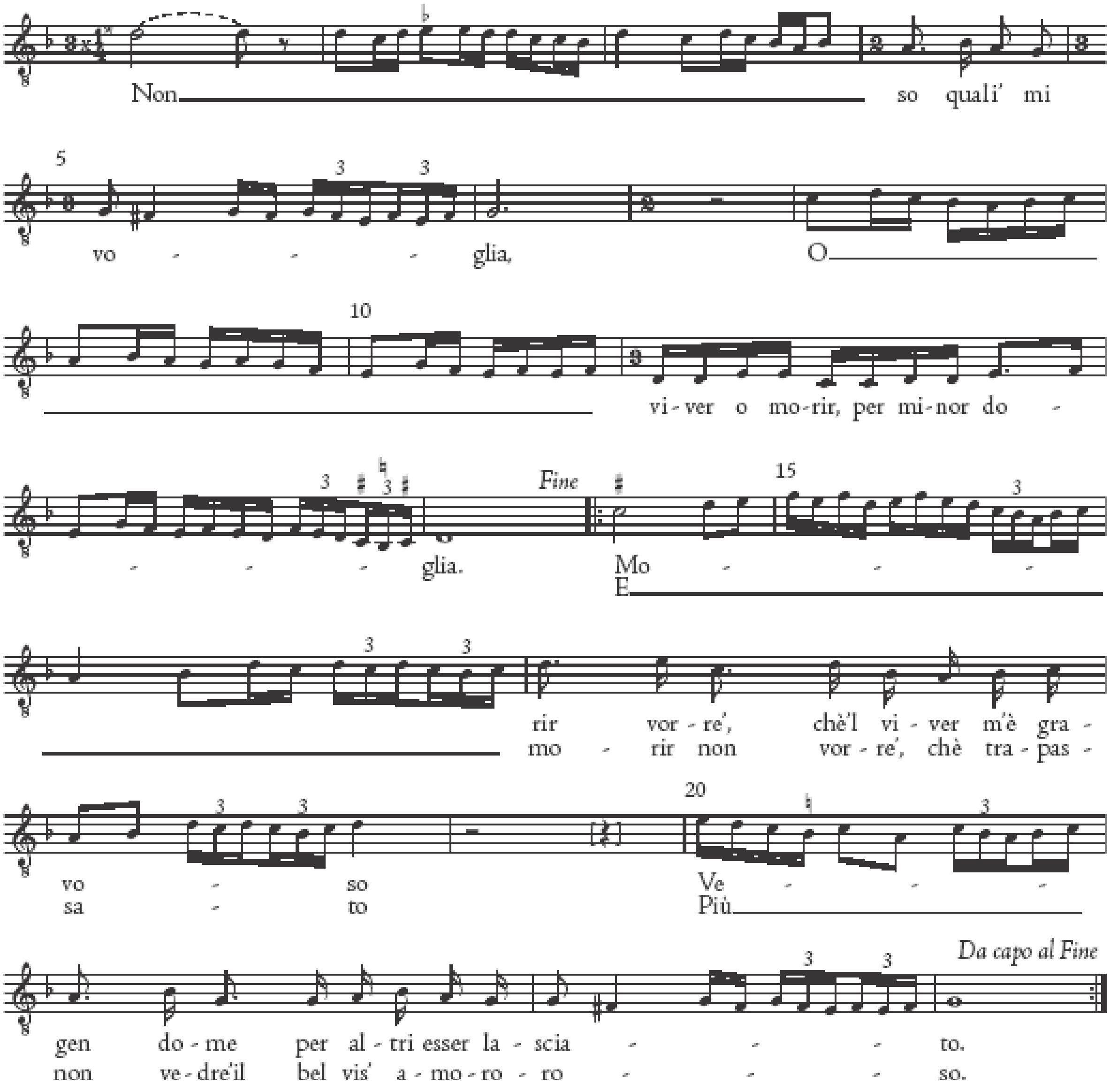
LANDINI

Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Nevertheless, it is not until the next (last) generation of trecento composers that we begin to find *ballate* in a truly gallicized style—that is, ballate with their form adapted to the French manner by means of a “contained” refrain (or, to put it another way, with a “turnaround” or *volta* consisting of a new verse sung to the refrain melody), with open-and-shut cadences for the inner verses, and a three-part texture that included a contratenor. Such ballate could be called Italian virelais, and their great master—regarded by all his contemporaries as the greatest musician of the trecento—was a blind Florentine organist named Francesco Landini (1325–97).

Of all trecento composers Landini has by far the largest surviving body of works—though it is hard to say whether that fact reflects his greater productivity or the greater zeal with which his compositions were preserved. Out of more than 150 compositions by him that have come down to us, only fifteen (twelve madrigals, a caccia, and a couple of miscellaneous songs, one in French) are anything but polyphonic ballate. Of the ballate, about forty, or one-third, have the French three-part texture.

This enormous emphasis on what was originally the humblest and least literary of the trecento genres reflects a changed social setting. Where the early madrigalists had competed for laurels at the courts of the northern Italian nobility, Landini and his Florentine contemporaries made music for the Florentine ruling class, which was an urban mercantile and industrial elite. (As Dante noted sadly, there was no central court or noble residence in Florence; it was a republican city-state.) Landini’s Frenchified ballata style may have reflected the tastes of that class, which maintained a lively commerce with their French counterparts. Florentine businessmen spent much of their time in French-speaking centers to the north and west, and learned the French language as a matter of business necessity. The later fourteenth century was a period during which the Tuscan vernacular language itself, to say nothing of the local art-music, suffered a great influx of gallicisms.


Non
so quali' mi
5
vo - - - glia,
O
10
vi-ver o mo-rir, per mi-nor do -
- - - glia.
Fine
Mo - - -
E
15
rir vor-re', chè'l vi-ver m'è gra -
mo - rir non vor-re', chè tra-pas -
vo - so
sa - to
20
Ve - - -
Più
Da capo al Fine
gen do-me per al-tri esser la-scia - - - to.
non ve-dre'il bel vis' a-mo-ro-ro - - - so.

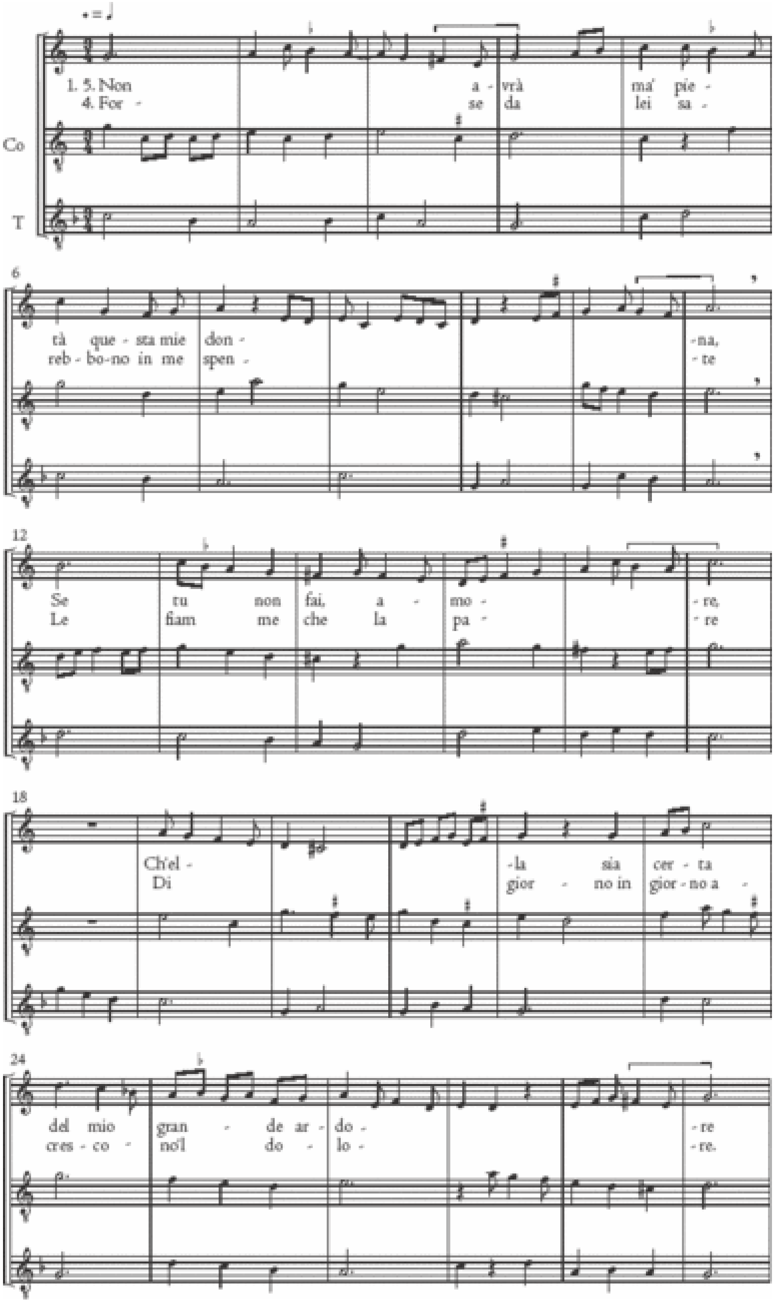
ex. 10-4 Lorenzo Masini, *Non so qual i' mi voglia* (ballata; text by Boccaccio)

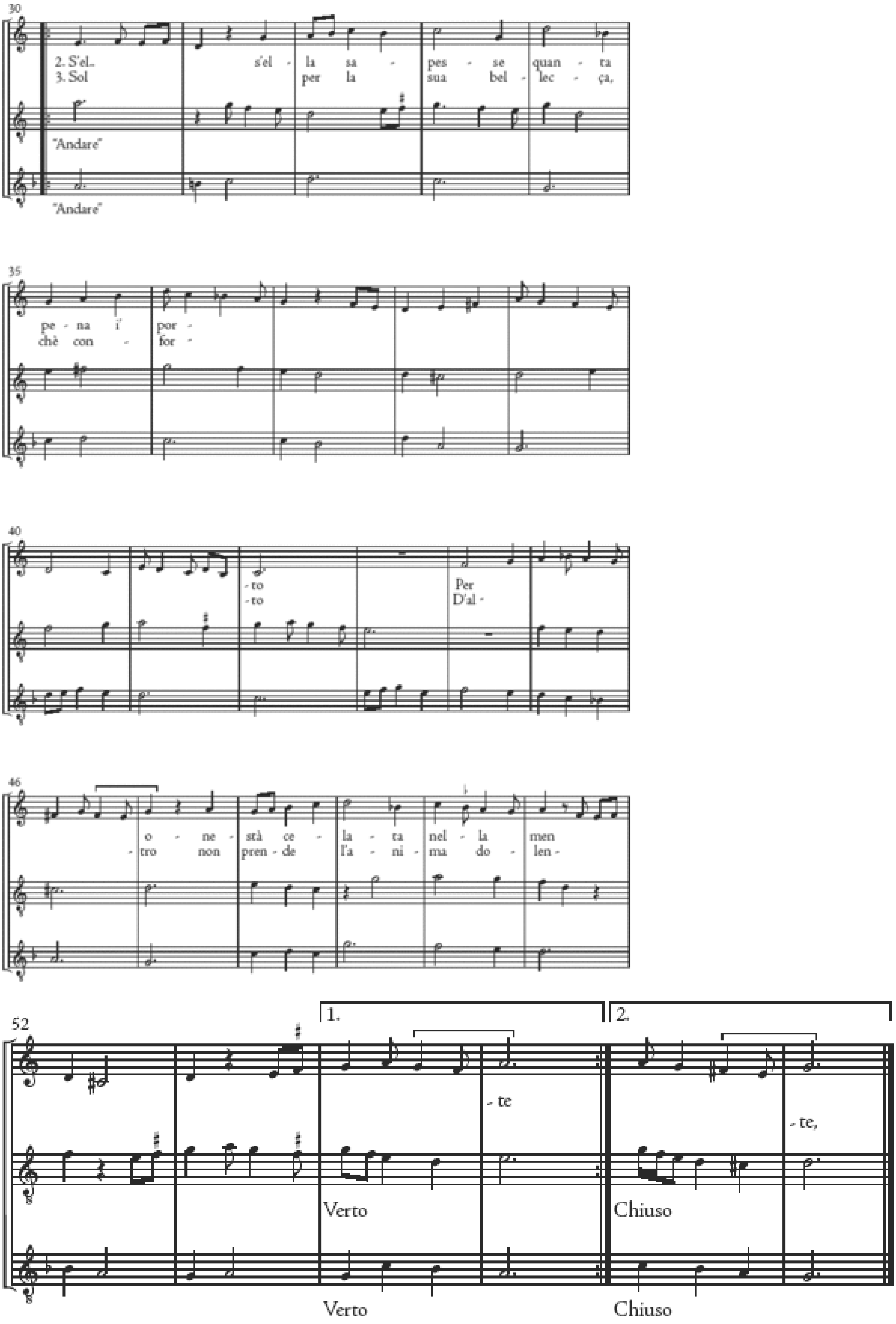
Like many of the troubadours, Landini was born into the artisan class, which in Florence was no impediment to social prominence. His father had been a church painter, and he himself earned his living (and much of his local fame) as an organ technician. So it is not surprising that the works of an artisan musician within an urban industrial community should have differed greatly from those composed by *literati* (university-trained clerics) for dynastic courts. Landini's ballate do not so much evoke bountiful pastoral surroundings or extol voluptuary pleasures or narrate venereal conquests as communicate personal feeling—often the conventionalized love-longing of the troubadours (by the fourteenth century more a "bourgeois" affectation than a noble sentiment). Therein lay the difference between the "madrigal culture" of the noble north and the "ballata culture" of the Tuscan trading centers.

The three-voiced, thus presumably later *Non avrà ma' pietà* ("She'll never pity me," Ex. 10-5) was one of Landini's most popular ballate, and it is one of the most thoroughly gallicized as well. The texture, with a single texted cantus accompanied by an untexted tenor and contratenor, is indistinguishable from that of a virelai. The open and shut cadences of the middle verses or *piedi* (first on the "supertonic," then on the final) are reminiscent of Machaut. Besides the language of the text, only the "clumping" of the poem's syllables between melismas at the beginnings and ends of lines remains characteristically Italian.

And yet Landini's fingerprint is unmistakable, owing to the use of a cadential ornament originally so peculiar to him as to bear his name, though it eventually became a stylistic commonplace in the thoroughly internationalized music of the fifteenth century. Every one of the three standard "double leading-tone" cadences in the *ripresa* (refrain or "A" section) of *Non avrà ma' pietà* (mm. 10–11, 16–17, 28–29), and the final cadences (both open and shut) in the *piedi* show the same melodic progression to the final, in which the *subtonium* (or note-below-the-final) proceeds down an additional scale step (from the seventh degree above the final to the sixth) before leaping up to the ending note, its behavior resembling what we would now call an "escape tone." (Besides the structural cadences as noted, one can see the ornament in mm. 3–4 and 46–47 as well; all occurrences of it are bracketed in Ex. 10-5.)

This 7–6–1 cadence, sometimes called the "under-third" cadence, is more commonly called the "Landini cadence" or "Landini sixth." As the counterpoint in *Non avrà ma' pietà* shows, moreover, it is often allied with a hemiola pattern (in the cantus against in the tenor and contratenor) that produces a characteristic precadential syncopation. (The syncopation, too, would become a standard feature of fifteenth-century counterpoint, eventually emphasized by a characteristic dissonance that we now call a suspension.) For once the personalized term is not a misnomer. "Gregorian chant" may not have much to do with Gregory, nor the "Guidonian Hand" with Guido, but the Landini cadence is fairly associated with Landini, whose ballate were, as Michael Long has put it, "the first body of polyphonic works in which it appears with systematic regularity and structural weight"[5] —*structural* because the cadences it decorates are typically, though not exclusively, those that correspond to the ends of verse lines.


• = ♩
1. 5. Non a - vrà ma' pie - tà que - sta mie don - na,
4. For - se da lei sa - reb - bo - no in me spen - te
Co
T
6
12
Se tu non fai, a - mo - re,
Le fiam me che la pa - re
18
Ch'el - la sia cer - ta
Di gior - no in gior - no a -
24
del mio gran - de ar - do - re
cres - co - no'l do - lo - re.

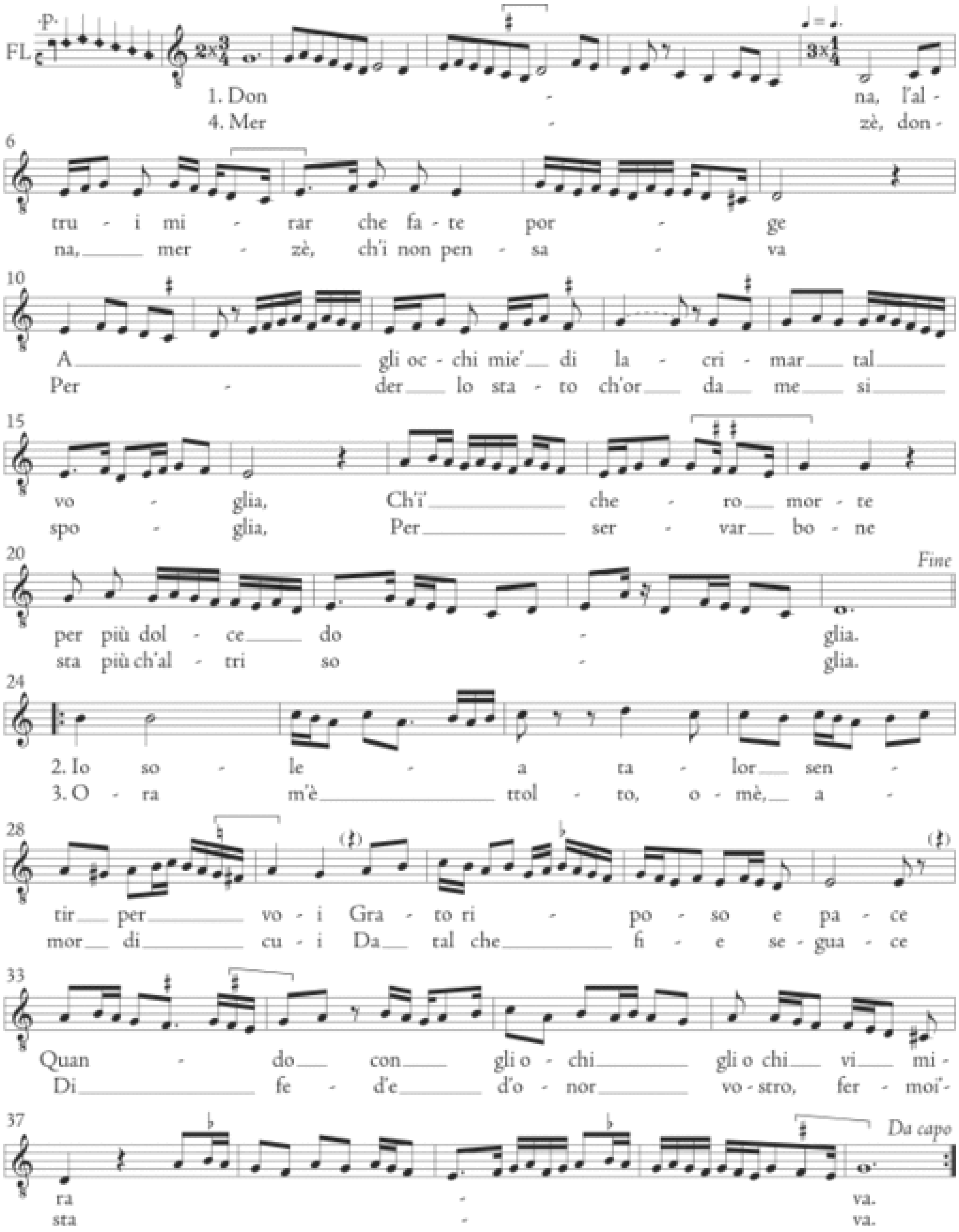

30
2. S'el..
3. Sol
s'el - la sa - pes - se quan - ta
per la sua bel - lec - ça,
"Andare"
"Andare"
35
pe - na i' por -
chè con - for -
40
- to
- to
Per
D'al -
46
o - ne - stà ce - la - ta nel - la men
- tro non pren - de l'a - ni - ma do - len -
52
1.
2.
- te
- te,
Verto
Chiuso
Verto
Chiuso

ex. 10-5 Francesco Landini, *Non avrà ma' pietà* (ballata)

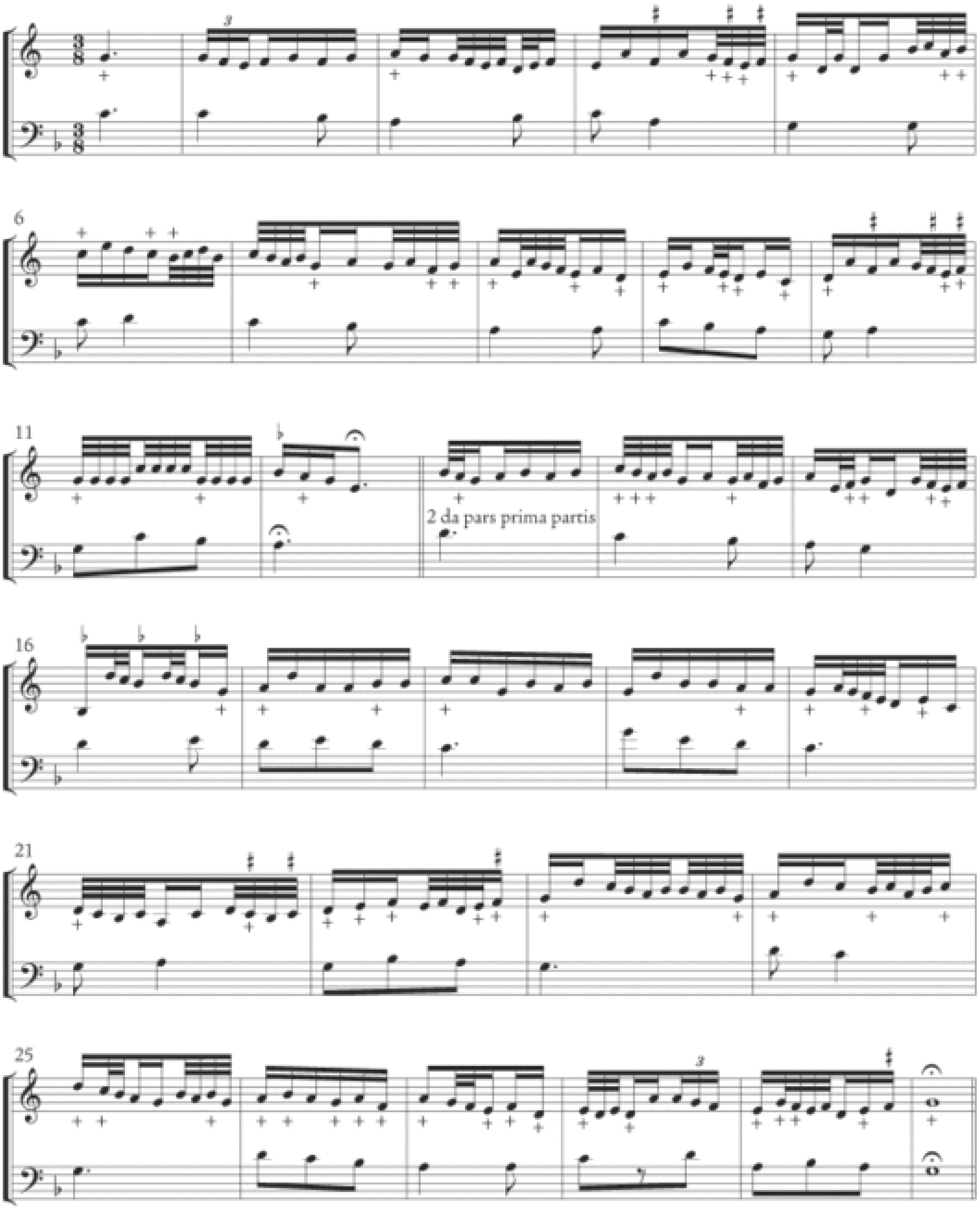
And yet the cadence can also be viewed as a typically trecento melodic pattern, found even in monophonic

Florentine ballate, like *Donna l'altrui mirar* ("O Lady, who belongest to another") by Gherardello da Firenze (d. 1363), where it seems to recall the "sigh-figure" of expressively descending paired notes (Ex. 10-6). Gherardello, an older contemporary and countryman of Landini's, was also the author of the caccia *Tosto che l'alba*, sampled in Ex. 10-3. What Landini did was to give the "under-third" cadence a home within the newly Frenchified polyphonic texture, thus making it exportable.

One of the ways we know that Landini's ballata *Non avrà ma' pietà* was exceptionally popular is its inclusion in the Faenza keyboard manuscript, put together about two decades after Landini's death. We first met this manuscript in chapter 9 as a source for the Kyrie *Cunctipotens genitor* and for a ballade by Machaut. The mixed contents of the book is another indication that Italian and French styles were fast interpenetrating by the end of the fourteenth century. When we remember that Landini was the foremost organist in Italy, and that this had been his chief claim to contemporary fame, it is hard not to speculate on the extent to which the keyboard arrangements in Faenza may reflect his improvisatory skills.


FL
2x 3/4
3x 1/4
1. Don - na, l'al -
4. Mer - zè, don -
6
tru - i mi - rar che fa - te por - ge
na, mer - zè, ch'i non pen - sa - va
10
A gli oc - chi mie' di la - cri - mar tal
Per - der lo sta - to ch'or da me si
15
vo - glia, Ch'i' che - ro mor - te
spo - glia, Per ser - var bo - ne
20
Fine
per più dol - ce do - glia.
sta più ch'al - tri so - glia.
24
2. Io so - le - a ta - lor sen -
3. O - ra m'è ttol - to, o - mè, a -
28
tir per vo - i Gra - to ri - po - so e pa - ce
mor di cu - i Da tal che fi - e se - gua - ce
33
Quan - do con gli o - chi gli o chi vi - mi -
Di fe - d'e d'o - nor vo - stro, fer - moi' -
37
Da capo
ra - va.
sta - va.

ex. 10-6 Gherardello da Firenze, *Donna l'altrui mirar* (monophonic ballata), cadences embellished with "Landini sixth"



ex. 10-7 Faenza version of *Non avrà ma' pietà*

Like the arrangement of Machaut's *De toutes flours* (Ex. 9-10), the arrangement of *Non avrà ma' pietà* (of which the first section is given in Ex. 10-7) consists of a virtuoso filigree over the original tenor. The filigree in this case conforms rather more to the outlines of the original cantus part than in the case of Machaut's piece; compare the notes marked "+" in Ex. 10-7 with the cantus of Ex. 10-5.

Certain features of the florid part in this setting have struck some commentators as unidiomatic for the keyboard. One is the tendency of the parts to cross, or to occupy the same note (= key). Another is the use of rapid repeated notes, as in the first cadence of the first part. These features would seem less problematical, the same writers have suggested, if the piece were re-imagined as a duet for two lutes, played (as was then the custom) with quills or plectrums. But if this is a notated lute duet, it is a completely isolated specimen. Nor are lutenists ever shown reading from sheet music in pictures before the sixteenth century.

At any rate, we may have here a kind of chance aural snapshot of the kind of music-making for which Landini was especially distinguished in his daily life as a musician, which was ineluctably "oral," not literate

(For one very obvious physical reason Landini could not have read any music, not even his own, from this or any book; it is worth mentioning, too, that he was only the first of many famous blind organists in the history of European music—the line extends right up to the twentieth century, with the organists Helmut Walcha and Jean Langlais, the latter also a noted composer.) But of course there is no reason to assume that this particular intabulation is a transcription of Landini's actual performances. On the contrary, the intabulator seems not even to have known that the work in question was a ballata: the sections after the first main cadence are marked "second part of the first part" and "second main part"; there is no indication that the "first part" is the one that actually ends the piece.

Notes:

(5) Michael Long, "Landini's Musical Patrimony: A Reassessment of Some Compositional Conventions in Trecento Polyphony," *JAMS* XL (1987): 31.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Francesco Landini

Madrigal

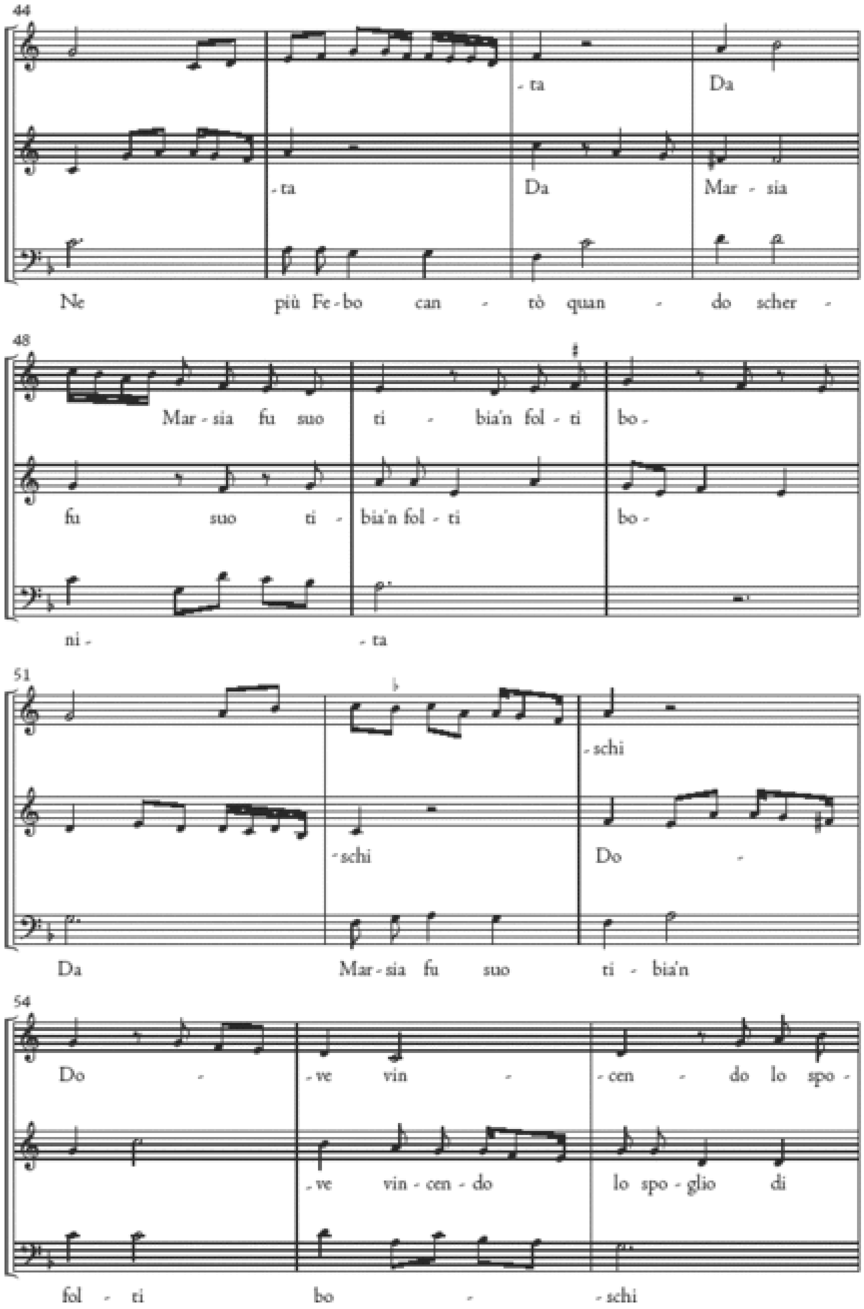
Motet: Italy

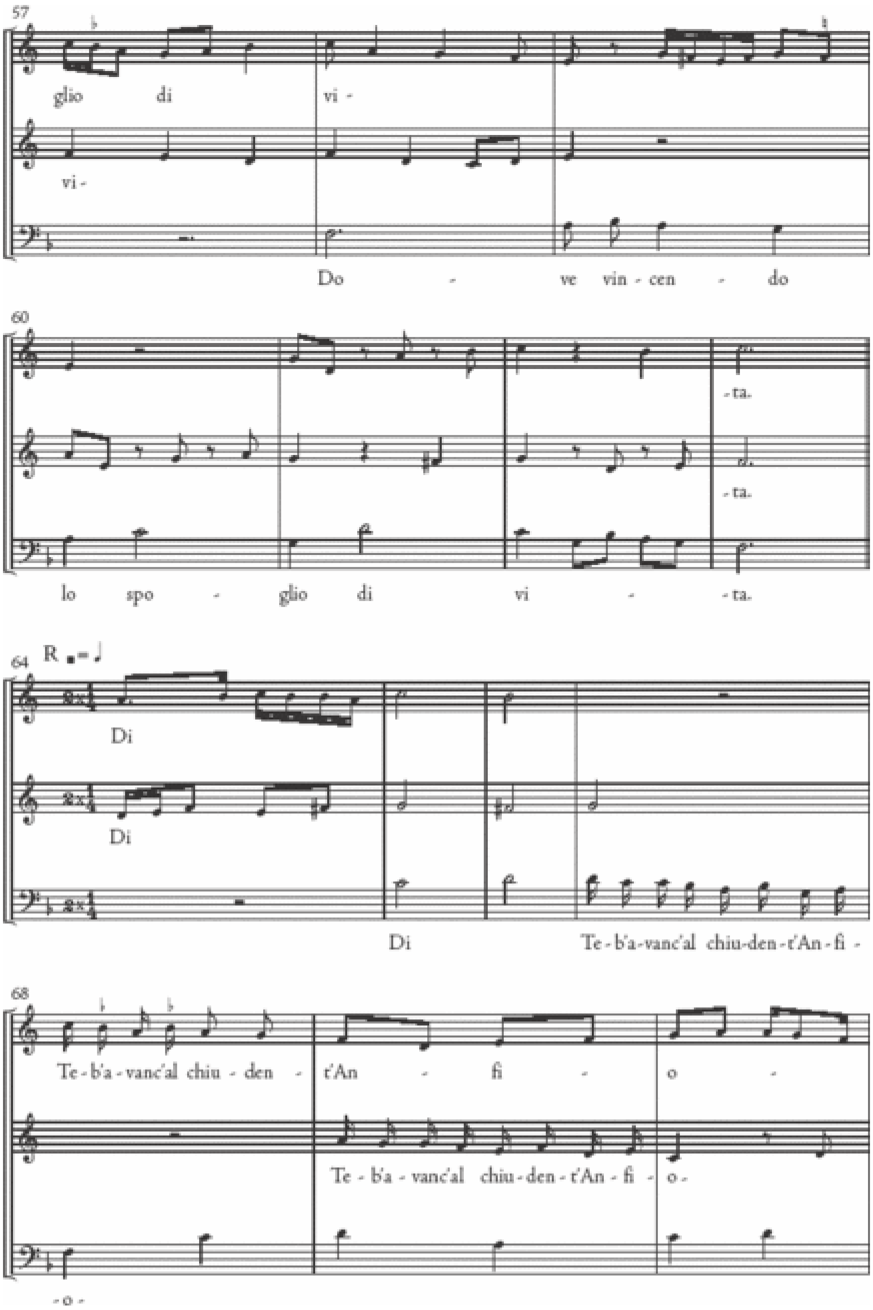
LATE-CENTURY FUSION

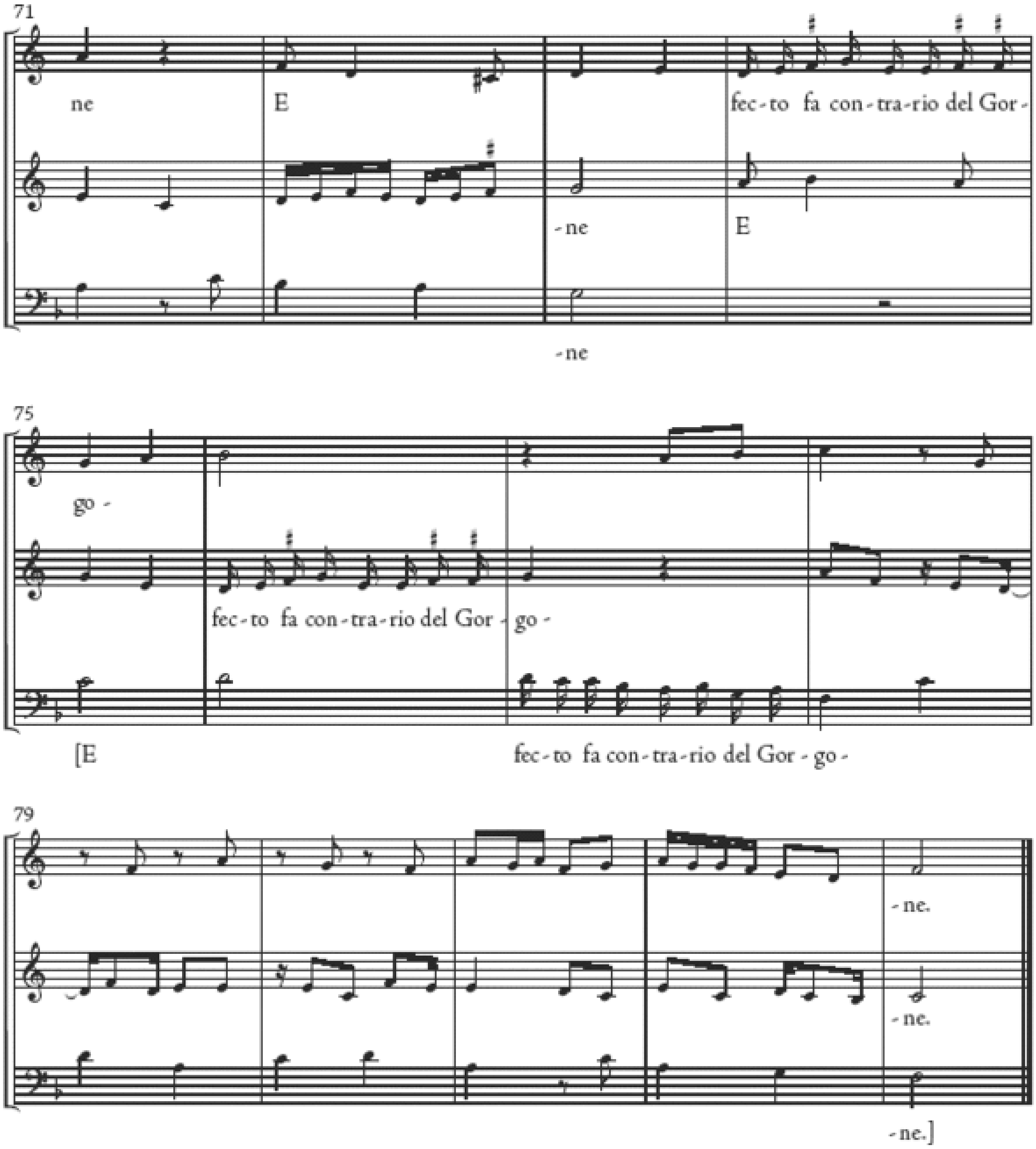
Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Landini’s hilarious little madrigal *Sy dolce non sonò con lir' Orfeo* offers an especially rich and witty merger of French and Italian genres, all most inventively adapted to one another. Its distribution of voices, with the part labeled “contratenor” sharing the range of the cantus rather than the tenor, harks back to the texture of the motet rather than the virelai. And sure enough, a motet it is, albeit one with only a single text. What makes it conceptually a motet is the fact that it is built up from a tenor that has been laid out, foundation-wise, in advance. This we can tell even though the tenor quotes no cantus firmus, because it is fully isorhythmic in the Ars Nova manner.

Yet for all its “Frenchness,” it is modeled exactly on, and illustrates, the structure of the Italian poem. A madrigal, we recall, consists of a number of three-line strophes called tercets—in this case three—followed by a contrasting ritornello. The tenor’s thrice-repeated 21-measure *color* coincides with the tercet, and within each color the thrice-repeated 7-measure *talea* coincides with each of the tercet’s constituent lines. The ritornello offers another surprise. It could also be viewed as isorhythmic in its tenor layout, with a twice-repeated color and a twice-repeated talea that happen to coincide. But since a coinciding color and talea amounts to plain repetition, we might also view the ritornello tenor as parodying a pair of *piedi* from a ballata, especially since the *colores* actually differ very slightly at their endings—one of them being “open” (cadence on G) and the other “shut” (cadence on F, the final). Ex. 10-8 shows the third tercet and the ritornello.


44
- ta Da
- ta Da Mar - sia
Ne più Fe - bo can - tò quan - do scher -
48
Mar - sia fu suo ti - bia'n fol - ti bo -
fu suo ti - bia'n fol - ti bo -
ni - - ta
51
- schi
- schi Do -
Da Mar - sia fu suo ti - bia'n
54
Do - - ve vin - - cen - do lo spo -
- ve vin - cen - do lo spo - glio di
fol - ti bo - - schi


57
glio di vi -
vi -
Do - ve vin - cen - do
60
- ta.
- ta.
lo spo - glio di vi - - ta.
64
R ▪ = ♩
Di
Di
Di Te - b'a - vanc'al chiu - den - t'An - fi -
68
Te - b'a - vanc'al chiu - den - t'An - fi - o -
Te - b'a - vanc'al chiu - den - t'An - fi - o -
- o -


71
ne
E
fec-to fa con-tra-rio del Gor-
-ne
E
-ne
75
go-
fec-to fa con-tra-rio del Gor-go-
[E
fec-to fa con-tra-rio del Gor-go-
79
-ne.
-ne.
-ne.]

ex. 10-8 Landini, *Sy dolce non sonò* (madrigal in motet style)

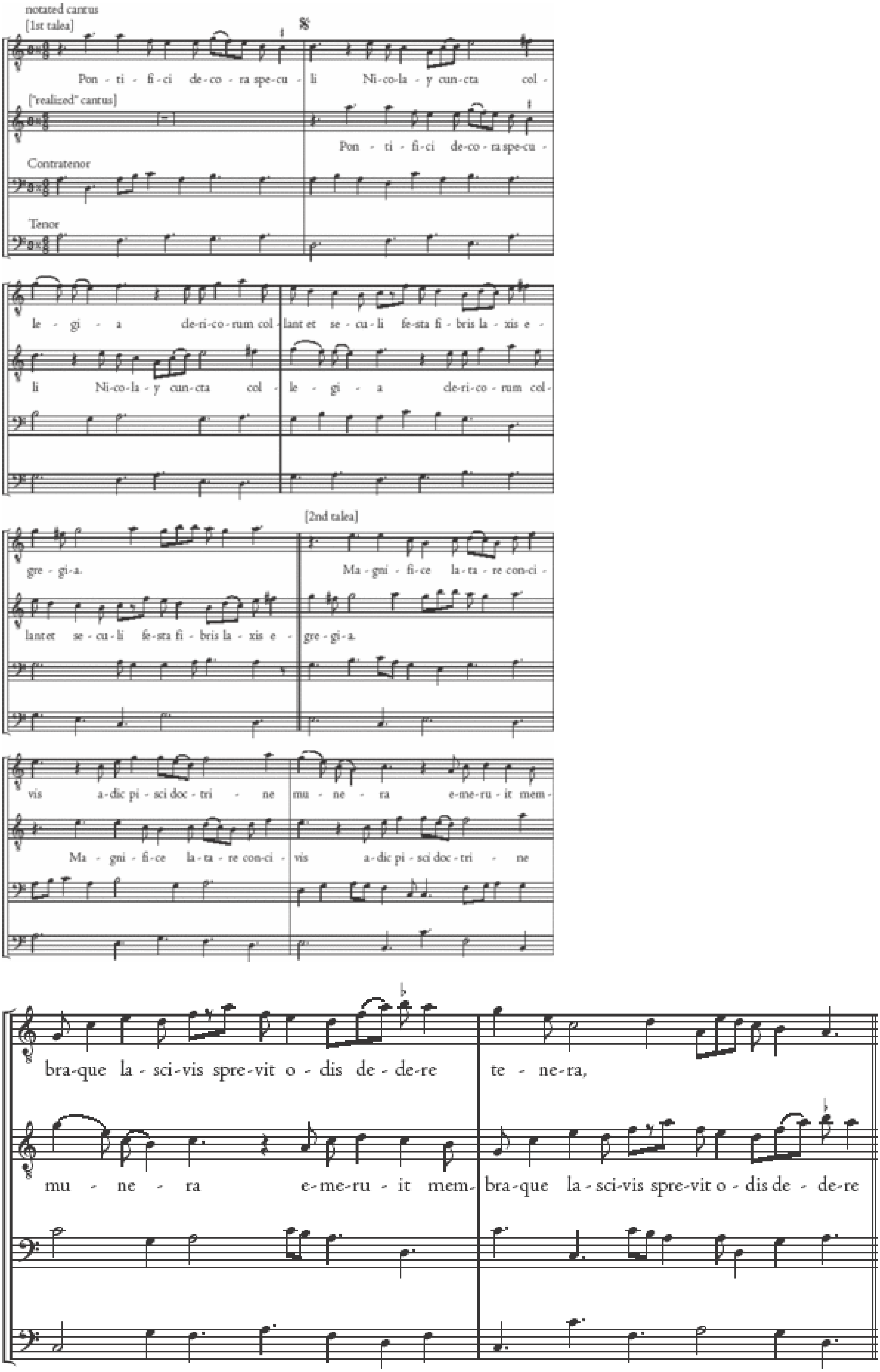
Landini even manages to work a few jesting references to the *chace* into the ritornello. The first little rash of texted minims in the tenor is mimicked in turn by the other two voices in successive measures. And on the rash's repetition, the other voices anticipate rather than follow the tenor, which now appears to have the last of three imitative entrances. The text is also a spoof, joshing the high-flown rhetoric of the early madrigalists, much given to classical and mythological allusions. Here no fewer than four mythological musicians—Orpheus, the prototype of lyric poetry (that is, poetry sung to the lyre); Philomel, the archetypal nightingale; Amphion, who could charm stones with his lyre; and the satyr Marsyas, master of the flute—are invoked, only to be compared with the poet's little red rooster who can outsing them all. "Its effect," the poet deadpans, "is the opposite of the Gorgon's," whose ugliness turned men into stone. The concluding, rather Gorgonesque melisma, piling hockets atop snaking syncopations, adds a final touch of satire.

But who is this "rooster"? In Italian, the word is *gallo*. Might Landini's *gallo* not be a stand-in for a certain *gallico*—a certain Frenchman? If, as has been most plausibly proposed, we regard *Sy dolce non sonò* as a veiled tribute to Philippe de Vitry, the virtual (or, at least, the reputed) inventor of the isorhythmic motet, the whole concept of the piece and its affectionate parody of French genres takes on a new level of meaning.

The gallicization of the Italian style was matched, albeit a few decades later, by the Italianization of the French, both tendencies converging on an internationalized style that in fact became truly international. That was to be the great musical story of the fifteenth century. We can observe its beginnings from an angle opposite to Landini's—that is, from the French perspective—by analyzing the very different mix of generic ingredients in *Pontifici decora speculi*, a motet in honor of Saint Nicholas by "Johannes Carmen," a name we enclose in quotes because it is so obviously a Latin pseudonym ("John Song") for a Parisian composer active in the first decades of the fifteenth century. A likely patron for such a musician would have been Nicholas of Clémanges, the rector of the University of Paris from 1393 as well as secretary and chief legal defender of the notorious Benedict XIII, the unsinkable Avignon antipope; the prayer on behalf of St. Nicholas's "servants," then, might well have been a name-day tribute to the ancient saint's living namesake. Ex. 10-9 shows the first and second of its five quatrains.

But for the language of its text, this motet looks in its manuscript source for all the world like a chanson. Only the cantus part is texted, and there are an accompanying pair of voices (tenor and contratenor) that share the same pitch-space. The text, divided into five quatrains of iambic pentameters, all in the same rhyme scheme but with different actual rhyme-words (thus: abab/cdcd/efef/ghgh/ijij) resembles the conductus texts of old (or the new-fangled sonnet) far more than it does the typical motet text of its day. So why is the piece called a motet? Because it is isorhythmic: each texted stanza is sung by the cantus to the same talea. (There is no color—unless one is content to describe the nonrepetitive melody of the cantus as a single continuous color, which rather defeats the meaning of the word.) Thus, what usually characterizes the tenor in an isorhythmic motet here characterizes the cantus.

All of this is indeed unconventional for a French motet, but where is the Italian connection? It comes in the inconspicuous little "sign of congruence" (*signum congruentiae*) that directs a second singer to enter at the beginning when the first has reached the end of the first phrase. The work, in short, is a canon. But it is not just any sort of canon; it is a two-part canon for a cantus over a tenor. In other words, it is a *caccia*—but not an entirely conventional caccia, either, since it has a "French" contratenor in addition to the tenor.


notated cantus
[1st talea]
Pon - ti - fi - ci de - co - ra spe-cu - li Ni-co-la - y cun-cta col -
["realized" cantus]
Pon - ti - fi - ci de-co - ra spe-cu -
Contratenor
Tenor
le - gi - a cle-ri-co - rum col - lant et se - cu - li fe-sta fi - bris la - xis e -
li Ni-co-la - y cun-cta col - le - gi - a cle-ri-co - rum col-
[2nd talea]
gre - gi-a. Ma - gni - fi-ce la - ta - re con-ci -
lant et se - cu - li fe-sta fi - bris la - xis e - gre - gi - a.
vis a-dic pi - sci doc - tri - ne mu - ne - ra e-me-ru - it mem -
Ma - gni - fi-ce la - ta - re con-ci - vis a - dic pi - sci doc - tri - ne
bra-que la - sci-vis spre-vit o - dis de - de-re te - ne-ra,
mu - ne - ra e-me-ru - it mem- bra-que la - sci-vis spre-vit o - dis de - de-re

ex. 10-9 Johannes Carmen, *Pontifici decora speculi* (motet in caccia style)

Nor are conventional *caccie* isorhythmic. But like a motet, a caccia does have to be composed “successively.” The canonic pair of voices have to be worked out in advance of the accompanying voices, just as an isorhythmic tenor, with or without a corresponding contratenor, has to be worked out in advance of the upper parts. So the motet and the caccia have a genuine affinity; the addition of isorhythm to the canonic part(s) of a caccia emphasizes that affinity. As in *Sy dolce non sonò*, Landini’s madrigal motet, the result is a genuine stylistic synthesis—something more than a stylistic juxtaposition or a hodgepodge of genres—and a step toward genuine internationalization.

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Renaissance

Italy: Renaissance

AN IMPORTANT SIDE ISSUE: PERIODIZATION

Chapter: CHAPTER 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Was there a musical “Renaissance”? Was this it? To ask such questions, of course, is to answer them. If there were no problems with the term, there would be no questions to ask. The short answer to questions like these is always (because it can only be) yes and no. A fair sorting of the issues is the best we can do or hope for, one that will address not only the immediate case but also the question of periodization as broadly as it can be framed.

The “yes” part of the answer addresses the broad question. Artificial conceptual structures are necessary for the processing of any sort of empirical information. Without them, we would have no way of relating observations to one another or assigning them any sort of relative weight. All we would be able to perceive would be the daily dribble of existence multiplied by weeks and years and centuries. That is the very antithesis of history.

On a more mundane level, we need subdivisions of some kind in our conceptualization of history because subdivisions provide handles by which we can grip the part of the story that interests us at the moment without having to contend at all times with the whole. Without such conceptual subdivisions, which when applied to chronology we call “periods,” we would have no way of delimiting fields of research, or of cutting up a book like this into chapters, or of organizing scholarly conferences, or (say it softly) of recruiting faculties of instruction at colleges and universities.

There is always the attendant risk that artificial conceptual subdivisions, hardened into mental habits, become conceptual walls or blinders. And there is also the related risk that traits originally grouped together for convenience will begin to look as though they are inherent (or *immanent*, “in-dwelling,” to use the philosopher’s term for it) in the material being sorted rather than the product of a creative act on the part of the sorter. When we allow ourselves to be convinced that traits we have adopted as aids in identifying and delimiting the “medieval” or “Renaissance” phases of history are in some sense inherent qualities of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance—or worse, that they express the “spirit” of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance—we have fallen victim to a fallacy.

That fallacy is called the fallacy of “essentialism.” When an idea or a style trait has been unwittingly defined not just as a convenient classifying device but as something *essentially* “medieval” or *essentially* “Renaissance,” we are then equipped (or rather, fated) to identify it outside as well as inside the boundaries of the period in question. They are then liable to take on the appearance of “progressive” traits (if they show up, as it were, in advance of their assigned period) or “regressive” ones (if they show up afterward). Not only does this confusion of assigned attribute with natural essence contribute to the teleological view of history as a directed march of styles (directed toward what, though, and by whom?); it also reflects back upon whatever it is that we are observing the values we associate with terms like progressive and regressive, which are borrowed from the language of politics and are never morally or emotionally innocent.

When periods are essentialized, moreover, we may then begin seeing objects classed within them in invidious comparative terms as more or less essentially medieval or Renaissance. We may become burdened with considerations of purity or fidelity to a *Zeitgeist* (a “spirit of the time”) that never burdened contemporaries. And that is because unless we are very cautious indeed, we can forget that the Zeitgeist is a concept that we, not “the time,” have constructed (or abstracted). We may then value some objects over others as being better, or even as being “the best” expressions of “the spirit of the Middle Ages” or “the spirit of the Renaissance.” If this sort of essentialism seems innocuous enough, we might transpose the frame of reference from the chronological to the geographical, and reflect on what happens when people become concerned over the purity or genuineness of one’s essential Americanism or Africanness or Croathood.

Subdivisions, in short, are necessary but also risky. Periodization, while purportedly a neutral—which is to say a “value-free”—conceptual aid, rarely manages to live up to that purpose. Values always seem somehow to get smuggled in. And this happens even when periodization is conducted on a smaller scale than the totality of history. Composers’ careers are also commonly periodized. All composers, even the ones who die in their twenties or thirties, seem to go through the same three periods—early, middle, and late. No prizes for guessing which period always seems to contain the freshest works, the most vigorous, the most profound.

The reason for raising these questions now is that the fourteenth century, and in particular the *trecento*, has been a period of contention with respect to musical periodization. In art history and the history of literature, scholars have agreed that the Florentine *trecento* marks the beginning of the Renaissance ever since there has been a concept of the Renaissance as a historiographical period. (That is not as long as one might think: the first historians to use the term as it is used today, for purposes of periodization, were Jules Michelet in 1855 and, with particular reference to art and literature, Jakob Burckhardt in 1860.) For art historians the first Renaissance painter, by long-established convention, is Giotto (Giotto di Bondone, ca. 1266–ca. 1337), a Florentine whose primary medium was the church *fresco*, or wall painting. In literature, it is Dante and Boccaccio, both Florentines, who for historians mark the great Renaissance divide.

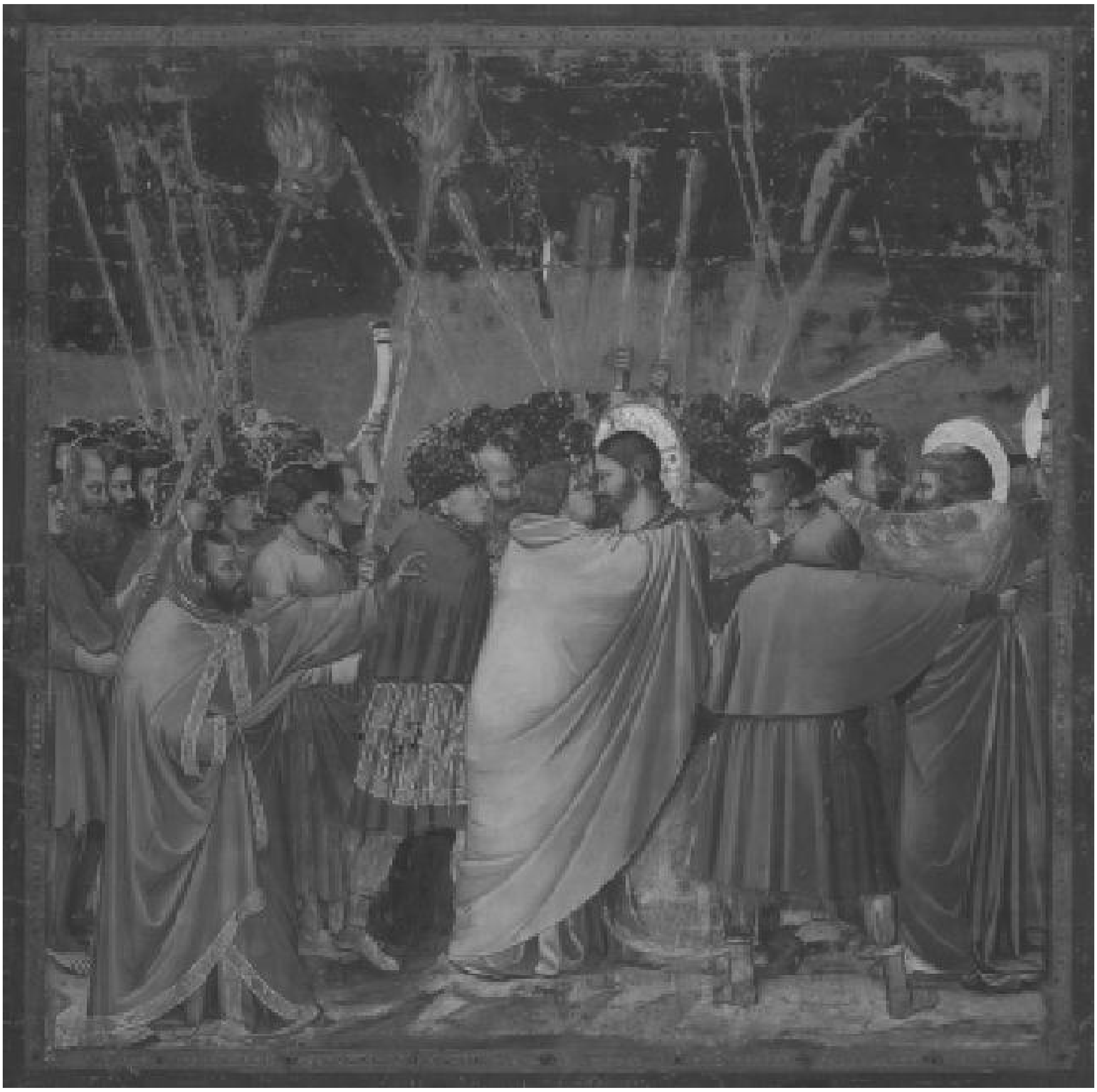

fig. 10-5 Giotto di Bondone, *The Kiss of Judas*, a wall painting from the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy. Giotto’s realism and his adoption of ancient Roman models have made him, for art historians, the first “Renaissance” painter.

The concept of the Renaissance in general historiography centers on three main considerations: secularism, humanism (sometimes conflated as “secular humanism”), and the rebirth—in French, *renaissance*—of interest in the art and philosophy of pre-Christian antiquity and its adoption as a “classical” model. All three concepts depend on the prior (and implicitly repudiated) notion of a medieval world that was sacred and inhuman in its outlook and shut off from the classical past. (“Essential” concepts can only originate as comparative ones: if we did not know “hot” we would not know “cold.”) Applying them to the fourteenth-century Florentines, moreover, is done in hindsight, a hindsight that casts them as anticipators of trends that reached fruition later. (“Anticipations,” being “progressive,” are value-enhancers.)

Even though Giotto’s output is almost entirely sacred in its subject matter and intent, he is regarded as an incipient secularizer because his figures, to the modern eye (and even to his contemporaries), have seemed more realistic—more “of this world”—than those of his predecessors. (Boccaccio: “he painted anything in Nature, and painted them so like that they seemed not so much likenesses as the things themselves.”[6]) That greater realism, moreover, can be attributed to Giotto’s adoption as a model for emulation of the artistic remains of ancient Roman culture in preference to the more immediate legacy of Christian (Byzantine) art. (Boccaccio: "He brought back to light that art which for many centuries had lain buried under errors.") Dante's status as a proto-Renaissance figure depends above all on his being the first great Italian poet to use the vernacular, that is, a living language of this world, even as he adopted a pre-Christian classical poet, Virgil (who actually figures in Dante's *Divine Comedy* as the author's guide) as his model for emulation. And Dante is a protohumanist despite his divine (that is, inhuman) subject matter because of his passion for introspection, for analyzing and reporting his own physical and emotional reactions to the visions and events that he portrayed. Putting himself so conspicuously into the picture meant putting a man there, which ultimately meant putting Man there. Or so the periodizing narrative insists. Boccaccio's status as a proto-Renaissance figure is much easier to account for, given his realistic subject matter, his prose medium, and his irreverent style. Historians differ as to Dante's position with respect to the medieval/Renaissance divide. All agree on Boccaccio's place. But Dante and Boccaccio were contemporaries. Could they then belong to different periods?

It is not at all difficult to relate the proto-"Renaissance" indicators to the music of the trecento. Its secularism is self-evident; with the possible (and, for periodization, possibly troublesome) exception of the troubadours, on whose legacy the trecento poets and musicians so zealously built, no artists were ever so fully preoccupied with the inventory, and the pleasures, of this world. Its intimate connection with the rise of "the vulgar eloquence," to use Dante's term, is likewise a demonstrable fact. The special relevance of Landini, the foremost exponent of "ballata-culture," to Boccaccio's world could hardly be more conspicuous.

Landini's output can be related just as effectively as Dante's or Boccaccio's to what the literary historian Leo Spitzer called the shift from the poetic to the empirical "I"—from the poet as impersonal observer to (in Michael Long's words) "the poet as individual engaged in self-analysis."[7] This shift came about in response to the tastes of the Florentine public—an audience of self-made men—and can easily be viewed as a shift from the God-centered worldview of "The Middle Ages" to the Man-centered view of "The Renaissance."

Since the view of trecento music as a harbinger of the Renaissance turns it into a "progressive" repertory, hence extra-valuable for teleological history, the trecento-as-Renaissance view has won many advocates ever since the trecento repertory was rediscovered by musicologists around the beginning of the twentieth century. It has not caught on generally, however, partly because the rediscovery came after the conventional style-periodization of modern music history had been established, and partly because of the situation implicit in its very rediscovery.

That situation, simply put, is the extreme perishability of music compared with the other art media, and the consequent lack of classical models for it. There could be no revival of a pre-Christian classical past in music, since there was practically nothing left from that vanished musical culture to revive. As a result, the idea arose among musicians and their audience alike that music was an art virtually without a past—or at least without "a usable past." As one German writer, Othmar Luscinius, put it in 1536, at the very height of what we call "the Renaissance,"

> how strange it is that in matters of music we find a situation entirely different from that of the general state of the arts and letters: in the latter whatever comes closest to venerable antiquity receives most praise; in music, he who does not excel the past becomes the laughing stock of all.[8]

We have already observed a comparable attitude in Landini's madrigal *Sy dolce non sonò*, in which all the mythological (i.e., classical) masters of music were mocked by a comparison with (on the one hand) a "modern" musician (Philippe de Vitry), or (on the other hand) a barnyard fowl. Many modern historians prefer to view the beginning of the musical "Renaissance" somewhere between the beginning and the middle of the fifteenth century, a period from which we have many witnesses testifying to the general perception that music had been reborn—or rather, that a usable music had actually been born—in their own day. We will sample and evaluate their opinions on the new in later chapters; here it will suffice to quote the fifteenth-century theorist Johannes Tinctoris's opinion of pre-fifteenth-century music, including trecento music. Such songs, he wrote, were "so ineptly, so stupidly composed that they rather offended than pleased the ear."[9]

Indeed Cosimo Bartoli, a Florentine scholar of the sixteenth century, observed (in a book about Dante!) that the composers of Tinctoris's time had "rediscovered music, which then was as good as dead."[10]

If we call that "rediscovery" the beginning of the "Renaissance" period for music, we are using the term in a very different way from the way it is used in general history. We are in effect endorsing and perpetuating an invidious comparison. The term, in such a usage, is not descriptive but honorific—a mark of favorable judgment—or even, as the music historian Reinhard Strohm has suggested, a mere "beauty" prize.[11] The use of the term "Renaissance" to coincide with what fifteenth-century musicians saw as the birth of their art, or its rupture with its past, becomes downright paradoxical at the other end of the period. For at the end of the sixteenth century, musicians did in fact try to revive the art of pre-Christian antiquity—not in terms of its style (for they could not know what that was) but in terms of its effects as described by classical authors. Only then did music actually join "the Renaissance," as the term is understood by general historians. But this belated emulation of antiquity was precisely what led to the overthrow of what music historians now call the "Renaissance" period, and its replacement by the so-called Baroque!

Yet to try and avoid this terminological quagmire merely by pushing the beginning of the "Renaissance" back a hundred years to the trecento would scarcely help. As we will shortly see (and whether or not it makes sense to call it a "Renaissance"), there was indeed a stylistic watershed for music in the fifteenth century, as there was for painting and literature in the fourteenth. If there is to be a periodization, it should not contradict the actual history of styles. As already hinted, the fifteenth-century watershed came about as the result of the internationalization of musical practices—what might be called the musical unification of Europe. But it was not a "Renaissance," and there is no point in calling it that. We may as well admit that the term serves no purpose for music history except to keep music in an artificial lockstep with the other arts—a lockstep for which there is a need only insofar as one needs to construct a Zeitgeist, an "essential spirit of the age." So as far as this book is concerned, then, the answer is no: there was no musical Renaissance, and therefore no "Renaissance music." The latter term will only appear in this book surrounded by ironic quotation marks ("scare quotes") as if to say that although one may use it occasionally for convenience to designate music of a certain age, one should not take it as really descriptive of anything in particular.

Notes:

(6) *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio,* trans. Richard Aldington (Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing, 1930), p. 329 (Sixth Day, Fifth Tale).

(7) Michael Long, "Francesco Landini and the Florentine Cultural Elite," *Early Music History* III (1983): 87.

(8) Othmar Luscinius, *Musurgia seu praxis musicae* (Strasbourg, 1536), quoted in Jessie Ann Owens, "Music Historiography and the Definition of 'Renaissance,'" *MLA Notes* XLVII (1990–91): 307.

(9) Johannes Tinctoris, *Liber de arte contrapuncti* (1477), as translated in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 199.

(10) Cosimo Bartoli, *Ragionamenti Accademici* (1567), quoted in Owens, "Music Historiography," p. 311.

(11) Renhard Strohm, *The Rise of European Music 1380–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 541.

Citation (MLA): Richard Taruskin. "Chapter 10 “A Pleasant Place”: Music of the Trecento." *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press. New York, USA. n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2011. <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-div1-010008.xml>.
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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland

Music in the British Isles Through the Early Fifteenth Century and its Influence on the Continent

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

THE FIRST MASTERPIECE?

Ever since the late eighteenth century, when the first modern histories of music were written, the most famous piece of "ancient music" in the Western world (apart from chants in daily use) has been the little composition reproduced in its entirety in Fig. 11-1, a piece still known to many who have otherwise never run into any early music at all.

It is found in a manuscript that was probably compiled at the Benedictine abbey of Reading, a town in south central England some fifty miles west of London, around the middle of the thirteenth century. About three hundred years later the monastery was dissolved in the turbulent course of the English reformation. The manuscript eventually passed into the collection of Robert Harley (1661–1724), the first Earl of Oxford, sometime speaker of Parliament and Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a celebrated bibliophile. After Harley's death, his collection was acquired by the crown and joined the holdings of the British Museum, where the manuscript was catalogued (as "Harley 978") and became accessible to scholars and historians of music—a profession (or rather, at the time, an avocation) that was then just coming into being.

Harley 978 is actually a random assortment of old parchment and paper relating to the Reading Abbey, probably bound together by Harley himself. The musical portion consists of only fourteen leaves out of 180, containing thirteen miscellaneous pieces and a solmization tutor. Most of the pieces are monophonic conductus settings, but there is also a three-voice conductus, a version of the same piece entered *sine littera* in "modal ligatures" so as to fix the rhythm, and three two-voice textless pieces, probably dances (*estampes*).

And there is the piece shown in Fig. 11-1. From the beginning, scholars examining the manuscript knew that it was something special. For one thing, it had two texts in two different languages. Besides the expected Latin *versus—Perspice, christicola* ("Observe, O Christians!"), a poem celebrating the Resurrection—there is a text in English, in the local Wessex dialect, entered above the Latin, right below the notes, which celebrates the arrival of summer: *Sumer is icumen in/Lhude sing cuccu!* In modernized English, it goes like this:

> Summer has come! Loudly sing cuckoo! Seed is growing, the flowers are blowing in the field, the woods are newly green. The ewe bleats after her lamb, the cow lows after her calf. The bull starts, the buck runs into the brush. Merrily sing cuckoo! That's it, keep it up!

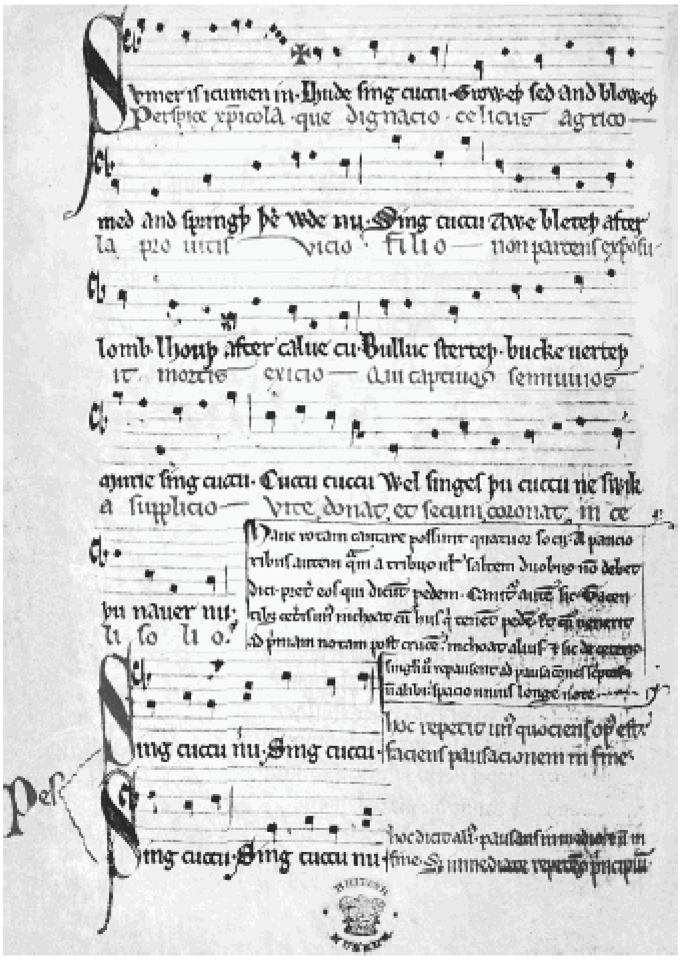


fig. 11-1 ***Sumer is icumen in*** **(London, British Library, MS Harley 978).**

And keep it up they do! But who are “they”? A long-winded rubric explains:

> This *rota* [round] can be sung by four companions, but not by less than three (or at least two), in addition to the ones on the part marked *pes* [“foot” or “pacer,” or better yet, “ground”]. Sing it thus: While the rest remain silent, one begins together with the singers of the *pes*, and when he comes to the first note after the cross, another begins, and so on. Pause at the rests, but nowhere else, for the length of one long note.

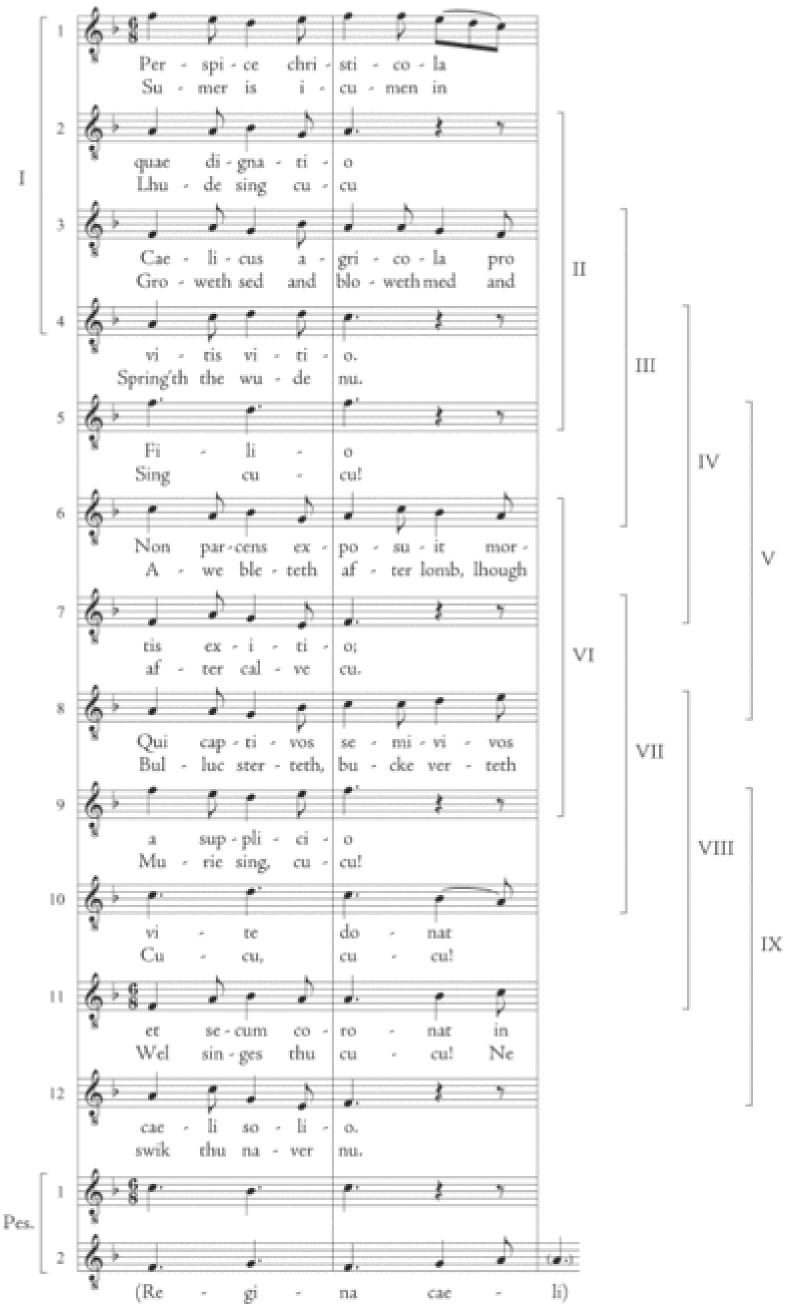
So this piece is a round—a canon with a beginning but without a specified end—and it is to be sung over a repetitive phrase or ostinato (what *pes* means in this context) that is itself split like a round between two parts. (Or rather, since the two *pedes* are directed by their own rubrics to enter together rather than in sequence, they are sung in perpetual voice exchange: A against B, then B against A, and so on forever.) An accompanied round in as many as six separate parts! There is nothing comparable to such a conception in any other manuscript music of the period from any country, and no other six-part composition would be preserved in writing until the latter part of the fifteenth century, some two hundred years later.

The “Reading rota,” as it came to be known, grew instantly famous in 1776, when it appeared, both in diplomatic transcription (that is, a reproduction of the original notation) and as written out (or “realized”) in score, in *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* by Sir John Hawkins. This was the first general survey of music in the Western literate tradition that (on the one hand) attempted to recount the whole chronological panoply and (on the other) was grounded rigorously in the empirical method—the inspection and analysis of documentary source material. Hawkins’s history, in other words, was the first endeavor in the line of which the present book is the latest.

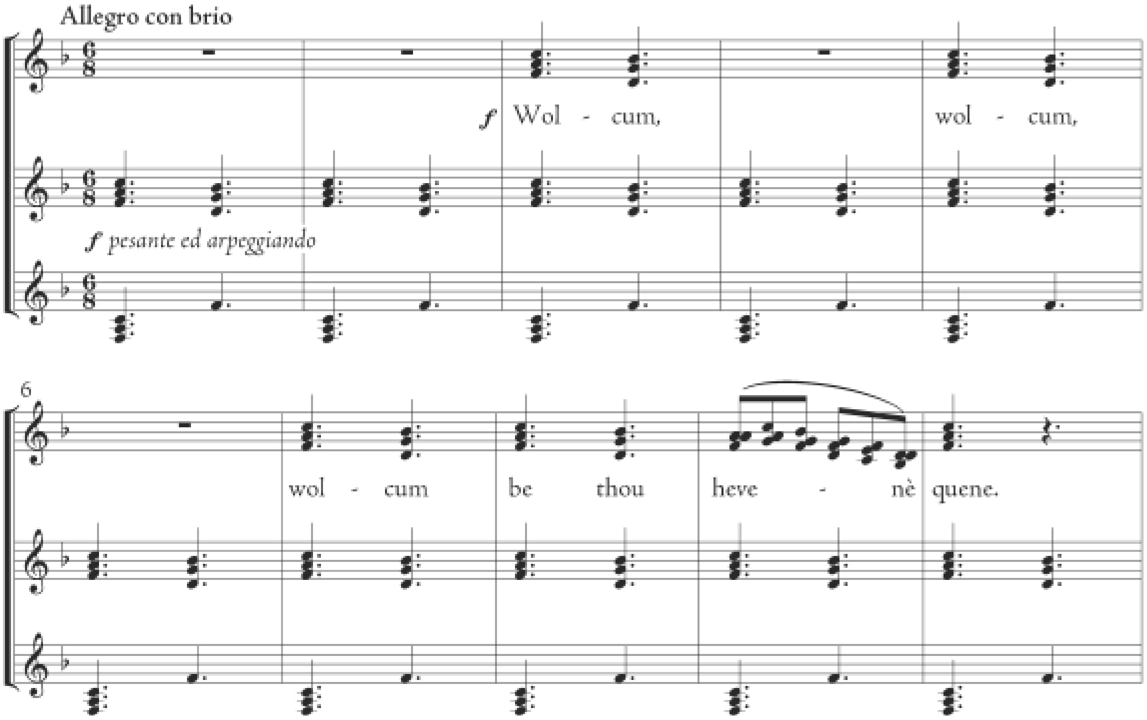
It had an instant competitor in the four-volume *General History of Music* by Dr. Charles Burney, the first volume of which appeared in the same year as did Hawkins's history. The second volume, published in 1782, contained a detailed discussion of the "Sumer canon" (as it is also commonly known) partly cribbed from Hawkins, which also included both a diplomatic transcription (only partial, Burney being a less laborious antiquarian than his rival) and a full realization in score (more accurate, Burney being also the better musician). Every subsequent history of music has done the same, and the present one, as you see, is no exception.

Having seen and discussed the original from a photographic facsimile (something for which Hawkins in particular would have given his eyeteeth), we will now proceed to the realization, in an ingenious space-saving version devised by the Irish musicologist Frank Llewellyn Harrison. The twelve phrases of the melody are all arranged over the double *pes* that accompanies the lot of them, with nine brackets showing the successive combinations of voices that occur when four "companions" sing the round as prescribed by the rubric (Ex. 11-1). Harrison, interestingly and uniquely, claimed that the Latin version of the canon was the original one, pointing out that the first five notes of the pes coincides with the incipit of *Regina coeli*, *laetare*, the Marian antiphon sung at Eastertide (compare Ex. 3-12a).[1] Whether to regard the undeniable resemblance as design or happenstance is anyone's guess.

Printed like this, as a twelve-part array, the Sumer canon looks very impressive indeed, and it is not difficult to see why it has been a celebrity of music history ever since there has been such a thing as music history. A certain nationalistic, promotional fervor has undoubtedly also played a part in the process of disseminating it. The canon has been a national monument in England since the days of Hawkins and Burney. It was printed as the frontispiece to the "S" volume in several editions of the big *Grove Dictionary of Music*, and even in the latest edition (the seventh, published in 2001) it has its own title entry, with a column and a half of text and a full-page photographic facsimile of the source. Every English school anthology (whether of songs or of poems) used to contain it, and every English child at school used to be able to sing it by heart. A book the present author was given as a child called it "the first masterpiece of music." Needless to add, it spawned legions of parodies, the most famous being Ezra Pound's "Winter is icumen in, lhude sing goddamn!" But just what has made it such a hit? Its "bigness," if we allow ourselves a moment to reflect, is somewhat illusory. A lot of parts get going at once, to be sure, but they are organized according to a very simple pattern, the repetitive pes with its implied harmonic oscillation between the final (F) and its "supertonic" (G)—the very oscillation that has governed the tonal design of many genres that we have already encountered, including all that have "open/shut" cadences or endings.


I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
Per - spi - ce chri - sti - co - la
Su - mer is i - cu - men in
quae di - gna - ti - o
Lhu - de sing cu - cu
Cae - li - cus a - gri - co - la pro
Gro - weth sed and blo - weth med and
vi - tis vi - ti - o.
Spring'th the wu - de nu.
Fi - li - o
Sing cu - cu!
Non par - cens ex - po - su - it mor -
A - we ble - teth af - ter lomb, lhough
tis ex - i - ti - o;
af - ter cal - ve cu.
Qui cap - ti - vos se - mi - vi - vos
Bul - luc ster - teth, bu - cke ver - teth
a sup - pli - ci - o
Mu - rie sing, cu - cu!
vi - te do - nat
Cu - cu, cu - cu!
et se - cum co - ro - nat in
Wel sin - ges thu cu - cu! Ne
cae - li so - li - o.
swik thu na - ver nu.
Pes.
(Re - gi - na cae - li)

ex. 11-1 Sumer Canon, as realized by Frank Llewellyn Harrison



ex. 11-2 Benjamin Britten, ***A Ceremony of Carols*****, opening of** ***Wolcum yole!***

In fact, that oscillation has in a very significant way become more literally harmonic, as we understand the term today, than any music we have hitherto encountered. Once the second voice has entered, full F major and G minor triads sound on practically every beat. And that evocative alternation has meant "olde England," if not since the thirteenth century, at least since the time of Burney and Hawkins. Benjamin Britten (1913–76) was only the most conspicuous of many modern English composers when he appropriated it (tastefully embellished with a tonic pedal) to set the scene at the beginning of his popular *Ceremony of Carols*, a Christmas school-piece for children's voices that he wrote in 1942. The "summer" progression, played on the harp, is actually the first harmony one hears, preceded only by a monophonic mock-Gregorian processional. (In Ex. 11-2 the music is transposed from A major to F major to aid comparison with Ex. 11-1.)

That basic harmonic—yes, chordal—to-and-fro so pervades the texture of the Sumer canon that anyone with half an "ear" (that is, the least bit acculturated into the idiom) could easily get into the swing of things and extend the piece "by ear" virtually *ad libitum* with additional simple counterpoints beyond the twelve written ones, the way kids at the piano do with "Chopsticks" or "Heart and Soul." And in bringing up the possibility of "ad-libbing," we are immediately reminded of Giraldus Cambrensis and his twelfth-century description of improvisational polyphony (and, just as in Britten's imaginative "transcription," harp playing as well) as practiced in his native Wales, quoted near the beginning of chapter 5.

Giraldus's account was set down in 1198, about half a century before the Reading Rota was set down. So is the Reading Rota a uniquely complex and innovative musical composition, the product of an anonymous English composer's prescient musical genius? Or was it a lucky (for us) written reflection of a widespread but otherwise unrecorded oral tradition—"acquired," as Giraldus informs us, "not by art but by long usage which has made it, as it were, natural," so that "children scarcely beyond infancy, when their wails have barely turned into songs could already take part"—possibly set down by a waggish monk who noticed the resemblance of a popular *pes* to the beginning of the *Regina coeli* chant, and fitted out a popular round with a Latin *contrafactum* that accorded with that chance resemblance?

If we assume the latter, then a great deal of what is otherwise strangely unique about early English music seems to fit into a historical pattern, and it turns out that that widespread oral tradition may not be quite so unrecorded as we might otherwise have thought. Once again the line between the oral and the literate

—between “folk” and “artistic” practice, between “popular” and “aristocratic” culture, or define it as you will—turns out, fascinatingly and fruitfully, to be a blur.

Notes:

(1) Frank L. Harrison, *Music in Medieval Britain* (2nd ed., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 144.

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Sources, MS: English polyphony 1270–1400

Gymel

VIKING HARMONY

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Giraldus himself supplemented his observations of contemporary lore with a keen historical speculation. Noting that polyphonic folksinging in the British Isles was mainly endemic to two areas, Wales and the northern territory occupied by the old kingdom of Northumbria, he ventured that “it was from the Danes and the Norwegians, by whom these parts were more frequently invaded and held longer, that they contracted this peculiarity of singing.”

There is a musical document, unknown to Giraldus, that seems to corroborate his theory. The Northumbrian style of “symphonious” singing, as Giraldus described it, consisted not of many parts in harmony, but only two, “one murmuring below and the other in a like manner softly and pleasantly above”—that is, “twinsong” (*tvìsöngur*), to give it its old Scandinavian (or modern Icelandic) name. A late thirteenth-century manuscript, now at the University library in Uppsala, Sweden, but copied at a monastery on the Orkney Islands off the northern coast of Scotland, contains a strophic hymn setting that seems to fit Giraldus’s description (Fig. 11-2; Ex. 11-3). From around 875 to 1231 the Orkneys were a Viking earldom under the Norwegian crown, and even afterward remained a part of the Scandinavian archbishopric of Nidaros—the most northerly of the Christian sees, with its seat at Trondheim, Norway—incorporating Iceland, Greenland, the Faeroe Islands, and the Western Isles of Scotland.

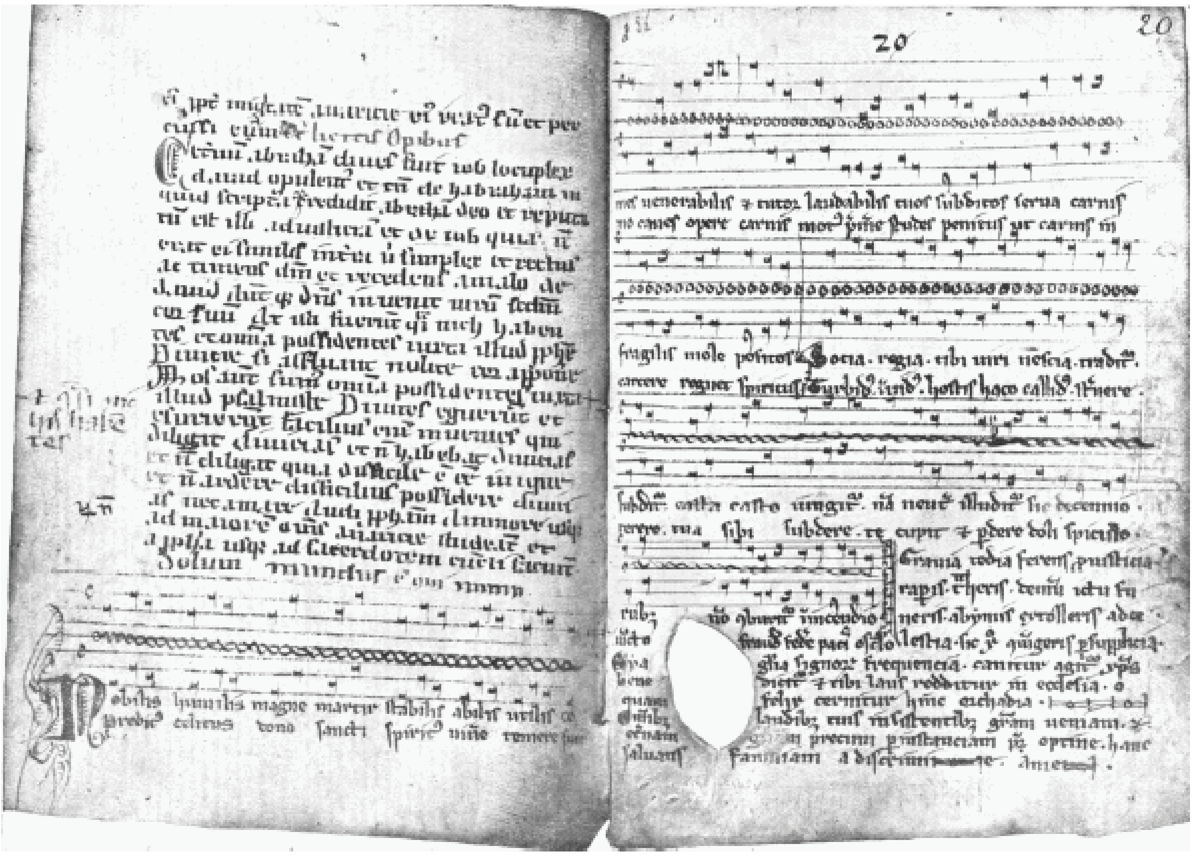
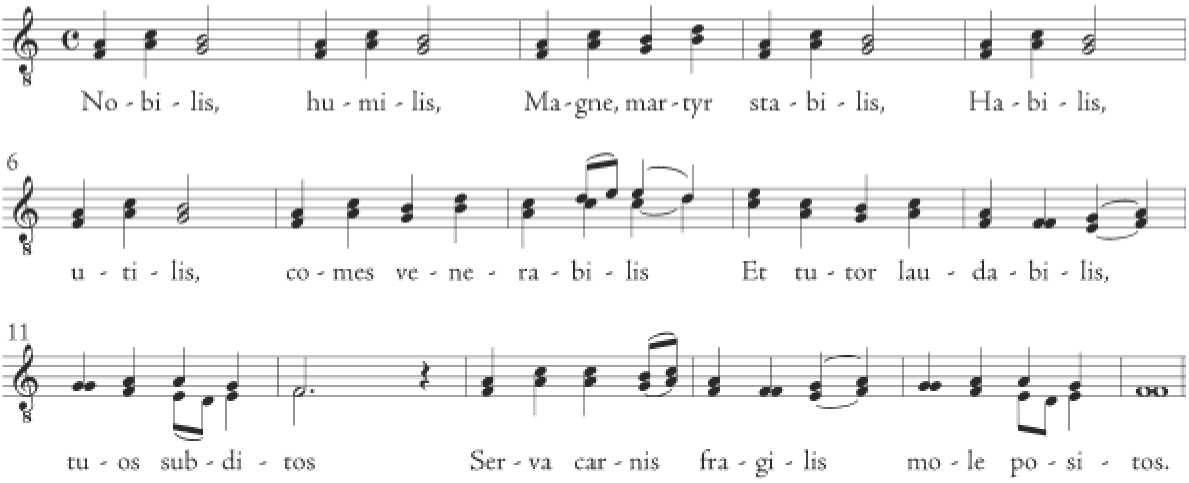


fig. 11-2 “Hymn to St. Magnus” (*Nobilis, humilis*) as it appears in its source, Uppsala (Sweden), Universitetsbiblioteket, MS C 233, fols. 19–20.

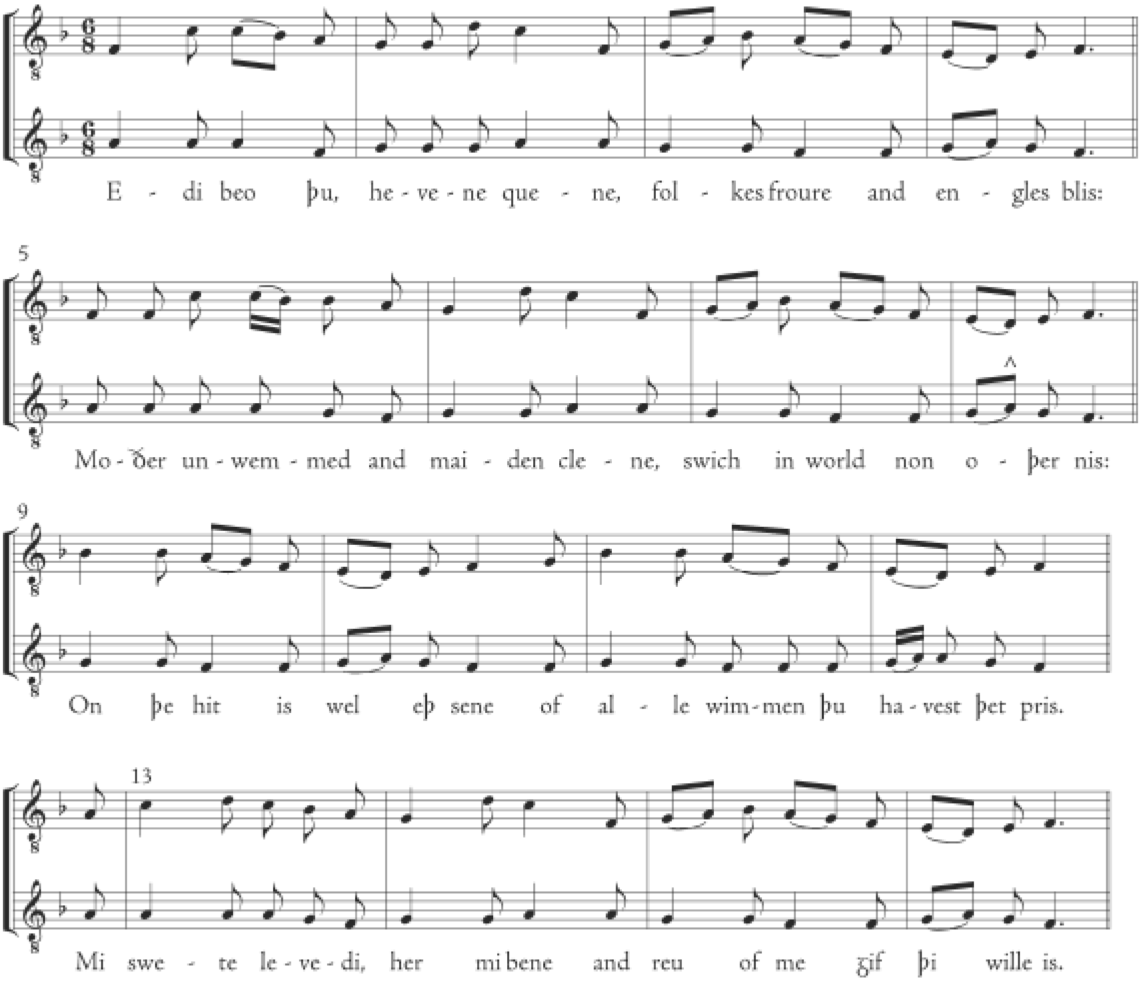

No - bi - lis, hu - mi - lis, Ma - gne, mar - tyr sta - bi - lis, Ha - bi - lis,
6
u - ti - lis, co - mes ve - ne - ra - bi - lis Et tu - tor lau - da - bi - lis,
11
tu - os sub - di - tos Ser - va car - nis fra - gi - lis mo - le po - si - tos.

ex. 11-3 *Nobilis, humilis* in transcription

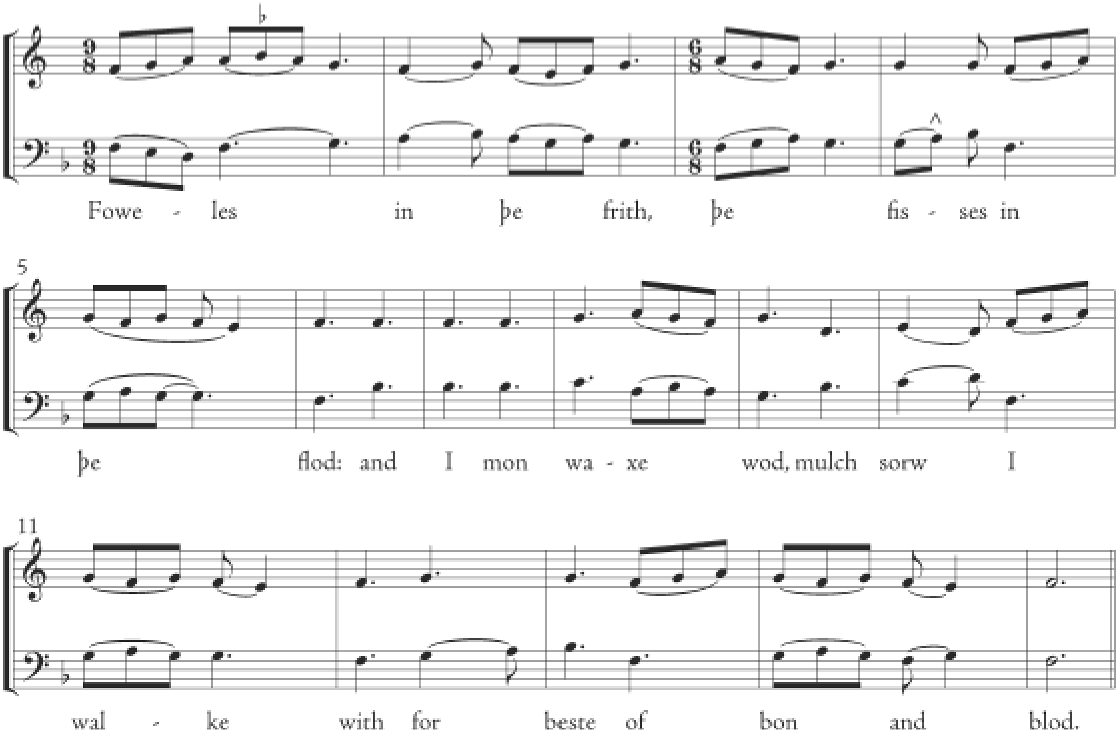
The hymn, *Nobilis, humilis*, sings the praises of St. Magnus (d. 1115, canonized 1135), the Norwegian patron saint of the Orkneys. By the time it was noted down the Orkneys were under Scottish temporal rule, but the music still undoubtedly represents a Nordic style of singing about which virtually nothing else is known. It cannot be connected with any other surviving Scandinavian music of the period (or even with the modern Icelandic *tvìsöngur*, for that matter, which proceeds for the most part in parallel fifths). It seems to have been known elsewhere in the British Isles, however: the English theorist Robert de Handlo quoted the incipit of what appears to be its upper part in a treatise written early in the fourteenth century (with a text, *Rosula* *primula*, “Our dear first-among-roses,” that substituted praise of the universally venerated Virgin Mary for the local Orkney saint).

The critical point is that the treatment of the third as primary normative consonance in *Nobilis, humilis* jibes with many early English musical remains. Besides the Sumer canon, with its normative triads, there is the roughly contemporaneous testimony of “Anonymus IV”—the Paris lecture notes, as we recall, of an English disciple of Garlandia—that English singers, especially those from “the area known as Westcuntre” (the West-country, bordering on Wales) called thirds, rather than octaves or fifths, “the best consonances.”

And there is the tiny repertory of surviving English twinsongs, which maintains the emphasis on thirds, and also shares with the Sumer canon (and with Giraldus’s account) the use of the F mode with B-flat, known to us as the major scale. These songs, among the earliest polyphonic vernacular settings to survive in any language, employ a more sophisticated sort of voice-leading, through contrary motion and voice-crossings, in addition to strictly parallel thirds; but they still seem, like the other pieces sampled in this chapter so far, to be the sort of “harmonizations” more often extemporized by ear than written down (Ex. 11-4).


6/8
E - di beo þu, he - ve - ne que - ne, fol - kes froure and en - gles blis:
5
Mo - ðer un - wem - med and mai - den cle - ne, swich in world non o - þer nis:
9
On þe hit is wel eþ sene of al - le wim - men þu ha - vest þet pris.
13
Mi swe - te le - ve - di, her mi bene and reu of me ʒif þi wille is.

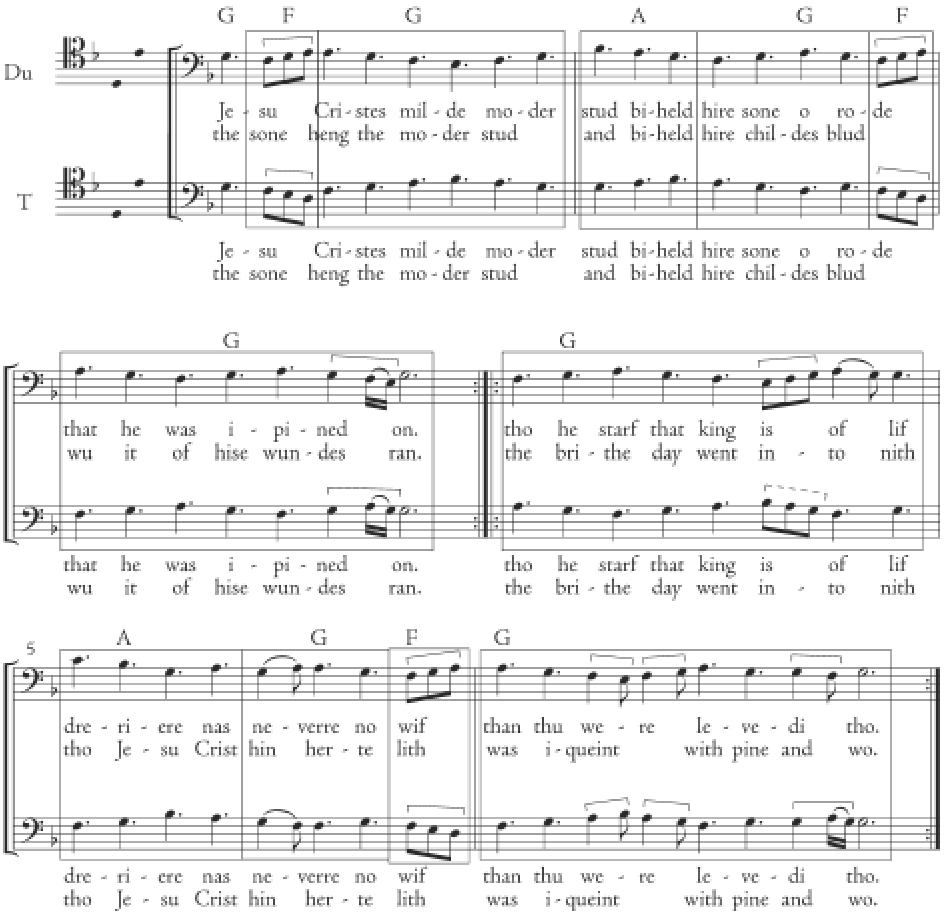
ex. 11-4a ***Edi beo thu, hevene Quene***


Fowe - les in þe frith, þe fis - ses in
5
þe flod: and I mon wa - xe wod, mulch sorw I
11
wal - ke with for beste of bon and blod.

ex. 11-4b *Foweles in the frith,* beginning

The most elaborate piece of this type is a translated sequence from the late thirteenth century, *Jesu Cristes milde moder* (from *Stabat juxta Christi crucem*, related to the famous *Stabat mater*). It is found in a manuscript that otherwise contains Latin-texted music, mainly plainchant (Ex. 11-5). The two voices in this case are really twins. They occupy the same range and constantly cross, so that neither produces “the tune” or “the accompaniment.” What is heard as “the tune” in a situation like this is actually a resultant of the constant voice-crossing. The voices are actually in a kind of “pivot” or “fulcrum” relationship, radiating outward from a central unison (to which cadences are ultimately made, *occursus*-fashion) through a third to a fifth; no larger interval is used. Although the F scale with B-flat is the medium through which the whole piece moves, and although the third F–A is its most characteristic (and normative) harmony, it begins and ends on unison G, the fulcrum-pitch between F and A (a true tone “center,” in a curiously literal sense).

Historians often call twinsong-type pieces like these “gymels,” appropriating from the English musical vocabulary of the fifteenth century a handy word that actually derives from the Latin *gemellus*, “twin.” A true fifteenth-century *gymel*, however, is something else: a temporarily split choral voice, like a modern orchestral “*divisi*.”


G F G A G F
Du
T
Je - su Cri - stes mil - de mo - der stud bi - held hire sone o ro - de
the sone heng the mo - der stud and bi - held hire chil - des blud
G G
that he was i - pi - ned on. tho he starf that king is of lif
wu it of hise wun - des ran. the bri - the day went in - to nith
5
A G F G
dre - ri - ere nas ne - verre no wif than thu we - re le - ve - di tho.
tho Je - su Crist hin her - te lith was i - queint with pine and wo.

ex. 11-5 ***Jesu Cristes milde moder*****, beginning**

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Conductus

INSULAR FAUNA?

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The examples given so far are enough to show that English polyphonic music pursued a somewhat different line of development from the one we have traced on the European mainland. Indeed, it is tempting to look upon England as a sort of musical Australia, an island culture inhabited by, and sustaining, its own insular fauna—musical kangaroos, koalas, and platypuses. That, however, would be very much to exaggerate England's musical isolation or independence. It is also a considerable exaggeration to view the English preference for thirds as something altogether alien or opposed to continental practice, as if only in remote geographical corners (and behind closed doors, among consenting adults) could harmonies unsanctioned by Pythagoras or the *Musica enchiriadis* be furtively enjoyed.

We've seen plenty of thirds in music previously studied, and not even the English thought thirds so consonant that they could be used to end a (written) piece—assuming that a piece *has* an ending, as a rota does not. This very chapter, moreover, has already shown the British Isles to have been no isolated territory but a site of repeated invasion and colonization, with substantive musical effect—and we have not yet even mentioned the most momentous invasion of all, the Norman Conquest of 1066 that brought the English into an intense, long-lasting, and all-transforming intercourse with French language, society, and culture.

By the late thirteenth century, English and French culture were so thoroughly intermixed that their disentangling is no longer feasible. Nor was their intercourse a one-way street. England was politically subject to France, but culturally the shoe was often on the other foot. The English college at the University of Paris was a strong contingent, particularly around the turn of the thirteenth century—precisely, that is, when the "Notre Dame school" was consolidating. (Remembering that puts an interesting, possibly significant spin on all the voice-exchanging we observed in chapter 6 in the *organa quadrupla* attributed to Perotin.) And so it is not surprising to find occasional French pieces from the period exhibiting traits reminiscent of the Sumer canon.

Consider the conductus *Veris ad imperia* (Ex. 11-6), from the Florence manuscript. Though famous, it is an odd conductus. Yet no one would claim (or at least no one has claimed) that its peculiarities mark it as an actual English piece. And that is because its chief peculiarity is that its lowest voice (as written) is, most unusually for a conductus, a cantus firmus. More unusually yet, that lowest written voice is actually the highest sounding one, so that for the first fourteen measures this ostensible conductus is actually a sort of harmonized tune or cantilena—a tune that the reader may remember, because it has already appeared in this account as Ex. 4-2: the troubadour dance-song or *balada* entitled *A l'entrada del tens clar*, defined on its earlier appearance as "a sophisticated imitation folk song."

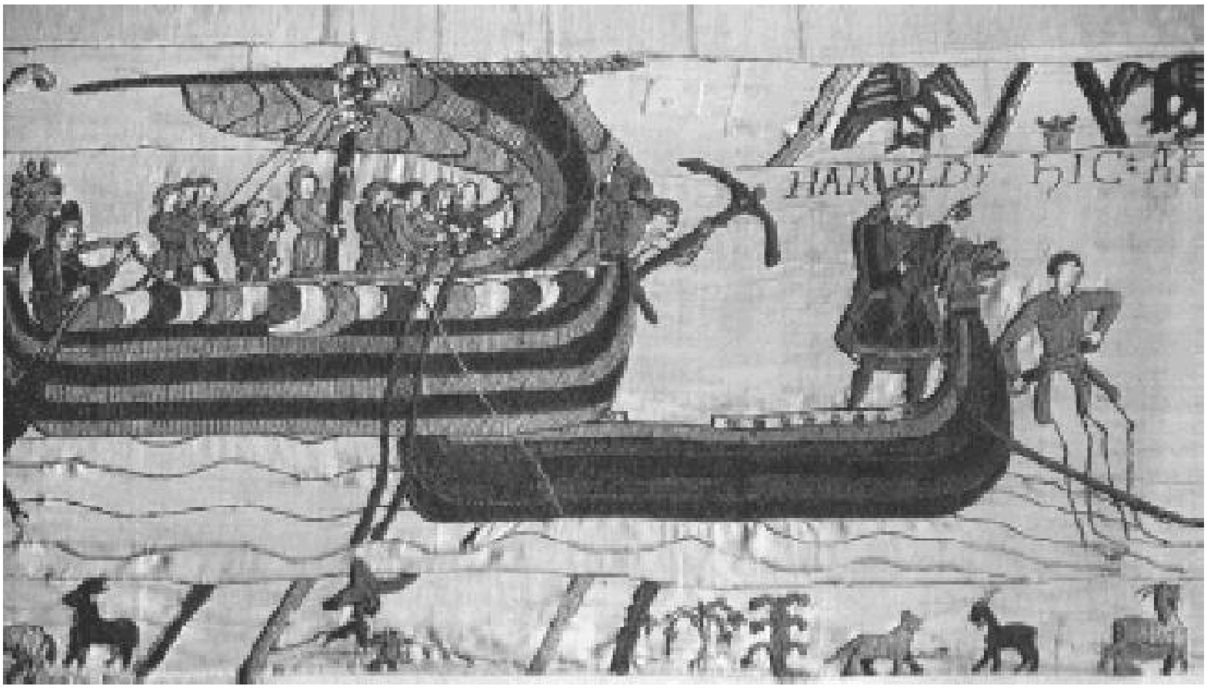
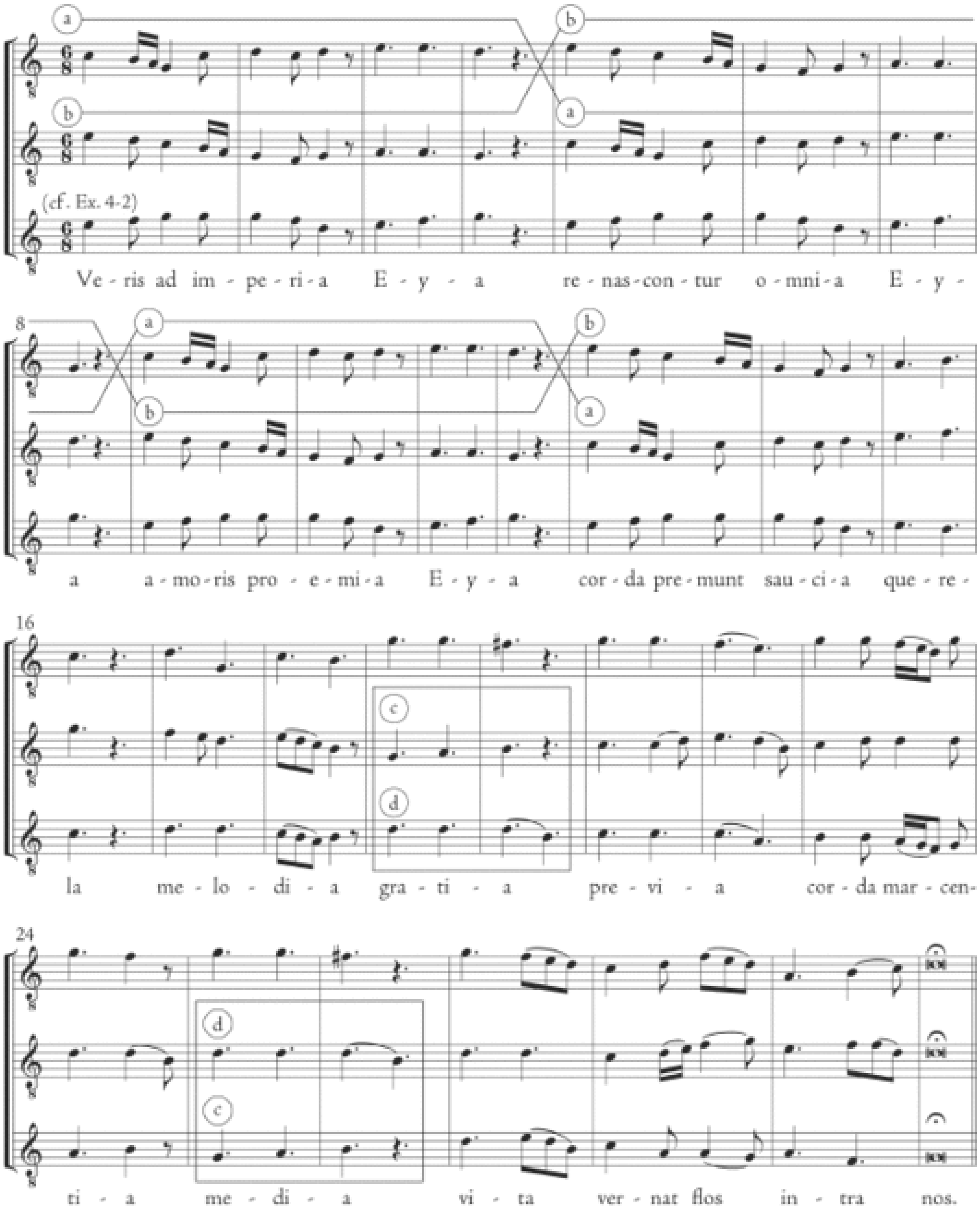


fig. 11-3 William the Conqueror setting sail for England, from the Bayeux tapestry (eleventh century).


a
b
b
a
(cf. Ex. 4-2)
Ve - ris ad im - pe - ri - a E - y - a re - nas - con - tur o - mni - a E - y -
8
a
b
b
a
a a - mo - ris pro - e - mi - a E - y - a cor - da pre - munt sau - ci - a que - re -
16
c
d
la me - lo - di - a gra - ti - a pre - vi - a cor - da mar - cen -
24
d
c
ti - a me - di - a vi - ta ver - nat flos in - tra nos.

ex. 11-6 ***Veris ad imperia*** **(conductus)**

What marked *A l'entrada* as folklike was its repetition/refrain scheme: **aa'aa'B**, where the "prime" signs stand for "closed" endings, on the final. A peek at the "tenor" of Ex. 11-6 shows that one of the closed endings has been replaced by an open one, so that the scheme is now the stuttering **aaaa'B**. Another way of accounting for the "stutter," of course, is to say that the "a" phrase has been turned into a *pes*. And now look what happens in the "upper" parts "over" that pes: what the triplum has the first time, the duplum has the second, and vice versa. Another way of putting this is to say that the two parts have made a voice-exchange. And they immediately repeat the exchange over the third and fourth repetitions of the pes, allowing for a different (closed) cadence the last time.

Voice-exchange over a pes—shades of the Sumer canon! And all the more so if we reflect that a round, shorn of its mock-imitative beginning, is just a perpetual voice-exchange disguised as a canon. (Gather three companions and sing "Row, row, row" or "Frère Jacques," beginning with the fourth entry!) But the use of an Occitan cantus-firmus tune (as well as the source situation) suggests that this is not an English piece, but a

French one that uses similar devices. Is that an example of English “influence,” then? Maybe, but why couldn’t the English practice be an example of French “influence”?

That, too, is possible. There is no need to decide. This much can be agreed upon: what is only a sporadic and short-lived device, or set of devices, in French music became definitive in English music over the course of the thirteenth century. Again, there are at least two ways of interpreting this (or any) fact. One can assert, as some historians have done, that the musical predilections of the English contingent exerted an influence on French university musicians in proportion to their numbers; when their numbers declined, so did their musical influence. Or one can assert, as other historians have done, that certain French pieces especially appealed to the English imagination because their distinctive features recalled to the English their local oral practice—a practice previously inflected by the habits of their Viking overlords, but now reencountered within a literate context sanctioned by “mainstream” (read: French) cultural authority. And that is how the English were led to a national “school” of artistic, literate music making all their own. Guess which view is favored by English historians and which by French (as well as some influential Americans).

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Pes

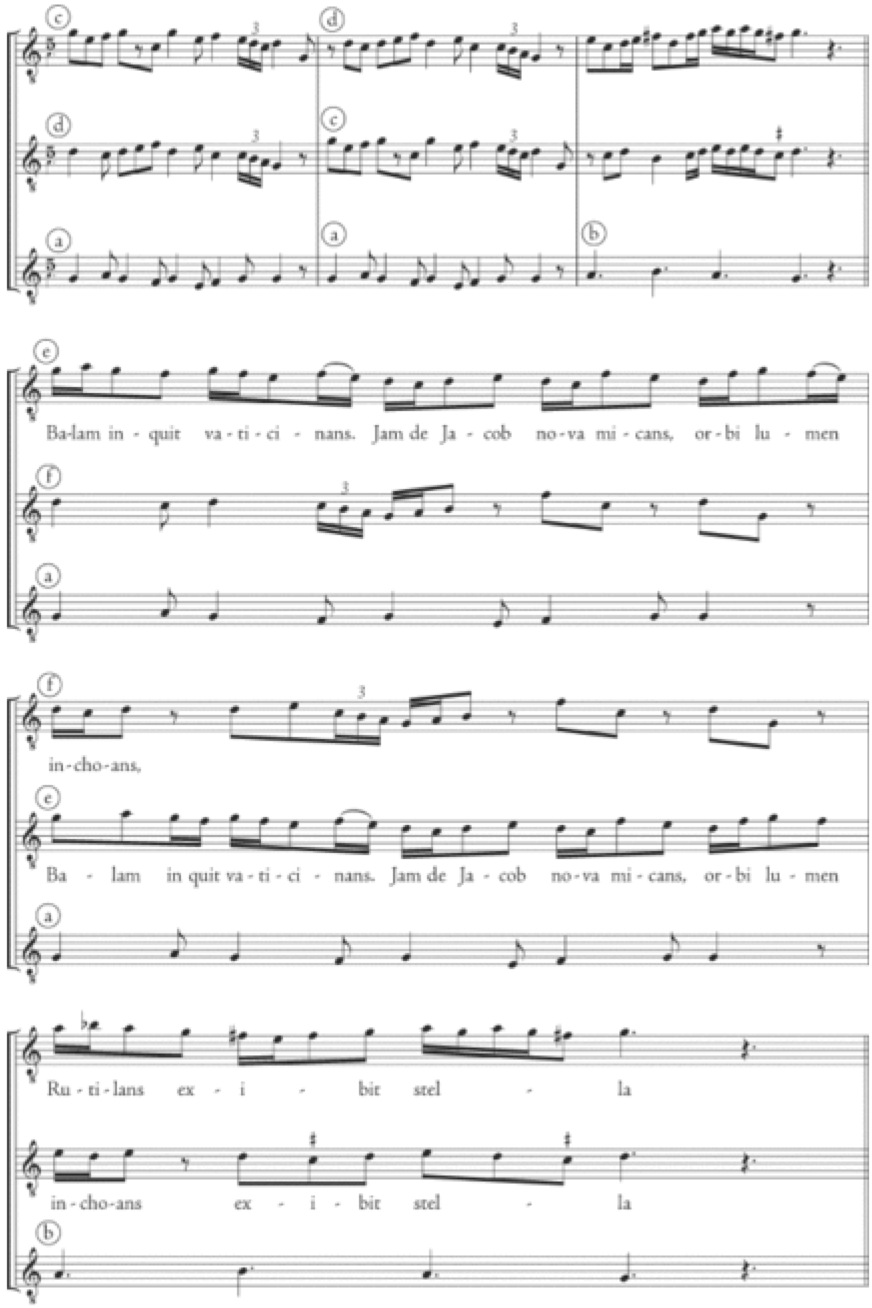
Motet

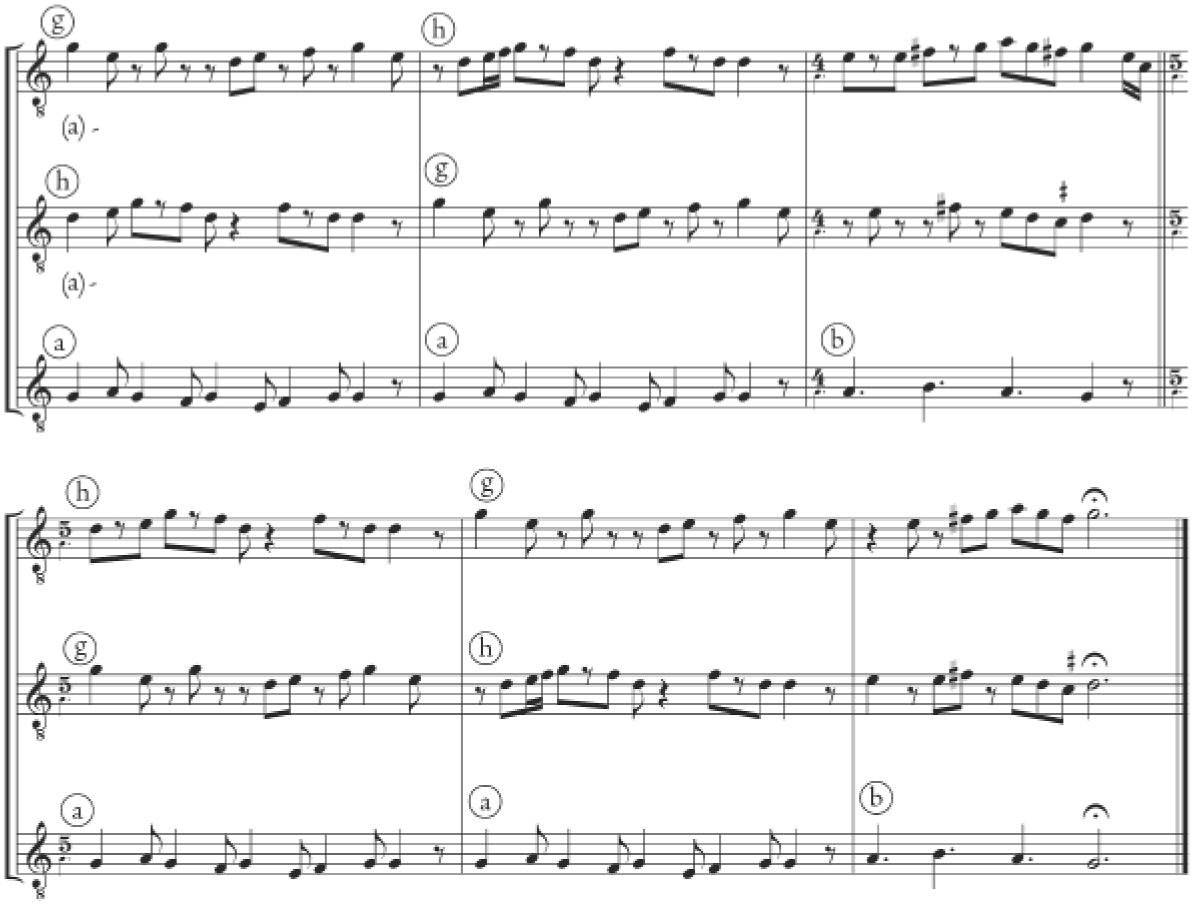
PES MOTETS AND RONDELLUS

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

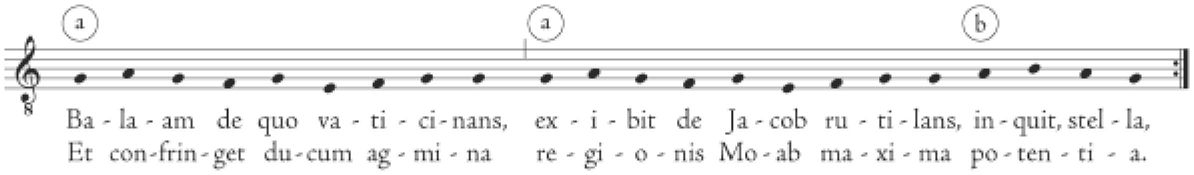
Whatever their way to it, the English did develop their own "insular" ways of inflecting French genres of literate music. One of those genres was the motet. The English loved to use sequence melodies as tenors, as in the famous "Balaam" motet (Ex. 11-7a), which adopts for this purpose a versicle from the Epiphany sequence, *Epiphanium Domino*, that happily incorporates an internal repeat into each of its repeated strophes (Ex. 11-7b).

The text of the sequence verse is a paraphrase of Balaam's fourth prophecy from the Bible (Numbers 24:17) "A star shall advance from Jacob and a staff shall arise from Israel that shall smite the brows of Moab"—placed in a context that turns it into a forecast of the Star of Bethlehem that proclaimed the coming of Christ. And the motet text is a paraphrase of the sequence verse.


ⓒ ⓓ
ⓓ ⓒ
ⓐ ⓐ ⓑ
ⓔ
Ba-lam in - quit va - ti - ci - nans. Jam de Ja - cob no - va mi - cans, or - bi lu - men
ⓕ
ⓐ
ⓕ
in - cho - ans,
ⓔ
Ba - lam in quit va - ti - ci - nans. Jam de Ja - cob no - va mi - cans, or - bi lu - men
ⓐ
Ru - ti - lans ex - i - bit stel - la
in - cho - ans ex - i - bit stel - la
ⓑ



ex. 11-7a ***Balaam inquit, vaticinans***


a
a
b
Ba - la - am de quo va - ti - ci - nans, ex - i - bit de Ja - cob ru - ti - lans, in - quit, stel - la,
Et con-frin-get du-cum ag - mi - na re - gi - o - nis Mo - ab ma - xi - ma po - ten - ti - a.

ex. 11-7b “Balaam” verse from sequence ***Epiphanium Domino***

Inserted into a performance of the sequence, the motet text would be the kind of thing we might (very loosely) call a trope. And the likelihood that the piece was meant to be inserted in this way seems good, since the text in question is the scantiest we have ever seen in a motet. It consists of a mere four lines of Latin verse, enunciated twice: first in the triplum and then in the motetus. While the triplum has the text, the motetus has an untexted melody. When the motetus gets the text, it takes over the melody to which the triplum had already sung it, and the triplum takes over the untexted countermelody: voice-exchange! And that is why a sequence melody served so well: with its double versicles it has a built-in pes to support the voice exchange. The particular manner of voice-exchange shown here, in which only one voice is texted at a time, is described by only one theorist, Walter Odington, a monk at the Benedictine abbey of Evesham, near the cathedral town of Worcester in the “West-country,” who wrote around 1300. “If what one declaims, all others declaim in turn, this is called *rondellus*,”[2] he informs us, divulging a sure sign of English authorship, even when, as here, the music in question is found in a continental source (the famous Montpellier codex, alias **Mo**, familiar to us since chapter 7).

The texted exchange only comes at the repetition of the sequence’s double versicle. But the first tenor statement also supports a textless exchange that counts, in Odington’s definition, as a rondellus (for rondellus, he tells us, can be *cum littera* or *sine littera*). And then the whole double versicle is repeated in the tenor to support an extended cauda in hocket style, in which the voices exchange not only their tunes but their relative positions the second time around. The text and its liturgical tie-in have served as little more than a pretext, clearly, for the kind of elaborate musical game we have been reading about since the beginning of this chapter. Giraldus would have understood.

Notes:

(2) Walter Odington, *De speculatione Musicae*, in Coussemaker, *Scriptorum*, Vol. I, p. 245, trans. R. Taruskin.

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Rondellus

Worcester polyphony

Sources, MS: English polyphony 1270–1400: Worcester Fragments

THE WORCESTER FRAGMENTS

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

There is an English source for the Balaam motet as well as the French one, but like almost all the English sources of the period, it is fragmentary—just a scrap containing the motetus voice. The wholesale destruction of “popish ditties”—manuscripts containing Latin church music—in the course of the Anglican reformation was a great disaster for music history. Between the eleventh century, the time of the staffless Winchester Tropers, and the beginning of the fifteenth, not a single source of English polyphonic music survives intact. All we have, for the most part, are individual leaves, or bits of leaves, that chanced to survive the holocaust for a seemingly paradoxical reason: having become liturgically or stylistically obsolete, the books that contained them had already been destroyed. The surviving leaves had been recycled, as we would now put it, for lowly utilitarian purposes. Some had been bound into newer manuscript books as flyleaves (the heavier protective leaves in the front and back of bound volumes), or as stiffeners for the covers or spine. Some had even been rolled up and inserted into organ pipes to stop little leaks that were causing the pipes to sound continuously (what organists call “ciphers”).

As we can tell from the folio numbers on the surviving leaves and from tables of contents that have outlived their hosts, many of the manuscripts from which these shards remain were originally massive tomes, comparable to the Florence or Montpellier or Ivrea codices that so abundantly preserve the French repertory of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. And the surviving shards come from so many different parent sources that most historians take it as a fact that pre-Reformation Britain produced more manuscripts of polyphonic music than did any other country during those centuries. But all we have to go on now, if we want to reclaim memory of what appears to have been an exceptionally rich literate culture of music and sample its fruits, are these pitiful fragments from which no more than a few dozen whole pieces, or even self-contained sections, can be salvaged.

Many of the extant manuscript bits originated or at least were used at Worcester Cathedral, which confirms and supports Walter Odington’s authority as a witness to the repertory he described, and the importance of “West-country” monastic centers as a hub for all that was most distinctive in English “popish” polyphony during these (to us) dark centuries. In the early part of the twentieth century, when systematic musicology was gathering steam in Britain, the loose leaves and strips from Worcester were collected and bound into three main codices—one kept in the Worcester Cathedral library itself, one at Oxford, and one at the British Library in London. These are now known as the “Worcester fragments.” About three-quarters of this repertory can be dated to the last third of the thirteenth century, and confirms Odington’s remarks about the prevalence in England of “pes” and “rondellus” techniques. We can be reasonably sure that the vast vanished body of music from the period reflected similar preoccupations.

Over and above the pes-motets like *Balaam* (or like *Alle psallite cum luya*—“Hey, come sing and play Alleluia”—its better-known companion in **Mo**), the Worcester fragments contain many rondellus-type compositions in conductus style. Odington’s description of rondellus technique harks back unmistakably to Franco of Cologne’s recipe for conductus, given in chapter 6. Where Franco wrote that the composer of a conductus must “invent as beautiful a melody as he can, and then use it as a tenor for writing the rest,” Odington’s instructions for composing a rondellus are these: “Think up the most beautiful melody you can, arrange it to be repeated by all the voices one by one, with or without text, and fit against it one or two others consonant with it; thus each sings the other’s part.” A circulation of parts in which all voices (usually three) participate is the quintessential “West-country” style, in which the age-old oral practices described by Giraldus Cambrensis are most fully absorbed into the developing literate tradition.

Flos regalis, a conductus in honor of the Virgin, is one of the largest and most characteristic pieces that can be salvaged from the dark centuries. It vividly reflects the way in which the English crossbred continental genres with indigenous performing traditions and harmonic idioms. It begins with a magnificent flourish of a cauda in the familiar trochaic (“first mode”) rhythms of Notre Dame, grouped the French melismatic way into phrases of varying length. The first four lines of text are set in the “Franconian” conductus style, built from the ground up (tenor in “fifth mode”) in regular four-bar phrases with occasional fast flourishes in the higher parts. The next two lines, however, in a slightly more lilting meter, are set as a three-part rondellus that runs through its entire *cursus* of voice-exchanges twice (once per line of text, as Odington implied). The remainder of the poem is cut up in the same way: four lines declaimed in longs *à la française* in a somewhat decorated homorhythmic texture, and the last two lines in purely English rondellus style. This last section is shown in Ex. 11-8.

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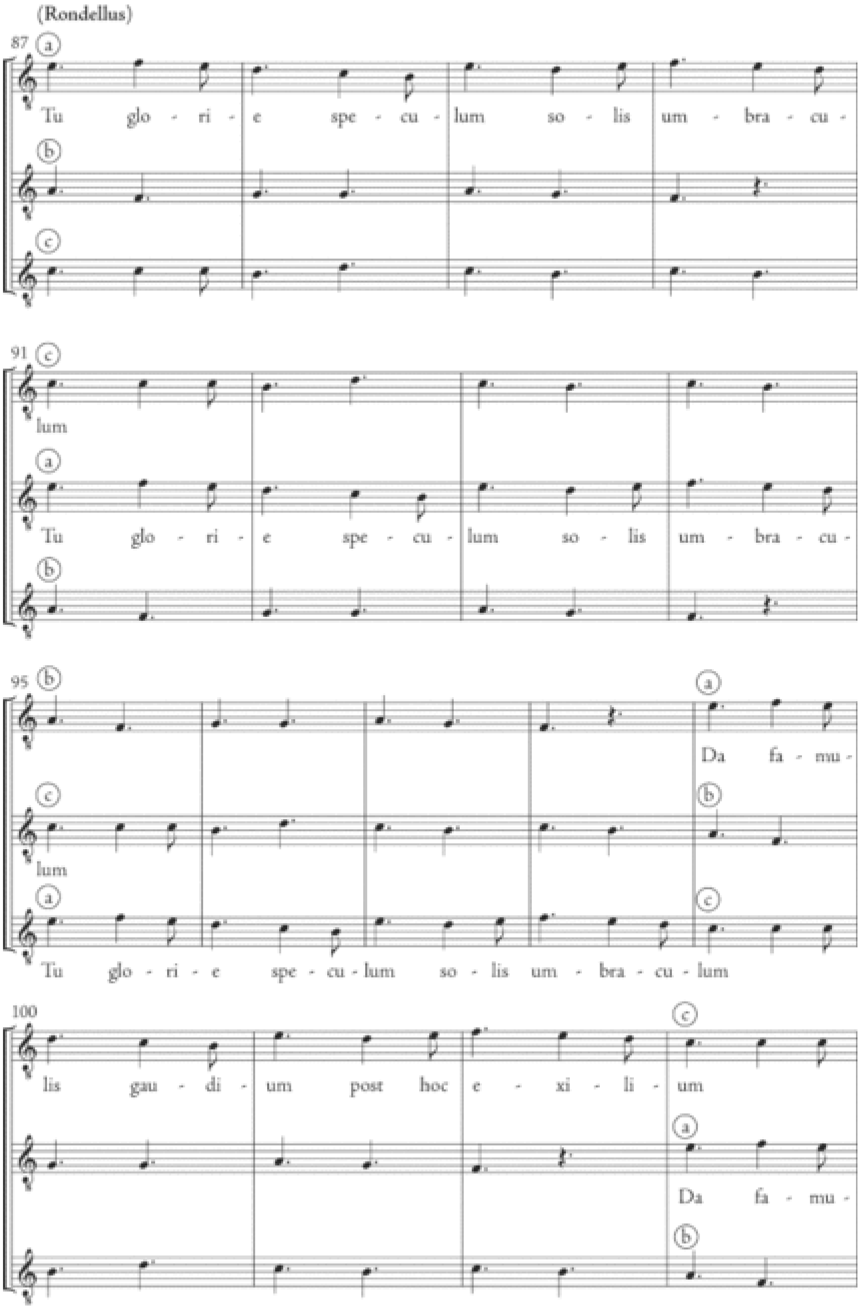
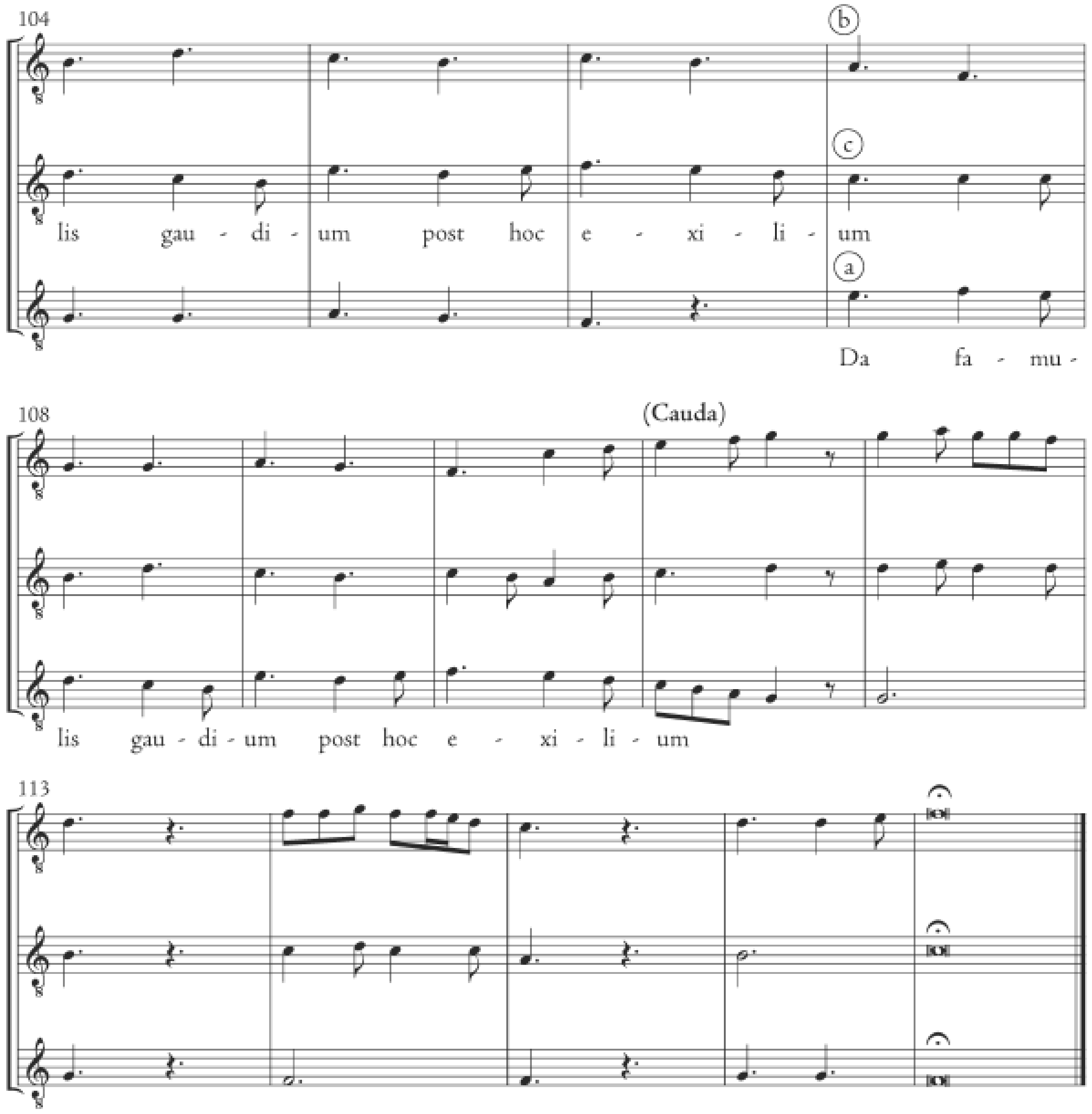
Nationalism: Origins and earliest manifestations

NATIONALISM?

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin


(Rondellus)
87
a
Tu glo - ri - e spe - cu - lum so - lis um - bra - cu -
b
c
91
c
lum
a
Tu glo - ri - e spe - cu - lum so - lis um - bra - cu -
b
95
b
a
Da fa - mu -
c
lum
b
a
Tu glo - ri - e spe - cu - lum so - lis um - bra - cu - lum
c
100
lis gau - di - um post hoc e - xi - li - um
c
um
a
Da fa - mu -
b


104
ⓑ
ⓒ
lis gau - di - um post hoc e - xi - li - um
ⓐ
Da fa - mu -
108
(Cauda)
lis gau - di - um post hoc e - xi - li - um
113

ex. 11-8 ***Flos regalis*** **(conductus/rondellus), mm. 87-117**

The harmonic idiom, too, is purely English (well, English-Scandinavian), even in the "French-textured" sections. No continental conductus sports strings of parallel or nearly parallel triads such as *Flos regalis* blazons forth from the very start. To this extent at least, the English idiom was indeed insular. And to an extent that continental composers may not have felt any need to match, the English seemed to flaunt their insular idiom within the "universal" (i.e., "catholic") ecclesiastical genres they had adopted.

This assertion of a local style within a universal genre may suggest the beginnings of something comparable to what we now call nationalism—a concept that, according to some historians, can be identified in England earlier than in other European nations. Those historians identify that emergence, it so happens, precisely around the 1270s and 1280s, the period of the pes motets and rondellus-style conductus settings so slenderly preserved in the Worcester fragments.

At this early date nationalism—or better, national consciousness—is identified with the crown, not with ethnicity, and is associated with propaganda aimed at conscripting a national army under the king's command. So far it may be viewed as merely a weaker, more abstract form of the personal loyalty one pledged to one's lord under feudalism. Nor is it easy to distinguish nationalism from imperialism: England's sense of itself as a nation had a lot to do with the efforts of the Anglo-Normans to conquer and rule their

Celtic neighbors to the west and north. But an island country inevitably has a higher consciousness of its boundaries than a continental one, and this can promote a greater sense of civic “commonweal.” As always, though, we should think twice before calling a tendency “progressive” simply because it “looks like us.” There are reasons, after all, why the word “insular,” denoting “island,” tends also to connote the parochial, the provincial, and the narrow-minded. These too are often ingredients of nationalism.

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English discant

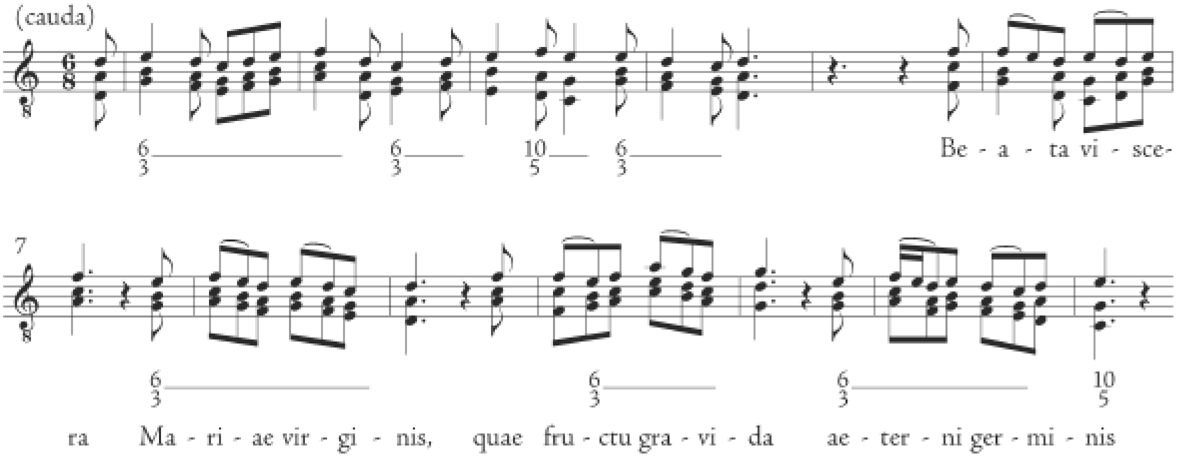
Worcester polyphony

Marian antiphons

“ENGLISH DESCANT”

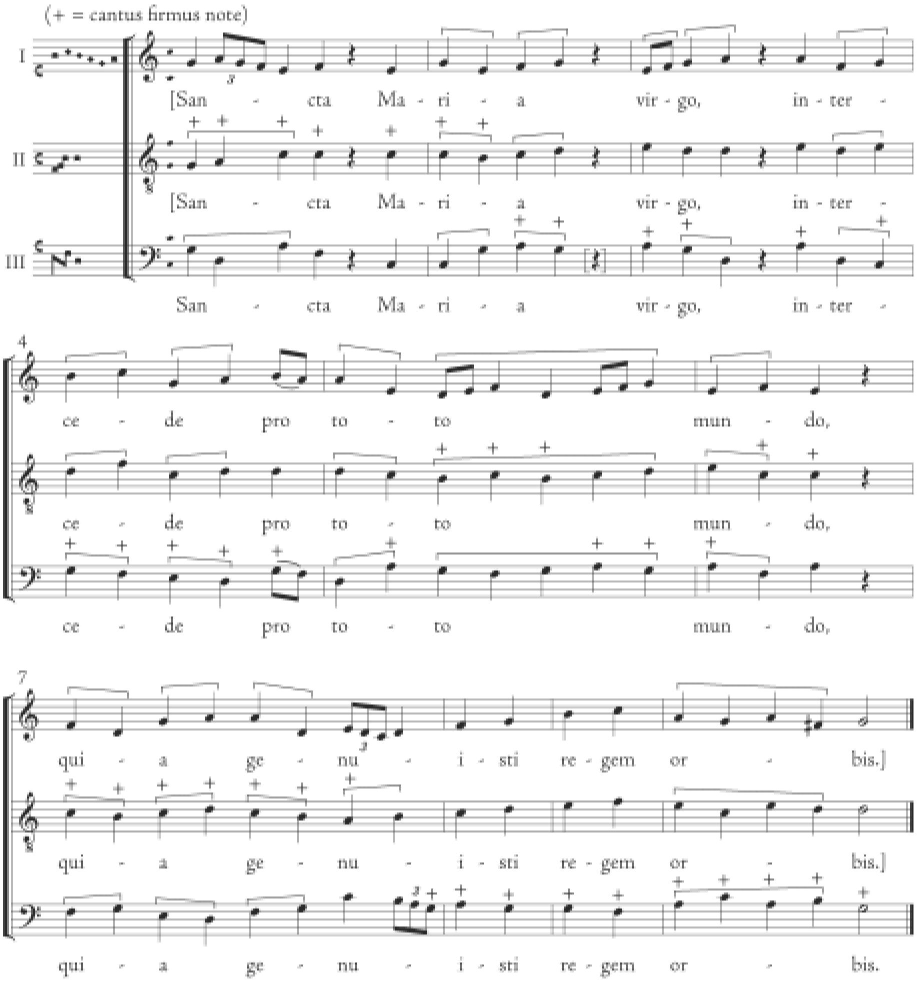
Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

In any case, the composers of the “Worcester school” rang many attractive changes on their parallel-triad (or, to put it in less anachronistic terms, their parallel-imperfect-consonance) style. Where *Flos regalis* featured parallel motion at the third and fifth, producing strings of chords in what we would call the (or “close-spaced”) root position, a Marian conductus with a text that parodies the communion *Beata viscera* (“O blessed womb”) shadows its tenor more rigorously with imperfect consonances. Doubling at the third and *sixth* produces what we would call strings of “six-three” (or “first-inversion”) triads (Ex. 11-9). For reasons that will soon become apparent, *Beata viscera* has become the most famous individual item from the Worcester fragments. Its style exemplifies what is often called “English descant.”


(cauda)
6/8
6 3
6 3
10 5
6 3
Be - a - ta vi - sce-
7
6 3
6 3
6 3
10 5
ra Ma - ri - ae vir - gi - nis, quae fru - ctu gra - vi - da ae - ter - ni ger - mi - nis

ex. 11-9 *Beata viscera* (conductus/motet), mm. 1-13

When English descant was based on a plainsong, the cantus firmus was usually carried in the middle voice, following an English practice of “improvising” counterpoints above or below, and sometimes simultaneously, by the use of prescribed intervals. (Actually, this sort of “improvisation”—though it was known, oddly enough, as using “sights”—is exactly what we would call “harmonizing by ear.”) When such settings were composed in writing, the cantus firmus often “migrated” between the middle and lower voices, so that the voices themselves did not have to cross. This seems to indicate an interest in chordal harmony as such: when the cantus firms is allowed to migrate to the lowest part instead of crossing it, the various parts are kept distinct in range. More significantly, the part written lowest in score can always maintain its function as “bass,” making it easier for the composer to keep track of the harmony. In Ex. 11-10, a setting of a votive antiphon to the Virgin Mary that was often performed after Compline in Britain before the present selection of “Marian antiphons” became canonical, the voices cross once only and only for the duration of a single note (on “genuisti,” near the end). The harmony is more mixed, between chords containing only perfect consonances and those admitting imperfect ones, than in the more popular “parallel” style, though there are local progressions that still bear traces of the English “oral” habit of extemporizing long sequences of full triads. But the general level of consonance is pervasive—far higher than in contemporary continental music.


(+ = cantus firmus note)
I
II
III
[San - cta Ma - ri - a vir - go, in - ter -
[San - cta Ma - ri - a vir - go, in - ter -
San - cta Ma - ri - a vir - go, in - ter -
4
ce - de pro to - to mun - do,
ce - de pro to - to mun - do,
ce - de pro to - to mun - do,
7
qui - a ge - nu - i - sti re - gem or - bis.]
qui - a ge - nu - i - sti re - gem or - bis.]
qui - a ge - nu - i - sti re - gem or - bis.

ex. 11-10 ***Sancta Maria virgo, intercede*** **(Marian antiphon)**

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Motetus

Triplum, triplex

THE BEGINNINGS OF “FUNCTIONAL” HARMONY?

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

As a marvelous summation of everything we have learned to identify as English, consider the motet *Thomas gemma Cantuariae/Thomas caesus in Doveria* (“Thomas, jewel of Canterbury/Thomas, slain in Dover”). Ex. 11-11 shows its beginning. Discovered by fortunate accident in the flyleaves of an English (non-musical) manuscript from the fourteenth century that was acquired by the Princeton University Library around 1950, it is a dual martyrs’ commemoration. The motetus celebrates Thomas de la Hale, a monk from the Benedictine priory at Dover, the chalk-cliffed English channel port, who was slain in a French raid that took place in August 1295, prefiguring the protracted conflict that became known as the Hundred Years War. The triplum celebrates another Thomas, the most eminent of all English martyrs: Thomas à Becket (1118–70), known since his canonization in 1173 as St. Thomas of Canterbury, who was murdered in the Canterbury Cathedral at the behest of King Henry II. The two texts in conjunction draw parallels between the two martyred Thomases, often sharing or paraphrasing each other’s lines.

As might be guessed, the triplum and motetus, each representing a Thomas, are “twinned,” sharing the same range and indulging in frequent voice exchanges and hockets. And they are accompanied by a tenor and a contratenor (the latter actually labeled “secundus tenor”) that are twinned in the same ways, thus producing a double twinsong texture. That is already an English trademark, the first of many.

The whole piece is laid out, like the Sumer canon, as a set of variations over a *pes*. But that pes, even more explicitly than the one in the Sumer canon, is essentially a harmonic rather than a melodic idea. It is never literally restated even once, but its harmonic framework is restated some twenty-eight times. That framework consists of the same alternation or oscillation we have observed in every other English pes we have considered, between the final F (the “shut-cadence” note) and its upper neighbor G (the “open-cadence” note). They alternate in a regular four-bar pattern, as follows (where “I” means F and “ii” means G): I/I–ii /ii/ii–I.

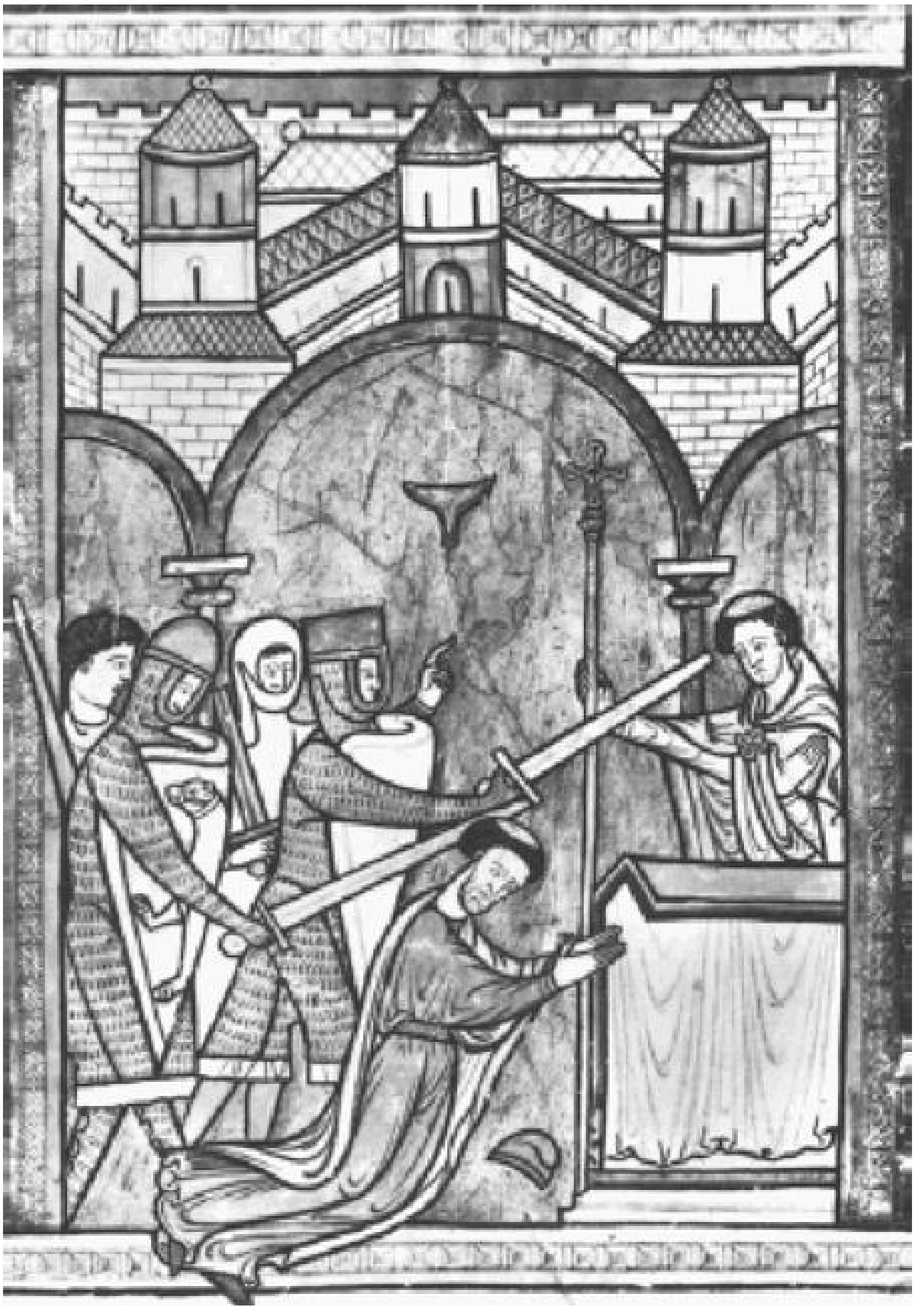

fig. 11-4 The murder of St. Thomas of Canterbury in 1170, from a Latin psalter made in England ca. 1200.

The reason for using the roman I and ii (reminiscent of harmonic analysis) instead of the *claves* (note-names) F and G to represent the pes is that G is not invariably the lowest note in the “ii” portions. When G is the lowest note, the cadences are of the familiar “double leading tone” type. But sometimes, when one of the twinned tenors has G, the other one takes the C a fifth below, producing against the upper-voice leading tone not a “six-three” harmony but one of those characteristically English “ten-fives” we first encountered in *Beata viscera*. At such cadences the actual “bass progression” is not ii–I but V–I. No one reading this book will fail to take notice of the first occurrence in its narrative of a “V–I” cadential pattern, the most familiar and decisive of all harmonic closes to our modern ears. Just what the *historical* significance of that (to us) striking and significant progression may have been on its debut is a matter of considerable debate among historians—a debate that cuts very deep into the question of what the word “historical” really means. We will return to it.

For now, it will be enough merely to take note of the freedom with which the “ten-five” open-spaced triad is deployed in this motet, along with all the other full-triad sonorities we have been tracking in “English descant.”

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Pycard

Old Hall Manuscript

Roy Henry

OLD HALL AND ROY HENRY

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

A caveat: Nothing that has been said about the distinctiveness and insularity of English music in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or about its stylistic continuity, should be taken to imply that English composers were unaware of continental developments, or hostile to them. On the contrary, by the end of the fourteenth century, when evidence of English musical activity becomes much more abundant, it is clear that there were plenty of English composers who kept well abreast even of the most arcane *ars subtilior* techniques and paraded them proudly in their own work. Even they, however, were sure to put an English spin on whatever they appropriated.

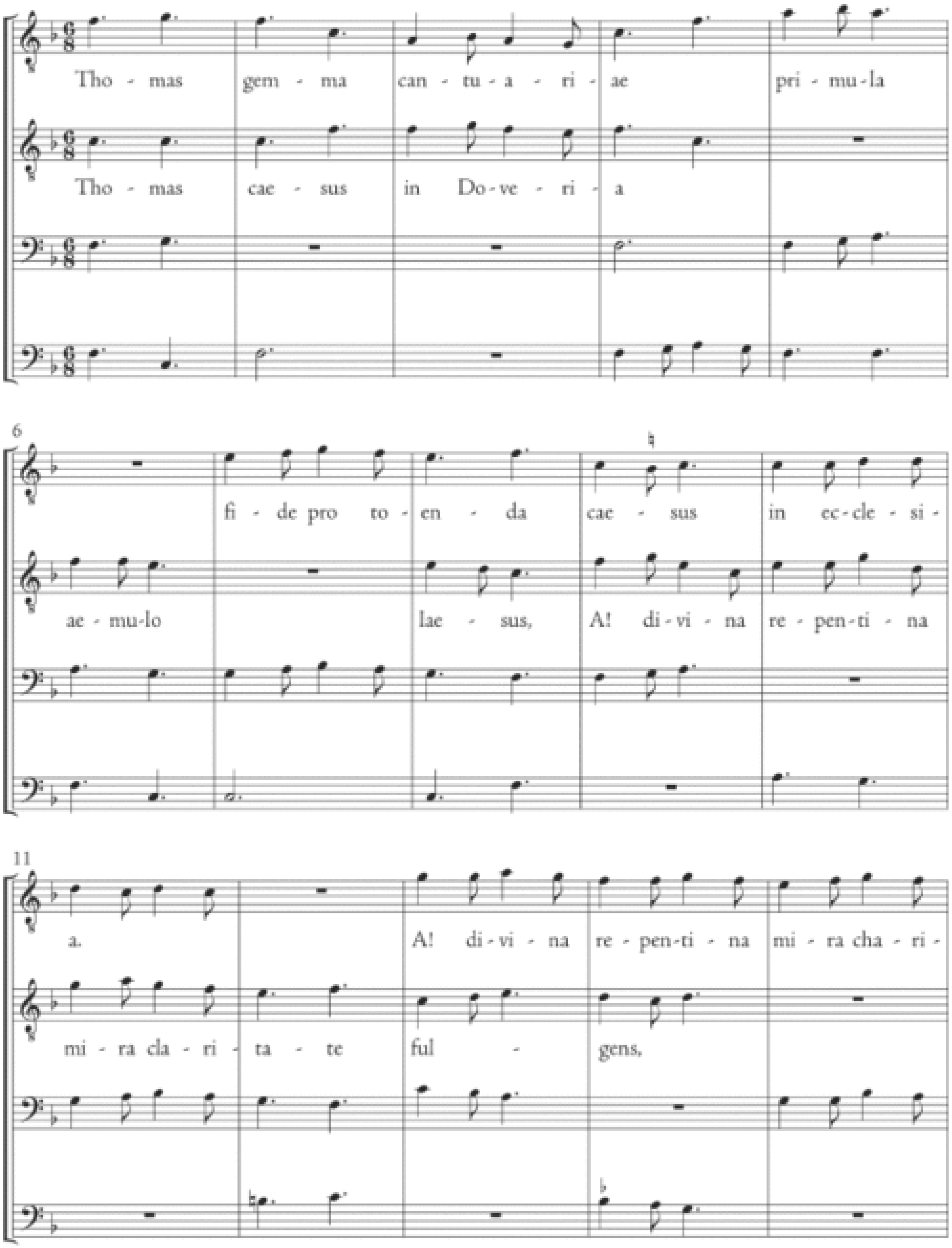
A piquant case in point is a Gloria by a composer known to us only as Pycard. It comes from the earliest English source of decipherable polyphonic church music to come down to us relatively intact, a magnificent codex known as the Old Hall manuscript because at the time of its discovery by scholars it was owned by the College of St. Edmund in the village of Old Hall, near the town of Ware, to which it had been willed by a private owner in 1893. It had been previously owned by the composer John Stafford Smith, whose song “To Anacreon in Heaven,” adapted to new words by Francis Scott Key, became “The Star-Spangled Banner”; in 1973 it was sold to the British Library. The fact that it had been in private ownership since the sixteenth century, and more or less out of sight, was probably what saved it from destruction.

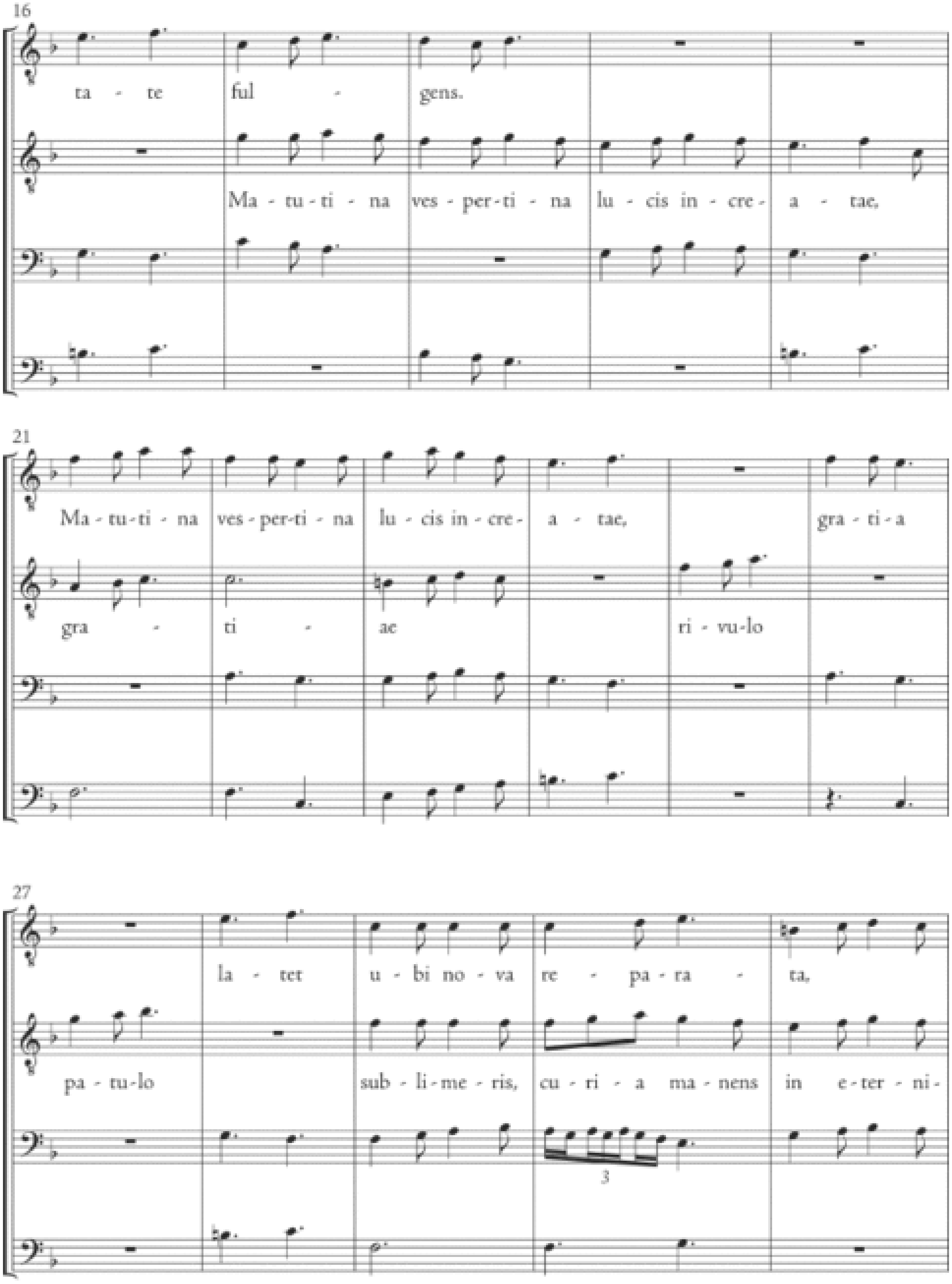
The manuscript was compiled and copied during the second decade of the fifteenth century, but its repertory probably extends back at least a generation before that and represents the state of English music at or near the end of the fourteenth century. It is now thought to have been copied for the chapel of Thomas, Duke of Clarence, second son of Henry IV and younger brother of Henry V. Its contents consist predominantly of Mass Ordinary settings organized in sections according to category: first Kyries (a section now lost), then Glorias (followed by a few antiphons and sequences, the one major non-Ordinary portion, but appropriately placed), then Credos and so on. Within each section there are, first, some “English descant” settings notated in score, then some more modern (that is, motetlike) pieces notated in separate parts. Pycard’s Gloria is of the latter type.

The piece is planned out in a very French sort of way. It apportions the text (the standard Mass Gloria “farced” with a Marian trope—*Spiritus et alme orphanorum*—that was very popular in England) into four sections, each consisting of a double panisorhythmic cursus. The lower parts have a recurrent color and talea that unite all eight cursus; the upper parts have four different taleae, one for each major section, each repeated once. As this description already begins to suggest, the four “real” voices in the texture are “twinned” just as they are in Ex. 11-11, the “Thomas” motet. The two upper parts, spitting out the text in rapid-fire bursts like fanfares, share a single range and a great deal of melodic material as well. Their very frequent if irregular imitations are clearly related to the old voice-exchange technique. The lower parts enunciate in tandem an old-fashioned English *pes* that oscillates between G and F as stable points. One of the parts is broken up “stereophonically” between two hocketing lines, so that the two-part pes actually requires the participation of three voices or instruments. (That is why there are four “real” parts even though the piece requires five players.) The combination of a popular English trope and the old English pes technique with isorhythm already justifies the remark about English "spin" on continental procedures. What justifies the reference to the *ars subtilior* is the changing rhythmic relationship between the upper voices and the pes. In the second pan-isorhythmic section (coinciding with the beginning of the trope) the upper parts continue singing as before, while the pes shifts over from longs equaling twelve minims (eighths) in the upper parts, to longs equaling nine minims. But the hocket-like splitting of notes in the pes means that in reality each note in the hocketing parts equals of the minims running in the treble parts above. At the same time, by the use of red ink, those upper-voice minims are grouped by twos, hemiola-fashion, into semibreves, so that the actual ratio of lengths between the notes of the trebles and the notes of the pes is . Now that is *subtilitas*! This remarkable stretch is shown in Ex. 11-12.

Complications mount: during the next pan-isorhythmic section each pes note equals eight of the trebles' minims, but in the trebles those minims are grouped by threes. And so it goes, the pes steadily contracting in a series of "Pythagorean" proportions (12:9:8:6) until the voices at last come back into mensural alignment, but with the pes moving at twice its original speed. What makes the piece not only intelligible but palatable, even delightful, despite all cerebral complications is the mixture of all these artful linear subtleties with the typically English full triadic sonority and the use of jolly dancelike tunes to carry it through. Giraldus Cambrensis and his Welsh toddlers still lurk in the background.

So sophisticated is this music, so given was Pycard to mathematical and canonic wizardry in the other eight pieces preserved under his name in Old Hall, and so suspiciously Gallic is his name (cf. the ancient northern-French province of Picardie), that it has been suggested that he was actually a French composer whose works are preserved for some reason in an English manuscript (and in only one other, a fragment, also English). One scholar has even proposed identifying him with a chaplain named Jean Pycard (alias Vaux), not otherwise identified as a musician, who served John of Gaunt (d. 1399), Duke of Lancaster and Aquitaine, fourth son of Edward III, and progenitor of the English house of Lancaster, during his residence at Amiens, the Picard capital, in 1390.[3]

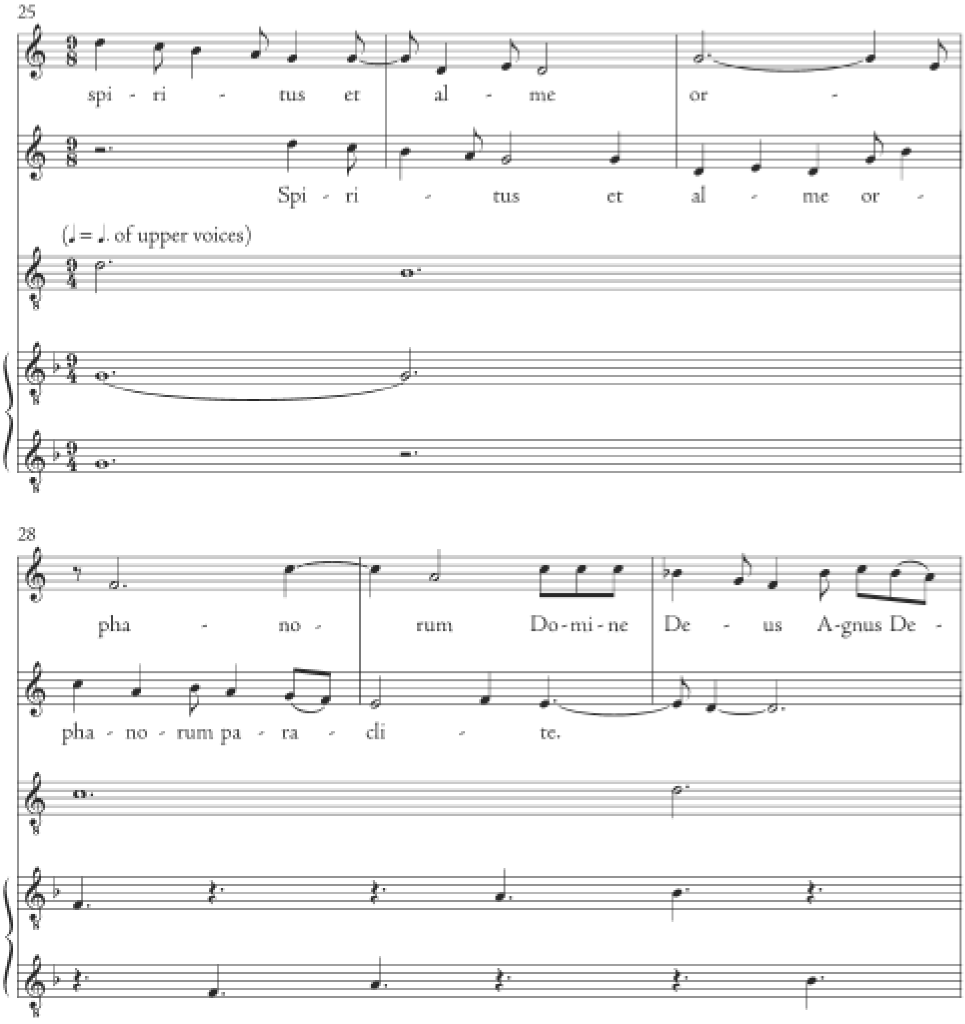

Tho - mas gem - ma can - tu - a - ri - ae pri - mu - la
Tho - mas cae - sus in Do - ve - ri - a
6
ae - mu - lo
fi - de pro to - en - da cae - sus in ec - cle - si -
lae - sus, A! di - vi - na re - pen - ti - na
11
a.
mi - ra cla - ri - ta - te ful - gens,
A! di - vi - na re - pen - ti - na mi - ra cha - ri -

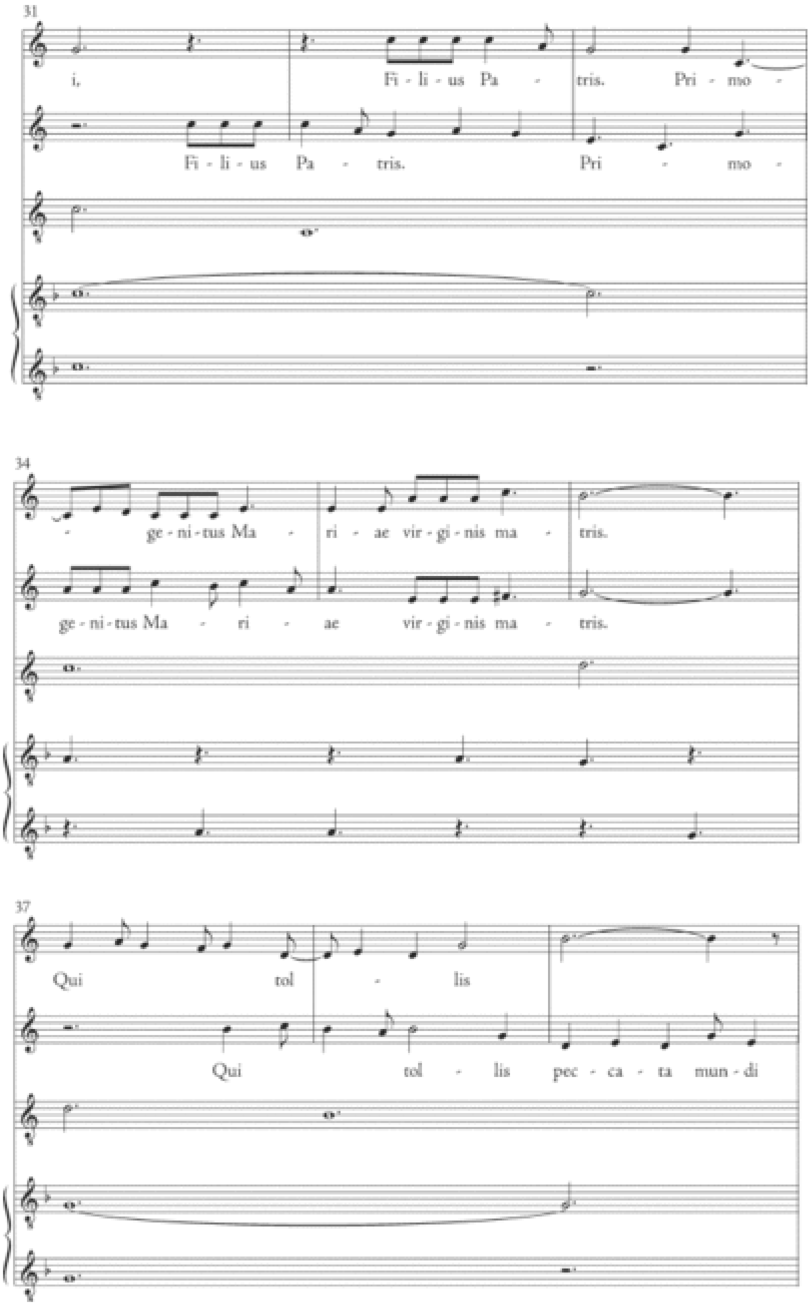

16
ta - te ful - gens.
Ma - tu - ti - na ves - per - ti - na lu - cis in - cre - a - tae,
21
Ma - tu - ti - na ves - per - ti - na lu - cis in - cre - a - tae, gra - ti - a
gra - ti - ae ri - vu - lo
27
la - tet u - bi no - va re - pa - ra - ta,
pa - tu - lo sub - li - me - ris, cu - ri - a ma - nens in e - ter - ni -
3

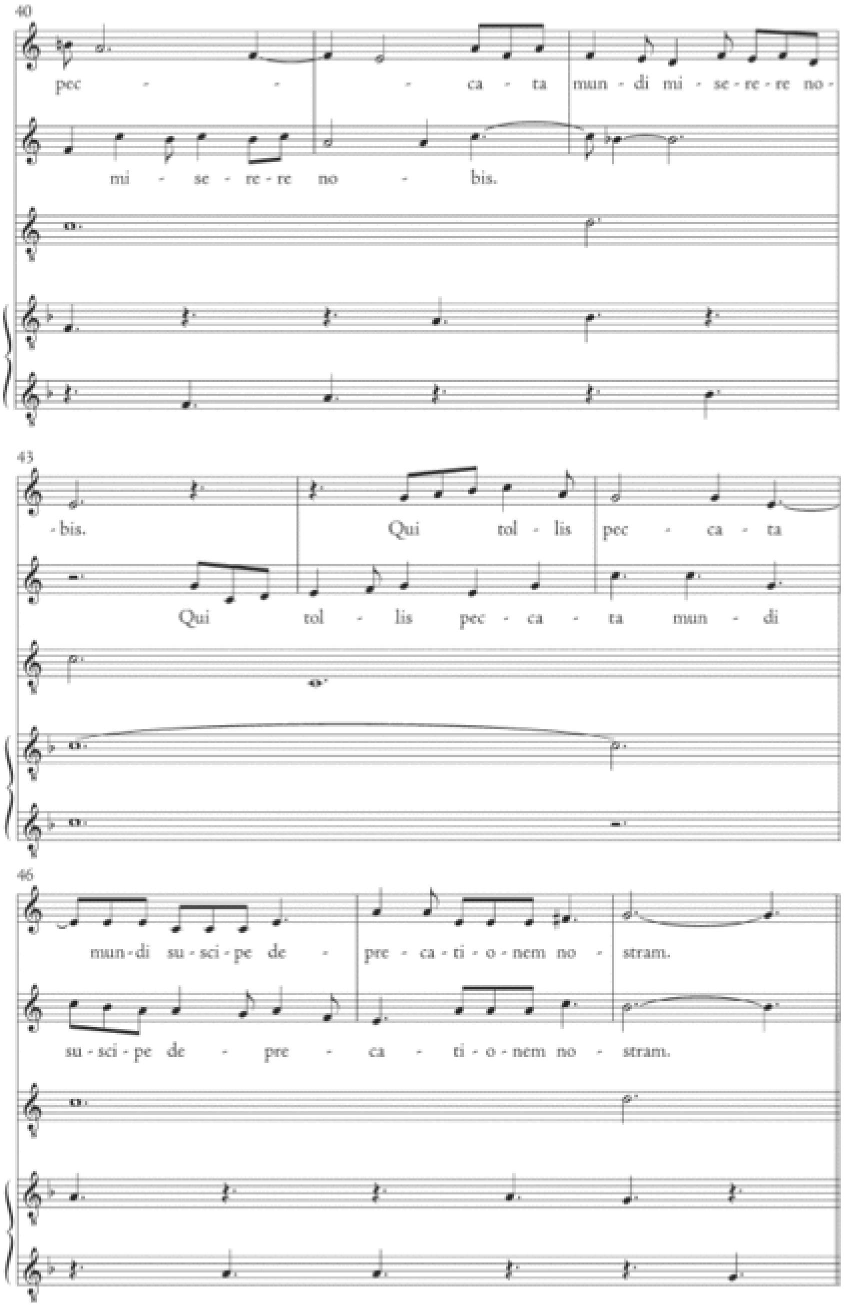
ex. 11-11 *Thomas gemma Cantuariae/Thomas caesus in Doveria*, mm. 1-32

But a family named Picard or Pychard was prominent in England at this time, and it furnishes other possible candidates for identification with the composer. Nor is there any reason to suppose that a French composer would have been inclined to use a pes (or, before the fifteenth century, the *Spiritus et alme* trope). As to the Frenchness of Pycard's style, compare another Old Hall Gloria, in a purebred French cantilena style, by Leonel Power, indubitably an Englishman. It easily rivals Pycard's for sheer complexity and displays far fewer identifiable English traits (though the voice exchange followed by imitation at the very end of the excerpt in Ex. 11-13 is a giveaway, after all).

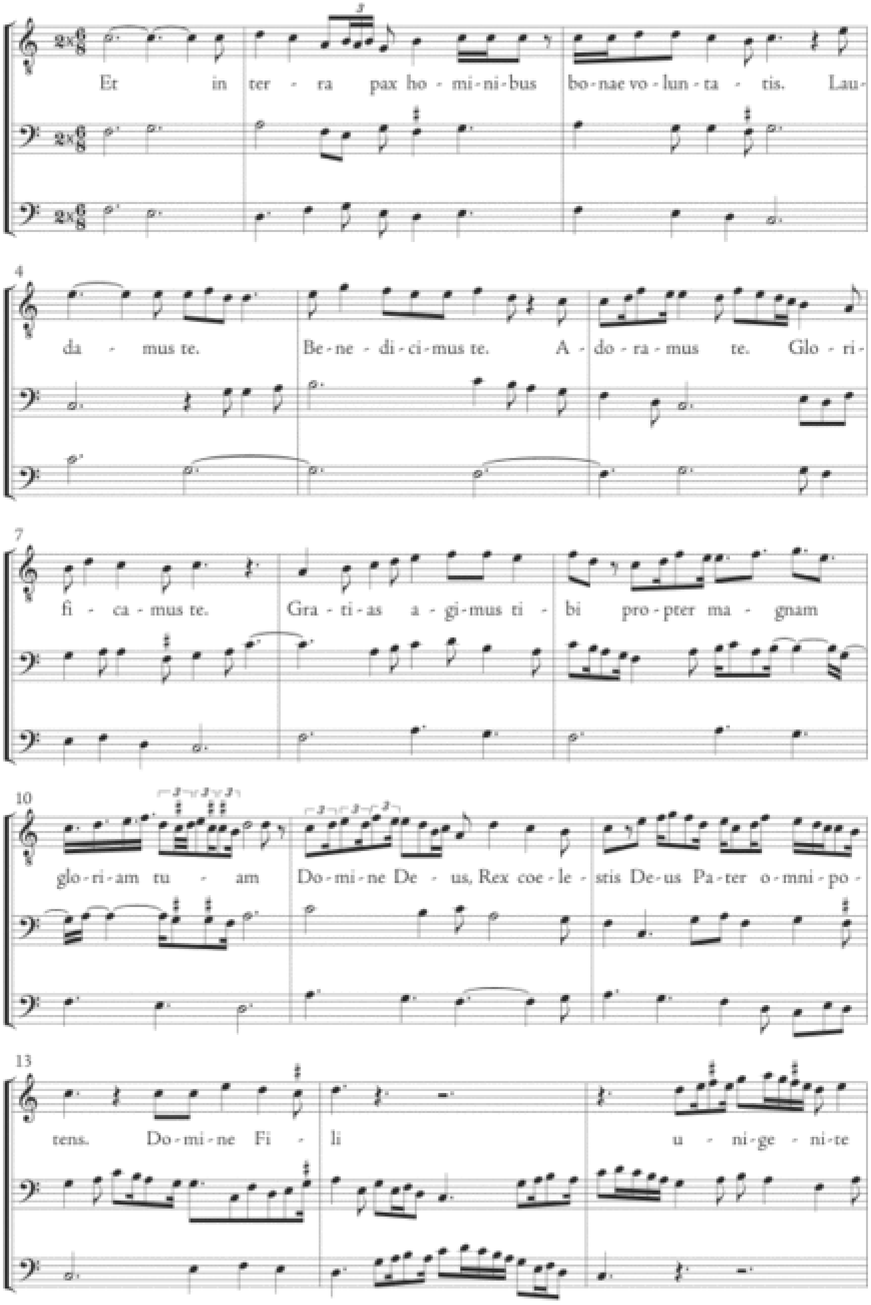
From the historian's point of view the Old Hall manuscript is truly a feast after a famine. About a hundred of its 147 pieces carry attributions, naming no fewer than twenty-four composers, so that we have more English musical names from this period to conjure with (even if many of them are nothing *but* names) than we have from any other country. And of all these names, it is fair to say that one has conjured up a fascination to equal all the rest combined: "Roy Henry," French for "King Henry," a royal composer!


25
spi - ri - tus et al - me or -
Spi - ri - tus et al - me or -
(♩ = ♩. of upper voices)
28
pha - no - rum Do - mi - ne De - us A - gnus De -
pha - no - rum pa - ra - cli - te.

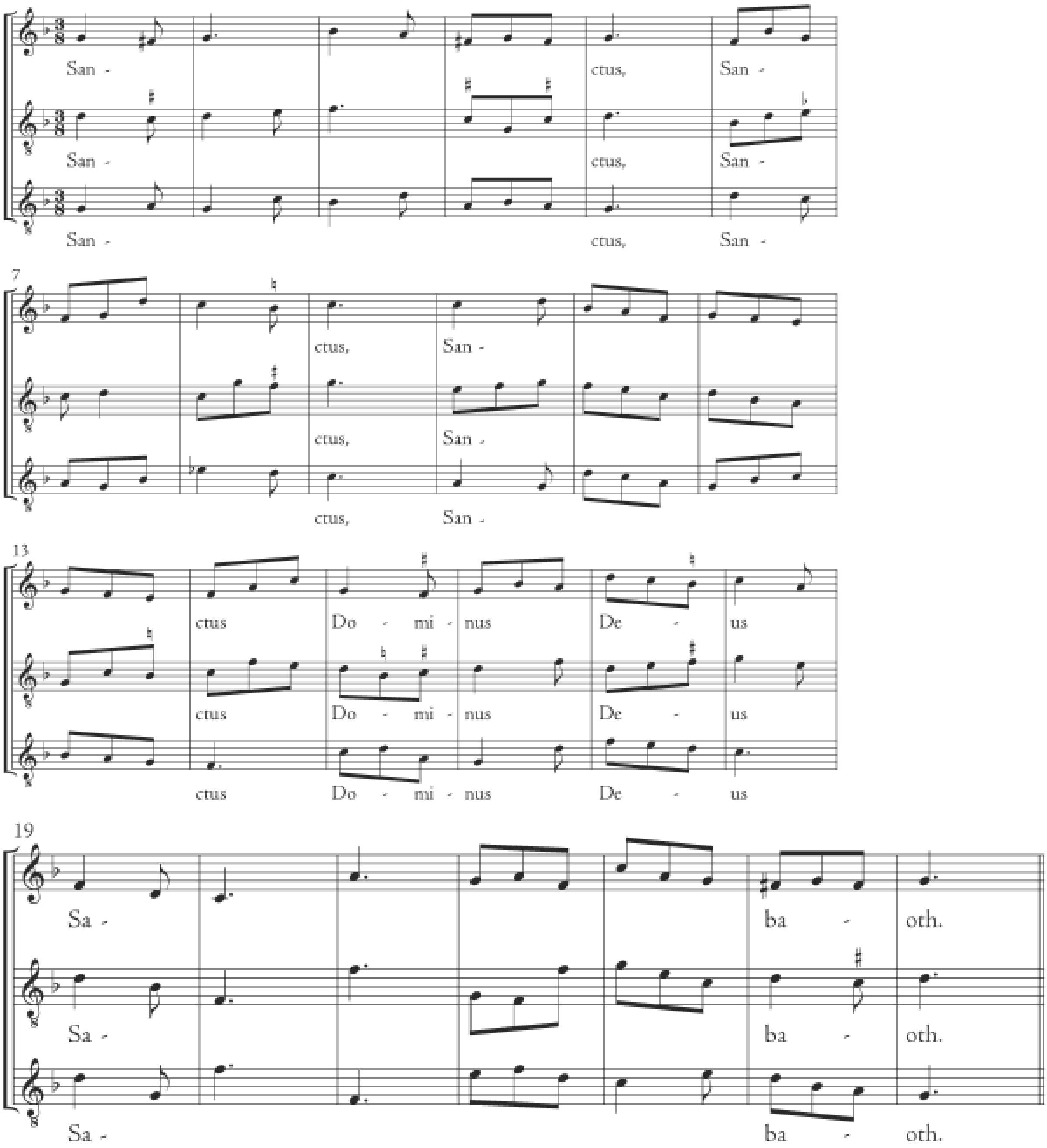

31
i, Fi - li - us Pa - tris. Pri - mo -
Fi - li - us Pa - tris. Pri - mo -
34
- ge - ni - tus Ma - ri - ae vir - gi - nis ma - tris.
ge - ni - tus Ma - ri - ae vir - gi - nis ma - tris.
37
Qui tol - lis
Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di


40
pec - - - ca - ta mun - di mi - se - re - re no -
mi - se - re - re no - bis.
43
- bis. Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta
Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di
46
mun - di su - sci - pe de - pre - ca - ti - o - nem no - stram.
su - sci - pe de - pre - ca - ti - o - nem no - stram.

ex. 11-12 Pycard, Gloria, mm. 25-48


Et in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni - bus bo - nae vo - lun - ta - tis. Lau-
4
da - mus te. Be - ne - di - ci - mus te. A - do - ra - mus te. Glo - ri-
7
fi - ca - mus te. Gra - ti - as a - gi - mus ti - bi pro - pter ma - gnam
10
glo - ri - am tu - am Do - mi - ne De - us, Rex coe - le - stis De - us Pa - ter o - mni - po -
13
tens. Do - mi - ne Fi - li u - ni - ge - ni - te

ex. 11-13 Leonel Power, Gloria, mm. 1-15



ex. 11-14 Roy Henry, Sanctus, mm. 1-25

But which Henry? The three kings of the house of Lancaster—the son, grandson, and great-grandson of John of Gaunt—were all named Henry. Henry VI, who acceded to the throne in 1421 at the age of nine months, can be ruled out, but Henry IV and Henry V, the father and the brother, respectively, of the manuscript's possible first owner, both reigned during the period of its compiling. Opinions still differ as to which of them may have composed the two pieces attributed to Roy Henry (and there is no guarantee that either attribution is anything but honorific), but as the two pieces differ radically in style it is not impossible that each of the two kings may have written one. An Alleluia setting in a different manuscript, attributed to "henrici quinti," might seem to clinch the case for the younger man; but as Margaret Bent, a specialist in the period, has dryly noted, the piece "is no more similar in style to the two Old Hall items than these are to each other."[4] The Old Hall Sanctus setting (Ex. 11-14) is the older of the two, to judge by its style and notation. Like the English descant settings of old (in particular, like Ex. 11-10), it is written in score, is basically homorhythmic, and freely mixes "perfect" and "imperfect" consonant chords. (The other "Roy Henry" piece is a Gloria in an advanced *ars nova* cantilena style, entered choirbook fashion in separate parts.) As befits its status as a royal composition—or at least as a composition carrying a royal attribution—it stands at the head of its section in the manuscript. Smoothly and skillfully written, maintaining the English predilection for full triadic sonority without resorting to actual parallelism, it can be taken as representative of "normal" English style (as opposed to the ostentatious complications of Francophiles like Pycard) just before that style became widely known and momentously influential on the continent.

Notes:

(3) See *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (2nd ed., New York: Grove, 2001), s.v. "Pycard."

(4) Margaret Bent, "Roy Henry," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

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Roy Henry

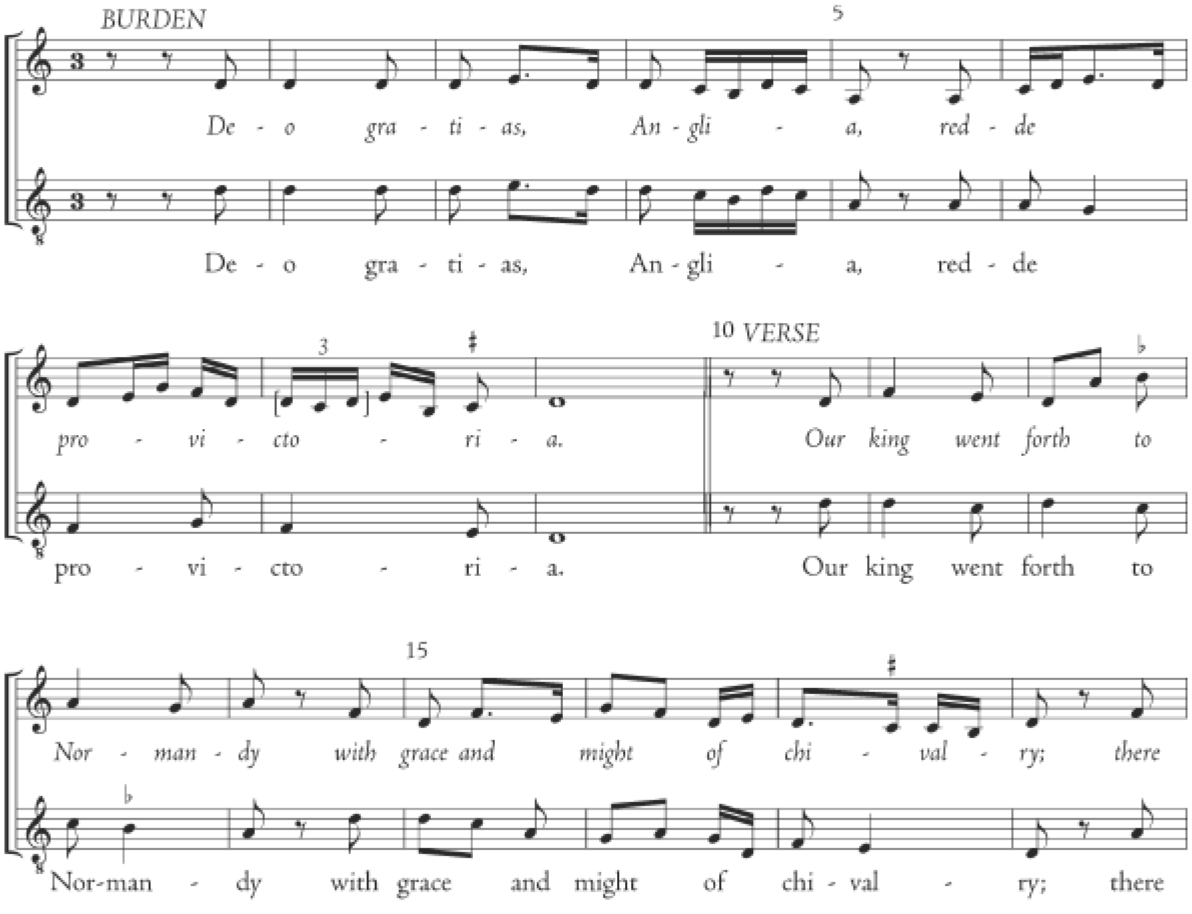
Carol

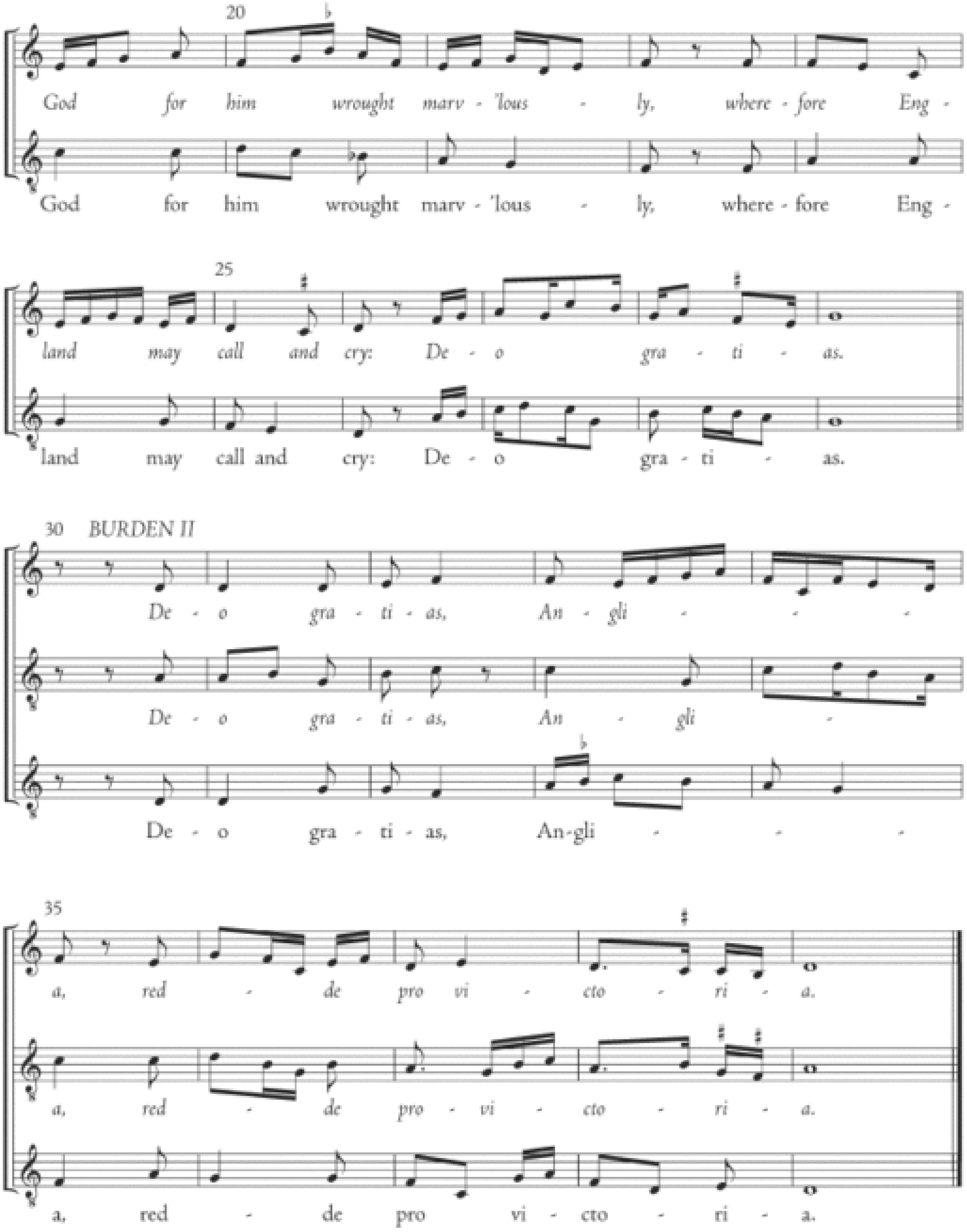
John Dunstable

FORTUNES OF WAR

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Here is Roy Henry again (assuming he is Henry V) in Ex. 11-15, this time doing what he did best and leaving the musical commentary to others:


BURDEN
5
De - o gra - ti - as, An - gli - a, red - de
De - o gra - ti - as, An - gli - a, red - de
3
10 VERSE
pro - vi - cto - ri - a. Our king went forth to
pro - vi - cto - ri - a. Our king went forth to
15
Nor - man - dy with grace and might of chi - val - ry; there
Nor-man - dy with grace and might of chi - val - ry; there


20
God for him wrought marv - 'lous - ly, where - fore Eng -
25
land may call and cry: De - o gra - ti - as.
30 BURDEN II
De - o gra - ti - as, An - gli - - -
35
a, red - de pro vi - cto - ri - a.

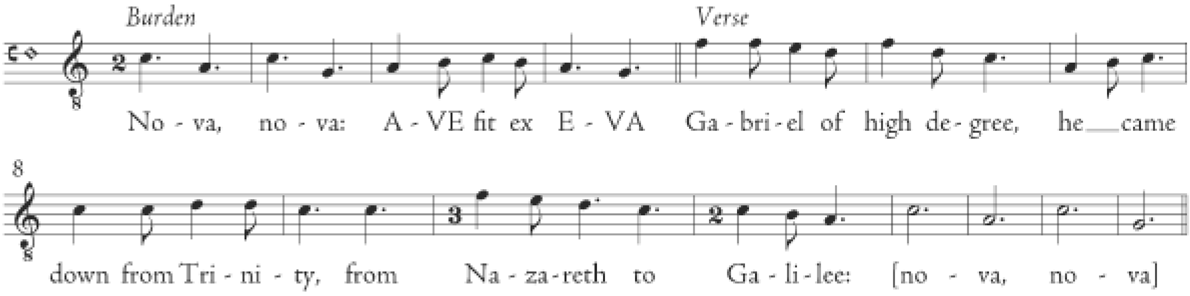
ex. 11-15 ***Deo gratias Anglia*** **("Agincourt Carol")**

Ex. 11-15 is a carol, the English version of the *carole,* the old French dance-song with refrain (here called the "burden"). Such songs had probably been sung in England since the Normans arrived in the eleventh century, if not before. But they left hardly a written trace until the fifteenth century, when they began to be composed by literate musicians using the latest polyphonic techniques. In the one shown here, the three-part writing in the "burden" (or refrain) has that distinctively English triadic sound first observed in the Sumer Canon, composed almost two centuries before.

By the time Ex. 11-15 was noted down, the genre to which it belonged had lost its necessary connection with the dance. It had become a "festival song," in the words of John Stevens, the carol's main historian.[5] The festival with which most written-down carols were associated was, yes, Christmas, although the songs we now call "Christmas carols" (especially those sung door-to-door or around the tree) are really hymns, and were largely the creation of the nineteenth-century sheet music industry.

For another illustration of the form, and a witty one, look at Ex. 11-16, a monophonic carol in popular style that is actually quite a bit younger than the earliest polyphonic examples. It comes from a Glasgow manuscript that contains a number of similar "unaccompanied" carol tunes. There is no chance of their being transcribed folk songs, though; their texts are urbane and literary through and through. This one, which describes the Annunciation (the event, so to speak, that made Christmas possible) is macaronic. It matches a burden in Latin, possibly meant for a chorus to sing, with verses in the vernacular (though the last verse ends with another, very familiar, line of Latin, quoting Mary's response to Gabriel's greeting in Luke 1:38—"Behold the handmaiden of the Lord").

The burden, sung at the beginning and end and in between each verse, is an elegant pun. "Nova, nova" means something like "Extra! Extra!" "Ave" (Hail) is what the angel said to Mary when telling her she was to bear the Son of God, and it reverses the word "Eva" (Eve), the source of the original sin for which the coming of Christ brought redemption. So the redemption revokes and negates the sin for those who accept Christ: for them, "Ave (the virgin birth) remakes Eva"—a second chance.


Burden
Verse
No - va, no - va: A - VE fit ex E - VA Ga - bri - el of high de - gree, he came
8
down from Tri - ni - ty, from Na - za - reth to Ga - li - lee: [no - va, no - va]

ex. 11-16 ***Nova, nova, ave fit ex Eva***

Deo gratias Anglia (Ex. 11-15), the carol in honor of Henry V, celebrates not a festival but a great event—one well known to fans of Shakespeare's history plays (or Laurence Olivier films). Found in a parchment roll copied some time during the first half of the fifteenth century, it commemorates the triumph of 25 October 1415, when King Henry and his small but well-equipped force of longbow men defeated a much larger French army on the field of Agincourt (now Azincourt) near Calais in the far north of France, near the point of shortest distance across the English Channel. It was the most important English victory in the Hundred Years War, a territorial conflict that actually lasted (off and on) for 116 years, from 1337 to 1453. In the battle's aftermath, England conquered and occupied much of northern France.

By 1420 Henry was able to march into Paris and (with the help of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Duke of Burgundy, his secret allies) claim—or, as he insisted, reclaim—the French throne. A treaty signed that year would have made him king of France after the death of the current ruler, Charles VI, whose daughter Catherine he agreed to marry. Henry died in 1422, before the terms of the treaty could be carried out (since Charles VI still lived). But the English armies continued to enjoy victories until by 1429 almost all of France north of the Loire River was in English hands. (It was at this point that the French rallied under Joan of Arc and eventually reclaimed most of their territory for the hereditary French heir, Charles VII.)

As the reader has surely guessed, there was an important musical repercussion from the political events just described. The English occupation of northern France in the 1420s and early 1430s brought a host of English "magnates" and administrators, both military and civil, to French soil. At their head was John of Lancaster, the Duke of Bedford, Henry's brother. Henry left behind a nine-month-old son and heir, Henry VI, who as the grandson of Charles VI was also heir by treaty to the French throne. (He was actually crowned in Paris in 1431, during the English occupation, but never reigned in France.)

Bedford and his brother Humphrey, the Duke of Gloucester, were named joint regents until the king came of age. Bedford had primary responsibility for prosecuting the war with France and administering the English occupation, duties that required his continued residence on French soil until his ally the Duke of Burgundy turned against him and made a separate peace with the French heir. From 1422 until his death in 1435, four years after he ordered the burning of Joan of Arc (who had been captured by the Burgundians, everybody's false friend, and sold to the English for a ransom), the Duke of Bedford was the effective ruler of France.

Bedford maintained a regal traveling household and retinue, including a chapel. Based largely in Paris, it was staffed by a substantial musical corps. The Duke also held many estates in Normandy, forfeited by French nobles who had been defeated and evacuated in the course of the English advance. One of these estates passed after Bedford's death to a man named John Dunstable, who is named in the deed as a servant and household familiar to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (*serviteur et familier domestique de Onfroy Duc de Gloucestre*), but who is named in another document (a bookplate in an astronomical treatise), and on his tombstone, as "a musician with the Duke of Bedford" (*cum duci Bedfordie musicus*).

The man thus rewarded in 1436 with a lordship in France was famous in his day as "an astrologian, a mathematician, a musitian, and what not" (to quote from one of his epitaphs). The striking thing about the musical works attributed to Dunstable is that, out of more than fifty surviving compositions (all but five on Latin religious texts), three-fifths are found only in continental manuscripts. This cannot be explained solely by the scarcity of English sources, since previously there had been nothing approaching such an English presence in continental ones. And the other striking thing about Dunstable's works is the enormous influence they had on continental composers—an influence readily, indeed enthusiastically, acknowledged by a number of witnesses. The only hypothesis that seems to unite all of these scattered facts and circumstances in a convincing pattern is one that places Dunstable in Paris at the head of the Duke of Bedford's musical establishment at the time when English prestige was at its height. That political prestige, plus the novelty and sheer allure of the English style (as we have already come to know it, but which was a revelation to continental musicians) conspired to produce a stylistic watershed in European music, after which for the first time there was truly a pan-European musical style—a literate musical *lingua franca*—of which the English, with Dunstable at their head, had served as catalysts.

Notes:

(5) John Stevens, "Carol," in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980).

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England: Contenance angloise

Martin le Franc

Johannes Tapissier

DUNSTABLE AND THE “CONTENANCE ANGLOISE”

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

One of our best witnesses to Dunstable’s prestige and his role as catalyst comes in the form of an aside in the course of an epic allegorical poem called *Le Champion des dames*, composed around 1440 by Martin le Franc, a Burgundian court poet. Le Franc, an enthusiastic partisan of the French in the Hundred Years War, wrote the poem to persuade Philip the Good, the Duke of Burgundy, to do what he eventually did: sunder his ties to the English and help the French drive them out. The presence of the English on French soil was baleful, Le Franc maintained; unchecked, it would lead ineluctably to an apocalypse, an end of historical time. Listing its portents, Le Franc pointed with a mixture of pride and dread at the perfection attained by the arts and sciences, beyond which no advance seemed possible. The fateful perfection of music, he alleged, was due especially directly to those accursed Englishmen.

At the beginning of the century, according to Le Franc, the composers most admired in Paris had been three: Johannes Carmen (whom we met in chapter 10), Johannes Césaris, and Jean de Noyers, called Tapissier (“the tapestry-weaver”). Their work had astonished all Paris, and impressed all visitors. But they had been totally eclipsed in recent years by a new generation of French and Burgundian musicians, who *ont prins de la contenance Angloise et ensuy Dunstable, Pour quoy merveilleuse plaisance Rend leur chant joyeux et notable*. (“have taken to the English guise and followed Dunstable, which has made their song marvelously pleasing, distinguished and delightful.”)

Le Franc’s vaguely eloquent phrase *la contenance angloise*—“the English something-or-other” (one dictionary gives “air, bearing, attitude” as well as “guise” as equivalents for the poetic *contenance*)—resists precise translation or paraphrase, and it is not clear whether Le Franc himself knew exactly what he was talking about. (The lines preceding the quoted ones are a merry hash of mangled technical terms.) But he was giving voice to the conventional wisdom of the day, and so it would remain for the rest of the century.

When the theorist Johannes Tinctoris, writing in 1477, made his famous announcement that there is not a single piece of music more than forty years old that is “regarded by the learned as worth hearing,” he was dating the beginnings of viable music to precisely the time when Le Franc had been writing. Anything earlier, he contended, was “so ineptly, so stupidly composed that they rather offended than pleased the ear.” And in a slightly earlier treatise Tinctoris had already identified “the English, of whom Dunstable stood forth as chief” as being the “fount and origin” of the “new art” that marked the boundaries of the viable.[6]

The “contenance angloise,” whatever it was, had already made a sensation among the continental churchmen and musicians who heard the choirs of the bishops of Norwich and Lichfield, and the instrumentalists in the retinue of the Earl of Warwick, at the Council of Constance that negotiated the end of the Great Schism in 1417. English musical influence reached its peak in music composed on the continent, in the wake of this council, for the newly reunited Roman Catholic church.

The French musicians named by Martin Le Franc as having absorbed the new manner and brought it to perfection were Dunstable’s contemporaries Gilles Binchois and Guillaume Du Fay. Tinctoris named them too, but as members along with Dunstable of the musical generation that had mentored Tinctoris’s contemporaries, the truly perfect ones. It was just as much the fashion in “premodern” Europe to regard the present as a summit as later it became the fashion to regard the past as a “golden age.”

Thus by the end of the sixteenth century Dunstable had grown sufficiently remote in time so as to lose his aura completely. Thomas Morley, a later composing countryman of Dunstable’s, writing in 1597, produced a little scrap from a Dunstable motet just so he could show what “some dunces have not slacked to do, yea one whose name is John Dunstable (an ancient English author),” whose quoted passage “is one of the greatest absurdities which I have seen committed in the dittying of music.” Or maybe Morley just couldn’t resist a pun. In any case it was nothing personal, nor did it signal any substantive change of mind or heart among music theorists. Morley was merely doing what Tinctoris and Le Franc had done before him—namely, despising music that was older than he was.

If Martin Le Franc was right, it should be possible to show how Dunstable’s music mediated between the music of Carmen, Cesaris, and Tapissier on the one hand, and that of Le Franc’s Franco-Burgundian contemporaries Binchois and Du Fay on the other. It is indeed possible to do this, and very instructive. From such a comparison we learn that precisely those features that until the end of the fourteenth century most distinguished “English descant” from the music of the continent—features like “major-mode” tonality, full-triadic harmony (or at least a greater reliance on imperfect consonances), smooth handling of dissonance—had the most decisive impact on continental musicians in the early fifteenth century, and therefore must have constituted the so-called *contenance angloise*.

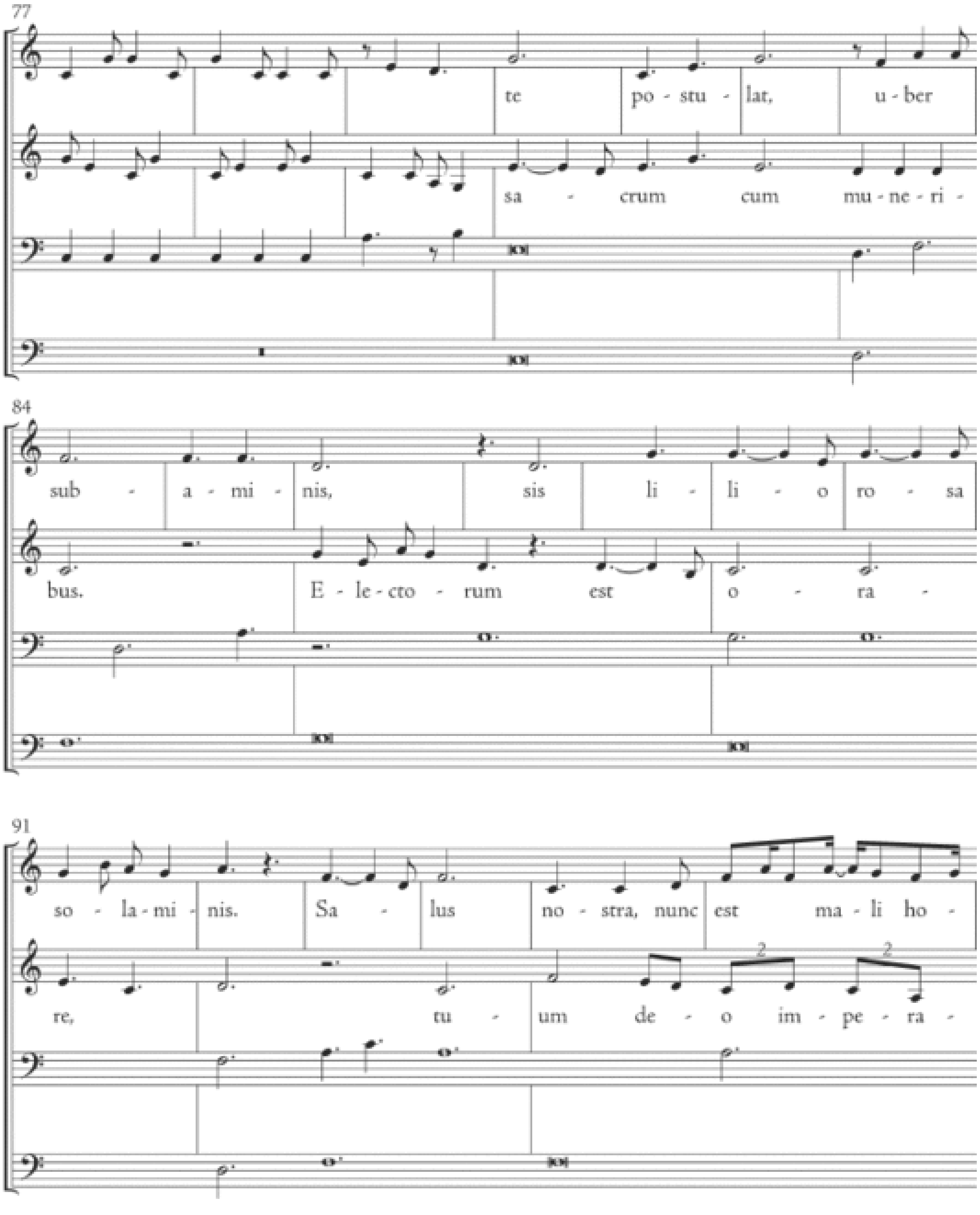
A pan-isorhythmic motet by Tapissier, *Eya dulcis/Vale placens*, is actually about matters the Council of Constance was convened to settle—“Rome, all Rome cries out, ‘Away with the Schism,’” shrills the triplum at one point—though it probably was composed earlier, possibly in Avignon, where the composer, who died around 1410, had worked. Another possibility is that the motet was composed for the court of Duke Philip the Bold of Burgundy, who was then the chief rival to French power in northern Europe. In any case, one can easily see why Martin Le Franc said that music like this had stunned all Paris. It radiates power and authority.

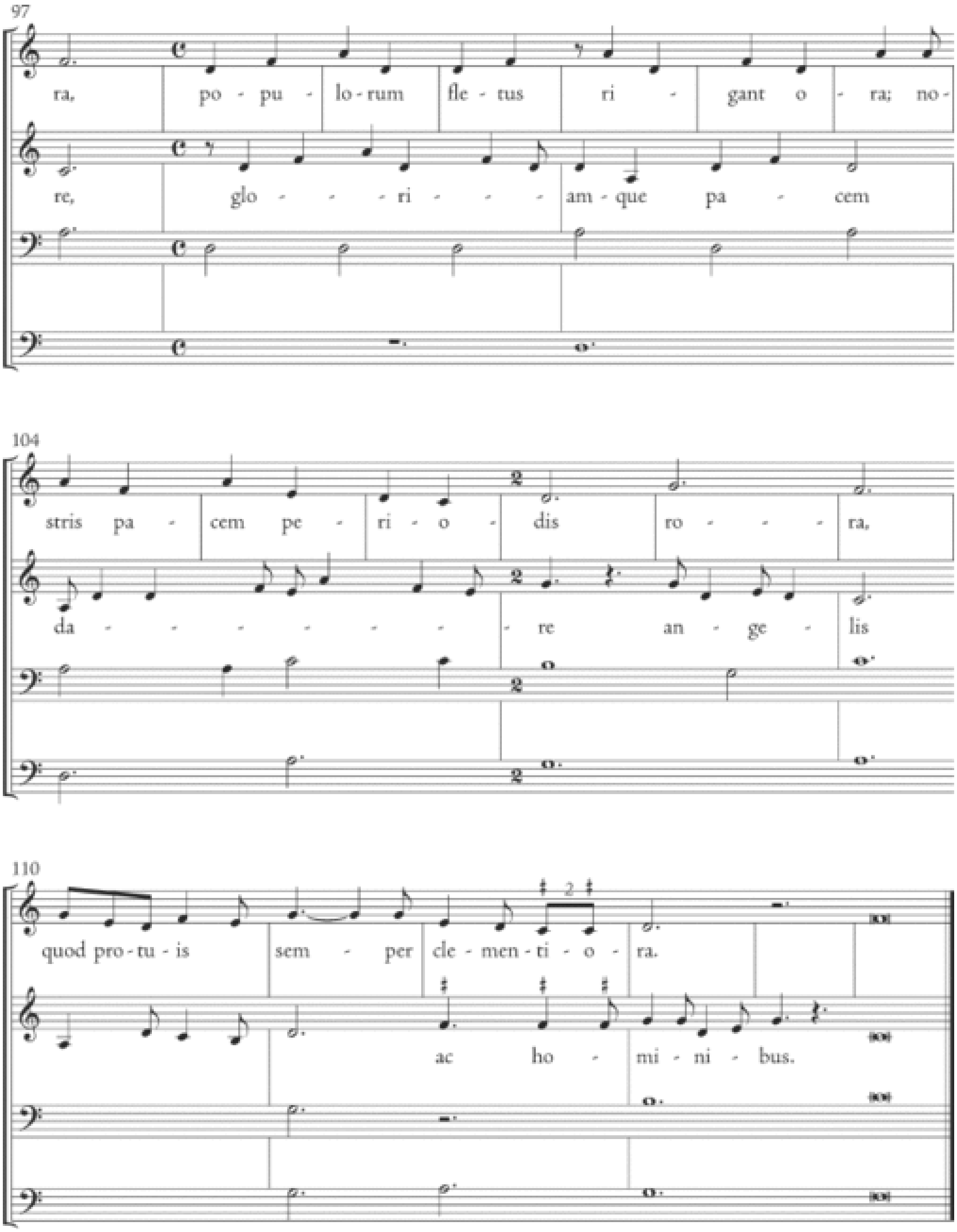
Like the motet by Ciconia discussed in chapter 8 (also connected indirectly with the Council of Constance through its dedicatee, Francesco Zabarella), Tapissier’s motet sports robust ceremonial fanfares preceding each talea, which suggest outdoor performance on loud winds. (Such wind bands did often accompany the choirs at the Council of Constance, we learn from literary descriptions, and the English trombones were particularly admired.) The text setting is hortatory, orotund, even a shade bombastic. It consists at times of longish strings of syllables on a reciting—or rather, a haranguing—tone. The rhythmic writing shows traces of the *ars subtilior*, the Avignon specialty, in its long chains of syncopes and its little rashes of polyrhythm.

The tonality of the whole is unabashedly disunified in the old French manner, recalling the *In seculum* motets encountered in chapter 7 whose wayward, unpredictable cadence structure was seen as a plus, as an aspect of variety (*discordia concors*). The three pan-isorhythmic taleae in Tapissier’s motet all begin with fanfares on C, but make their respective cadences on F, C, and G. And then, just as in the *In seculum* motets, a single note evidently left over in the tenor’s unidentified color comes out of the blue and forces a final chord on F that in no sense resolves the harmony but confuses it—pleasurably (or at least impressively) for its original listeners, one must assume, if not for us. Ex. 11-17 shows the last talea and its surprise ending.

The only fair comparison with Tapissier’s motet would be another isorhythmic motet. Although he looms in traditional historiography (thanks to Le Franc and Tinctoris, among others) as a stylistic divider, Dunstable was at least as much a continuer and an adapter of traditional genres. He wrote a considerable number of isorhythmic motets, of which a dozen or so survive; indeed he was particularly expert in this loftiest of genres, as one might fairly expect “an astrologian, a mathematician, a musitian, and what not” to be. Like all his contemporaries, Dunstable was still brought up musically in the spirit of the quadrivium. But the content with which he invested the old forms—the new wine, as the old metaphor has it, that he poured into the old bottles—was indeed something different.

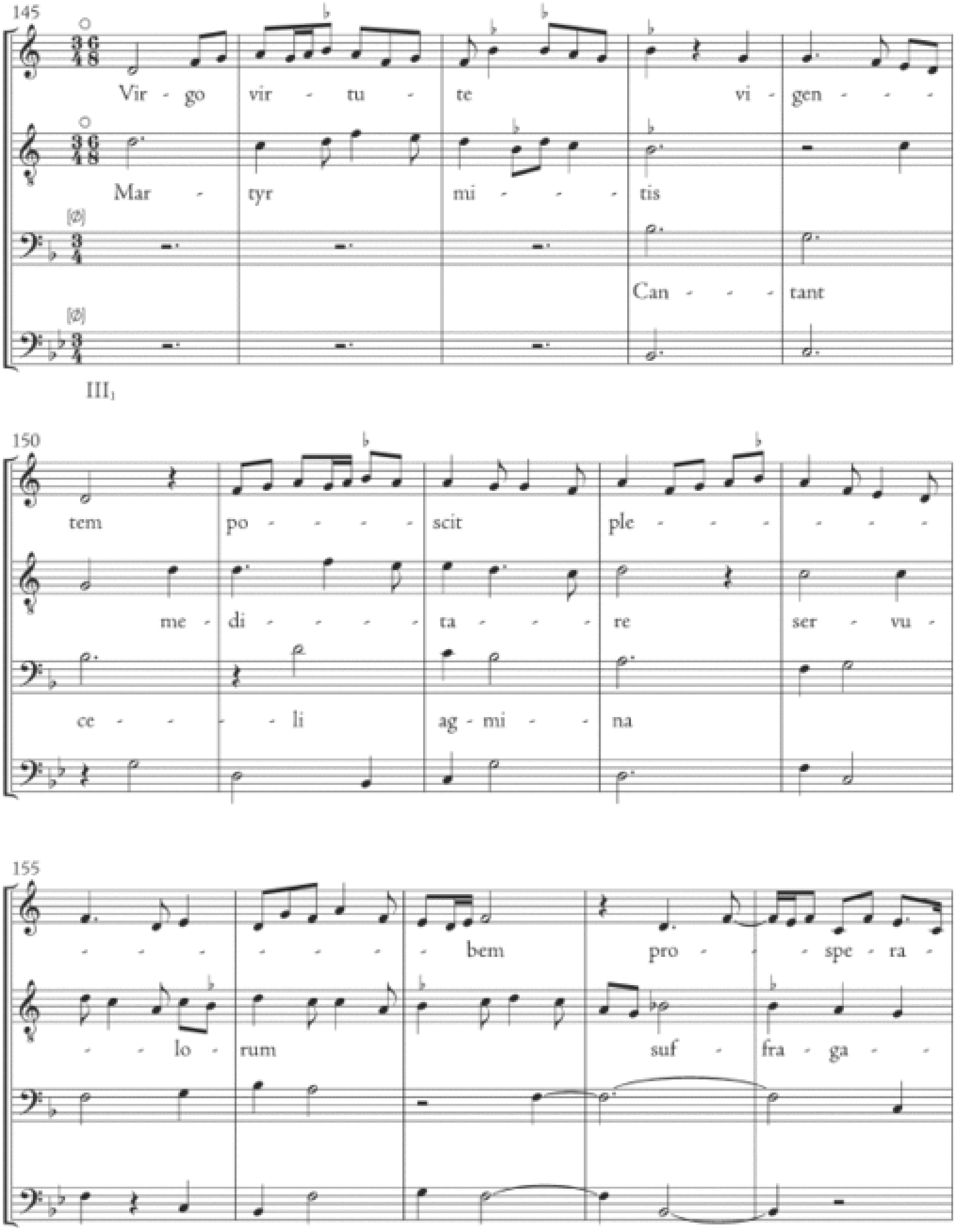
His motet *Salve scema/Salve salus*, in honor of St. Katharine (Ex. 11-18), is every bit as rigorous in its structural design as Tapissier’s. The tenor and contratenor both have strictly maintained *colores* that sustain a triple cursus. Each color, moreover, supports a double cursus of a talea that is maintained strictly in the lower parts from beginning to end, for a total of six statements. With each repetition of the color, the talea undergoes a change in mensuration that increases its speed: the second color runs at times the speed of the first, and the third is double the speed of the first. Moreover, the texted parts are pan-isorhythmic within a color statement of the lower parts: that is to say, whenever the lower parts repeat their talea at a given speed, the upper parts repeat their talea, too (compare mm. 145–62 with 163–end). The difference is that the lower parts never change their talea while the upper parts do so twice, as indicated.

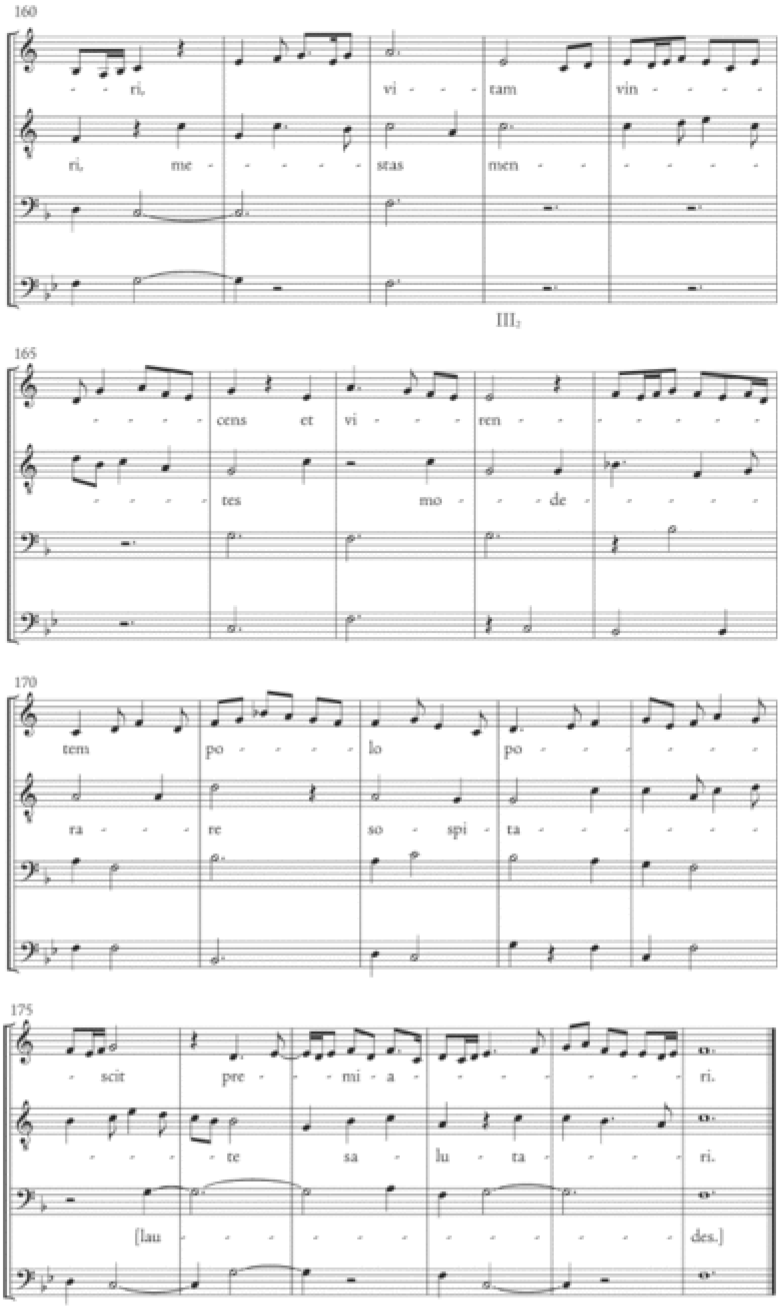

77
te po - stu - lat, u - ber
sa - crum cum mu - ne - ri -
84
sub - a - mi - nis, sis li - li - o ro - sa
bus. E - le - cto - rum est o - ra -
91
so - la - mi - nis. Sa - lus no - stra, nunc est ma - li ho -
re, tu - um de - o im - pe - ra -
2
2


97
ra, po - pu - lo - rum fle - tus ri - gant o - ra; no -
re, glo - - - ri - - - am - que pa - cem
104
stris pa - cem pe - ri - o - dis ro - - - ra,
da - - - - - - - - re an - ge - lis
110
quod pro - tu - is sem - per cle - men - ti - o - ra.
ac ho - mi - ni - bus.

ex. 11-17 Jean de Noyers (Tapissier), *Eya dulcis/Vale placens*, mm. 77-115

Yet if the structure of Dunstable’s motet is traditional, its sound is worlds away (well, at least a channel away) from Tapissier’s, thoroughly informed by sonorities we have learned to associate with English descant: uniform F-major tonality and euphonious triadic harmony, with thirds enjoying full rights (except in final chords) as consonances. When in each statement of their *color* the tenor and contratenor enter after the *introitus*, we even get a deliberate whiff of what old Giraldus Cambrensis had called the “sweet softness of B-flat” (what we would call “plagal harmony”). Most of all, Dunstable’s music displays an unprecedentedly smooth technique of part writing, its dissonances consistently subordinated to consonances in ways that begin to approximate the rules of dissonance treatment still taught in counterpoint class and analyzed in harmony class (passing tones, neighbors, and so on). Ex. 11-18 contains the last *color* statement. Note the double cursus of the pan-isorhythmic talea: after the eighteenth measure all the rhythms in all the parts repeat exactly.


145
Vir - go vir - tu - te vi - gen - - -
Mar - tyr mi - - - tis
Can - - - tant
III₁
150
tem po - - - - - scit ple - - - - - - - -
me - di - - - - ta - - - re ser - vu -
ce - - - li ag - mi - - na
155
- - - - - - - bem pro - - spe - ra -
- - lo - rum suf - fra - ga - -



ex. 11-18 John Dunstable, *Salve scema/Salve salus*, mm. 145–80

By contrast, Tapissier’s texture bristles with “unprepared” and “unresolved” dissonance. The last six measures of the example abound in instances: triplum G making a seventh with the motetus (and tenor) A, and then skipping from it; triplum and motetus both skipping to a clashing E-F(♯) second, and so on. Such things had been perfectly normal in the French polyphonic style that grew out of continental discantus. They will not be found in Dunstable’s piece. To ears trained to regard English descant as the norm, and to regard Dunstable as the “fount and origin” of viable music, Tapissier’s dissonances can easily seem like blunders, and it is easy to see why Tinctoris would see fit to censure such music as “ineptly and stupidly composed.” We have already seen the continental response to Dunstable’s motet style in Du Fay’s *Nuper rosarum flores*, analyzed for its numerical symbolism in chapter 8. There it was mentioned that the beginnings of “the Renaissance,” for music, are often associated with the work of Du Fay (more often, in fact than with Landini). That is because modern music historiography has, perhaps somewhat uncritically, adapted the views of Martin Le Franc and Tinctoris—about the significance of the English style as marking a new beginning for the continent—to the conventional vocabulary of art history. What is “Renaissance” about Du Fay and his contemporary Binchois is exactly what Martin Le Franc said was “new” about them: that they “have taken to the English guise and followed Dunstable,” particularly as regards harmony and part-writing. In fact the continental composers invented new ways—clever cookbook recipes, actually—for instantly transforming their style and donning that “English guise.”

Notes:

(6) Tinctoris, *Proportionale musices* (ca. 1476), as translated in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 195.

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John Dunstable
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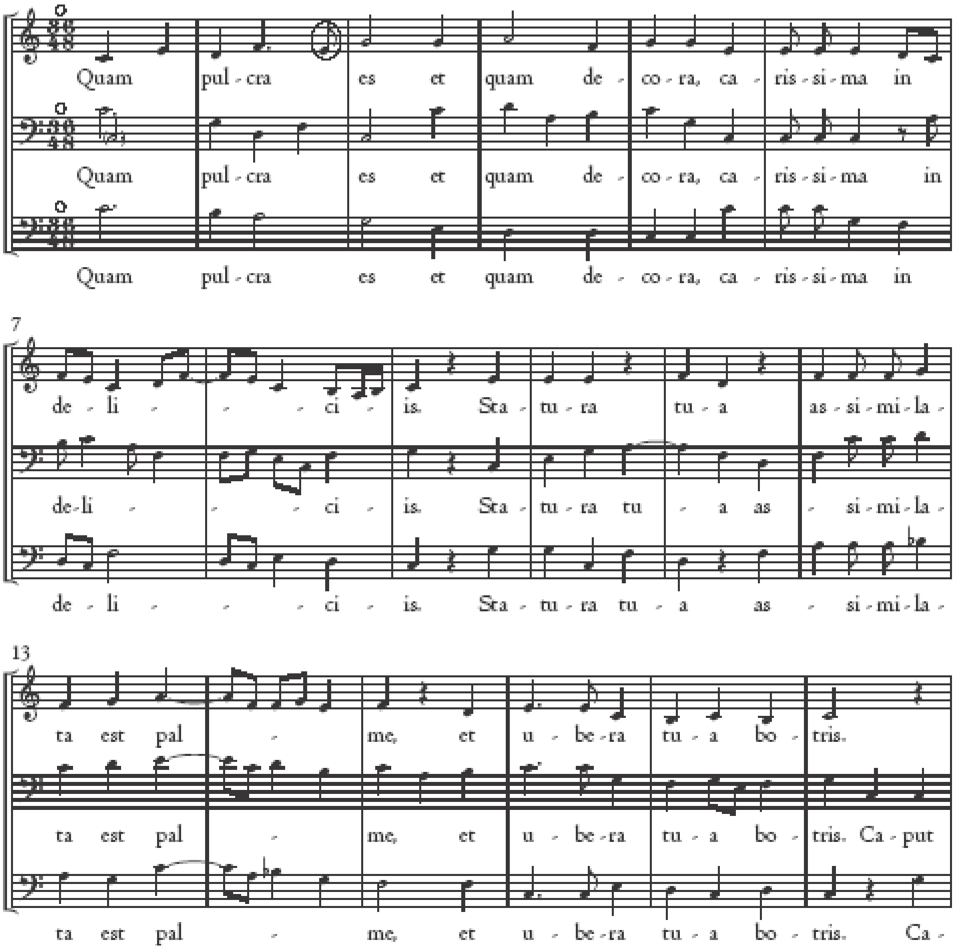
VOLUPTUOUSNESS AND HOW TO ACQUIRE IT

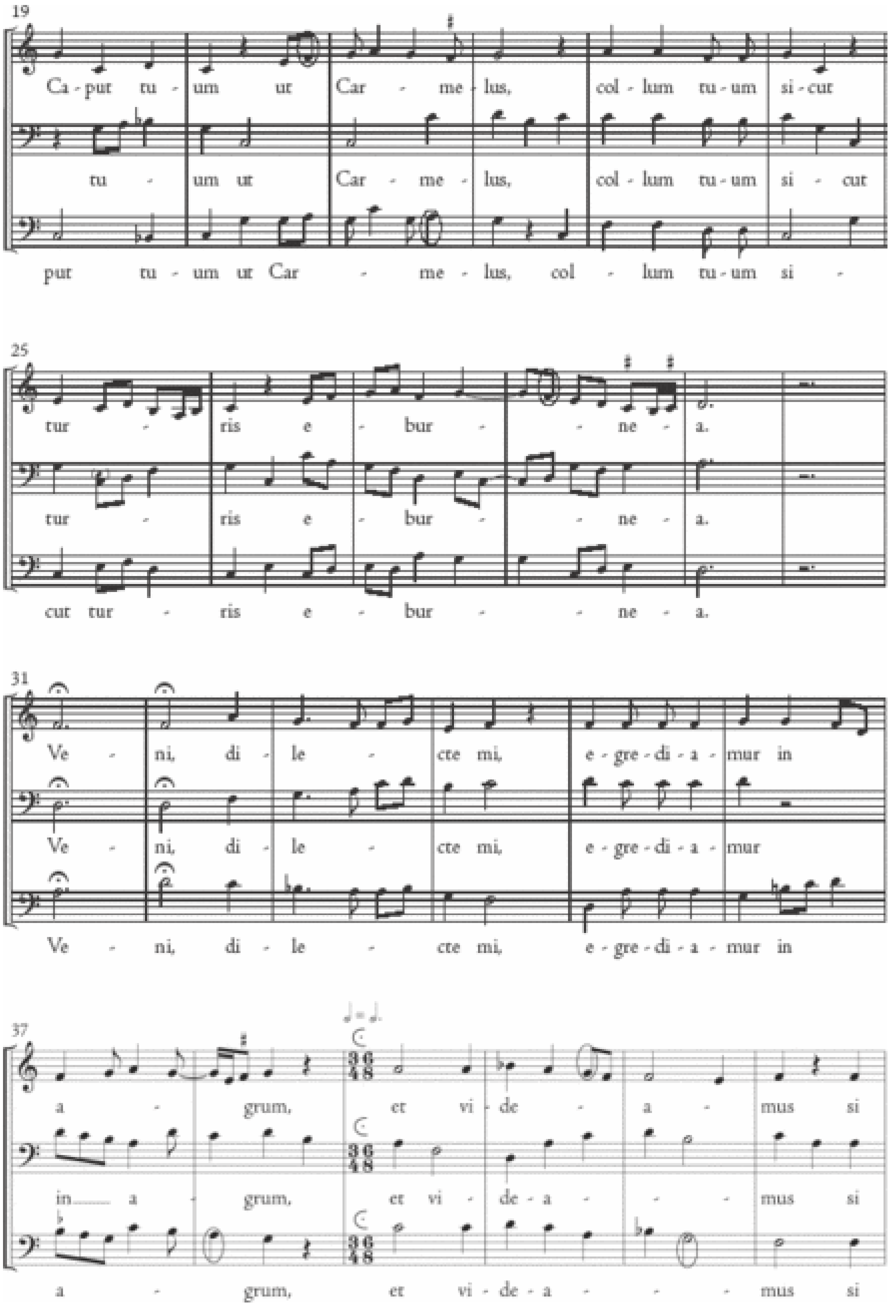
Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

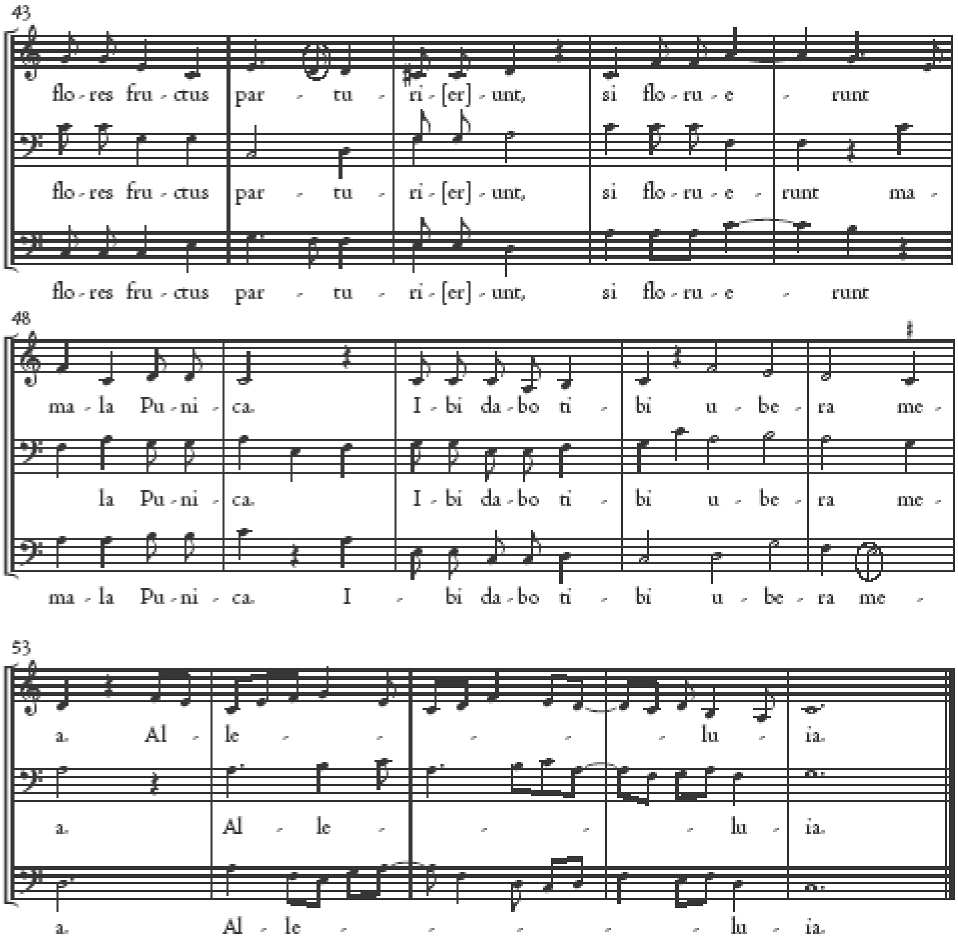
For a dose of English newness at its most radical, let us briefly consider Dunstable's most famous composition, then as now: *Quam pulchra es* ("How beautiful thou art"), a setting from the Song of Songs (Ex. 11-19). Verses from that book of the Bible had become exceedingly popular in England as a result of the burgeoning of votive services addressed to the Blessed Virgin Mary in her role as "neck," connecting (and mediating between) the Godhead and the body of the faithful. The love lyrics attributed to King Solomon, for which a long tradition of allegorical interpretation existed, now came into their own as votive antiphons.

Nevertheless, the Song of Songs remains an erotic poem, and its surface meaning no doubt conditioned the exceedingly sensuous settings its verses received from English composers, starting with the "Old Hall" generation and, through Dunstable and his contemporaries, eventually infiltrating the continent. A new style of discant setting emerged out of these Song of Songs antiphons; it is widely known in the scholarly literature as the "declamation motet," but a better name would be "cantilena motet" because of its similarity to the texture of the continental courtly chanson. Its seductive sweetness is the result of a control of dissonance so extreme as to remind Manfred Bukofzer, the historian who christened the new genre, of a "purge."[7] The homorhythmic texture of the old conductus is adapted in them to the actual rhythms of spoken language rather than to isochrony or to any preconceived metrical scheme. But the naturalistic declamation is not pervasive; rather it is used selectively to spotlight key affect-laden words and phrases, chiefly terms of endearment and symbols of feminine sexuality.

In *Quam pulchra es* there are from beginning to end only nine dissonant notes (circled in Ex. 11-19), and they all conform to the highly regulated dissonance treatment still codified in academic rules of counterpoint. (In other words, they can be named and classified.) There is an "incomplete neighbor" or "escape tone" on *pulchra*; there are unaccented passing tones on *ut* and *eburnea*; there is an accented passing tone on *videamus*, and there are four 7–6 suspensions at various cadences. Such a refining-out of dissonance requires effort. It is indeed conspicuous, and therefore expressive, reminding us that we normally take for granted a much higher level of dissonance as the norm.


Quam pul - cra es et quam de - co - ra, ca - ris - si - ma in
Quam pul - cra es et quam de - co - ra, ca - ris - si - ma in
Quam pul - cra es et quam de - co - ra, ca - ris - si - ma in
7
de - li - - - ci - is. Sta - tu - ra tu - a as - si - mi - la -
de - li - - - ci - is. Sta - tu - ra tu - a as - si - mi - la -
de - li - - - ci - is. Sta - tu - ra tu - a as - si - mi - la -
13
ta est pal - me, et u - be - ra tu - a bo - tris.
ta est pal - me, et u - be - ra tu - a bo - tris. Ca - put
ta est pal - me, et u - be - ra tu - a bo - tris. Ca -


19
Ca - put tu - um ut Car - me - lus, col - lum tu - um si - cut
tu - um ut Car - me - lus, col - lum tu - um si - cut
put tu - um ut Car - me - lus, col - lum tu - um si -
25
tur - ris e - bur - ne - a.
tur - ris e - bur - ne - a.
cut tur - ris e - bur - ne - a.
31
Ve - ni, di - le - cte mi, e - gre - di - a - mur in
Ve - ni, di - le - cte mi, e - gre - di - a - mur
Ve - ni, di - le - cte mi, e - gre - di - a - mur in
37
a - grum, et vi - de - a - mus si
in a - grum, et vi - de - a - mus si
a - grum, et vi - de - a - mus si
3 6
4 8


43
flo - res fru - ctus par - tu - ri - [er] - unt, si flo - ru - e - runt
flo - res fru - ctus par - tu - ri - [er] - unt, si flo - ru - e - runt ma -
flo - res fru - ctus par - tu - ri - [er] - unt, si flo - ru - e - runt
48
ma - la Pu - ni - ca. I - bi da - bo ti - bi u - be - ra me -
la Pu - ni - ca. I - bi da - bo ti - bi u - be - ra me -
ma - la Pu - ni - ca. I - bi da - bo ti - bi u - be - ra me -
53
a. Al - le - - - - lu - ia.
a. Al - le - - - - lu - ia.
a. Al - le - - - - - lu - ia.

ex. 11-19 John Dunstable, *Quam pulchra es*

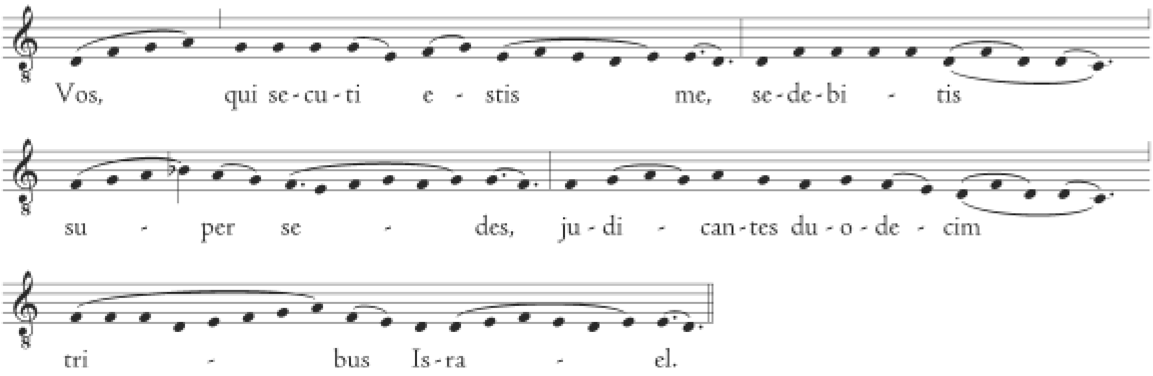
No less expressive is the declamation. The words singled out for naturalistic setting in strict homorhythm include *carissima* (“dearest”), *collum tuum* (“your neck,” perhaps symbolic as well as erotic), and *ubera* (“breasts”), the latter singled out twice, once by the male lover and another time, at the very end, by the female. Most dramatically set of all is the female lover’s command—*Veni dilecte mi* (“Come, my beloved”)—set off not only by homorhythm and by long note values but also by time-stopping fermatas. Whatever the allegorical significance of the Song of Songs verses within the Marian liturgy, the music achieves its telling expressive potency by literally, if tacitly, “telling”—that is, unmasking the allegory.

This, it is worth noting parenthetically, is only the first of many times that we will see music speaking the unspeakable and naming the unnameable, in many contexts of constraint. Its unique if largely unsung power to subvert the texts and occasions it adorns has already been given occasional notice in these pages, largely through the words of churchmen (Saint Augustine, Pope John XXII) who were sensitive to its potentially treacherous allure. In the case of the English declamation motet, the secret the music betrayed was as open a secret as could be.

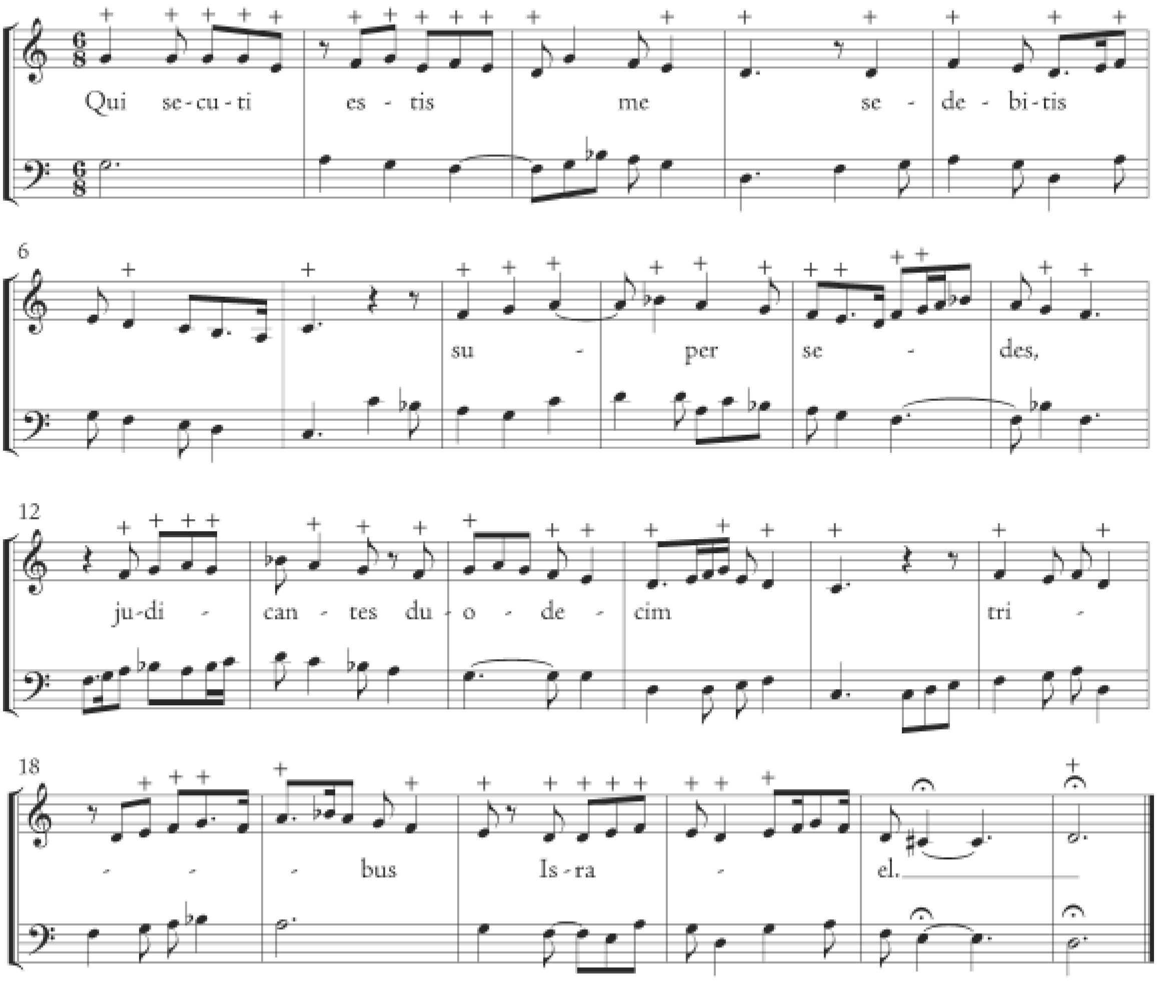
One can well imagine the kind of impression music as voluptuous as this must have made on continental musicians when they finally had an opportunity to hear it. It opened up a whole new world of musical expressivity, and gaining access to it became item number one on the continental musical agenda. The first thing continental musicians must have noticed about the “English guise” was its luxuriant saturation with full triads, most conspicuous of all when they came in chains. Those chains, we recall, were a standard feature of English descant; now, in Dunstable’s work they were absorbed into a more varied and subtly controlled compositional technique.

The only kind of parallelism Dunstable allowed was the kind that avoided perfect consonances in favor of the more mellifluous, more characteristically English imperfect ones. Thus, for example, the phrases *assimilata* *est palme* ("like the palm tree") and *ubera mea* ("my breasts") are made to stand out by the use of an exhaustive parallel motion of imperfect consonances, the contratenor shadowing the tenor at the third, the cantus at the sixth, as in the English descant setting of the *Beata viscera* Communion motet sampled in Ex. 11-9. And that is why *Beata viscera* has become the most famous piece of fourteenth-century English descant. It fortuitously foreshadowed the fifteenth-century pieces that marked an epoch in European music history, and has therefore been singled out in retrospect as "typical," which it was not.

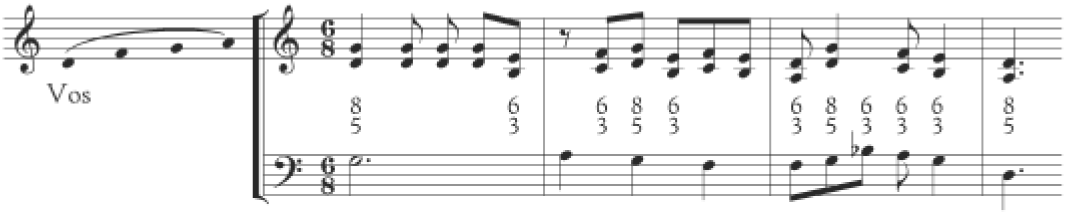
The continental response to this exotic euphony came in surprisingly concrete form. Beginning in the 1420s—right on schedule, as it were, following the Council of Constance and coinciding with the Duke of Bedford's regency in France—pieces like the one in Ex. 11-20 turn up in profusion. Like *Beata viscera*, it is a Communion antiphon, based on a gregorian chant (Ex. 11-20a). It is notated as a "duo" (a piece "for two"), but a very curious one (Ex. 11-20b). The only intervals employed are octaves and sixths, with the octaves at the beginnings and ends of phrases and the sixths dominating in the middles, moving in parallel.


Vos, qui se-cu-ti e - stis me, se-de-bi - tis
su - per se - des, ju-di - can-tes du-o-de - cim
tri - bus Is-ra - el.

ex. 11-20a Guillaume Du Fay, *Vos qui secuti estis me* (Communion from *Missa Sancti Jacobi*), original chant


Qui se-cu-ti es-tis me se - de - bi-tis
6
su - per se - des,
12
ju-di - can - tes du - o - de - cim tri -
18
- - - bus Is-ra - el.

ex. 11-20b Guillaume Du Fay, ***Vos qui secuti estis me*** **(Communion from** ***Missa Sancti Jacobi*****), as notated (chant notes denoted by '+')**



ex. 11-20c Guillaume Du Fay, ***Vos qui secuti estis me*** **(Communion from** ***Missa Sancti Jacobi*****), first phrase as realized in performance**

Now sixths are strange intervals for music in the "mainstream" theoretical tradition; while nominally consonances, they had always been described by theorists as an interval normally avoided. Here, bizarrely, they seem to be the prevalent interval. But the duo carries a "canon" or rubric that says, "If you desire a three-part piece, take the top notes and start with them, but down a fourth." When this is done, fifths are added to the framing octaves, and thirds are added to the sixths, so that the prevailing parallelism becomes exactly like the one in *Beata viscera*: an exhaustive parallelism of imperfect consonances amounting to a parallelism of triads, voiced for maximum smoothness with the "hard" and "hollow" perfect fifth avoided. In Example 11-20c, the beginning of the Communion is "realized" according to the given recipe; but any singer who can read the top part can deduce the unnotated middle voice from it by transposition, without any need for a special notation. Those handicapped by perfect pitch can substitute a different clef in their mind's eye (using what fifteenth-century musicians called “sights”), but most can make the transposition “by ear.” Try it yourself with two companions: sing through Ex. 11-20b following the model indicated in Ex. 11-20c. When you do this, you will be simulating the “contenance angloise” just the way Martin Le Franc jokingly said Du Fay and Binchois did it: *En fainte, en pause, et en muance*, which roughly means “in faking, in relaxing, and in transposition [i.e., making hexachord mutations].”

Notes:

(7) Manfred Bukofzer, “English Church Music of the Fifteenth Century,” *New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. III (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 185.

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FAUXBOURDON AND FABURDEN

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
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Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Example 11-20 was actually composed by Du Fay himself. It is the concluding item in his *Missa Sancti Jacobi*, a "plenary" setting of the Mass for Saint James (that is, a setting that includes both the Proper and the Ordinary). Circumstantial evidence suggests that the Mass may have been written for the Church of San Giacomo Maggiore (Saint James the Greater) in Bologna, where Du Fay was sojourning in 1427 and 1428. If that date is correct, then Du Fay's Communion is the earliest surviving specimen of this technique for deriving three parts from two to achieve an instant-English effect. It would be rash, however, to call Du Fay the inventor of the technique or the year 1427 or 1428 the exact year of its invention on the basis of such scanty data. Still, Du Fay was one of the recognized specialists in the technique, with twenty-four surviving specimens to his name (four times as many as Binchois, the runner-up).

The other important distinguishing feature of the new style was that the cantus part, not the tenor, carried the original chant (transposed up an octave), as if reverting to the *vox principalis/vos organalis* texture of old. But that resemblance is fortuitous. By the fifteenth century, nobody remembered the *Musica enchiriadis* or any other treatise of its ilk. Their rediscovery had to await the zealous antiquarians of the modern age. Rather, the chant-bearing cantus was adapted by embellishment and rhythmic adjustment to the conventions of the contemporary "top-down" genre, the *cantilena* or *chanson*. The chant, in short, was disguised (or "paraphrased," as we now usually say) as a contemporary secular song.

Du Fay's ersatz-English Communion setting carries a label as well as a rubric. The setting is designated *fauxbourdon*, and the term became a standard one, sufficient in itself to take the place of the rubric. Singers seeing the word would know that the cantus part of the piece so labeled had to be doubled at the lower fourth, and that the tenor was so fashioned that a voluptuous array of parallel imperfect consonances *à l'anglaise* would emerge against the doubled line. The technique became understandably popular—faddish, in fact.

Just what the word *fauxbourdon* meant etymologically, or why it was coined (whether by Du Fay or some other French-speaking musician) to designate this particular manner of composing or arranging, remain enigmas. With only a handful of exceptions, the 171 surviving pieces so labeled are all based on chants that have been transposed and embellished like the one in Du Fay's Communion. If *fauxbourdon* literally meant *faux bourdon* ("false bass," from the French *bourdonner*, to drone or sing in an undertone), then it might have referred to this transposition, leaving in the bottom voice what was usually found above (that is, a discant to a cantus firmus). If that seems a farfetched etymology, so are all the others that have been proposed from time to time. One explanation associates the *bourdon* in *fauxbourdon*, which can mean a pilgrim's staff, with St. James, who carried one, and who is depicted, staff in hand, in a miniature at the head of Du Fay's *Missa Sancti Jacobi* (fig. 11-5).

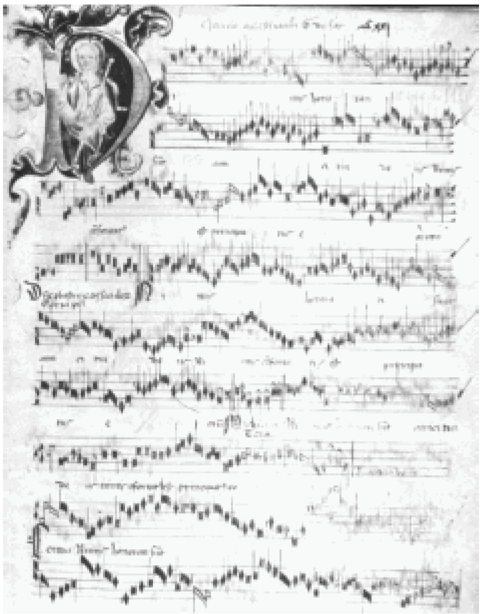


fig. 11-5 Saint James with his pilgrim’s staff, depicted in an illumination from the single extant complete source of Du Fay’s *Missa Sancti Jacobi*, in which is the earliest fauxbourdon setting (Bologna, Civico Museo Bibliografico Musicale, MS Q 15, fol. 121, copied in Padua in the 1420s).

The enigma is compounded by the existence of a near-cognate English term, *faburden*, which denotes something comparable to fauxbourdon but not identical with it. How (or indeed whether) the two terms and practices are related has been a matter of considerable speculation and debate.

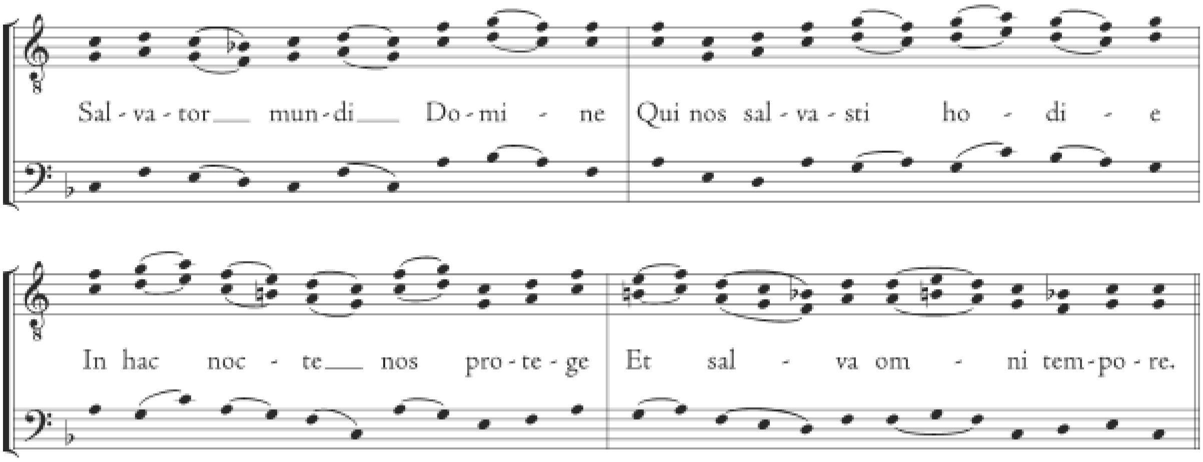
To begin with, the term faburden is not associated with individual written compositions but with an English technique of harmonizing chants at sight (*super librum*, roughly “off the book,” or “off the page” in contemporary parlance). According to a treatise called *The Sight of Faburdon*, copied around 1450 and the sole surviving theoretical description of the method, two singers would accompany the singer of the chant with unwritten counterpoints, one (called the “deschaunte”) above the written part and the other (called the “counter note”) below. The “counterer” would sing thirds and fifths below the plainchant and the “discanter” would double it at the upper fourth. A didactic example of faburden that happened to be written in a Scottish treatise of the mid-sixteenth century shows the result (Ex. 11-21). It is based on *Salvator mundi Domine* (“O Lord, Savior of the World”), a frequent English contrafact of the *Pentecost* hymn *Veni creator spiritus* (already encountered as Ex. 2-7c). The original chant is carried by the middle voice—the one voice, ironically enough, that was not notated at all in *fauxbourdon* settings.

The result, so far as the listener is concerned, differs from the *fauxbourdon* settings of Du Fay and his continental contemporaries only in pitch range, if it differs at all. In the case of *faburden* the chant is thought of as the “meane” or middle voice and the doubling part as the “tryble” above it. In the case of *fauxbourdon* the chant is thought of as the “cantus” and the doubling part as the contratenor below it. But it is a distinction that makes no audible difference, just as it makes no difference whether the lowest voice is thought of as making fifths and thirds against the middle or octaves and sixths against the top.

The reasonable and simple assumption would be that fauxbourdon was just the continental written-down imitation of the English oral practice. But the actual evidence does not fit that easy explanation. For one thing, *The Sight of Faburdon* (or at least its extant source) is a good deal later than the probable date of Du

Fay's *Missa Sancti Jacobi*, in which the first use of the term *fauxbourdon* occurs. And for another, the word *faburden* is much more easily construed as a corruption of *fauxbourdon* than the other way around. (We can easily imagine etymologies for *fauxbourdon*, however flimsy; explaining *faburden* as "the bass that sings fa" (because it uses a lot of B-flats) is a rather desperate contrivance.) So what happened? Did the English borrow back a continental cookbook recipe for imitating the English? To believe that is neither simple nor particularly reasonable. What is likelier is that the term *faburden*, adapted from *fauxbourdon*, was applied retroactively by some English writers to one of many varieties of "sighting," or ad hoc chant harmonization, which had been practiced by the English all through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This particular one happened to resemble, in a relatively crude and unembellished way, the very elegant written compositions from abroad that began to travel back to England, with their deft and graceful chant-paraphrases in the manner of the courtly chanson.

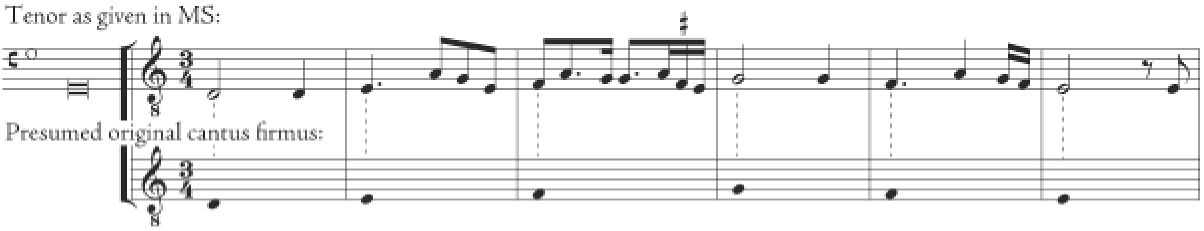
But *faburden* was and remained a "sight," an older English practice and an oral one. It can be documented in principle as far back as Anonymus IV, the first treatise that mentions sights. Thus it differed in kind, despite its belated similarity in nomenclature, from *fauxbourdon*, a later continental practice and an elegantly embellished, written one. Later, the technique became the property of organists, who used faburden "counters" or bass lines (like the bottom voice in Ex. 11-21) as grounds for improvisation, and, beginning in the early sixteenth century, kept little books of them handy. You can almost always tell a "faburden," as organists informally called the bottom line of a chant harmonization, by its initial rising fourth, the inevitable product of the "sight" technique. Since the "counter" had to begin at the fifth below the chant and proceed to the third below the chant, and since perhaps nine chants out of ten begin with a rising step progression, nine "faburdens" out of ten will begin with the rising fourth.


Sal-va-tor mun-di Do-mi-ne
Qui nos sal-va-sti ho-di-e
In hac noc-te nos pro-te-ge
Et sal-va om-ni tem-po-re.

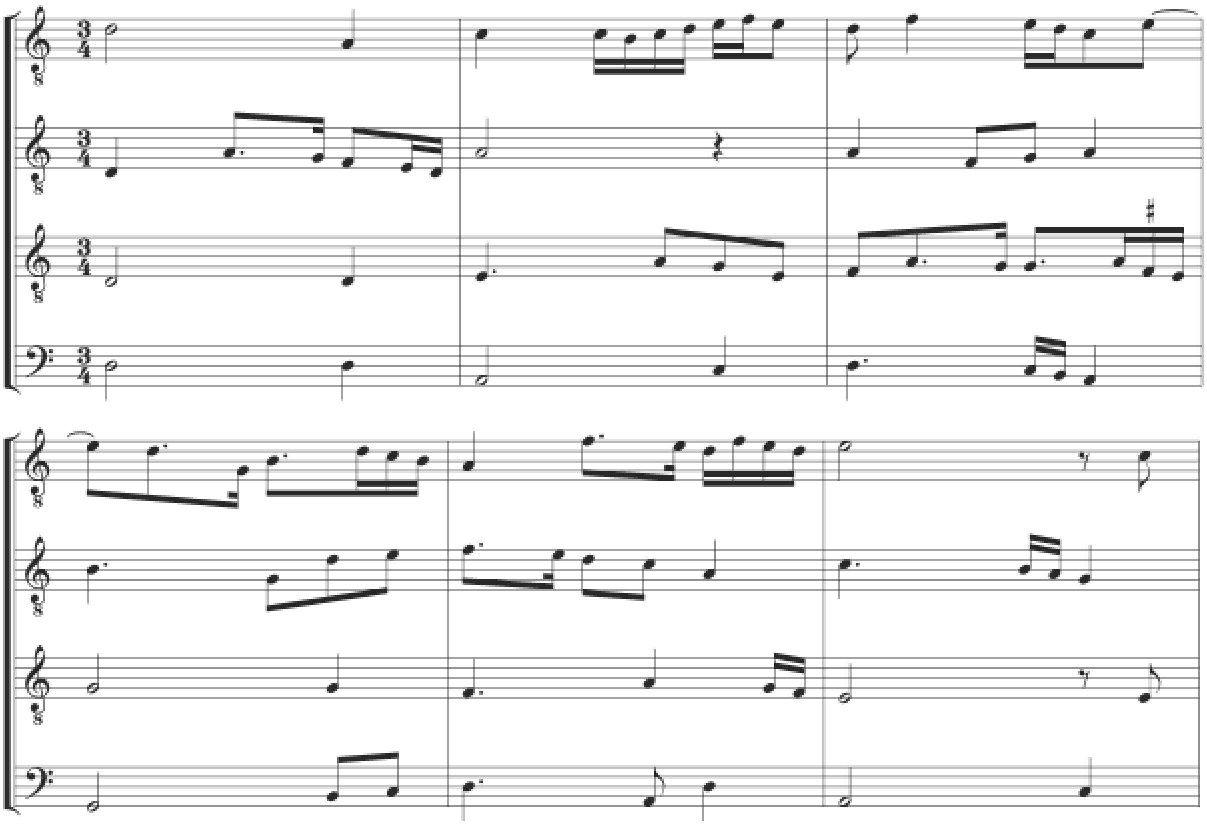
ex. 11-21 *Salvator mundi Domine* in faburden

Lots of questions regarding the reciprocal early histories of fauxbourdon and faburden remain unanswered. For instance, did the inventors of fauxbourdon actually hear English choirs (at Constance, say, or in Paris) singing *super librum*—i.e., singing what eventually became known as faburden? Or did they hear something much more impressive, found a simple way of counterfeiting it, and gave the author of *The Sight of Faburdon* an idea for simplifying the technique of "sighting"? This last possibility, with its intriguing suggestion of a true cross-fertilization of cultures, is supported by a sentence in *The Sight of Faburdon* that calls the practice so designated only the lowliest and most commonplace of sight techniques.

Really skillful British extemporizers, going all the way back to the time of Giraldus Cambrensis, could come up with much more impressive harmonizations, not only in three parts but in four or even more. Desiderius Erasmus (Erasmus of Rotterdam), the great humanist scholar and a great Anglophile, reported in amazement, following one of his many visits to England toward the end of the fifteenth century, that in English churches "many sing together, but none of the singers produce those sounds which the notes on the page indicate." (This sounds a lot like Giraldus, in fact, except that the Welsh singers he described did not use books at all.)



ex. 11-22a *Heir beginnis countering*, presumed cantus firmus



ex. 11-22b *Heir beginnis countering*, final example, mm. 1-6

We can share in Erasmus's amazement if we travel forward in time a bit for a quick look at the latest and most advanced treatise on *supra librum* singing from the British Isles. A manual copied in Scotland around 1580, but summing up two or three hundred years' worth of singers' lore, ends with a final chapter on "countering" in which twelve rules are given that, when mastered over considerable time, enabled a quartet of singers to take a simple line of plainchant (like Ex. 11-22a) and from it work up on the spot a polyphonic realization like the one shown in the treatise's final didactic example. The tenor sings a highly embellished version of the cantus firmus at the original pitch (each measure beginning and ending with the notated pitch, but with the middle filled most fancifully), and the other parts carol away even more ornately, albeit according to strict—and, no doubt, well-kept—secret formulas (Ex. 11-22b).

Compared to this, fauxbourdon (to say nothing of simple faburden) might seem like child's play. But the point of fauxbourdon, as practiced by the continental composers, was not so much the contrapuntal amplification of the chant as it was the transformation and elaboration of "plainsong" into "fancy song" (or, to use contemporary terminology, *cantus figuralis*, "figured" or patterned song). The raw material of plainchant was processed in this way into the highly refined style of the courtly "art song."

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Gilles de Bins dit Binchois

DU FAY AND BINCHOIS

Chapter: CHAPTER 11 Island and Mainland
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

It seems no accident, then, that Du Fay and Binchois (fig. 11-6), the two most prolific masters of fauxbourdon were also the leading song composers of their generation. Nor is it a coincidence that the liturgical genre most characteristically treated in the fauxbourdon manner was the hymn, the most songlike of chant types.

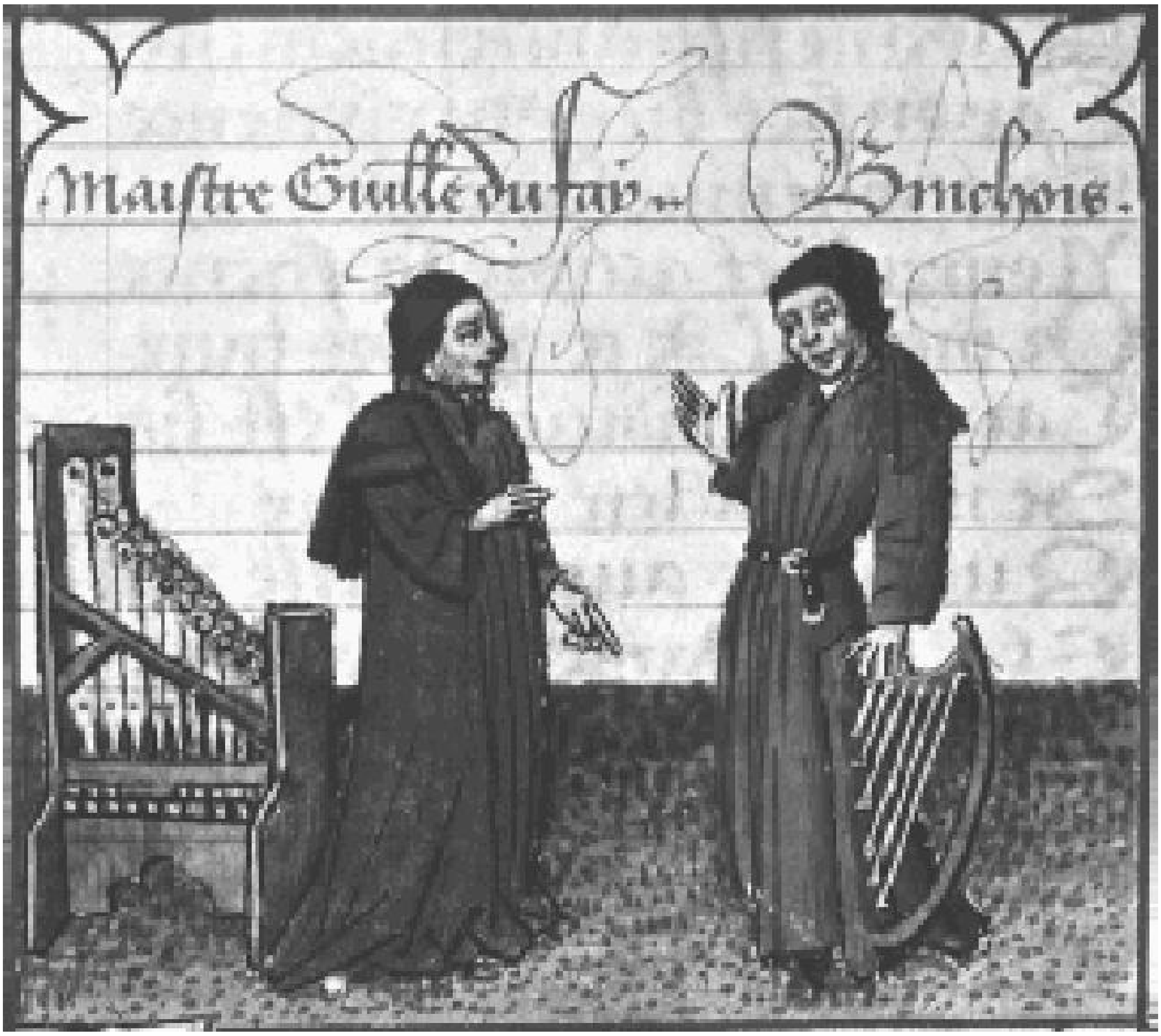
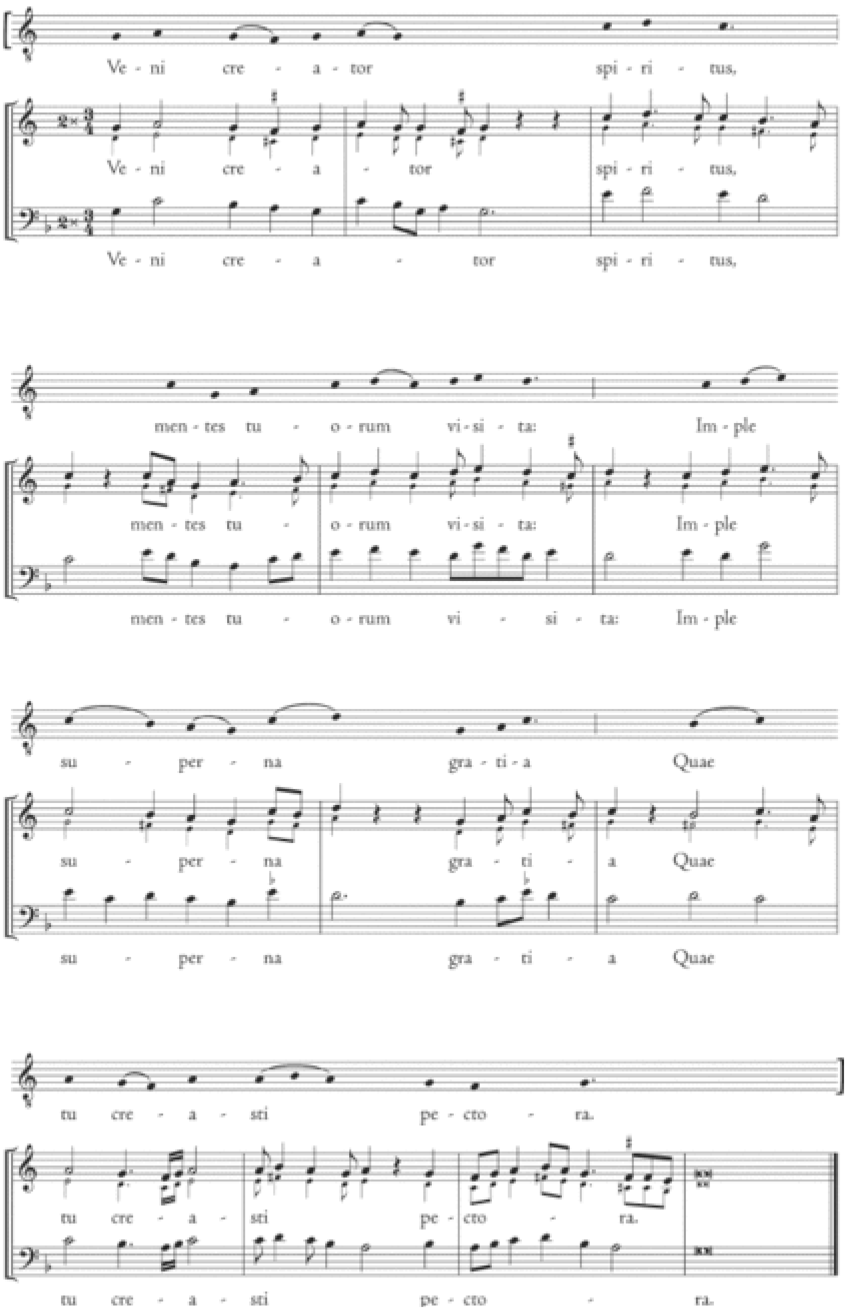


fig. 11-6 Guillaume Du Fay and Gilles Binchois, French followers of Dunstable and the contenance angloise, as depicted in a manuscript of Martin le Franc's epic *Le champion des dames* copied in Arras in 1451.


Ve - ni cre - a - tor spi - ri - tus,
2×3/4
Ve - ni cre - a - tor spi - ri - tus,
Ve - ni cre - a - tor spi - ri - tus,
men - tes tu - o - rum vi - si - ta: Im - ple
men - tes tu - o - rum vi - si - ta: Im - ple
men - tes tu - o - rum vi - si - ta: Im - ple
su - per - na gra - ti - a Quae
su - per - na gra - ti - a Quae
su - per - na gra - ti - a Quae
tu cre - a - sti pe - cto - ra.
tu cre - a - sti pe - cto - ra.
tu cre - a - sti pe - cto - ra.

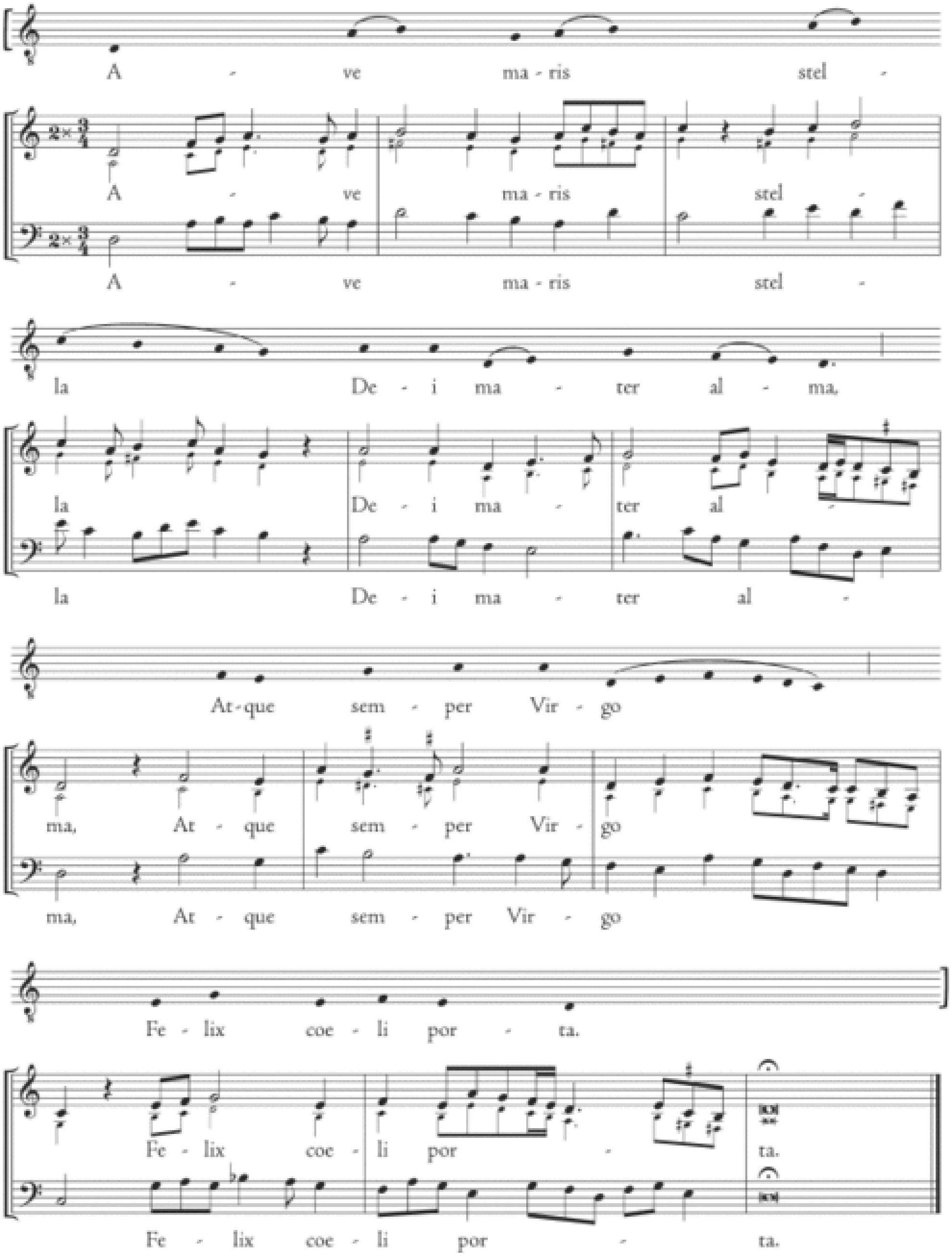
ex. 11-23 Gilles Binchois, *Veni Creator Spiritus*

Gilles de Bins, called Binchois (d. 1460) spent virtually his entire career as a court and chapel musician to Philip the Good, the long-reigning Duke of Burgundy, whose court was widely acknowledged to be the most magnificent in Western Europe at a time when art consumption was a prime measure of courtly magnificence. His fauxbourdon setting of *Veni Creator Spiritus* (Ex. 11-23) was written for Philip's chapel. Compare it with Ex. 11-21 to see how fauxbourdon and faburden relate to one another. It is not just that the settings are pitched differently because of the differing placement of the cantus firmus. Binchois's cantus part, while modest as such things go, is nevertheless an elegant paraphrase of the transposed chant melody. The embellishments occur mainly at cadences, where they invoke the typical formulas of the chanson style: the 7–6 suspension at the end of the first phrase (on *Creator*), the "Landini sixth" at the end of the second (on *spiritus*), and so on.

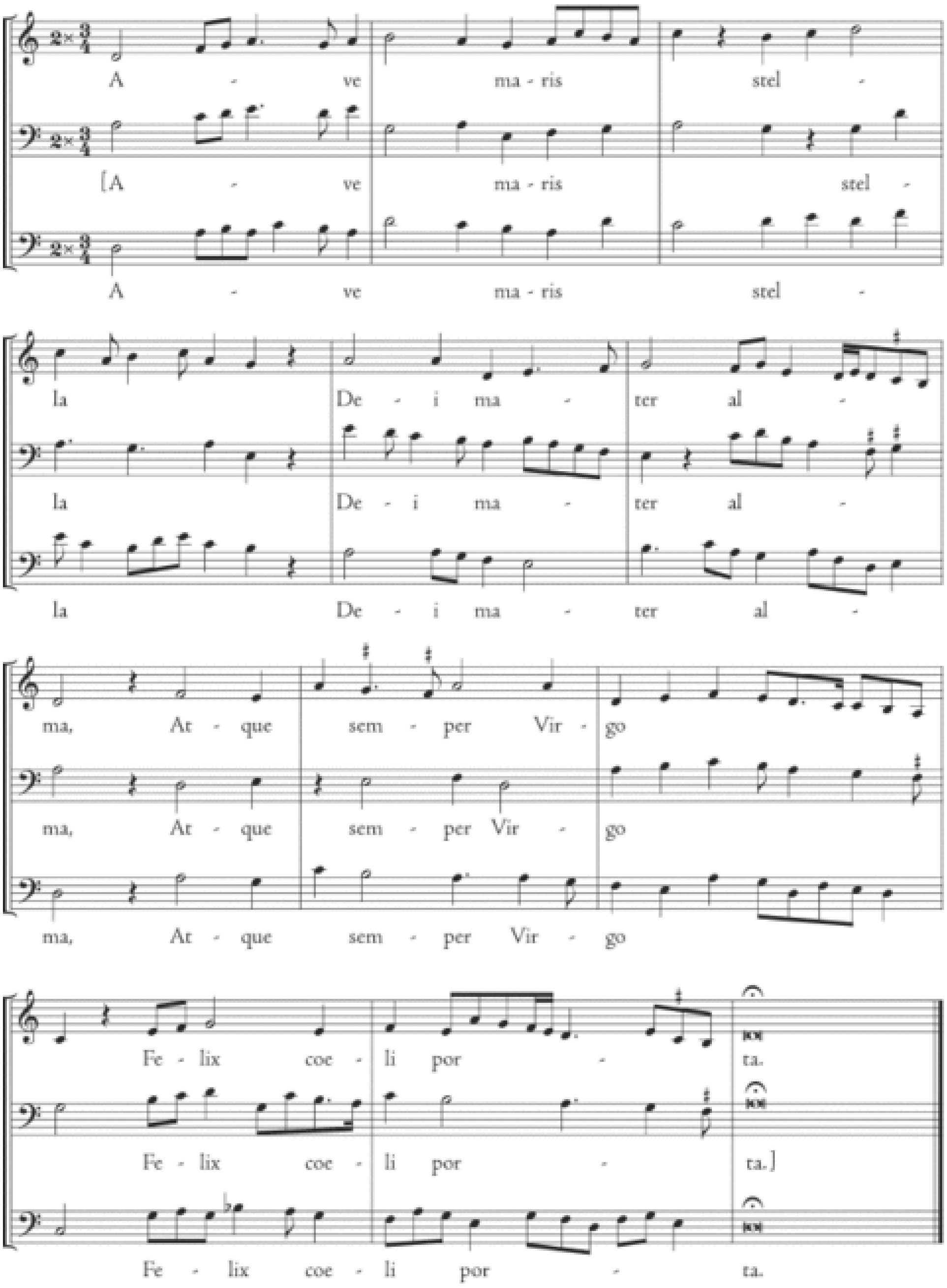
This is definitely an "art" setting, if a relatively unshowy one, and literate through and through, worlds away from the bald, nonfigural "sight" harmonization in Ex. 11-21. The artfulness is most apparent in the rhythmic design, which has been calculated with great subtlety both as to declamation and as to variety. The basic mensuration is that of *tempus perfectum*—semibreves grouped by threes into perfect breves. But Binchois applies hemiola at two levels, one above the basic mensuration (at the level of *modus*) and one below (at the level of *prolatio*). For an example of the latter, see the setting of the word *gratia*, where the cantus breaks momentarily into a trochaic pattern of semibreves and minims (quarters and eighths in transcription) that implies a grouping of three minims into perfect semibreves. And for the former, see what the tenor does immediately afterward (on *quae tu creasti*), where a series of imperfect breves (half notes in transcription) implies a grouping of three breves into perfect longs. That sort of supple, "natural" artfulness—artfulness within apparent simplicity—is the mark of a really successful assimilation of the "English sound" into the continental literate tradition.

We have already met Guillaume Du Fay (d. 1474) in chapter 8, and know from his extraordinary motet *Nuper rosarum flores* that he was an extremely ambitious composer. He had a brilliant international career, with phases in Italy (including a stint in the papal choir) and at the court of Savoy, a duchy in the Alpine region of what is now eastern France and western Switzerland, before returning to his native region as a canon at the cathedral of Cambrai, near the present-day border of France and Belgium. His setting of the Marian hymn *Ave maris stella* (previously encountered as Ex. 2-7a), while also fairly modest as befits the genre, is more ornate than Binchois's and assimilates the chant melody much more thoroughly to the style of the courtly chanson (Ex. 11-24). As befits Du Fay's glamorous career and his comprehensive stylistic range, even his hymn settings are unmistakably the work of the most enterprising composer of the age.

This greater assimilation is accomplished in two ways. First, Du Fay's chant paraphrase is far more decorative than Binchois's; there is nothing in the Binchois setting like the first measure of Du Fay's, in which the plainchant's opening leap of a fifth is filled in with what amounts to an original melody. The cadential structure of Du Fay's setting is also much freer from that of the plainchant than Binchois's—and quite purposefully so. The first cadence, for example, joins the finishing note of *maris* to the first note of *stella*, creating a stopping point on C, a note to which no cadence is made in the original chant. The alternation of cadences on C and D thus obtained in the first half of the setting is then replayed in the second half (C on *virgo*, D on *porta*), creating a bipartite structural symmetry not at all typical of plainchant melodies but very typical of courtly songs, whose "fixed forms" always comprised two main sections.

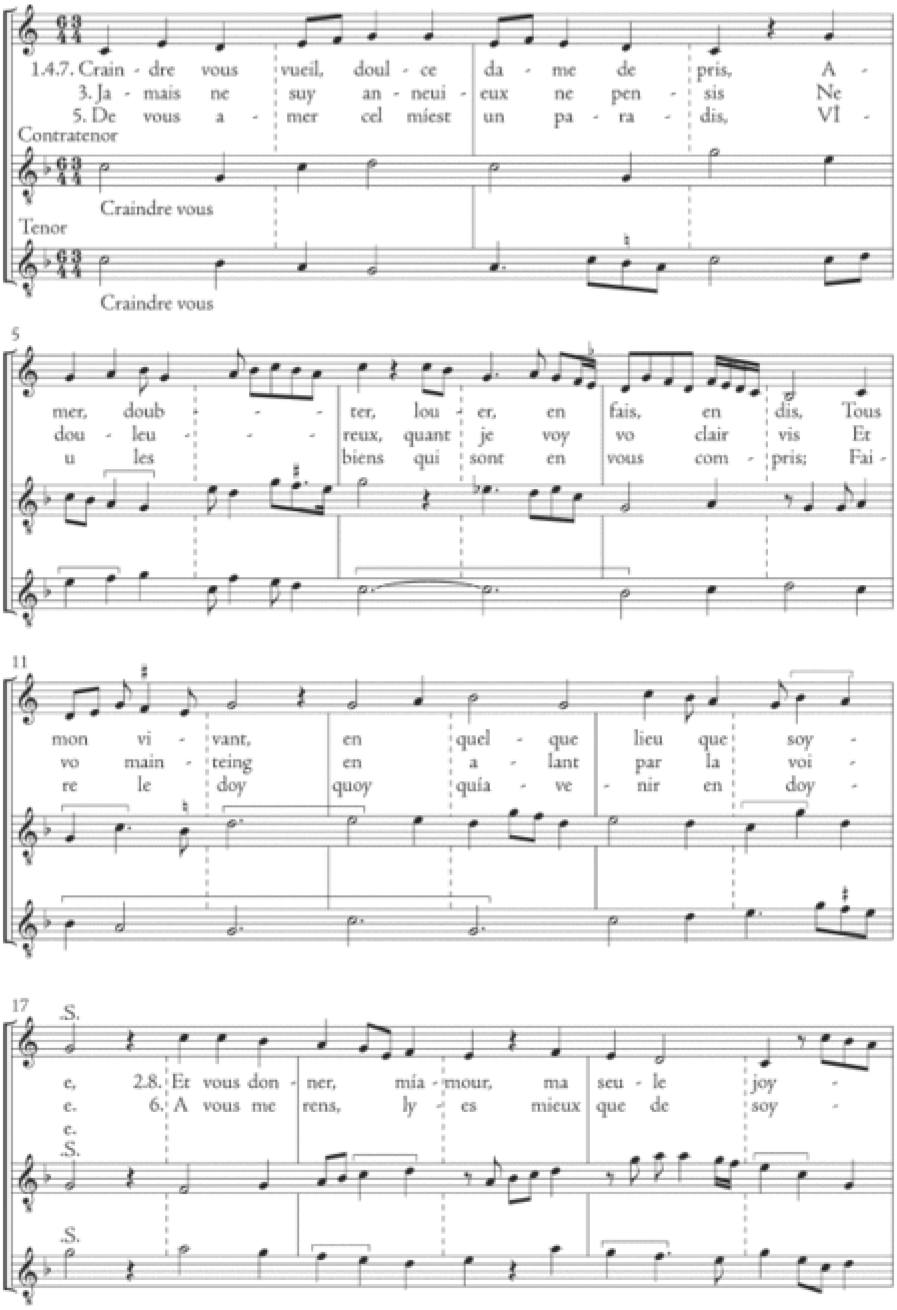

A - ve ma - ris stel - la De - i ma - ter al - ma, At-que sem - per Vir - go Fe - lix coe - li por - ta.
2× 3/4

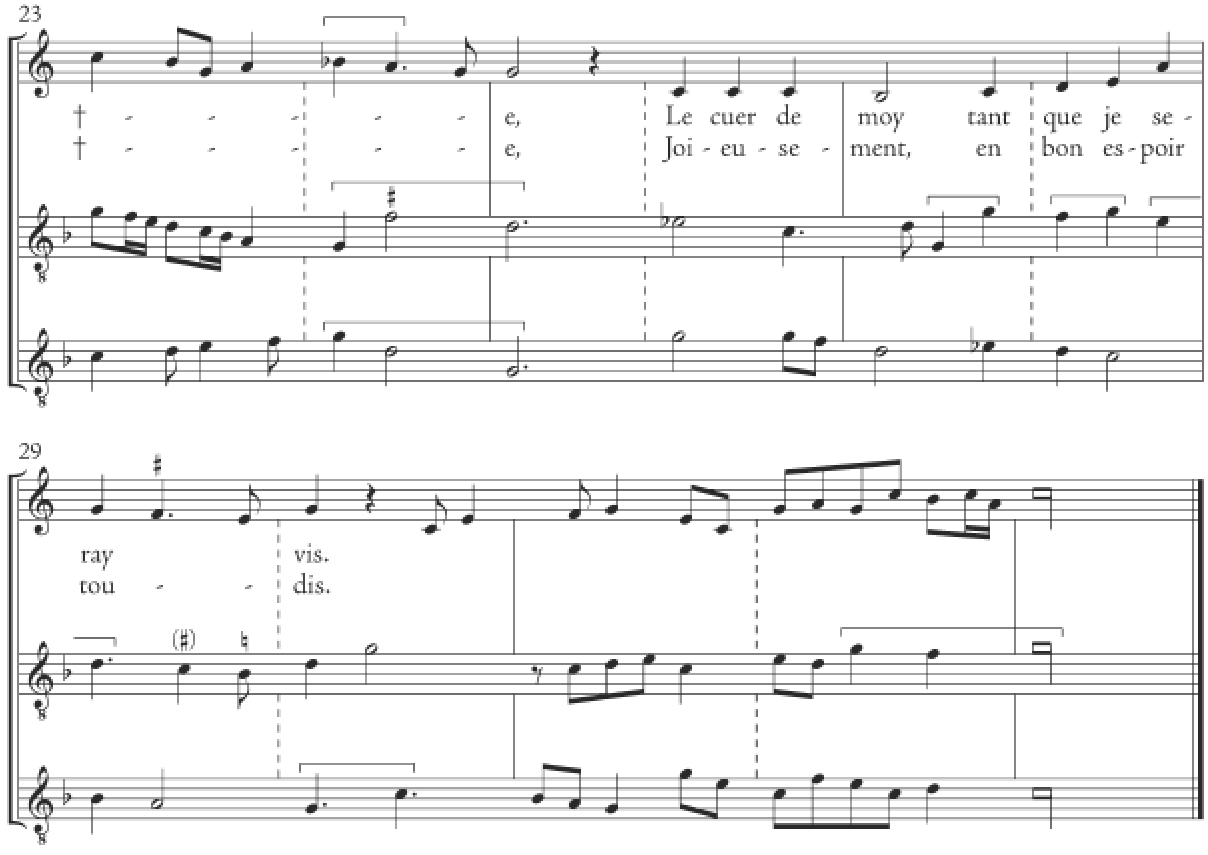
ex. 11-24a Guillaume Du Fay *Ave mars stella* in fauxbourdon


A - ve ma - ris stel - la De - i ma - ter al - ma, At - que sem - per Vir - go Fe - lix coe - li por - ta.
[A - ve ma - ris stel - la De - i ma - ter al - ma, At - que sem - per Vir - go Fe - lix coe - li por - ta.]
A - ve ma - ris stel - la De - i ma - ter al - ma, At - que sem - per Vir - go Fe - lix coe - li por - ta.

ex. 11-24b *Ave maris stella* with "contratenor sine faulx bourdon"

Even more boldly, Du Fay writes an alternate third part, labeled "*contratenor sine faulx bourdon*," that replaces the "derived" fauxbourdon voice with a full-fledged contrapuntal line that behaves exactly like the traditional chanson contratenor. It occupies the same register as the tenor, with which it frequently crosses. The first crossing is a marvelous joke, in fact. The first measure of the new contratenor coincides with—or rather, is disguised as—the beginning of the fauxbourdon realization, so that when the downbeat G replaces the expected F♯ in the second measure, it comes as an attention-grabbing surprise. That G forms a chord with the other voices—a chord that simply cannot occur in a fauxbourdon. The contratenor stays under the tenor all the way to the end of the fourth bar, completely changing the harmonization of the chant-derived part and converting the setting for all practical purposes into a chanson. Then the contratenor reverts to its initial position above the tenor by leaping an octave, which (as we will see in a moment) was a most typical sort of cadential behavior for a chanson contratenor at this time. All in all, Du Fay's setting shows him to be a singularly self-conscious artist and one especially aware of the distinguishing features and requirements of genres. As we have observed before, that sort of awareness enables an artist to play upon, and fully engage, the expectations of an informed audience.


1.4.7. Crain - dre vous vueil, doul - ce da - me de pris, A -
3. Ja - mais ne suy an - neui - eux ne pen - sis Ne
5. De vous a - mer cel miest un pa - ra - dis, VI -
Contratenor
Craindre vous
Tenor
Craindre vous
5
mer, doub - - - ter, lou - er, en fais, en dis, Tous
dou - leu - - - reux, quant je voy vo clair vis Et
u les biens qui sont en vous com - pris; Fai -
11
mon vi - vant, en quel - que lieu que soy -
vo main - teing en a - lant par la voi -
re le doy quoy quia - ve - nir en doy -
17
.S.
e, 2.8. Et vous don - ner, mia - mour, ma seu - le joy -
e. 6. A vous me rens, ly es mieux que de soy -
e.
.S.
.S.


23
e, Le cuer de moy tant que je se -
e, Joi - eu - se - ment, en bon es - poir
29
ray vis.
tou - dis.

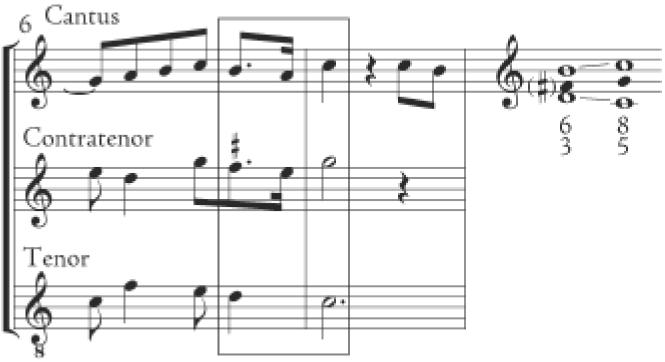
ex. 11-25 Guillaume Du Fay, *Craindre vous vueil*

As an example of the sort of contemporary courtly chanson Du Fay's hymn setting parodies, let us consider one of his own (Ex. 11-25). What to call it is already a problem, since it exists in different manuscript sources with two different texts, one in Italian and the other in French. The source containing the Italian text, *Quel fronte signorille* ("That noble brow"), also contains the note "Rome composuit" (composed in Rome), which would date it to Du Fay's period of papal employment, between 1428 and 1434. There seems to be good reason, though, for believing that only the text was composed in Rome, and perhaps not even by Du Fay.

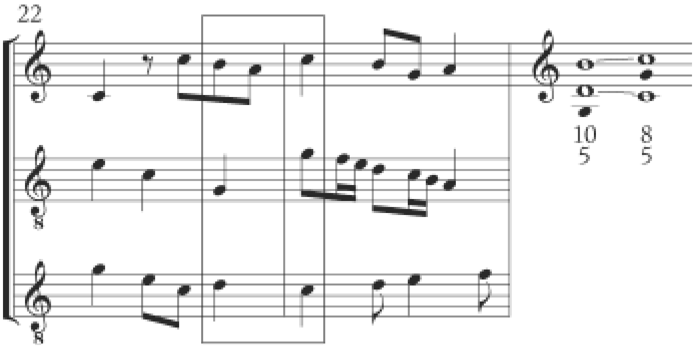
The French version, *Craindre vous vueil* ("To fear you is my wish"), is in the standard *rondeau cinquain* form, with a five-line stanza and corresponding refrain, and this fits the shape and cadential structure of the music very ingeniously. The poem has the rhyme scheme A A B/B A, with the slash showing the division between the refrain (first part of the music) and the remainder of the stanza. The music associates cadences on C with the "A" lines and cadences on G with the "B" lines. (By contrast, the Italian text has a four-line stanza, and the music ends with the cadence in m. 25—off the final. That seems a sure sign of clumsy contrafactum.) In addition, the French text embodies an acrostic linking the names "Cateline" (whoever she may have been; some suggest the composer's sister) and "Dufai." The music was more likely fashioned to fit it than the other way around.

The octave leap noted earlier in Du Fay's "contratenor sine faulx bourdon" for *Ave maris stella* occurs in the very first cadence of *Craindre vous vueil*. It was standard contratenor behavior at cadences, alongside (and fast replacing) the "doubled leading tone" variety that had been customary in the fourteenth century (compare the second cadence a couple of measures later). Notice, though, that the "new" cadence is just another way of filling the same frame: the "structural pair" of cantus and tenor still make the cadence by moving from imperfect consonance to perfect consonance (here, from third to unison) in contrary motion. Yet another way of accompanying the same structural pair can be seen at the "medial cadence" of the rondeau. The superius and tenor again approach a unison; the contratenor, this time, does not leap up an octave, which would put it out of range, but drops a fifth to double the superius and tenor's pitch at the octave.

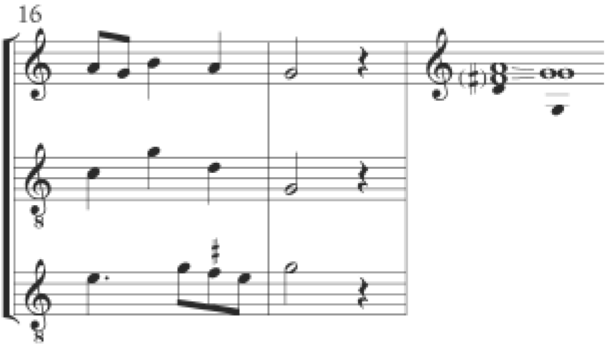
Thus there is now a choice of three possible contratenor moves (summed up in Ex. 11-26) to accompany the obligatory cadence-defining movement of superius and tenor. They will coexist throughout the century, with the second steadily gaining on the first, and (with the standardization of four-part textures, to be described in the next chapter) with the third finally displacing both of the others.



ex. 11-26 Cadential motion in superius/tenor pair accompanied by three different contratenors, doubled leading tone



ex. 11-26b Octave leap



ex. 11-26c "V - I"

With more than sixty courtly chansons constituting more than half his surviving output, Binchois was his generation's great specialist in the genre, famous as a melodist both in his own day and in ours. Like Du Fay, he composed mainly *rondeaux cinquains*, but his greatest achievements were ballades. By the early fifteenth century, the ballade, the oldest and most distinguished of the courtly song genres, had become a genre of special grandeur, reserved for special occasions, chiefly commemorative and public. One of the grandest Franco-Burgundian ballades of all was *Deuil angoisseux* by Christine de Pisano (or Pizan

1364–ca.1430)—one of the outstanding poets of the day, remembered now (in the words of the historian Natalie Zemon Davis) as “France’s first professional literary woman”[8] —as set to music by Binchois for performance at the court of Burgundy.

By the time he set it, Christine’s poem was already an old and famous one, composed on the death of her husband, Etienne Castel, a notary in service to the king of France, in 1390. Christine remained a quasi-official French court poet and a partisan commentator on the Hundred Years War. Her “Letter Concerning the Prison of Human Life” (*L’Espistre de la prison de vie humaine*) was intended in the first instance as a consolation to the widows left behind by the fallen heros of France on the battlefield of Agincourt, and at the end of her life Christine wrote “The Tale of Joan of Arc” (*Le Ditié de Jeanne d’Arc*), the earliest encomium to the intrepid Maid of Orléans, and one of the most authoritative, since it was the only one that dated from its subject’s lifetime.

It is a bit ironic, then, to find in Binchois’s setting of Christine’s early ballade (Ex. 11-27) a gorgeous epitome of the *contenance angloise,* the English-influenced style that testified so eloquently, if obliquely, to the ascendancy of France’s enemy. It is a veritable orgy of F-major “euphony,” opening with arpeggiations of the F-major triad in both cantus and tenor, sonorously supported by a pair of droning contratenors on the final and the fifth above. When the tenor reaches its high A at the end of the word *angoisseux*, the harmony sounding is the most brilliant possible spacing of an F-major triad: over the final.

This ravishing four-voice texture is the “big band” sound of the day, achieved by replacing the contratenor in a three-part version of the song (itself achieved by providing a contratenor to add harmonious sonority to a self-sufficient structural pair)with a pair of complementary contratenors to amplify the sonority. The lowest voice in the transcription could still function correctly as a contratenor by itself. It regularly makes its cadences by octave leap: see mm. 11–12, 21–22, 25–26, 28, 34–35, 44–45 (= 11–12), 53–54(= 21–22), the final pair of cadences recapitulating the first pair since this is a “rhymed” or “rounded” ballade, in which the ending of the “B” section quotes the ending of the “A.” The presence of the fourth voice makes it possible to complete the triad at each cadence by adding a third to the obligatory octave of cantus and tenor and the obligatory fifth of the contratenor.

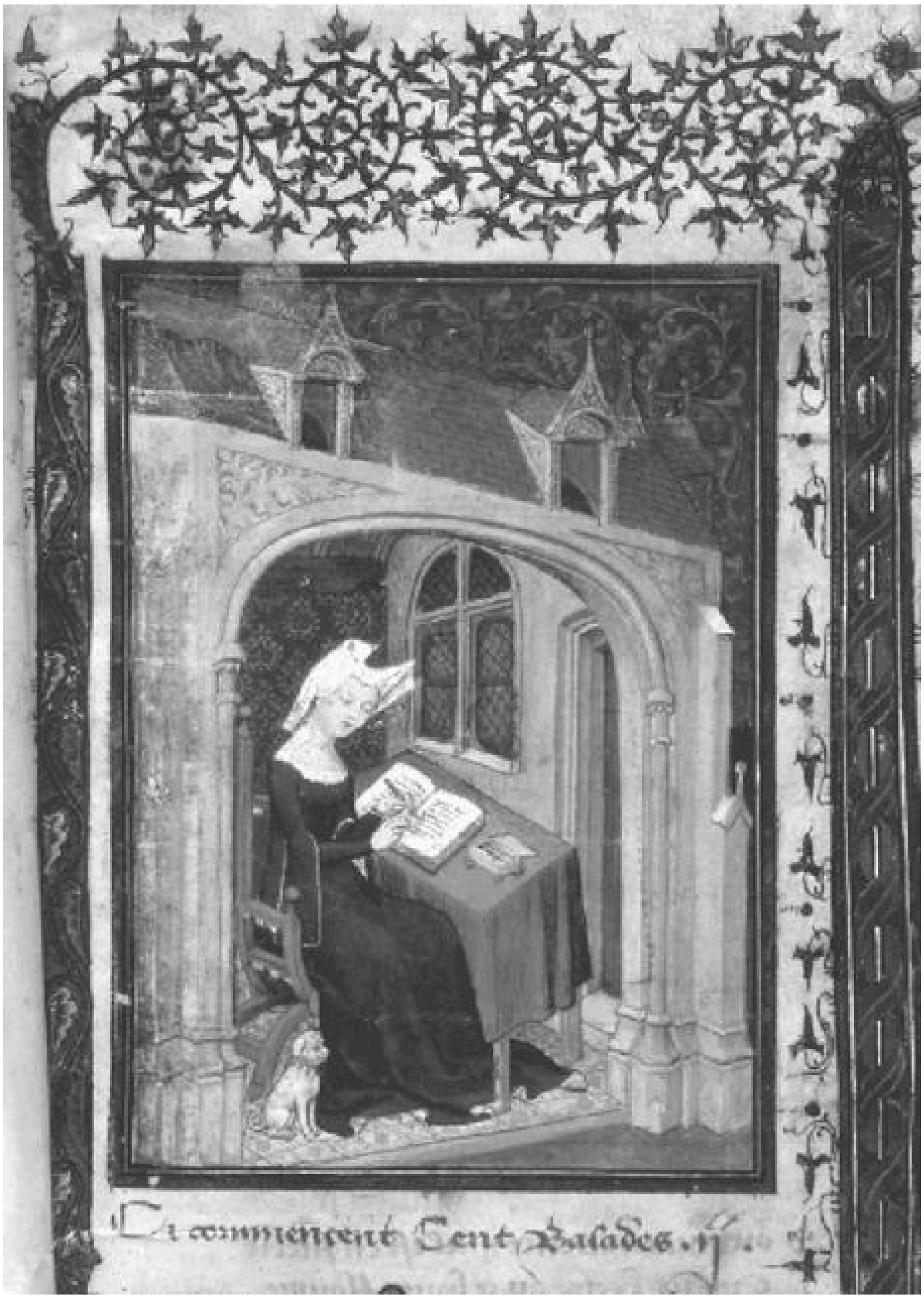
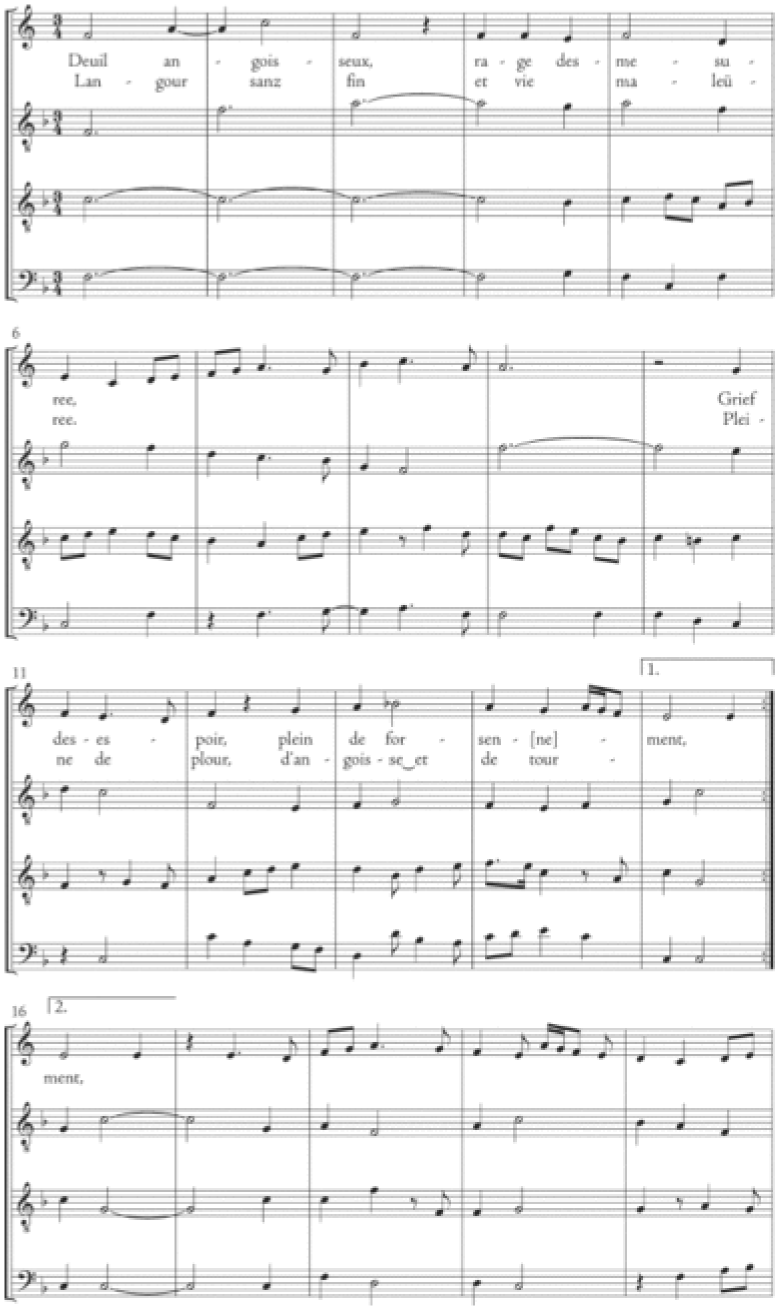
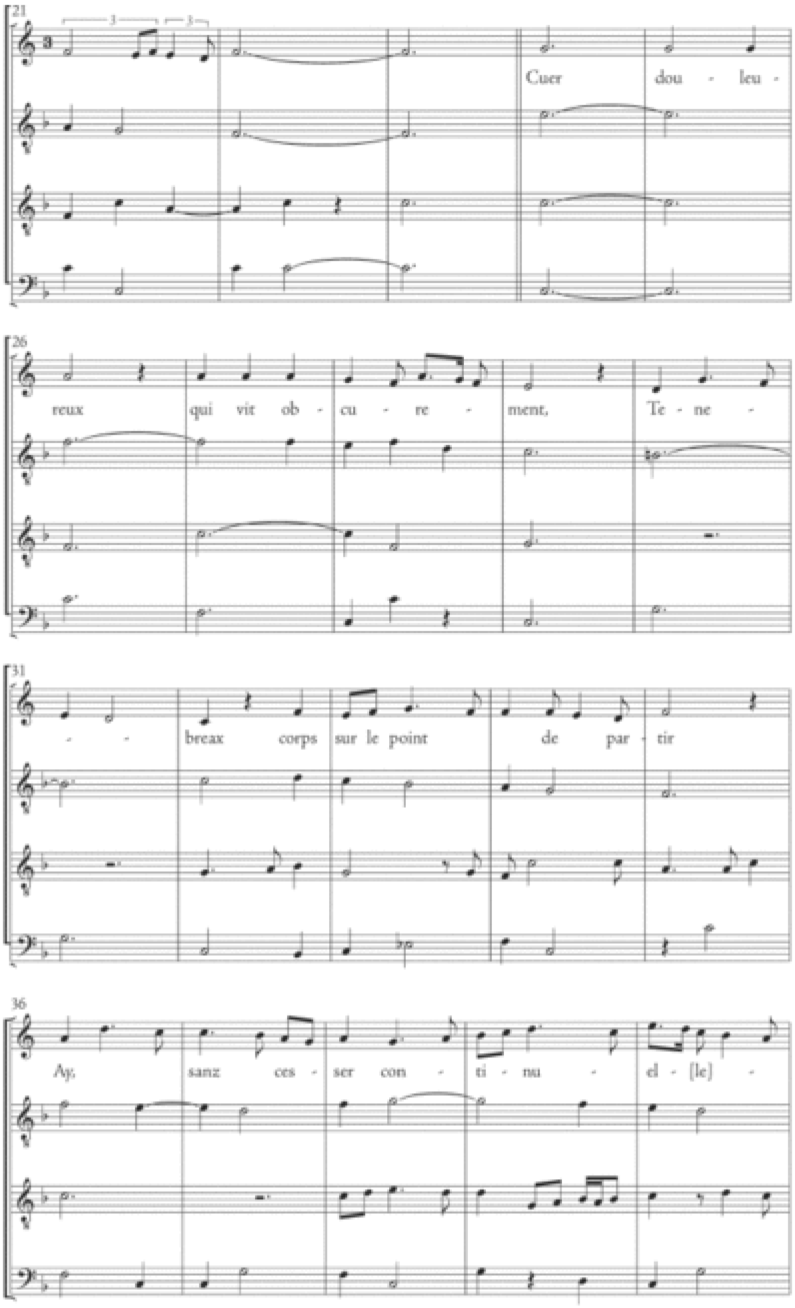
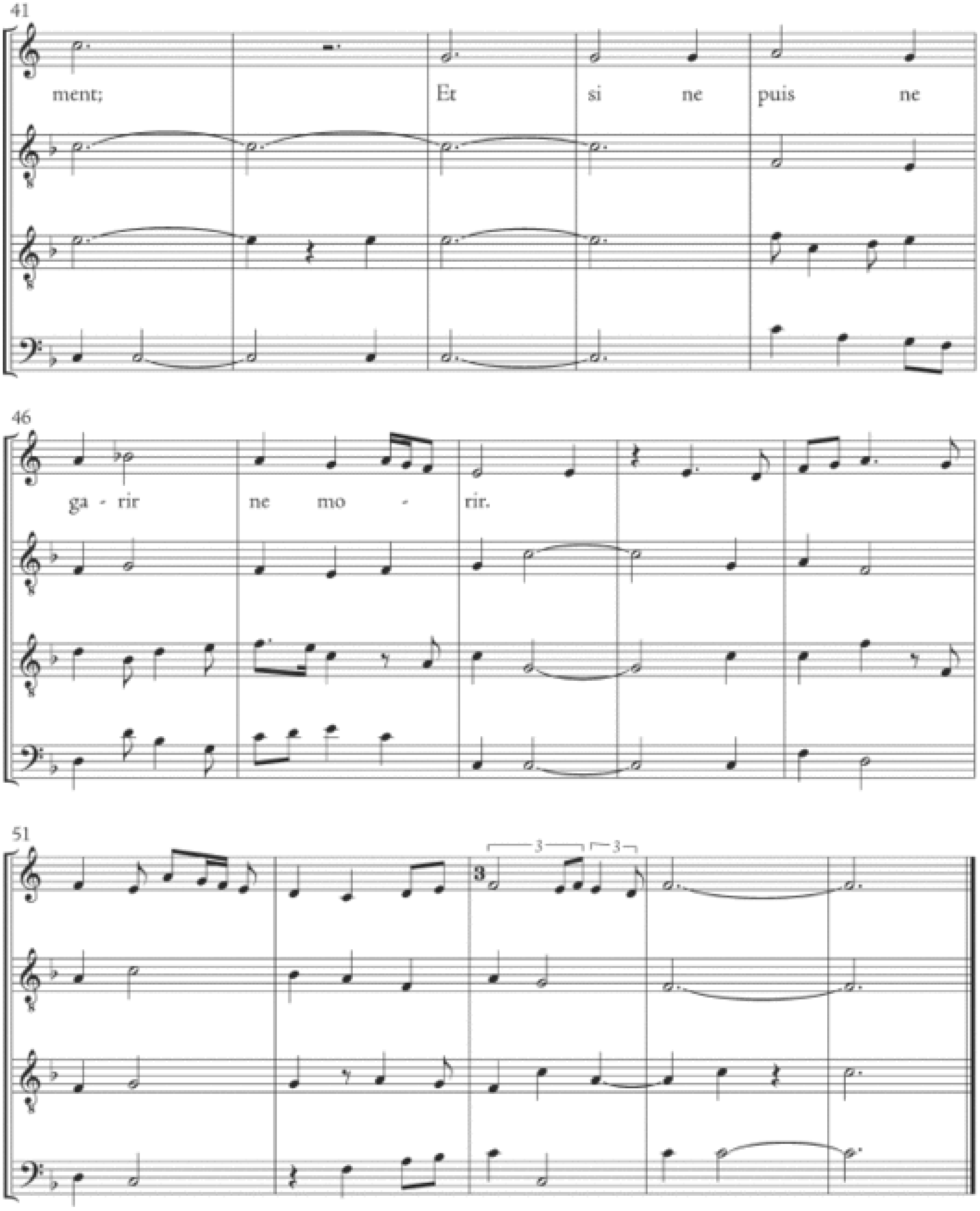


fig. 11-7 Christine de Pisane at her writing desk (London, British Library, MS Harley 4431, fol. 4).

Binchois's *Deuil angoisseux* can tell us an enormous amount about the esthetics of fifteenth-century courtly art. It is a marvelously effective, even hair-raising outpouring of emotion, and yet it scarcely conforms to our own conventional notions of what makes music sound "sad." Our present-day musical "instincts" demand that laments be set to extra slow, extra low music, harmonically dark ("minor") or dissonant. (We also expect such music to be sung and played with covered timbre and a greater than ordinary range of dynamic and tempo fluctuation.) Binchois's setting flatly contradicts these assumptions with its bright F-majorish (English) tonality, its high tessitura (especially in the tenor), and its very wide vocal ranges. Even the tempo contradicts our normal assumptions: the time signature carries a slash through it comparable to the slash in our familiar "cut time," which places the tactus on the breve, not the semibreve, causing all the note values to be shorter (hence, to go by quicker) than normal.


Deuil an - gois - seux, ra - ge des - me - su -
Lan - gour sanz fin et vie ma - leü -
6
ree,
ree.
Grief
Plei -
11
1.
des - es - poir, plein de for - sen - [ne] - ment,
ne de plour, d'an - gois - se‿et de tour -
16
2.
ment,


21
Cuer dou - leu -
26
reux qui vit ob - cu - re - ment, Te - ne -
31
- - breax corps sur le point de par - tir
36
Ay, sanz ces - ser con - ti - nu - el - [le] -



ex. 11-27 Gilles Binchois, ***Deuil angoisseux***

What is conveyed, in short, is not private anguish but a public proclamation of grief, as suggested in the poem itself with an *envoi* addressed to an assembled audience of "princes." The mood is one of elevation (*hauteur* in French): elevation in tone, in diction, in delivery, all reflecting the elevated social setting in which the performance took place. *Hauteur* had two specifically musical meanings as well, which relate metaphorically to the general concept: highness of pitch and loudness of sonority, both of which are exaggerated in Binchois's setting of Christine's lament. And rightly so, for fifteenth-century musicians still quoted Isidore of Seville, Pope Gregory's contemporary, on the qualities of a good singing voice: "high, sweet and loud."

Even "sweetness" comes in many varieties. To us it may connote a highly nuanced sort of tone production suitable for the subjectively expressive music of more recent centuries. The formal, conventionalized public rhetoric of the court called for a different sort of sweetness, the sort achieved by the "English" euphony of clear, uncomplicated, well-matched timbres, true tuning of harmonies, and sensitivity to the flexibly shifting rhythmic groupings we have already observed. Many scholars and performers have become convinced that the most desirable performing ensemble for a court ballade was one of voices unaccompanied by instruments, despite the absence of text in the tenor and the contratenors.[9] The singers of these parts may have vocalized or ad-libbed textual abridgments.

Again we are reminded that music in performance is something different from music on the page, and that even the most literately conceived music (and no music was ever more literary than the fifteenth-century court chanson) must be mediated through oral practices and traditions in order to become sound. That is why the study of "performance practice," which is precisely the collection and interpretation of evidence about the oral and unwritten, is and will always be one of the liveliest areas of "early music" research.

Notes:

(8) Natalie Zemon Davis, foreword to Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea Books, 1998), p. xi.

(9) The strongest exponent of this view, both in scholarship and (with his ensemble, Gothic Voices) in performance, has been Christopher Page. See his *Voices and Instruments of the Middle Ages* (London: Dent, 1986). For a stimulating and wide-ranging critique of the attendant debate, see Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Modern Invention of Medieval Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties

The Cyclic Mass Ordinary Setting

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

THE INTERNATIONALISM OF THE UPPER CRUST

Johannes Tinctoris (ca. 1435-1511), a minor composer but a theorist of encyclopedic ambition, can be our very capable guide to the music of his time, the mid- to late fifteenth century. His twelve treatises, covering the properties and powers of music, the qualities of the modes, notation, counterpoint, form, mensural practice, terminology, and even (in his last work, called *De inventione et usu musicae*) what might be called musical sociology, attempt collectively to encompass all of contemporary music, its practices and its products alike. They are liberally illustrated with extracts not only from the works of ancient authorities but from the works of the leading composers of Tinctoris's own generation—the musical *literati* who staffed the principal courts and churches of Latin Christendom at the time of his writing.

Tinctoris, the theorist's Latin professional name, means "*dyer*." He was born near Nivelles (Nijvel in Flemish), a town in present-day Belgium, and attended the University of Orléans as a member of the "German nation" or non-French constituency there. No one knows today what his native language was or what his original surname may have been: in French it would have been Teinturier, in Dutch or Flemish de Vaerwere, in German Färbers. Around 1472, after a stint teaching the choirboys at Chartres Cathedral near Paris, and singing under Du Fay at the Cathedral of Cambrai, he entered the service of Ferdinand (Ferrante) I, the Aragonese (that is, Spanish) ruler of the kingdom of Naples in southern Italy, and seems to have remained in Naples until his retirement, if not his death.

Tinctoris's international, polyglot career, and in particular its southward trajectory from the Low Countries to Italy, were characteristic, even paradigmatic, for his time. The old Frankish territories were still the chief seats of musical learning, but the *nouveau riche* Italian courts, avidly competing with one another for the most brilliant artistic personnel, were becoming the great magnets for musical talent. Even after impregnation by the English, the basic technique of music remained French; but once the northerners began invading the south, it became impossible to tell by style where a piece of written continental music had been composed. Europe, musically, seemed one.

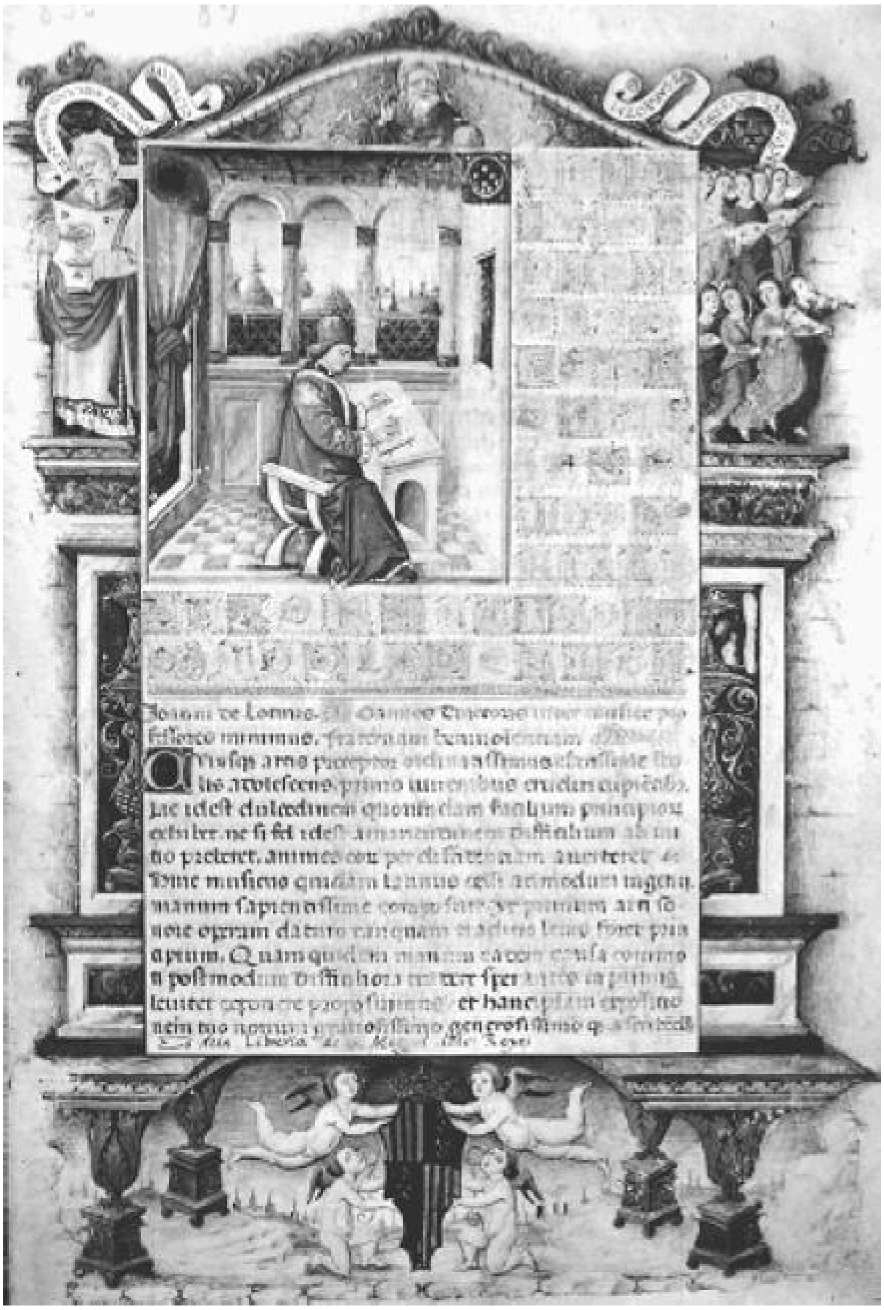
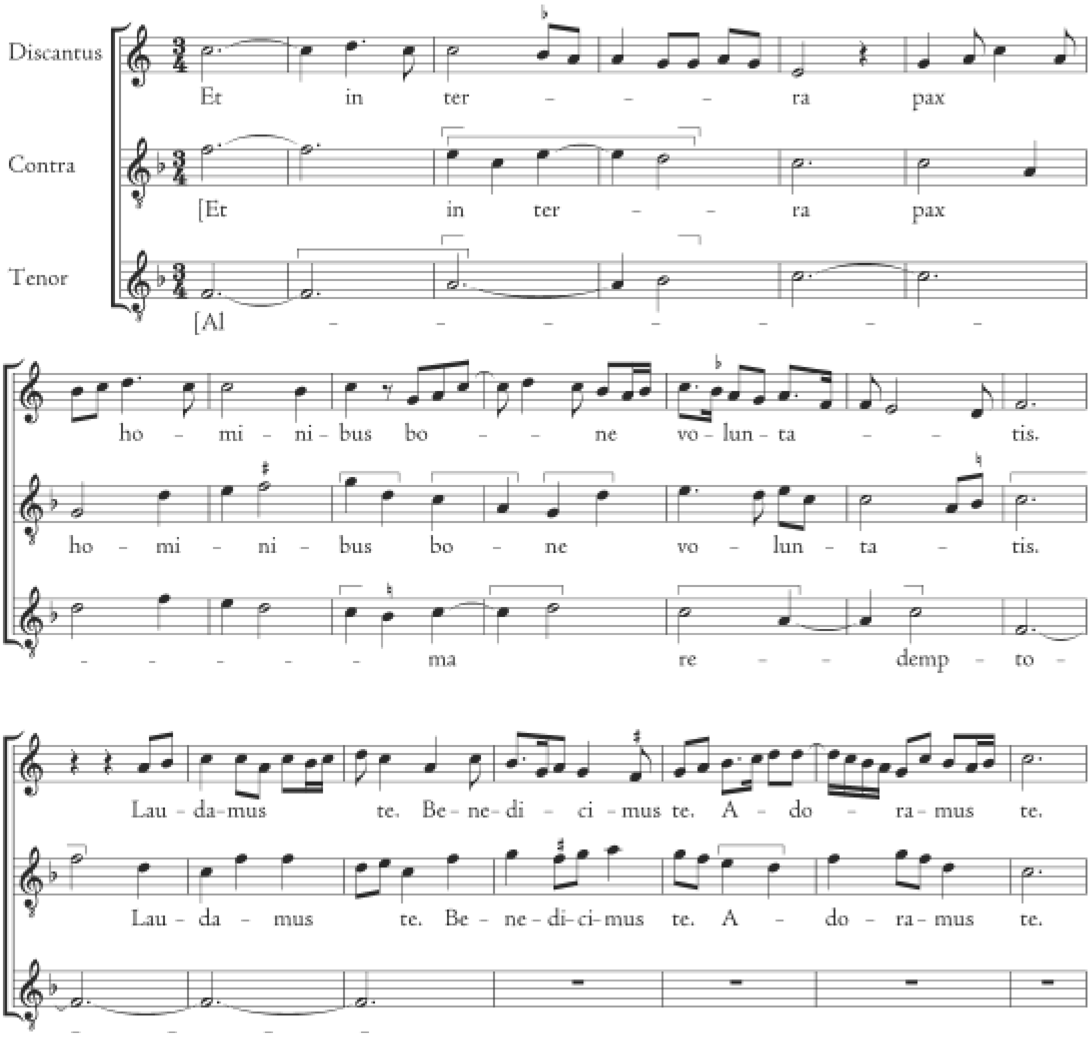
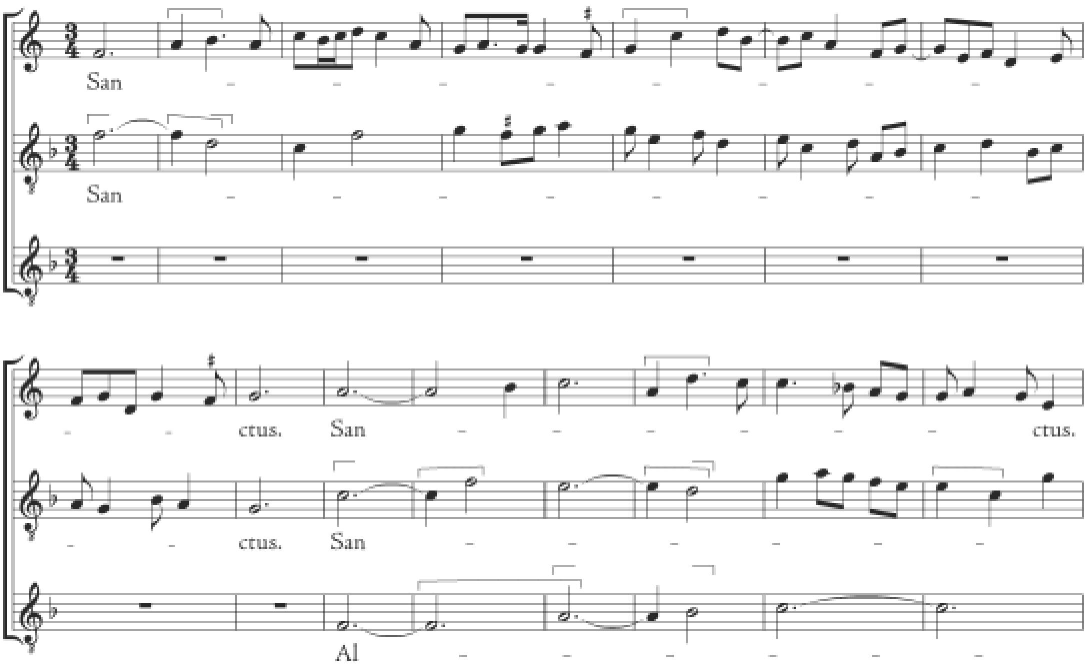


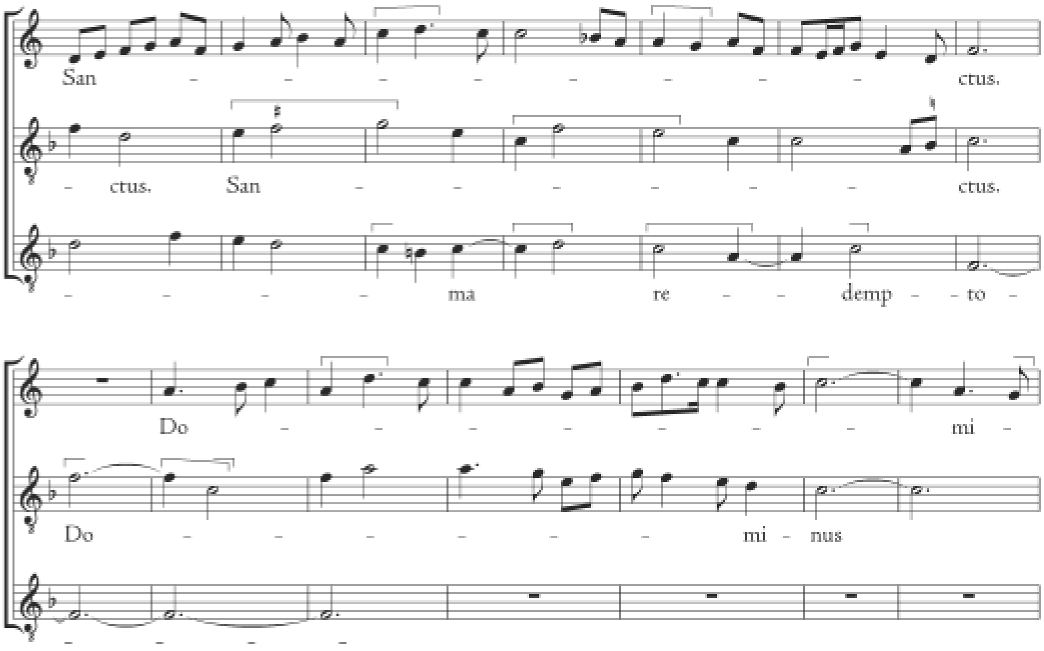
fig. 12-1 Tinctoris at his writing desk, a portrait (possibly from life) by the Neapolitan artist Cristoforo Majorana from a late fifteenth-century manuscript of Tinctoris's treatises (Valencia, Biblioteca Universitaria).

But this apparent musical unity should not be read as an indicator of cultural or social unity. Literate musicians, it is time once again to recall, served a tiny clientele of aristocrats and ecclesiastics. These elite classes did indeed identify with their counterparts throughout the length and breadth of Europe, but at less exalted social levels, Europe, musically and in every other way, was far from one. The minority culture of the literate cannot yet be taken as representative of society as a whole. It was just the surface cream—if a less complimentary analogy is desired, call it an oil slick—that only seems homogenized from our bleary historical distance. Owing to the nature of our sources of evidence, the surface slick tends to hide the rest from view; and unless we are careful to remind ourselves, we can easily forget that the vast majority of Europeans in the fifteenth century lived out their lives in complete ignorance of the music we are about to investigate.


Discantus
Contra
Tenor
Et in ter - - - ra pax
[Et in ter - - ra pax
[Al - - - - - - - -
ho - mi - ni - bus bo - - ne vo - lun - ta - - tis.
ho - mi - ni - bus bo - ne vo - lun - ta - tis.
- - - - - - ma re - - demp - to -
Lau - da - mus te. Be - ne - di - ci - mus te. A - do - ra - mus te.
Lau - da - mus te. Be - ne - di - ci - mus te. A - do - ra - mus te.
- - - -

ex. 12-3a Leonel Power, *Missa Alma Redemptoris Mater*, Gloria, beginning


San - - - - - - - - -
San - - - - - - - - -
- - ctus. San - - - - - - - ctus.
- - ctus. San - - - - - -
Al - - - - - - -


San - - - - - - - - - ctus.
- ctus. San - - - - - - - ctus.
- - - - ma re - - demp - - to -
Do - - - - - - - mi -
Do - - - - - - - mi - nus
- - - -

ex. 12-3b Leonel Power, *Missa Alma Redemptoris Mater*, Sanctus, beginning

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

See also from Grove Music Online

Johannes Ockeghem

Antoine Busnoys

Johannes Regis

THE “TINCTORIS GENERATION”

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The musical literati from whom Tinctoris drew his didactic examples are the very ones whose works are found in practical sources throughout Europe irrespective of provenance. In the same preface to his book on mensural proportions in which he called Dunstable the fountainhead of contemporary music and consigned everything earlier to oblivion, Tinctoris cited an honor roll of his great coevals—a sort of musical peerage. Pride of place went to Johannes Ockeghem and Antoine Busnoys, who in their joint pre-eminence have, much like Du Fay and Binchois, haunted historical memory as a pair.

Ockeghem (d. 1497), the older of the two, came not from the East Flemish town of the same name, but from St. Ghislain, near the large town of Mons in the French-speaking Belgian province of Hainaut to the south. By 1443 he was a singer at the cathedral of Notre Dame in Antwerp, the leading church of Flanders. A *déploration* or chanson-lament Ockeghem composed on the death of Binchois in 1460 suggests a master-pupil relationship with the leading composer to the Burgundian court. It was at the court and chapel of the French king, however, that Ockeghem made his real mark, beginning in 1451. He became a great favorite of Charles VII, who *elevated* him to high church rank as treasurer of the royal collegiate church of St. Martin of Tours in the valley of the Loire, where the king had his winter palace. Under Charles’s successor, Louis XI, Ockeghem became concurrently a canon of Notre Dame de Paris. By the time of his death he was surely the most socially exalted musician in Europe, and the richest as well: he was a major *rentier* or urban property-owner, and rented out houses to many persons of means and even eminence, including Jean Fouquet, the great miniaturist and portrait-painter, Ockeghem’s court counterpart among artists.

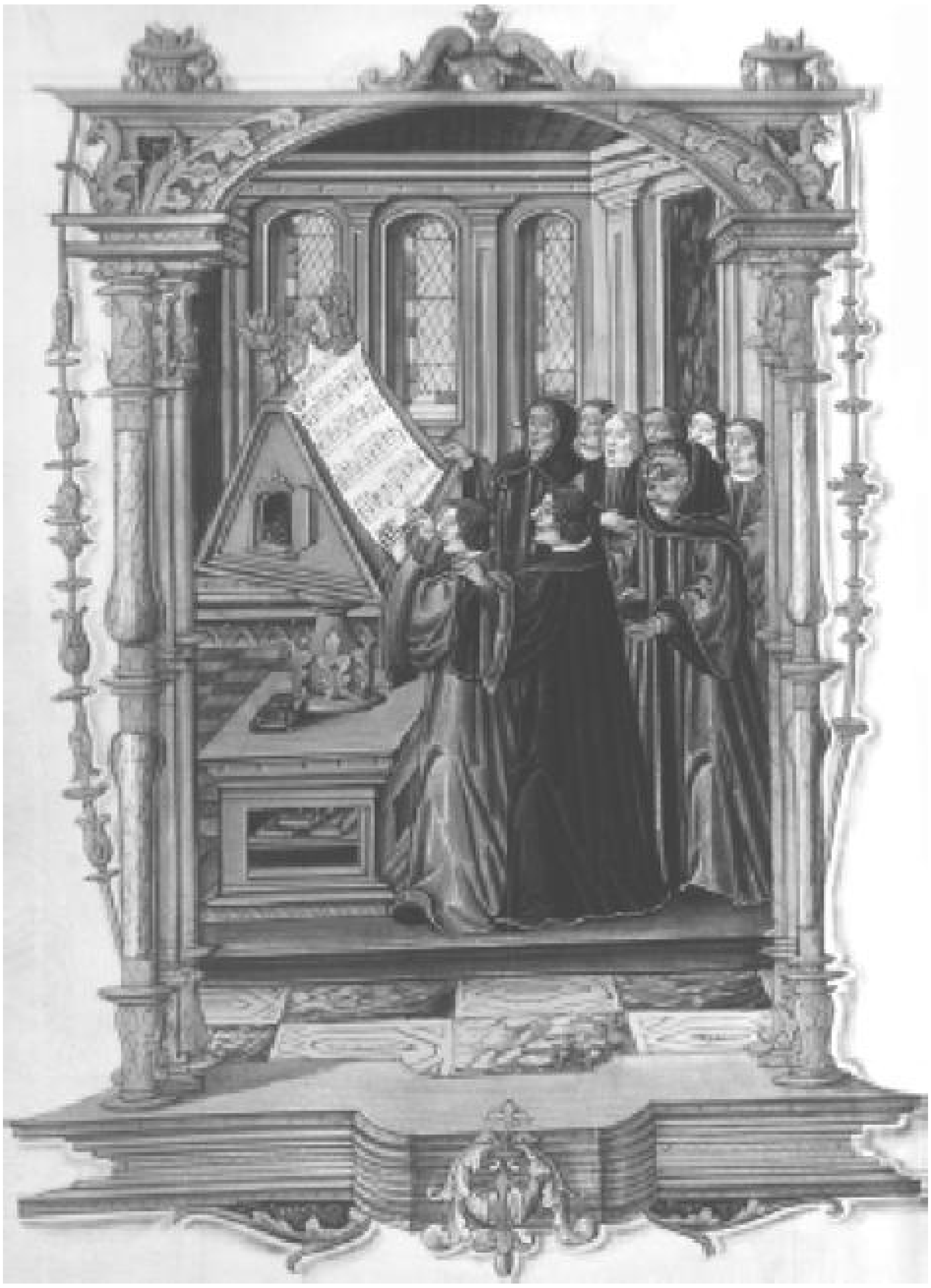


fig. 12-2 Ockeghem and his choir, depicted ca. 1523 in a manuscript from Rouen (Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, Fonds Francais 1537, fol. 58v).

A famous manuscript illumination from around 1523 (Fig. 12-2) perhaps fancifully depicts Ockeghem (by then dead a quarter century) and his chapel choir. The great composer—famous for his deep voice and so advanced in age when he died that his official court eulogist, the poet GuillaumeCrétin, lamented his not reaching a round hundred years—must surely be the burly, bespectacled figure in the right foreground. The most valuable historical evidence in this picture is the placement of the choristers’ hands, visibly on the music rack and palpably on one another’s shoulders. The singers are not touching one another out of camaraderie alone: as contemporary writers confirm, their hands were busily employed in physically transmitting the tactus beat. As we will see, Ockeghem wrote some music that kept his singers’ hands quite full.

Busnoys (d. 1492), whose name suggests that he may have come from the town of Busnes in northern France, was Ockeghem’s counterpart (and Binchois’s successor) at the court of Burgundy, where he served as “first singer” to Charles the Bold (d. 1477), the last of the Burgundian dukes. As Ockeghem may have been a pupil of Binchois, so Busnoys may have received instruction from Ockeghem at Tours, where Busnoys served briefly during the 1460s, before joining the household of the future Duke of Burgundy. (Charles the Bold and Louis XI, Ockeghem’s patron, were bitter enemies; between 1467 and 1477, one may say with confidence, the two composers had few opportunities to meet.) After Charles’s death, Busnoys remained in service to his patron’s daughter Mary of Burgundy (who was also the niece of the English King Edward IV). Her death in 1484 extinguished the Burgundian dynasty. There is evidence that Busnoys now retired to the Belgian city of Bruges, becoming cantor at a parish church that was occasionally patronized by the Archduke (later Holy Roman Emperor) Maximilian, Mary’s widower.

Busnoys is perhaps the earliest major composer from whom autograph manuscripts survive, so that we know how he personally spelled his surname (often routinely modernized in the scholarly literature to Busnois). In a motet to his patron saint and namesake, the fourth-century Egyptian recluse St. Anthony Abbot, Busnoys worked his name into an elaborate multilingual pun that depends on the spelling with *y* to make (Greek) sense (see Fig. 12-3). Having received a master’s degree (possibly at the University of Paris), Busnoys loved to show off his erudition—in particular, his familiarity with Greek—in little ways like this. And he was by no means exceptional in this quirk; the fifteenth century was one of those times when intellectual attainments and cerebral virtuosity were considered appropriate in an artist.

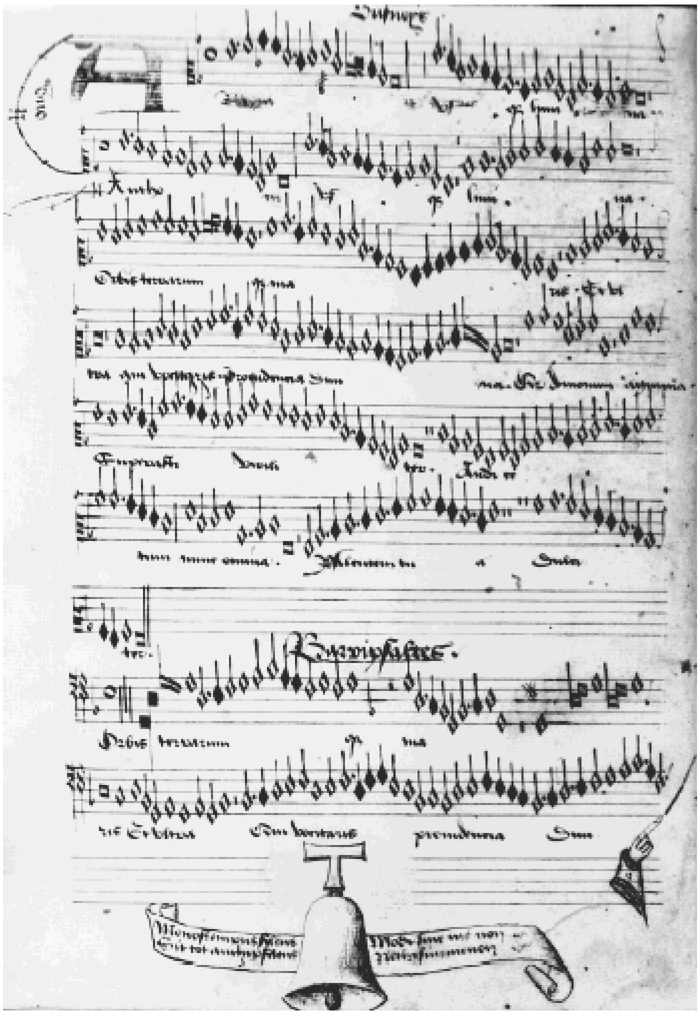
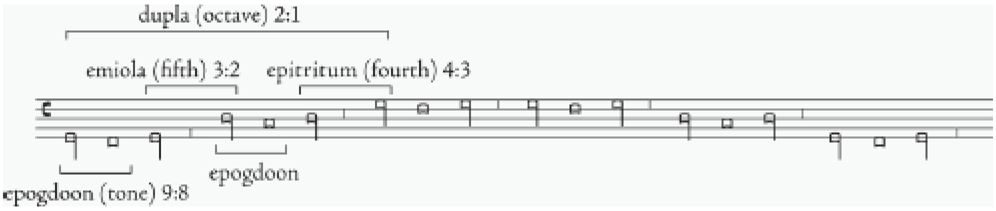


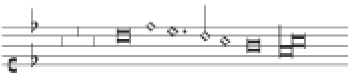
fig. 12-3 Autograph copy of Busnoys’s self-referential motet *Anthoni usque limina* (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royal Albert I, MS 5557, fol. 48v). The first pair of words in the first line of the text *(ANTHONI USque limina* ...—“Anthony, you who to the furthest

bounds …”)—and the last pair of words in the last line *(Fiat in omniBUS NOYS*—“that understanding may come to all”) contain a rebus of the composer’s name.

Busnoys also put his formidable linguistic, musical, and architectonic skills to work in praise of his great contemporary and mentor. The motet *In hydraulis* (“On the Water organs”), written sometime between his stay at Tours and his patron’s accession to the ducal throne in 1467, compares Ockeghem with Pythagoras and Orpheus, musicians of mythological stature. The motet is built over a *pes*, a repetitive tenor phrase in three notes (OC-KE-GHEM?) that is put through a series of transpositions that collectively sum up all the Pythagorean consonances (Ex. 12-1a). This whole complex of repetitions, moreover, which may be regarded as the *color* of the motet, is put through four complete repetitions, each of them under a different mensuration sign; the resulting speeds are calibrated to reproduce the same Pythagorean proportions—in another musical dimension, so to speak.



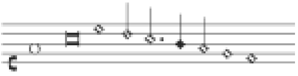
ex. 12-1a Antoine Busnoys, *In hydraulis*, tenor layout



ex. 12-1b Antoine Busnoys, *In hydraulis*, beginning of *secunda pars* (point of imitation on “haec Ockeghem”)

Ockeghem is actually named at the beginning of the second major section of the motet, and the phrase containing his name is turned into a musical emblem through a series of canonic entries (Ex. 12-1b). With its pes and its significant use of imitation and voice exchange, *In hydraulis* might be looked upon as a distant, university-educated descendant of the old Sumer Canon.

Ockeghem returned the compliment in the form of an even more elaborate motet called *Ut heremita solus* (“Lonely as a hermit”), of which the text has been lost, but whose incipit seems to combine a reference to Busnoys’s hermit patron saint with an encomium, loneliness often being a trope for eminence (as in “it’s lonely at the top”). The tenor of Ockeghem’s motet is based on a six-note pes (AN-THO-NI-US BUS-NOYS?), to realize which requires solving an immensely difficult puzzle. (Compliments, at this rarefied, snooty level, are often hard to distinguish from challenges.) Most telling of all, its opening puts a variant of the same phrase that had carried Ockeghem’s name in Busnoys’s motet through another series of imitative voice exchanges (Ex. 12-1c).



ex. 12-1c Johannes Ockeghem returns the

compliment to Busnoys
in *Ut heremita solus*

Besides Tinctoris’s encomia to them, and their encomia to one another, there is further evidence in the surviving musical sources of the fantastic prestige that these composers achieved, and the veneration in which Ockeghem particularly was held. By all odds the most beautiful musical manuscript of the fifteenth century is a priceless presentation volume that contains Ockeghem’s virtually complete collected sacred works and some of Busnoys’s as well. It was commissioned in 1498 from the foremost scriptorium in Europe—the Flanders workshop of Pieter van den Hove, known as Petrus Alamire (“Peter A-above-or-below-middle-C”)—as a memorial to the just-deceased Ockeghem by a courtier to the French king Charles VIII, the son and grandson of the composer’s chief patrons. The intended recipient was possibly Philip I (the Handsome) of Spain, the son of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian by Mary of Burgundy, Busnoys’s former employer. It was purchased by Agostino Chigi (KEE-jee), a great arts patron, for the collection of the rapacious Spanish pontiff, Pope Alexander VI (father of the notorious Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia). From there it went into the Vatican library, of which it is now one of the prize holdings. Fig. 12-4 shows a typically lavish opening from this manuscript, now called the Chigi Codex. The music shown is by Ockeghem, whose name appears at the upper left.

In addition to the superstars Ockeghem and Busnoys, Tinctoris’s cast of characters included several other important contemporary Franco-Burgundian or Franco-Flemish composers. Johannes Regis (d. 1496) served as Du Fay’s secretary at Cambrai during the last decade of the older man’s life. Caron, whose first name is never given in the musical sources and is consequently uncertain (Tinctoris calls him Firminus, but there are archival references to a Philippe Caron as well), most likely trained at Cambrai under Du Fay and served the Burgundian court alongside Busnoys. Guillaume Faugues is known mainly by his works and by Tinctoris’s references to him. Documents suggest that he received his early training at the cathedral of Bourges, France’s second city under Charles VII and Louis XI, in the early 1460s.

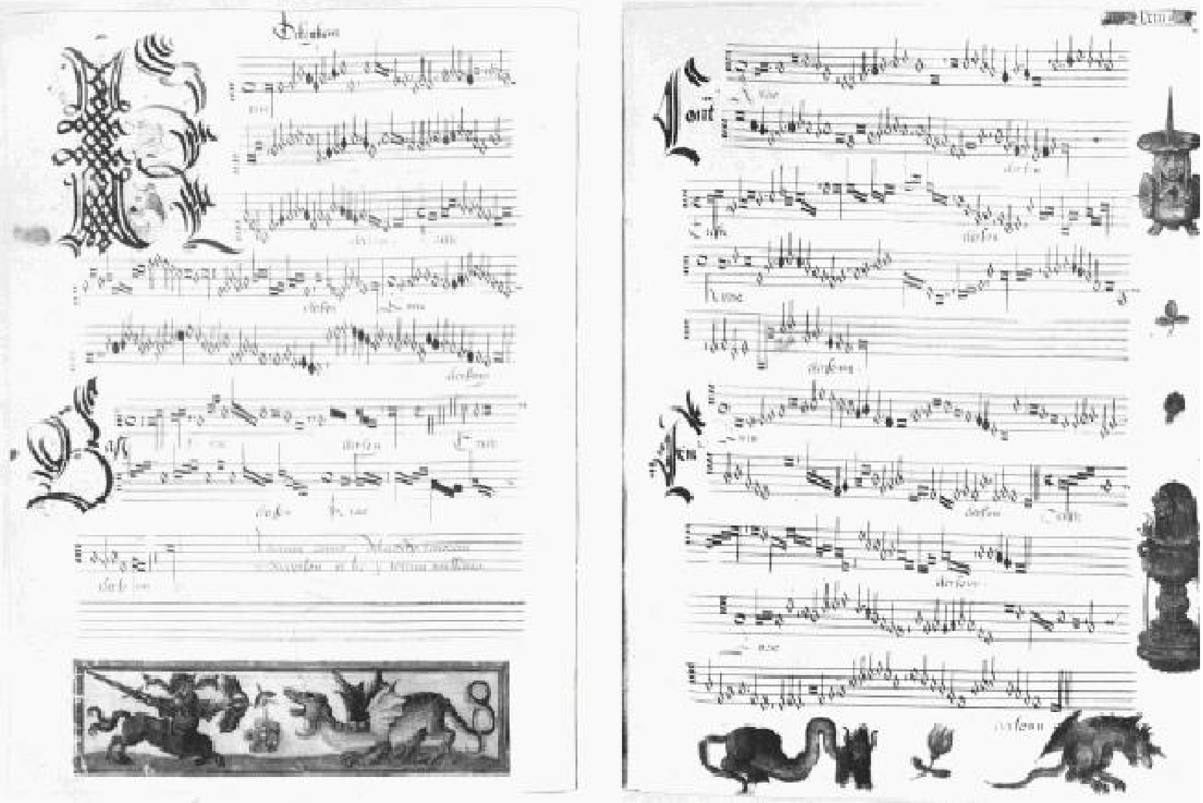


fig. 12-4 Opening of Ockeghem’s *Missa caput* from the so-called Chigi Codex (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Chigi C.VIII.234, fols. 64v-65).

The composers named thus far are not known to have visited Italy, but only Ockeghem’s career is well enough documented to preclude the possibility of an Italian sojourn. Even in their physical absence, though, their music was widely circulated and performed in southern Europe, as Tinctoris’s wide and deep knowledge of it already attests. Their works, and the works of many lesser French and Flemish masters, make up the bulk of the repertory preserved in the massive choirbooks that were copied during the reign of Pope Sixtus IV (1471 - 84) for use at his newly built and consecrated personal worship hall, the celebrated Sistine Chapel. These choirbooks survive to this day in the Vatican library. In 1472, Ockeghem received a personal communication from Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza in Milan requesting help in recruiting French singers for his chapel. Several important composers of the early sixteenth century (among them Loyset Compère) who were too young to be noticed by Tinctoris, and who will therefore figure in a later chapter of this book, had their professional start in the Milanese court chapel choir around this time, possibly at Ockeghem’s recommendation.

Beginning with the generation after that of Ockeghem and Busnoys—the generation Tinctoris called “younger composers,” who were reaching maturity in the 1470s and lived into the next century—residence at the high-paying Italian courts became the rule. Their outstanding representative was Jacobus Hobrecht (better known as Obrecht, as habitually given in Italian sources), who after a distinguished career in Dutch and Belgian cities such as Antwerp, Utrecht, Bergen op Zoom, and Bruges was summoned to the magnificent court of Ercole I, the Duke of Ferrara, where he died of plague in 1505.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Mass

THE CYCLIC MASS

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The major genre on which all these composers lavished their skills, and the chief vehicle for their fame, was a genre that did not exist before the fifteenth century. It may be fairly regarded as the emblem of the century's musical attainments, for it was a genre of unprecedented altitude.

The quality of “height” or *hauteur*, as we observed at the end of the previous chapter, was an important determinant of style within an aristocratic culture. It was the yardstick by which subject matter and rhetorical manner had been correlated since pre-Christian times. The classic formulation was given by Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 bce), the Roman statesman and orator, who sought an ideal union of rhetoric and philosophy to guide human affairs. To make knowledge effective, it had to be cast in the proper expressive form.

Cicero distinguished three basic styles of oratory, which he called *gravis*, *mediocris*, and *attenuatus:* weighty, middling, and plain. The Carolingian rhetoricians and their scholastic descendants in the twelfth century had modified the Ciceronian doctrine to reflect literary rather than oratorical categories, substituting *humilis* (“low”) for Cicero's plain-spoken style and associating it with the vernacular tongues that had replaced Latin for everyday speech, including the speech of the unlettered. In arguing for artistic literature in the vernacular, Dante had set himself the task of proving (on the basis of the troubadours' achievement) that vernacular languages could accommodate all three levels of discourse, identifying them in terms that had even more obvious social connotations: *illustre, mediocre, humile* (noble, middling, lowly).

It was Tinctoris who first applied a variation of this time-honored scheme to music. In his dictionary of terms, he designated three musical styles, calling them *magnus, mediocris,* and *parvus*: great (= high-ranking or lofty), middle, and small (= low-ranking). He associated each of them with a genre. The small, predictably enough, was associated with the vernacular chanson. The middle was associated with the motet, especially as transformed by contact with English models, as we witnessed in the previous chapter.

The great or lofty style was the style of the Mass—a new type of standardized Mass composition in which five items from the Ordinary (no longer including the brief dismissal-plus-response formula) were set as a musical unit. A musical unit precisely, not a liturgical one, for there is nothing unified about the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei as a set of texts. They had different histories, traced in the early chapters of this book; their structures were different, and they served different functions. Two are prayers, two are acclamations, one is a profession of faith. Only the Kyrie and the Gloria are consecutive in the liturgy.

Settings of the Ordinary in the fourteenth century, as we have seen, were of individual items, or occasionally of pairs. Such complete formularies as exist were ad hoc compilations of individual, musically heterogeneous items (even when, as in the case of Machaut, they were all the work of a single author), opportunistically assembled for “votive”—which from the church's point of view chiefly meant fund-raising—purposes.

And now, all of a sudden (or so it seems), the Mass Ordinary emerges as a unified musical genre—the most fully unified in history, covering a longer span, and shaped by more purely “musical,” composerly (hence arbitrary) processes, than any we have yet encountered. The fact that its constituent sections were nonconsecutive in performance meant that its musical unity was “thematized” and made symbolic. The musically integrated Mass Ordinary setting now unified the whole service, symbolically integrating a process lasting as much as an hour or more by means of periodic inspiring returns to familiar, hence significant, sounds.

It was the most potent demonstration yet of the abstract shaping powers of music and their potential import in mediating between the human and the divine; and it was a kind of shaping for which the literate tradition and only the literate tradition could provide the necessary means. Consequently, the genre of the musically unified Mass Ordinary quickly acquired enormous prestige as a symbol of ecclesiastical power—the power, let us recall, of a church that was itself newly restored to unity, a church that frequently lent its support to temporal authorities, intervening in their affairs and disputes, and that just as frequently drew similar support from them.

Cyclic Mass Ordinaries were what chiefly filled those early Sistine chapel manuscripts, and thirteen of these mammoth cycles, posthumously collected together in one fantastically decorative presentation manuscript, were what attested to—or rather, what established—Ockeghem’s claim to pre-eminence among the composers of his day. In short, the Mass Ordinary “cycle” became, in Manfred Bukofzer’s words, “the focal point on which all the artistic aspirations and technical achievements of the composer converged,” for it was the focal point of patronage and prestige.[1]

Notes:

(1) Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (New York: Norton, 1950), p. 217.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Mass: The cyclic mass in the later 15th century

John Dunstable

Leonel Power

Cantus firmus

Tenor

CANTUS FIRMUS AS TROPE OF GLORY

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

But first, its history: one that, like so much in the history of fifteenth-century music, begins with the English. And it begins at the moment when the device of paired movements based on a common cantus firmus tenor, *already* found in the Old Hall manuscript, was expanded to encompass all the major components of the Ordinary.

We cannot tell when that decisive moment occurred; all we can know are its first preserved fruits. One of the earliest is a Kyrie-Gloria-Credo-Sanctus set somewhat shakily attributed to Dunstable, based on a tenor derived from *Da gaudiorum praemia* ("O grant the prize that brings joy"), a responsory for Trinity Sunday (the Sunday after Pentecost). It is bound up with the family history of the Henrys of England and was very likely first performed at the wedding of Henry V and Catherine of Valois, his joyful prize and daughter of the French King Charles VI, which took place on Trinity Sunday, 2 June 1420. The same Mass seems to have been performed again at another royal occasion, the Paris coronation of Henry VI in 1431.

There, *already*, is a clue to the original purpose of the cyclic organization of the Ordinary: the use of a symbolic or emblematic tenor uniting its various sections renders the Ordinary "proper" to an occasion. The common cantus firmus acts like a trope, a symbolic commentary on the service. It was, or could be, a most potent device for insuring that there would be no separation of church and state.

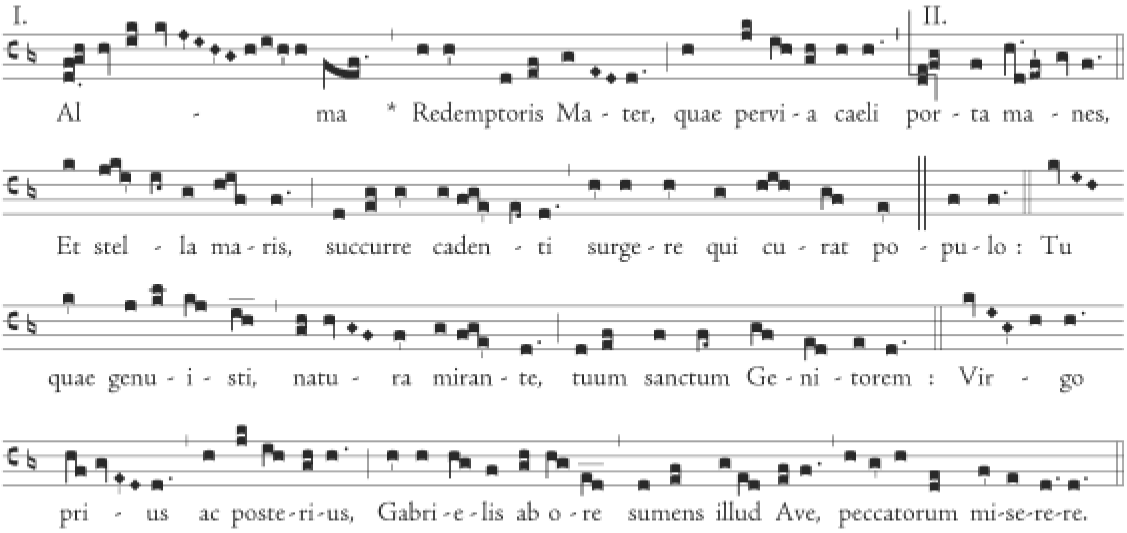
More secure is the attribution to Leonel Power of a four-part Ordinary complex (a pair, so to speak, of traditional pairs: Gloria/Credo and Sanctus/Agnus Dei) all based on a tenor derived from the Marian antiphon *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. This composition, found only in northern Italian manuscripts copied around 1430-1435, is one of the best witnesses to the prestige of English music at the time and the leadership that English composers were exercising over musical developments on the continent.

Unlike Dunstable, his (probably) somewhat younger contemporary, Leonel Power does not seem to have made much of an international career. It was his music that traveled. Except for a brief French sojourn between 1419 and 1421 with his employer the Duke of Clarence (brother of Henry V, in whose campaign the Duke was participating), the composer spent his whole professional life in England, first as tutor to the choristers in the Duke's household chapel, and later as a member of the fraternity of Christ Church, Canterbury, where he died, probably aged around seventy, in 1445. One of his duties at the Canterbury church was to lead the choir that sang special votive services in the "Lady chapel," and it was presumably for this choir that he composed, on a suitable Marian hymn, the Mass that, because it was so widely circulated in manuscript copies, now looms so large in history.

Unifying the sections of Mass cycles on the basis of common tenors meant laying out a foundation in advance and building from the ground up. This architectonic conception had previously been the special distinguishing characteristic of the motet. And indeed, that genre was the source of the idea, even as the motet itself was undergoing change in the fifteenth century, a change that implied a “lowering” of its style. What happened, in effect, was that the rigidly conceived, highly structured style if the isorhythmic motet—the “high style” or *stylus gravis* of the fourteenth century—passed from the motet into the domain of the cyclic Mass, which was potentially a kind of isorhythmic motet writ large, with five or so discrete sections replacing the multiple color-talea *cursus* of old.

All the characteristics thatmark a “high” style in the Ciceronian sense—weightiness, loftiness, nobility, vouchsafed by a highly rationalized, “artificial” idiom of “unnatural” intensity and complexity—became the property of the Mass, even as the motet loosened up under another strain of English influence to become more “naturally” declamatory, more personally expressive, more texturally flexible, thus assuming the position of a “middle” style. To appreciate this shift, keep Dunstable’s *Quam pulchra es* (Ex. 11-19) in mind as a “middle style” foil to accompany and contrast with the brief account that follows of Leonel’s Mass on *Alma Redemptoris Mater*.

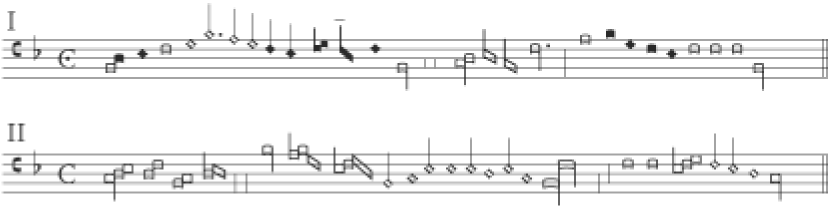
The arbitrarily strict, the artificial, and the unnaturally formal—hallmarks of the high style—are very conspicuous in the fashioning and the treatment of Leonel’s cantus firmus. Ex. 12-2a shows *Alma Redemptoris Mater* as it is found in the *Liber usualis*, the modern chant book, with the major divisions as extracted by Leonel for the purposes of his Mass setting, amounting to roughly half of the original melody, indicated with bars and Roman numerals. These divisions do not conform at all to the given (text-based) structural divisions of the chant. The break between Leonel’s two major sections occurs in the middle of a ligature, and the end of the cantus firmus also comes in the middle of a word; nor is the last note of the cantus firmus even the final of the original melody’s mode.


I.
II.
Al - ma * Redemptoris Ma - ter, quae pervi - a caeli por - ta ma - nes,
Et stel - la ma - ris, succurre caden - ti surge - re qui cu - rat po - pu - lo : Tu
quae genu - i - sti, natu - ra miran - te, tuum sanctum Ge - ni - torem : Vir - go
pri - us ac poste - ri - us, Gabri - e - lis ab o - re sumens illud Ave, peccatorum mi-se-re-re.

ex. 12-2a *Alma Redemptoris Mater* (eleventh-century Marian antiphon)

Thus there is no apparent rhyme or reason for Leonel’s selection or apportionment of his cantus firmus material. That is not to say that there was no reason, only that it is not readily apparent. Possible reasons might have involved numerology or some other form of occult symbolism, or might have had some other connection with *musica speculativa*. Sometimes modern researchers stumble on these things, and sometimes they don’t. In any case, the absence of an apparent rationale is not proof of the absence of a rationale. Nor is it proof of the presence of a rationale. Sherlock Holmes and his famous dog that failed to bark in the night notwithstanding, one can rarely make secure deductions from an absence. (It follows, then, that we can never know that a given piece of music has no preexisting cantus firmus; all we can know is that we have not yet discovered one.)

What is possible to say with certainty is that, whatever the reason for it, Leonel’s selection and apportionment of raw material for his cantus firmus was entirely arbitrary (that is, “at will”), unrelated to the formal or semantic content of the antiphon from which it came. Similarly arbitrary is the processing of the raw material. Ex. 12-2b shows the actual tenor of Leonel's Mass in its entirety and in the original notation. The two sections marked I and II are cast in contrasting mensurations. (The first section, in accordance with an English custom for the use of major-prolation signatures in notating tenors that a few continental composers picked up, is meant to be performed "in augmentation," that is, in durations twice as long as those written.) The rhythms show an effort to include maximum variety. There is a profuse and unpredictable mixture of note values, including such standard options as hemiolas in the first (perfect) section and syncopations in the second (imperfect) one.



ex. 12-2b Tenor of Leonel Power's Mass on *Alma Redemptoris Mater*

Once established, this arbitrary color/talea combo was cast in stone. It serves as the basis for all four extant sections of the Mass, without the slightest modification. This, of course, is the isorhythmic principle (though in somewhat simplified form, since the color and talea match up one to one), extended over a multipartite span that unifies the whole worship service. "Higher" than that one could hardly aim.

The beginnings of Leonel's Gloria and Sanctus are given for comparison in Ex. 12-3. The only difference between them, so far as the tenor is concerned, consists of the little "introitus" that precedes the first tenor entrance in the Sanctus. This, too, is arbitrary and counter-intuitive, since the Gloria has by far the longer text, and could benefit practically from the use of an introitus to take up some of the verbiage. Clearly, the introitus to the Sanctus serves an ornamental rather than a functional purpose, possibly in keeping with the fact, often exploited by composers of Masses, that the Sanctus is supposed to be an imitation of the heavenly choirs.

More important than the small difference is the overall uniformity. Two liturgical texts, with inherent shapes that have practically nothing in common, have been forced into a musical conformity. Owing to the uniform tenor, moreover, the two sections take the same amount of time. It means, of course, that the Sanctus text is stretched out in luxurious melismas and the Gloria text is crammed in as if with a shoehorn. But the fixed bipartite musical format prevails, and became standardized over time, both for Mass sections and for many motets.

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Mass: The cyclic mass in the later 15th century

Contratenor

“CAPUT” AND THE BEGINNINGS OF FOUR-PART HARMONY

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The direct adoption from the English of the cyclic Mass as the standard “high” genre, and the way the “Tinctoris generation” of continental musicians further developed all its compositional techniques, can be illustrated with a trio of Masses all based on the same cantus firmus melody: a grandiose *neuma* or supermelisma on *caput* (“head”), the concluding word of an antiphon, *Venit ad Petrum* (“He came to Peter”), that was sung at Salisbury Cathedral for the ceremony of “washing the feet” on Maundy Thursday during Holy Week preceding Easter. “Do not wash only my feet, but also my hands and my *head*,” said Peter to Jesus in the Gospel according to John, in a line that became the antiphon that begat the Masses.

Sometime around 1440, an anonymous English composer (whose anonymity does not preclude his being a well-known personage) turned this magnificent melisma into a cantus firmus by following the procedures described above and produced a Mass similar in principle to Leonel’s *Alma Redemptoris Mater* Mass, but much, much grander in scale. The vastness of the conception suggests no mere chapel votive service but a cathedral Mass attended by dignitaries and magnates in force (precisely the kind of stellar occasion, in short, for which isorhythmic motets used to serve).

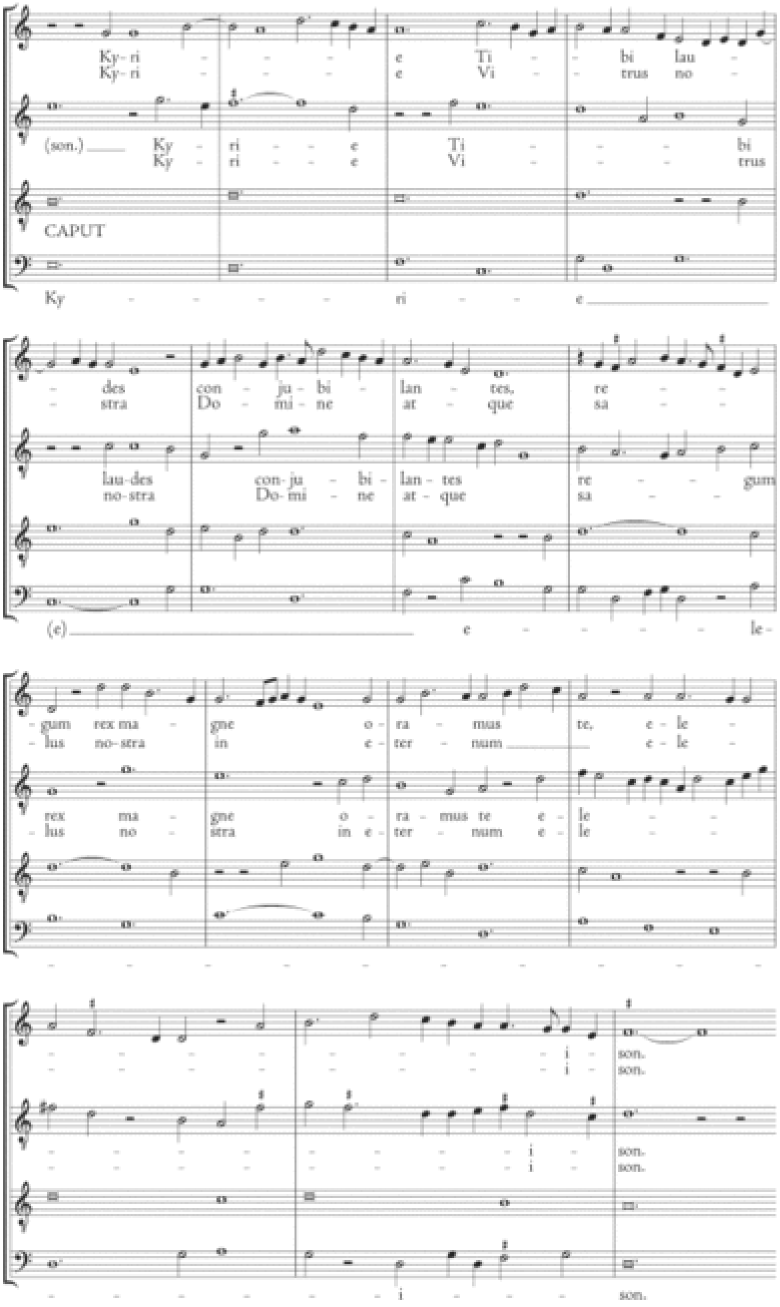
As in Leonel’s Mass, the cantus firmus of one “movement” is (with minor variables like rests between phrases) the cantus firmus of all. Each “movement” has the same overall bipartite structure articulated through the same contrast of perfect and imperfect mensurations. But each mensuration governs a full statement of the enormous cantus firmus, so that each “movement” embodies a double cursus of what is already a very lengthy melody. So this Mass would be twice as long as Leonel’s even if the apparently missing (and probably heavily trooped) Kyrie from Leonel’s Mass were restored.

10099.- SALISBURY CATHEDRAL.

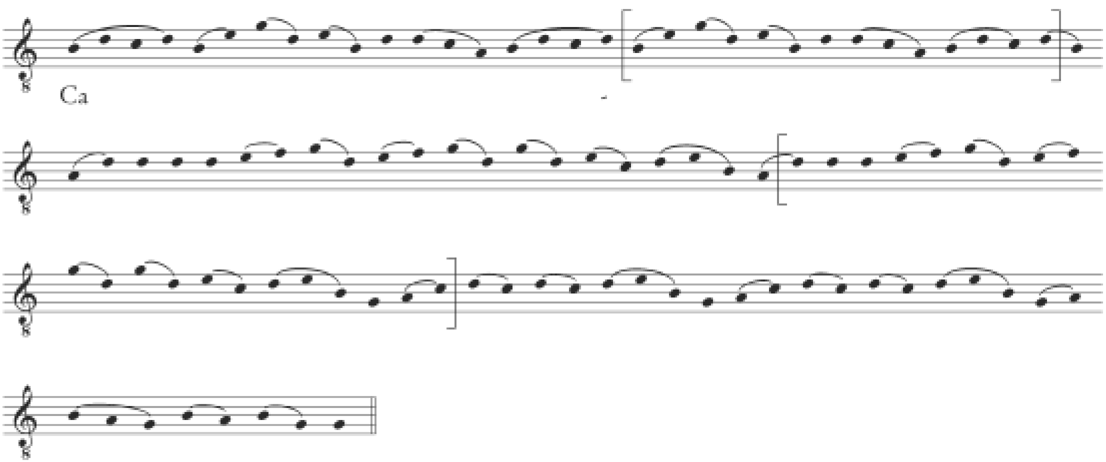
fig. 12-5 Salisbury Cathedral, home of the Sarum chant, the repertoire that included the *Caput* melisma.

In fact it is surely more than twice as long, because the “*ideal*” structure of this or any cyclic Mass (that is, the structure as composed) is not necessarily the same as its practical structure (the structure as performed). The two sections of the Kyrie from the *Caput* Mass are composed—”Kyrie” in perfect time and “Christe” in imperfect—to satisfy the requirements of its structural plan. But they do not satisfy the requirements of the liturgy. In the actual liturgical performance of any Mass the words “Kyrie eleison” must be repeated following the words “Christe eleison”; and so we may assume that in the liturgical performance of this Mass, either the missing words were shoehorned into the “Christe,” or the first section was performed *da capo* in order to complete the liturgical text.

But however impressive, length is not the most important dimension in which the *Missa Caput* has been magnified over and above its predecessors. More significant by far, historically speaking, is the amplification of the texture. The complement of voices has been increased to four—and that number of voices, in precisely the configuration found in this Mass, became the norm for a century or more of intense Mass Ordinary composition. Once something becomes normal it is quickly taken for granted; so let us seize this moment, while things we have long since taken for granted are still in the process of being formed, to witness the birth of “four-part harmony.”


Ky-ri - e Ti - bi lau - des con - ju - bi - lan - tes, re - gum rex ma - gne o - ra - mus te, e - le - i - son.
Ky-ri - e Vi - trus no - stra Do - mi - ne at - que sa - lus no-stra in e - ter - num e - le - i - son.
(son.) Ky - ri - e Ti - bi lau-des con-ju - bi - lan - tes re - gum rex ma - gne o - ra - mus te e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e Vi - trus no-stra Do-mi - ne at - que sa - lus no - stra in e - ter - num e - le - i - son.
CAPUT
Ky - ri - e (e) e - le - i - son.

ex. 12-4a *Missa Caput*, Kyrie (sung with prosulas), mm. 11–25



ex. 12-4b The *Caput* melisma

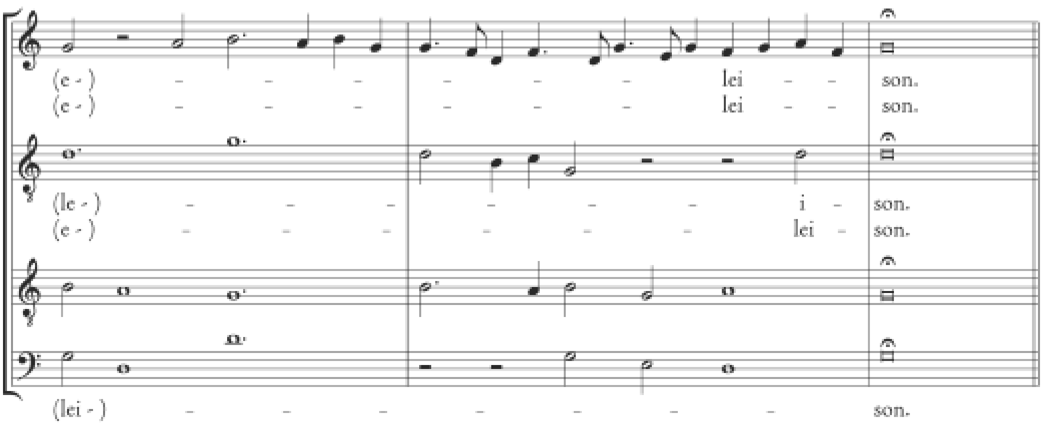
The *Caput* tenor is an unusually high-lying chant, making repeated ascents to the G that in the old eight-mode system was the highest theoretically recognized “scale note” of all. The original melisma is given in Ex. 12-4b for comparison with the tenor of the Kyrie, a portion of which is shown in Ex. 12-4a. The tenor’s high tessitura puts it in a range far closer to, and apter to cross with, the contratenor above it than the “second tenor” below. Indeed, at its peaks it even crosses the cantus at times—sometimes quite dramatically, as when it makes its first ascent to the high G (m. 15) while the second tenor descends to its lowest note to put a maximum distance of a twelfth between the two parts that in earlier music used to cross so freely.

Although the sources that include the anonymous *Caput* Mass retain the nomenclature of voice-parts with which we are familiar, scribes in the mid-fifteenth century responded to the newly standardized, newly stratified four-part texture by adopting a new nomenclature, as shall we from now on. The now-obligatory voice that stays consistently below the tenor, like the more accustomed “nonessential” voice above it, was now thought of as a second *contratenor*—a voice written against the tenor and (functionally if not literally) “after” it—rather than a second tenor. To distinguish the two contratenors, one was called “high” (*altus*) and the other “low” (*bassus*).

No one reading this who has ever sung in a chorus will fail to appreciate the significance of this new nomenclature. The term *contratenor altus* metamorphosed into the Italian *contralto*, and *contratenor bassus* into *contrabasso*—terms that have long since been anglicized as “alto” and “bass.” Moreover, once the word “high” became standard for a voice that was not in fact the highest one singing, the highest voice (till now the cantus or the triplum) became known as the “top voice”—*superius*, from which the word *soprano* is derived. And now we have our full familiar range of voice parts—soprano, alto, tenor, bass (SATB)—and can see how the word *tenor*, originally the “holding part” (which, in cantus firmus Masses, it still was), acquired the meaning that has since become standard: a high male range. (For that meaning to become primary, of course, a further major change was required—one that was still some centuries away: the substitution of mixed choirs for the all-male *schola* of the pre-Reformation Christian church.)

Now that both the range and the term for it have been established, let us take a close look at the *bassus* voice in Ex. 12-4a. It occupies a pitch space all its own and behaves in a new harmony-defining way. Like that of any contratenor, its movement tends to be disjunct—by skips—and it has a newly standardized role at cadences.

A cadence, we may recall, is defined theoretically as stepwise movement, by the “structural pair” (cantus and tenor), in contrary motion from an imperfect to a perfect consonance. That criterion is of course met here—and the original chant melisma is given in Ex. 12-4b just to show how the cantus firmus had to be modified at the ends of both its cursus in order to secure for the tenor a stepwise, properly “cadential” fall to the final. At the final cadences, both of the Kyrie and of the Christe, an A is interpolated in the tenor before the final to correspond with the *subtonium* F in the superius, preparing the cadence on G. The two voices make their resolutions in contrary motion, and that is the essential cadence (Ex. 12-4c).


(e -) - - - - - - lei - - son.
(e -) - - - - - - lei - - son.
(le -) - - - - - - i - son.
(e -) - - - - - - lei - son.
(lei -) - - - - - - - - - son.

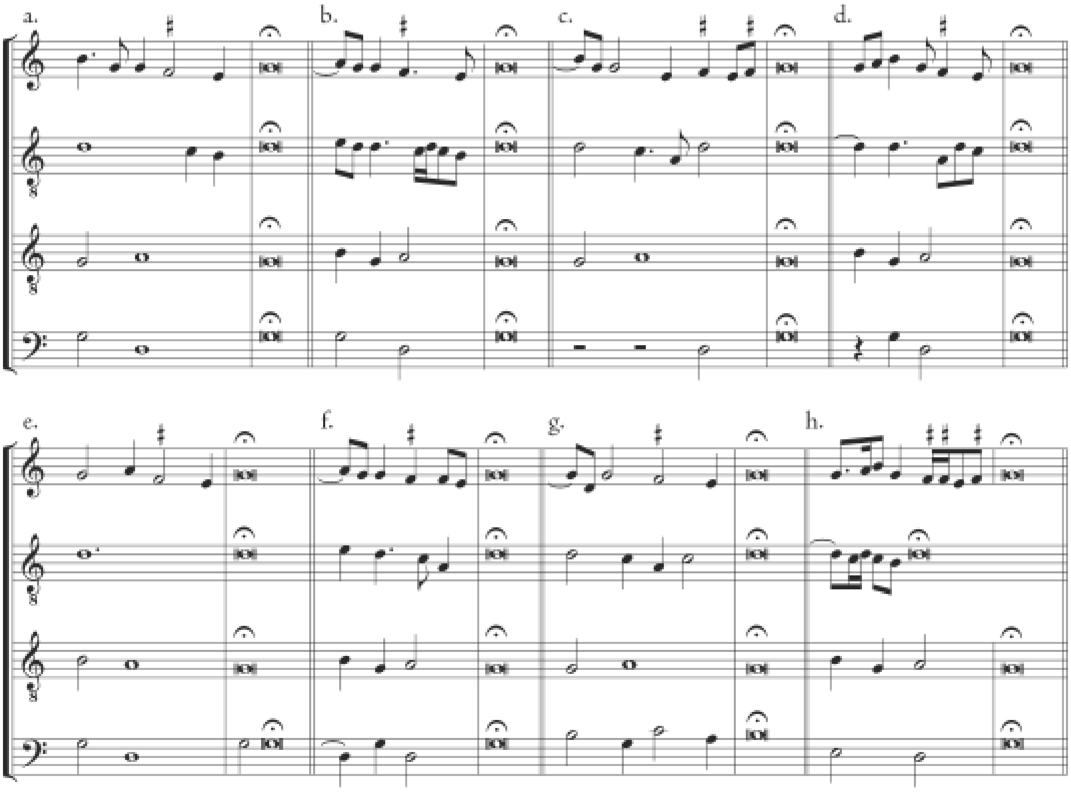
ex. 12-4c *Missa Caput*, Kyrie (sung with prosulas), mm. 50-52

Anyone who has studied counterpoint knows that the only way two additional voices can be added to the "imperfect" part of this cadence that will be both consonant with the structural pair and independent of it (in the sense that they will not be forced to double the "essential motion" of either cantus or tenor at the cadence) is to have them both sing D. At the resolution of the cadence the D above the tenor remains stationary, and the D below goes the only place it can—to G, doubling the tenor either at the same pitch or an octave below, depending on the available range. Because this cadence reinforces the effect of the tenor's descent to the final from above, it emphasizes the "authentic" modal ambitus and has a particularly forceful closing effect. It is conventionally called the "authentic cadence," probably because of its modal associations (but as with many terms in current, unambiguous and informal parlance, its etymology has not been researched, and its pedigree is uncertain).

At any rate, the progression in the bass, from the fifth scale degree (supporting the two "essential" pre-final tones) to the final, is congruent with what we are accustomed to calling a V -I or dominant - tonic progression. To call it that is to think of the motion of the lowest part as the essential cadential approach, and to associate the gesture toward closure with the "dominant" harmony. The question for historians is at what point such a way of conceptualizing cadences becomes justified (or to put it less prescriptively, at what point such a conceptualization matches that of contemporaneous musicians and listeners).

However they were conceptualized, such an approach and such a harmony were perceptually a part of virtually every final cadence from the mid-fifteenth century on. They admitted considerable variation from the beginning. For an idea of the possibilities, compare the lineup, in Ex. 12-5, of all the remaining sectional cadences in the *Caput* Mass (two per "movement"). In Ex. 12-5a and Ex. b, from the Gloria, both the superius and the altus are decorated with "Landini sixths," producing pungent dissonances right before the resolution. A variation of the same configuration occurs at the end of the Credo (Ex. 12-5d), where the superius again has the Landini sixth but the altus has a simple lower neighbor, producing not a sixth but a seventh (the first "dominant seventh"?) above the bass.

Example 12-5g, from the Agnus Dei, is especially interesting since the bassus is modified so that the final chord is a richly sonorous full triad. Both the avoidance of the fifth progression in the bass and the presence of the third in the final chord, however, are justified by the fact that the chord in question is not actually a final chord. It is a sectional cadence only, immediately followed by the continuation of the Agnus Dei. The final cadence of the Agnus, Ex. 12-5h, returns to the concord of perfect consonances. The presence of an imperfect consonance in a final chord would not normally be countenanced in strictly composed polyphonic music (whatever may have gone on behind the closed doors of the oral tradition) until nearly the end of the next century.



ex. 12-5 ***Missa Caput*** **a. middle of Gloria b. end of Gloria c. middle of Credo d. end of Credo e. middle of Sanctus f. end of Sanctus g. middle of Agnus Dei h. end of Agnus Dei**

As long as the perfect concord was required at full cadences, the theorists, our only direct witnesses to contemporary concepts, went on calling the superius/tenor motion the essential cadential motion, with the V-I in the bassus beneath playing a no more than a contrapuntally mandated supporting role. Just as surely, however, by the middle of the seventeenth century the dominant-tonic cadence, articulated by the V-I bass, was fully conceptualized and had become for contemporary musicians the primary means of defining harmonic closure, as it remains for us today (that is, in our practiced habits of "hearing"). Over the two centuries between 1450 and 1650, in other words, a gradual conceptual change took place in the wake of a new perceptual reality. Roughly speaking, it was the change from "modal" to "tonal" thinking.

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Oxford History of Western Music: Richard Taruskin

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Tonality

HOW CONTROVERSIES ARISE (AND WHAT THEY REVEAL)

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The essential difference between these two concepts of pitch organization, the radic-alness of the change from the one form of cadential articulation to the other and the implications of that change, remain matters of debate among historians. They can be (and have been) tendentiously exaggerated, and also tendentiously minimized. Clearly, though, whatever the eventual implications of the V-I bass, its fifteenth-century introduction (like many other retrospectively momentous turning points in music history) was no conscious revolution. To call “tonality” a radical break with past thinking, an inspired invention, or (most telling of all) an unanticipated, world-transforming discovery is clearly to borrow without critical reflection from that all-embracing concept of the “Renaissance” that, unless vigilantly examined, can all too easily prejudice the study of fifteenth-century music.

Thus to look for a musical “Age of Discovery” to match the near-contemporary exploits of Columbus and Magellan is attractive but facile, just as it is facile to compare the “discovery” of “tonal” harmony based on the circle of fifths with the “discovery” of perspective by the painters of “Renaissance” Italy. In neither case was something discovered. Both discoveries were inventions. The invention of techniques for rendering a three-dimensional perspective by locating the viewer’s eye in space is easily explained, moreover, as an attempt to imitate nature—that is, our natural way of seeing. That way of seeing existed before there was a technique for representing it on canvas. But what is the comparable preexisting natural model for tonal harmony? Natural acoustical resonance, some have argued, with reasonable but limited justification.

Yet it would be equally tendentious to minimize the difference between a harmonic syntax based on the concept of occursus—“closing in” on a unison or octave—and one based on fifth relations. On the basis of virtually all the music that we hear in daily life, we have learned to assign implied hierarchical functions to chords as well as to scale degrees. Composers have long since learned how to establish these harmonic (or, as we call them, “tonal”) hierarchies, as well as dissolve them, and to move from one such ordering (through a process called modulation) to another.

These habits of the musical ear, and the techniques to which they gave rise, were a long time taking shape. A fully elaborated tonal system was not in place until the other end of the two-century time frame initiated by the change in cadential norms. By the late seventeenth century, the V-I close was only the most decisive member of a pervading system of fifth relations (the “circle of fifths”) that governed harmonic relations at many levels. Equally important (and equally different from earlier practice), the tonal system was no longer dependent for its effects on strict linear voice leading.

For us, who live more than five hundred years later, what was for the fifteenth century the distant future has become the distant past. We are therefore much more fully aware than anyone could have been at the time of the range of implication the new cadential structure carried within it. And so we are justified in seeking the origins of modern harmonic practice at a period when that practice could not yet be predicted. The fact that some of the questions we now ask about fifteenth-century harmony would not have been meaningful to fifteenth-century musicians does not lessen their interest or their meaningfulness to us.

It should be clear, then, that to deny the perceptual reality of functional harmonic practice simply because it originated "unintentionally," as an incidental contrapuntal formula, is to commit the "genetic fallacy," as it is called, a rather hackneyed logical error that equates origins with essence. (According to the genetic fallacy no contrapuntal combination can ever become a harmonic norm, no drinking song can ever become a national anthem, no Russian composer can ever write an Italian opera, no African can ever become an American.) Committed innocently, an error is something from which one can learn; committed cynically, an error is something with which one can deceive.

This particular genetic fallacy—to reduce the "tonal system" to the chance product (or worse, the tenacious misinterpretation) of a contrapuntal accident—was a common academic strategy for undermining belief in the reality of the tonal system at a time around the middle of the twentieth century when the rights of "atonal" music—a music then practiced exclusively in the academy—were being defended against those who called it "unnatural." Instead of arguing that a basis in nature is only one of the criteria by which musical styles acquire perceptual viability (especially in academic or otherwise "high" or elite environments), an attempt was made to deny all natural basis to habits of musical "hearing." In this controversy, we can see especially clearly how fundamentally the writing of history can be influenced by current esthetic or political concerns.

So we will avoid taking sides in a misconceived argument and limit ourselves to the perceptual facts insofar as they are available, and with recognition that such facts are never entirely available. "Oral" practices that we know only imperfectly if at all—for example, the use of chord-strumming instruments in unwritten musical repertories and their effect in reconditioning musical "hearing" during the two centuries in question—unquestionably had an important bearing, but one that can never be fully documented, on the "transition" from modal discant counterpoint ("their" way of composing) to functional harmony ("our" way of hearing).

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Borrowing: Renaissance mass cycles

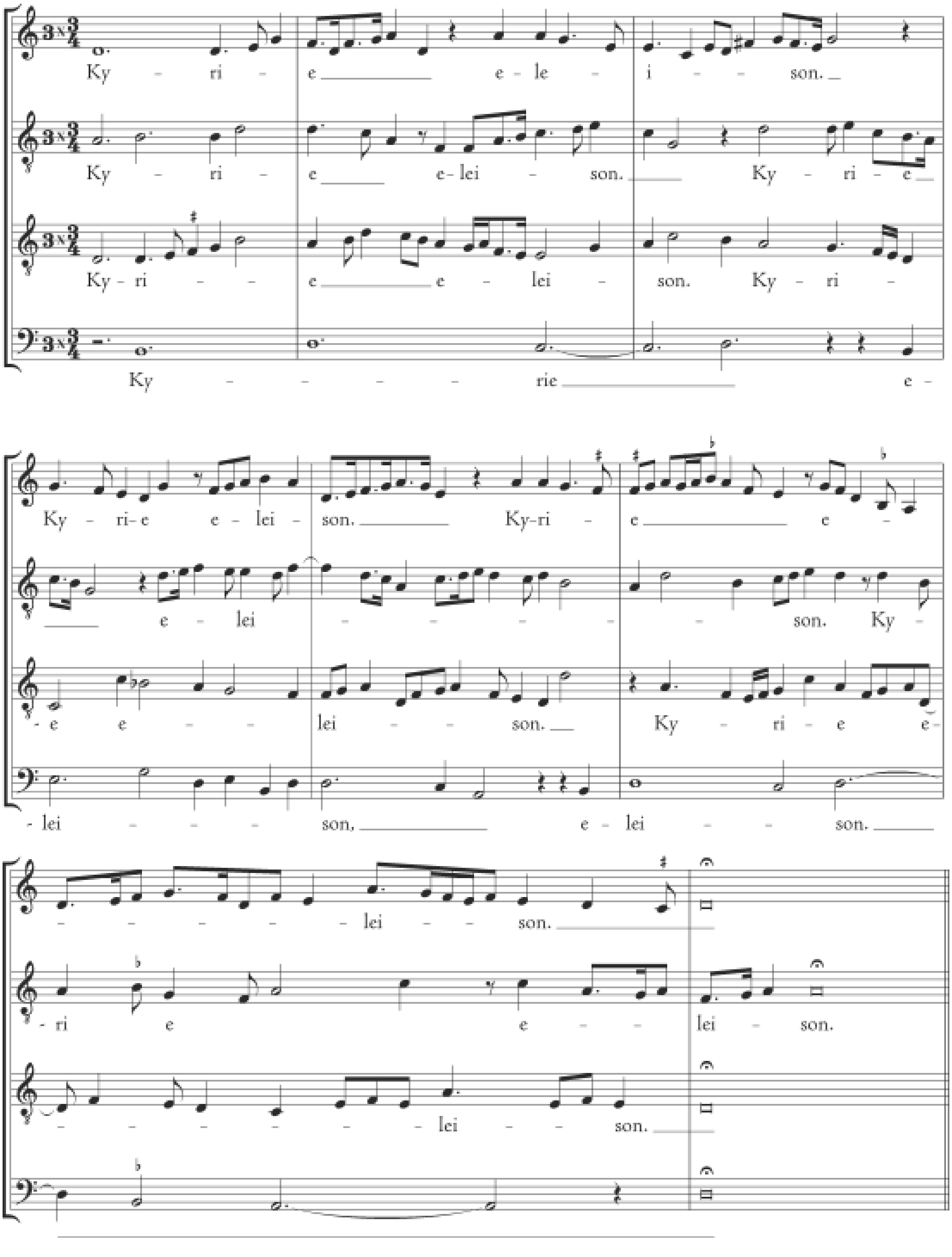
Johannes Ockeghem

PATTERNS OF EMULATION

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

Leading composers of two “Tinctoris generations” of continental musicians—both that of the theorist’s own contemporaries and the younger, up-and-coming genera-tion—wrote *Caput* Masses in imitation (or rather, in emulation) of the one we have been examining, thereby casting themselves into a sort of three-generation dynasty. That these Masses were in fact responses to the older Mass and not two independently conceived Masses on the same cantus firmus tune is proved by the nature of the cantus firmus itself. It is a very little-used chant (neither from the Mass nor from the regular Office, but from a special service attended only by the clergy) that occurs only in English chant books. Ockeghem and Obrecht, the composers of the subsequent *Caput* Masses, would have been unlikely to encounter the tune anywhere else but in the tenor of the first *Caput* Mass, which circulated widely in continental manuscripts (in one of them under a spurious attribution to Du Fay that was long believed by scholars). Even more conclusively, the melody shows up in Ockeghem’s and Obrecht’s tenors in the precisely the same modified and rhythmicized form we have already observed in the first *Caput* Mass.

Ockeghem’s Mass, because of its heavy dependence on a model, is presumed to be a relatively early work (possibly from the 1450s), but Ockeghem’s works are not easy to date, since many of them are found only in manuscripts—like the magnificent Chigi Codex illustrated in Fig. 12-4—that postdate his death. That illustration, it so happens, shows the Kyrie from Ockeghem’s *Caput* Mass, transcribed in Ex. 12-6, with which it may be compared. Of all the sections of Ockeghem’s Mass the Kyrie is the freest in its relationship to the model, and therefore the most interesting and instructive one to describe.


Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e
Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Ky - ri -
Ky - rie e -
Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e e -
e - lei - son. Ky -
- e e - lei - son. Ky - ri - e e -
- lei - son. e - lei - son.
- lei - son.
- ri e e - lei - son.
- lei - son.

ex. 12-6 Johannes Ockeghem, *Missa Caput*, first Kyrie, mm. 1-8

The reasons for the freedom had to do with a necessary compression. The anonymous English *Caput* Kyrie, as English (but not continental) Kyries still tended to do in the fifteenth century, carried a full set of prosulas (included in Ex. 12-4a). To accommodate them, a very spacious musical treatment was necessary. Ockeghem, having only eighteen canonical words to set (3 × Kyrie eleison; 3 × Christe eleison; 3 × Kyrie eleison), streamlined his setting by pruning away the lengthy internal repetitions in the cantus firmus melody (bracketed in Ex. 12-4b), and then laying out the abridged cantus firmus to prop the whole Kyrie in a single cursus, divided into three parts in accordance with the liturgical form, observing both the mensuration contrast of the original *Caput* Mass (perfect time followed by imperfect) and the “da capo” resumption of perfect time that was implied in the older Mass but is now made explicit.

That single cursus can be easily viewed in Fig. 12-4, which shows an "opening," the visual unit formed by two facing pages in a choirbook—the back or *verso* of one leaf (*folio*) and the front or *recto* of the next—on which the four voice parts are entered for the group around the lectern to read from, as Ockeghem's own choir is shown doing in Fig. 12-2. The lower left area of the choirbook opening is the one normally occupied by the cantus-firmus-bearing voice: the tenor, by original definition. That placement puts the superius and tenor—the "structural pair" as they were regarded by composers and theorists—on one side of the opening, and the two compositionally "nonessential" contratenors, the altus and the bassus, on the other.

In Fig. 12-4 the positions of the bassus and the tenor seem to have been switched. In fact only their names have been transposed, in deference to the newer meaning of the term "tenor," then just coming into use, which designated a range rather than a function. And here we come to the nub of the distinction, drawn but not defined above, between an imitation and an emulation.

An imitation is simply a reproduction, a copy, a match—or, as often remarked, a compliment. An emulation is both an homage and an attempt to surpass. The dynasties of composers and of compositions that so distinguished the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were dynasties of emulation. Works of "high" style became models for other works that aspired to highness in a spirit at once of submission to a tradition and mastery of it, and in a spirit at once of honoring and vying with one's elders. A composition regarded as especially masterly will come to possess *auctoritas*—authority. It sets a standard of excellence, but at the same time it becomes the thing to beat. A true emulation will honor the model by conforming to it, but it will also distinguish itself from the model in some conspicuously clever way.

The original *Caput* Mass set such a standard and inspired such emulation, and Ockeghem's way of distinguishing himself was to transpose the tenor down an octave so that it became the effective bass—no doubt originally sung by the composer himself, leading his choir not only with claps on the back but with his famously deep voice. That is what the little rubric says next to the "bass-playing-tenor" (in Latin, *bassus tenorizans)* in Fig. 12-4: *Alterum caput descendendo tenorem per diapason et sic per totam missam*, "Another head [appears] by lowering the tenor an octave, and thus for the entire Mass." It will not be missed that the "head" (*caput*) has now become the "foot" of the texture. That sort of playful cleverness was part of the emulation game; and yet (as is emphatically the case here) that playfulness, at its best, gave rise to music of high seriousness and eloquence.

Any practicing fifteenth-century musician would have been impressed with Ockeghem's sheer audacity in transposing this particular cantus firmus melody down an octave, to the foot of the texture. For it begins with the one note—B natural—that normally cannot function as a bass, since the diatonic pitch set can offer no perfect fifth above it with which it can resonate. To put it in more modern, avowedly somewhat anachronistic terms, it cannot function under normal conditions as a harmonic root. So Ockeghem creates abnormal conditions.

He goes ahead and writes an F above the cantus firmus B anyway, which forces alteration of the F to F♯ *causa necessitatis* ("by necessity"), producing what we would call a B-minor triad. But the F♯ is immediately contradicted by the superius's F-natural against the second cantus firmus note, D, producing what we would call a D-minor triad. This harmonic succession, by virtue of a root progression by thirds and a melodic cross relation, is still weird to the ear after half a millennium. Immediately reiterated and confirmed in the Gloria, it becomes a kind of signature for this Mass.

Nor is F/F♯ the only "cross relation" to be found in the work's harmonic texture. Within the first subsection of the Kyrie there is an equally teasing interplay of B-natural and B-flat (occasionally called for by specific notational sign). By harnessing the old devices of music ficta to new and especially pungent effect—an effect implicit in the cantus firmus that he has taken over from an earlier composer, but one that the earlier composer had not exploited—Ockeghem announces his emulatory designs on the *Caput* tradition and proclaims himself a worthy heir to his distinguished predecessor.

Who might this distinguished predecessor have been? Why should an anonymous English Mass have attracted such determined emulation? The likelihood, of course, is that in Ockeghem's day the Mass was not anonymous. Ockeghem probably knew for a fact something about which we now can only hazard guesses. The gargoylish manuscript illuminations in Fig. 12-4 (p. 458) give a fascinatingly oblique hint as to what he knew and we don't, namely the earlier author's identity.

They show dragons—dragons galore. In the bottom panel at left there is a huge dragon fighting with a centaur. At right there are two more dragons, one of which sports a grotesquely elongated neck that draws extra attention to its strangely maned head. A fourth dragon, in the lower right margin, is reduced to just a head emerging from a hellish cauldron.

Dragons' heads—what do they mean? Any fifteenth-century astrologer or navigator would have known. The Dragon's Head (*Caput Draconis,* now called *Alpha Draconis*), the topmost star of the constellation Draco, was the ancient polestar. The actual term "Caput Draconis" mysteriously appears at the head of the first appearance of the cantus firmus of the original *Caput* Mass in its most recently discovered source, a Dutch manuscript now in Italy, unknown to scholars until 1968. This manuscript, or one with a similar label on the cantus firmus, must have served the scribe who copied (or more to the point, the artist who decorated) the Vatican manuscript as his exemplar or copy-text. That scribe or artist seems to have interpreted the phrase "dragon's head" literally.

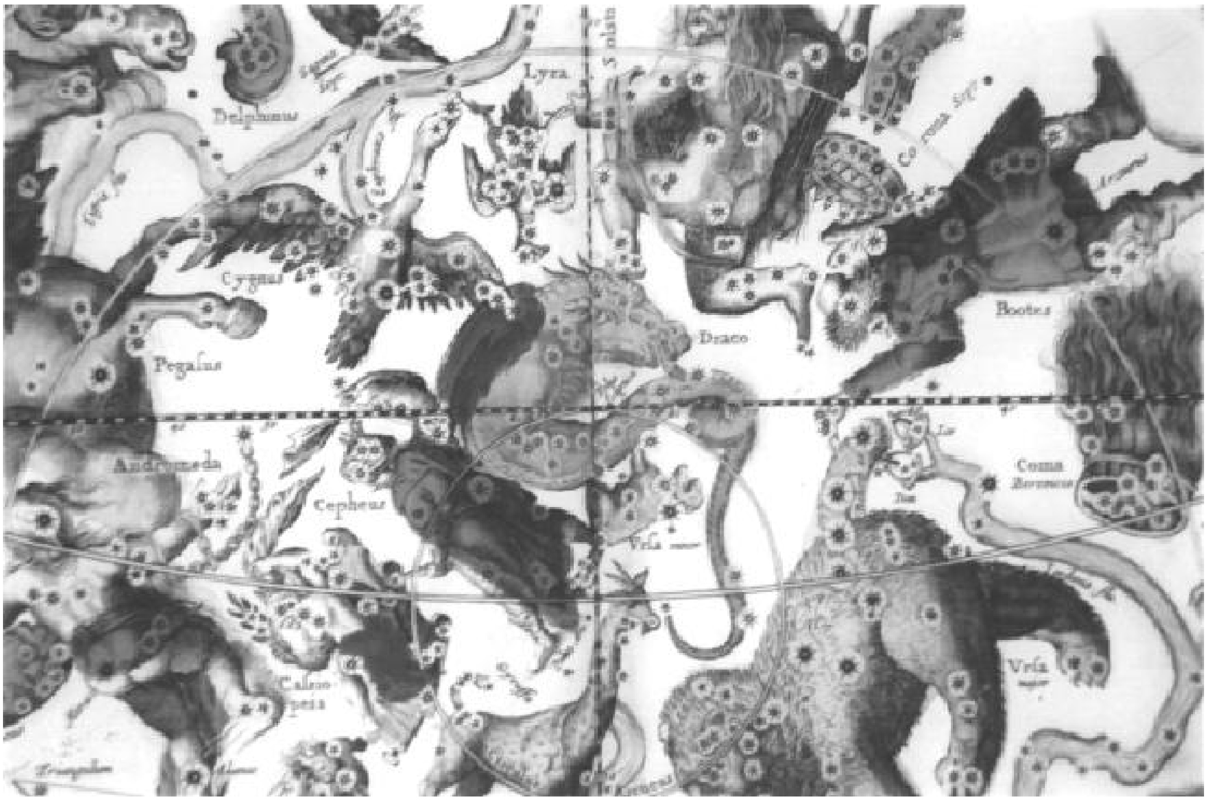


fig. 12-6 An old sidereal map of the constellation Draco. Andrea Cellarius, *Harmonia Macrocosmica* (Amsterdam, 1708), plate 24: *Hemisphaerium stellatum boreale antiquum* (The Ancient Constellations of the Northern Hemisphere).

Or maybe not: the big dragon at bottom left is fighting with a centaur, and Centaurus, containing Alpha Centauri, the closest star to earth and one of the brightest in the sky, is another major constellation. For those in the know, what better way could there be than this—a visual pun linking the cantus firmus of this magnificent Mass with a bright heavenly orb—for evoking the great figure known to his contemporaries as "an astrologian, a mathematician, a musitian, and what not"? On the basis of the astrological *reference,* scholarly suspicion has begun to fall on none other than John Dunstable (who, as it happens, did habitually use the term "Tenor secundus" for what later composers called "Contratenor bassus") as the author of the original *Caput* Mass.[2]

Notes:

(2) Michael Long, “Celestial Motion and Musical Structure in the Late Middle Ages,” unpublished paper (1995), by kind courtesy of the author.

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Mass

Johannes Ockeghem

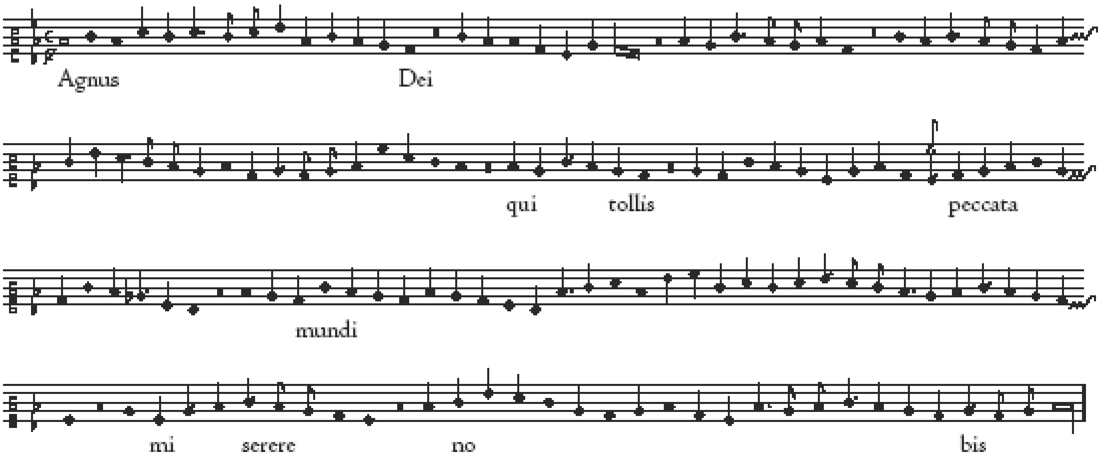
THE COMPOSER AS VIRTUOSO

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

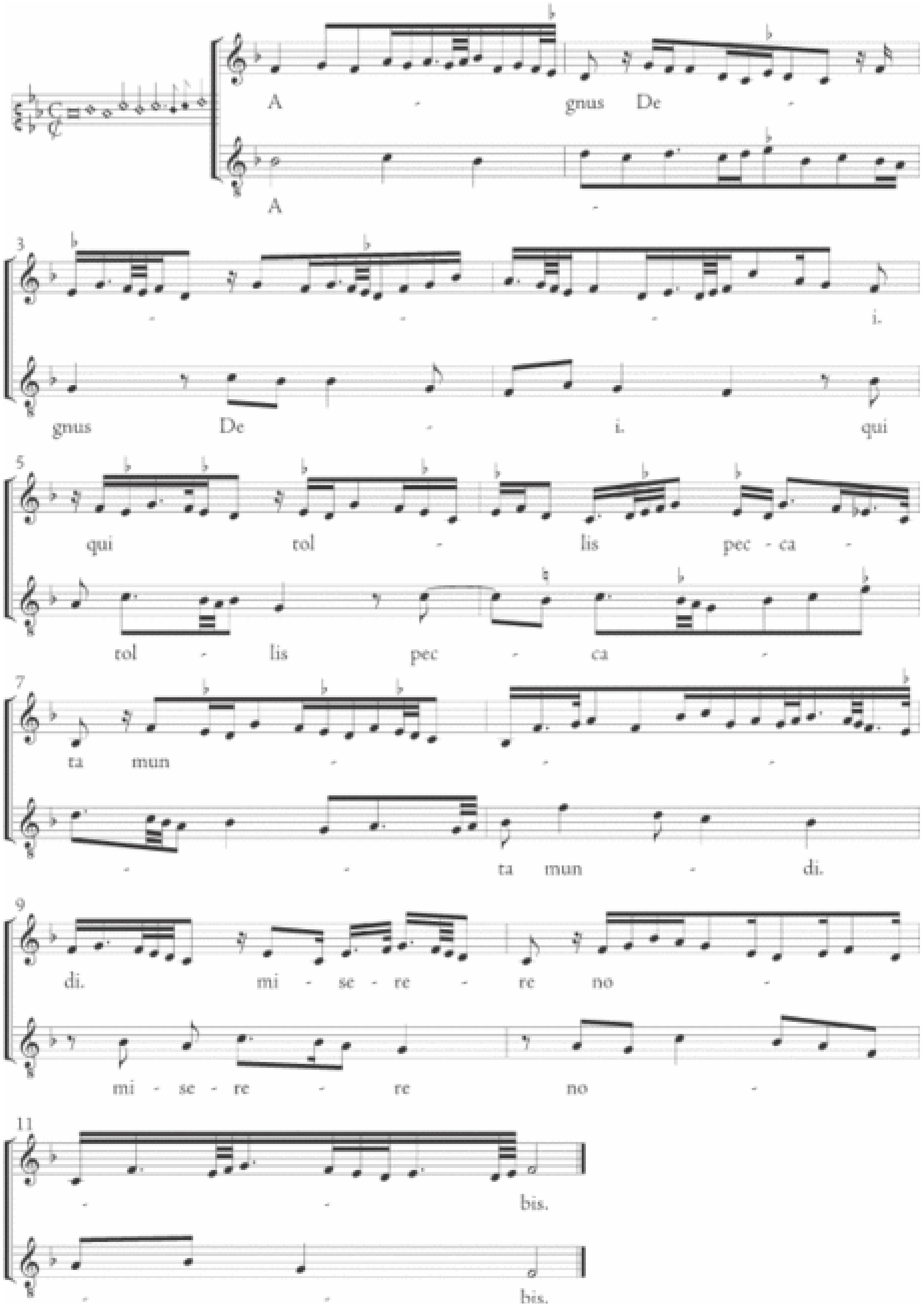
Ockeghem’s emulation of the original *Caput* Mass, whoever its author may have been, certainly shows him to have been inclined toward *tours de force*, for which the French, as we know, had a longstanding predilection. The most famous tours de force in all of fifteenth-century music, in fact, are a couple of Masses by Ockeghem—works with which his historical reputation, for better or worse, is indissolubly bound up.

One of them is called the *Missa Prolationum*, the “Mass of the Time Signatures.” It is sung in four parts but written in two, both to be simultaneously realized as canons in an ascending cycle of intervals: the first section of the Kyrie is a double canon at the unison; the Christe at the second; the second Kyrie at the third; the Gloria at the fourth; the Credo at the fifth, and so on. The peculiar title advertises the fact that each of the two voices as written carries a double time signature: and when the Mass is actually sung, each of the four voices realizes its note-values according to a different mensuration scheme.

By writing canons in which the voices are in effect singing at different speeds, Ockeghem is able to start with all the voices singing together. When sufficient distance has been achieved between the canonic voices, Ockeghem employs additional notational devices that effectively neutralize the differing time signatures, and the canons proceed as normal ones. Only one little item in the *Missa Prolationum*, a duo, is truly a “mensuration canon,” in which two parts derived from a single notated line move at different rates of speed throughout. In Ex. 12-7 that duo, the second Agnus Dei, is given in its original notation and in a two-voice realization. The lower voice reproduces the upper voice an octave below and at half the speed, and consequently ends halfway through the written part. This strict little duo, one of the simpler-textured items in the Mass, will give an idea both of its diabolically clever contrivance, and also of the smooth mellifluousness of the result (the truest art, to recall Horace’s famous dictum once again, being the art of concealing art).

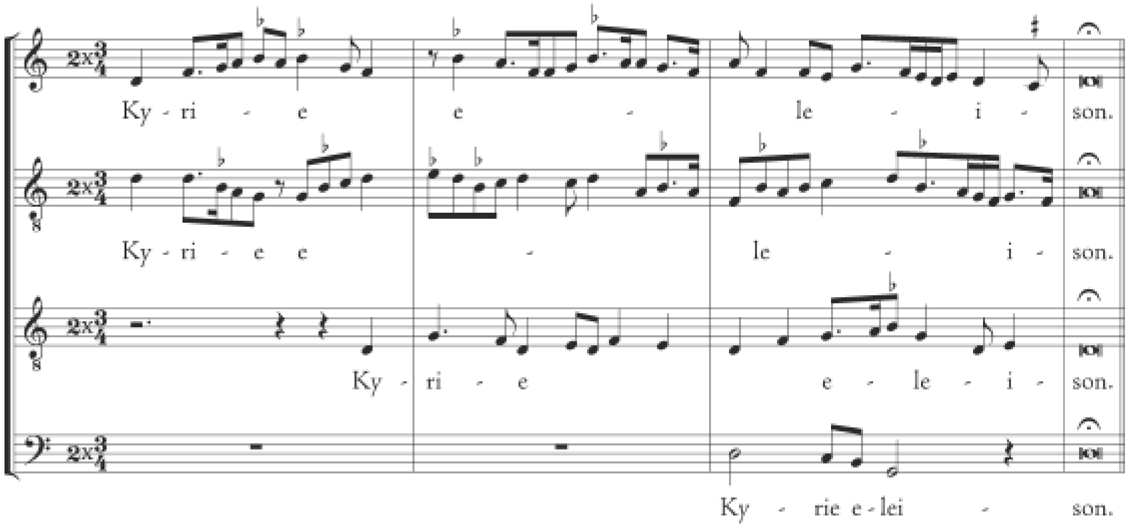


ex. 12-7a *Missa Prolationum*, Agnus II, in the original notation as a single voice

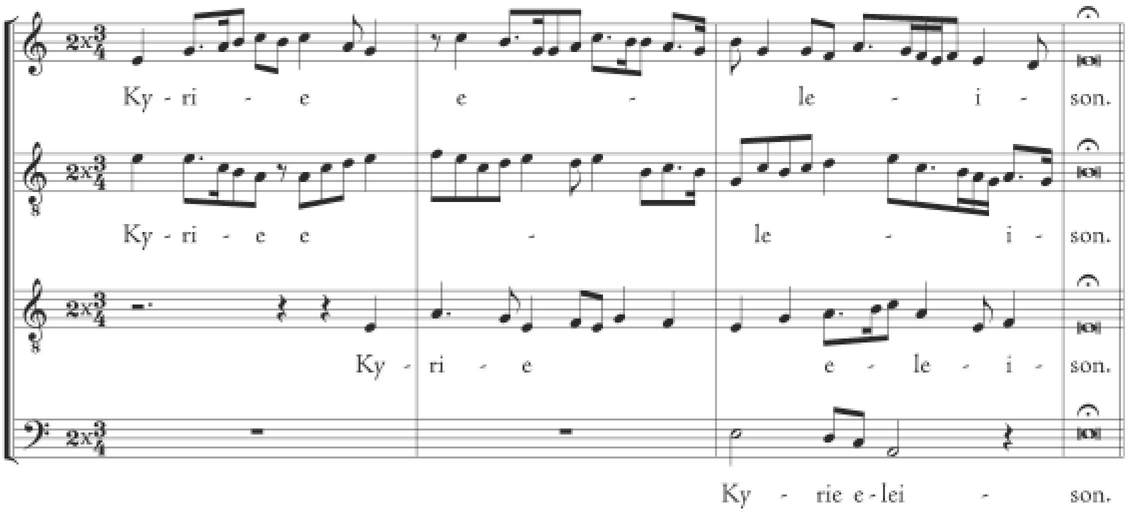


ex. 12-7b *Missa Prolationum*, Agnus II, realized as a mensuration canon in two parts

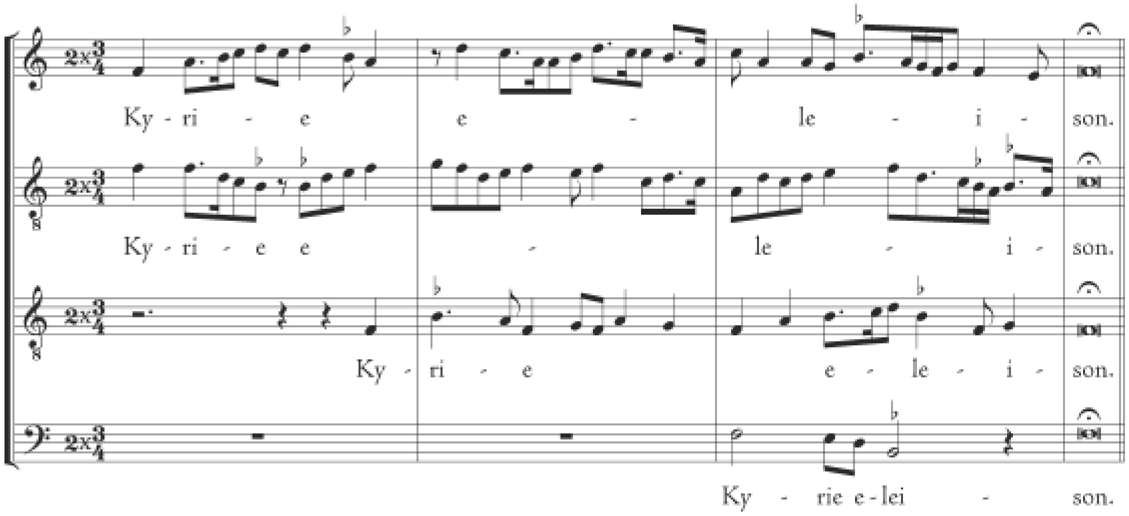
The other famous Ockeghem star turn is the *Missa cuiusvis toni*, the “Mass in any mode.” It is notated without clefs. The singers can decide on one of four different clef combinations, each of which, when supplied mentally, fixes the notated music on one of the “four finals,” (as described by the chant theorists) from D to G. When the final is D, the modal scale will be Dorian; when E, Phrygian; when F, Lydian; and when G, Mixolydian. In Ex. 12-8, the brief opening Kyrie is given all four ways. In order to make the harmony compatible with any mode, “authentic” cadences—impossible in Phrygian because “on the white keys” the “dominant” chord to E is diminished—had to be avoided throughout the Mass in favor of “plagal” ones.


2x3/4
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - rie e - lei - son.

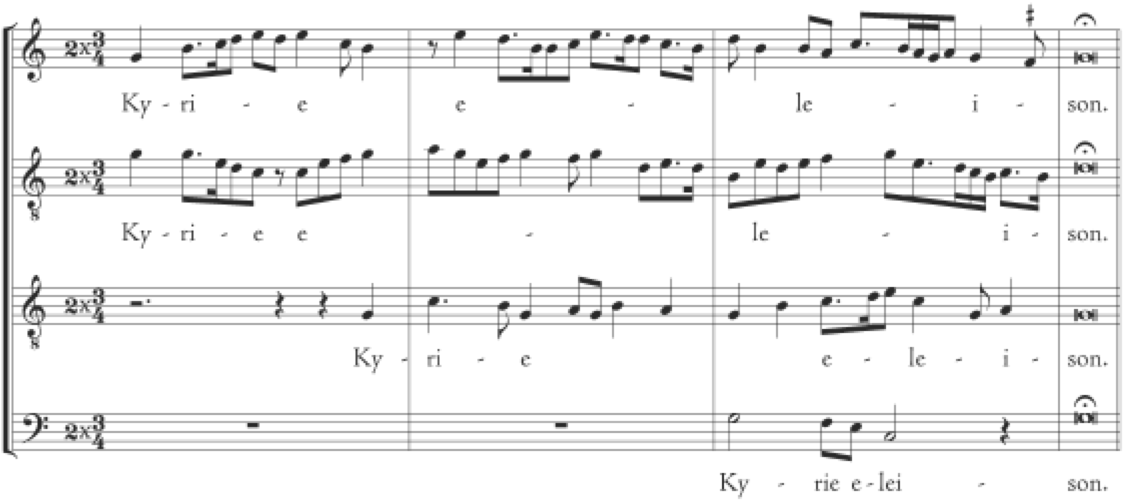
ex. 12-8a Johannes Ockeghem, *Missa cuiusvis toni*, Kyrie I, pitched on D (Dorian)


2x3/4
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - rie e - lei - son.

ex. 12-8b Johannes Ockeghem, *Missa cuiusvis toni*, Kyrie I, pitched on E (Phrygian)


2x3/4
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - rie e - lei - son.

ex. 12-8c Johannes Ockeghem, *Missa cuiusvis toni*, Kyrie I, pitched on F (Lydian)


2x3/4
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - rie e - lei - son.

ex. 12-8d Johannes Ockeghem, *Missa cuiusvis toni*, Kyrie I, pitched on G (Mixolydian)

As noted above, Ockeghem's historical reputation rests disproportionately on these Masses "for better or worse," because not everyone is equally impressed with an elaborate technical apparatus that is seemingly constructed and exercised for its own sake. Charles Burney, the great eighteenth-century historian, captured well the appeal of the high style at its most hermetically "learnèd" when he wrote of the *Missa Prolationum* that "the performer was to solve canonical mysteries, and discover latent beauties of ingenuity and contrivance, about which the hearers were indifferent, provided the general harmony was pleasing."[3] For Ockeghem's clique of singers, as for all lovers of puzzles (or, more broadly, the members of any in-group), the notational complexities were not so much perceived to be a burden as their solution was experienced as a reward. To which it only need be added that like any *trobar clus*, the Masses of Ockeghem, chaplain to the French royal court under three successive kings of the Valois dynasty, were expected suitably to adorn, and in a sense to *create*, elite occasions. Intricacy of design and *facture* ("makery," as the French untranslatably put it) was one means of fulfilling this expectation.

Yet ever since the sixteenth century, when the Swiss music theorist Henricus Glareanus (Burney's chief source of knowledge about "Okenheim") illustrated the composer's work exclusively with these bizarre technical *tours de force*, Ockeghem has had a reputation for cold calculation that has rubbed off, until quite recently, on his whole era. "These compositions," Burney sniffed, "are given rather as specimens of a determined spirit of patient perseverance, than as models [worthy] of imitation. In music, different from all other arts, learning and labor seem to have preceded taste and invention, from both which the times under consideration are still very remote." As long as Ockeghem and his contemporaries were judged by an impressive but unrepresentative sample of their work, the verdict stood. Implicit in that condescending (mis)appraisal is a caution for anyone who would attempt to understand, let alone judge, the past on the basis of its fragmentary remains.

Notes:

(3) Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, ed. Frank Mercer (New York: Dover, 1957), Vol. I, p. 731.

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FARTHER ALONG THE EMULATION CHAIN

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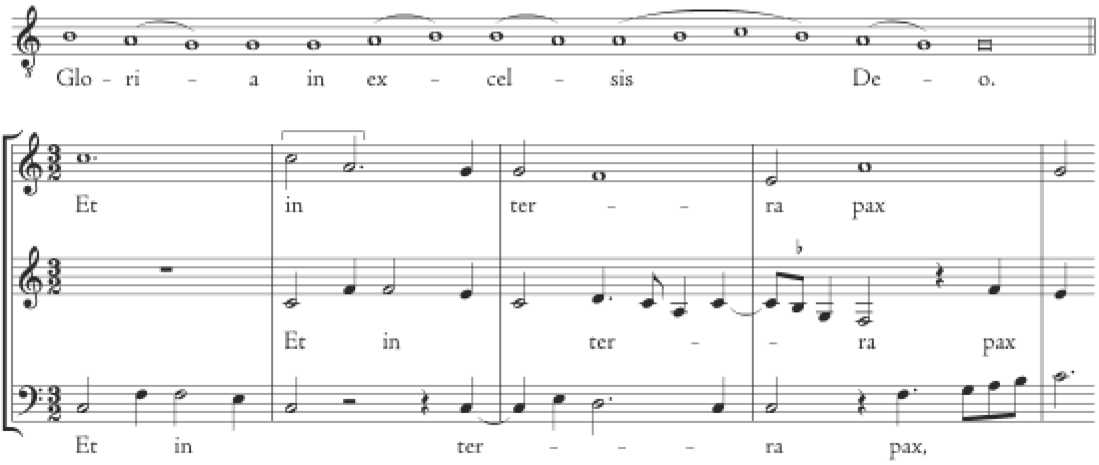
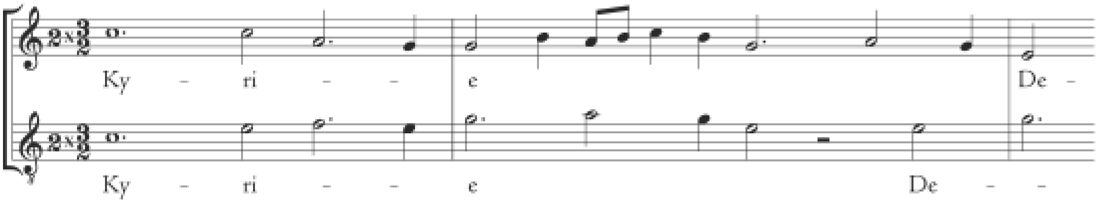
Obrecht's *Missa Caput* continues the emulatory line begun by Ockeghem and does so in a way that demonstrates with special clarity the composer's high consciousness of the tradition in which he was participating. He pays tribute to the founder of the dynasty by citing, at the beginning of his Gloria (Ex. 12-9a), the phrase that begins every movement of the original English *Caput* Mass (compare the beginnings of Ex. 12-9a and Ex. 12-9b). Such phrases, called "headmotives" or "mottos," were one of the most conspicuous devices through which composers spotlighted the formal unity of their music, a unity that was meant to rub off propitiously on the elite ritual occasions their music adorned.

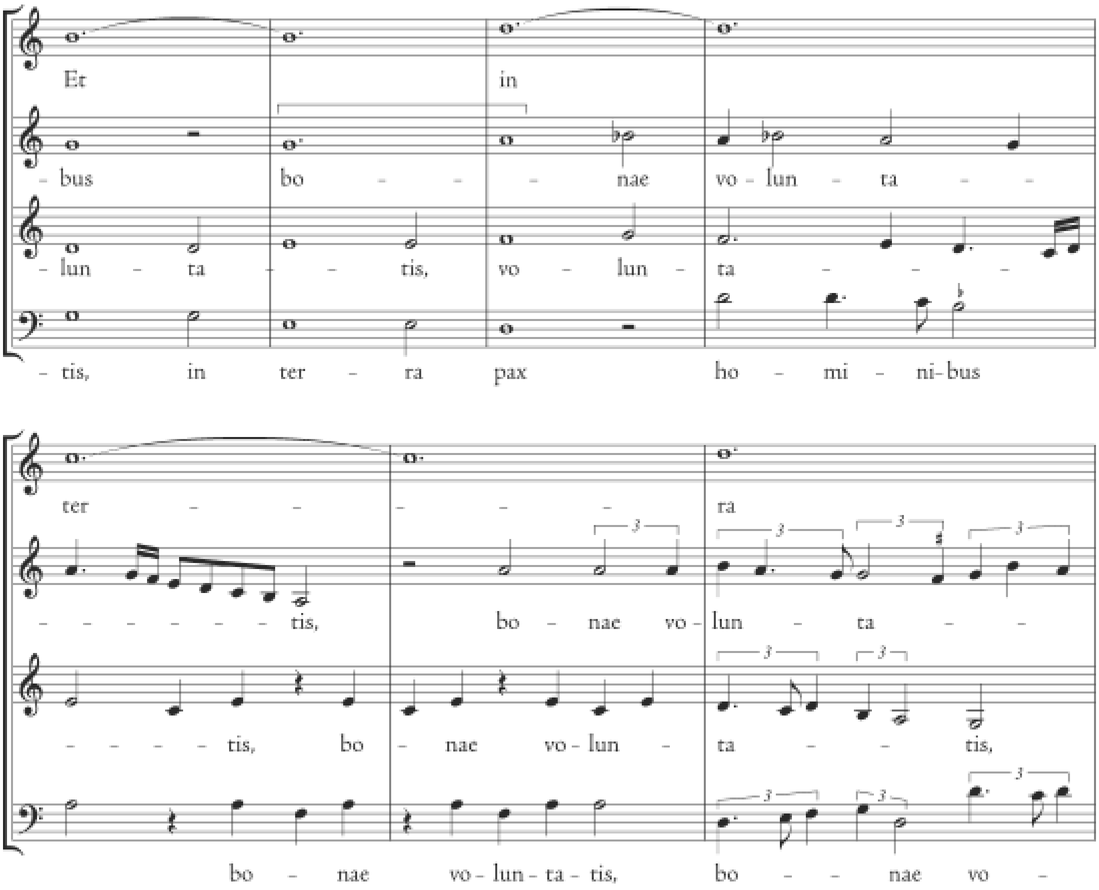


ex. 12-9a Jacobus Obrecht, *Missa Caput*, Gloria, mm. 1-5



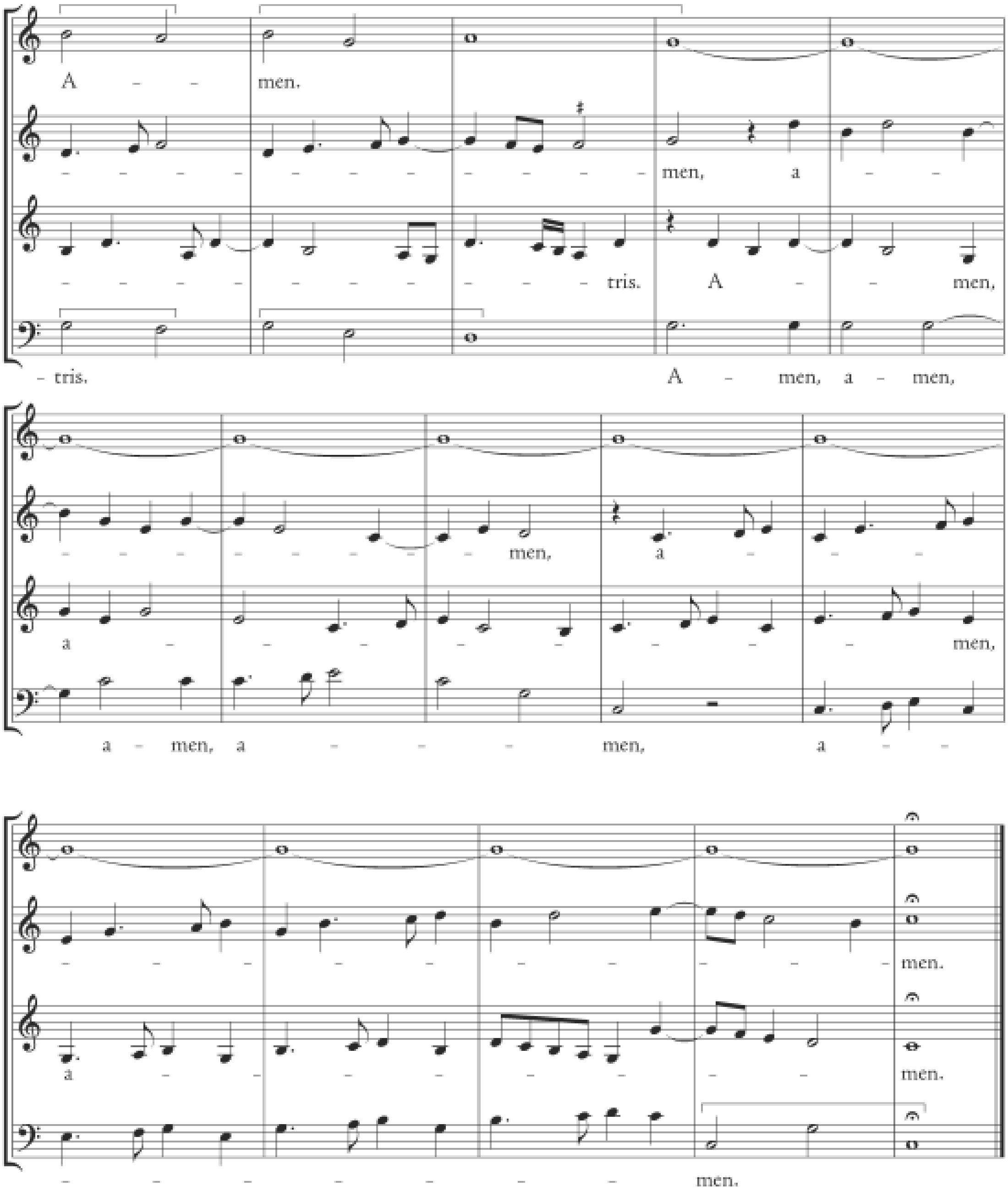
ex. 12-9b Original *Missa Caput*, opening phrase

Obrecht also shows his awareness of Ockeghem's Mass by carrying farther the special technical maneuver that had distinguished it. That maneuver had been cantus-firmus transposition; but where Ockeghem had been content to make a single transposition of the cantus firmus, bringing it down an octave so that it became the de facto bassus of his Mass, Obrecht transposes it to five different pitch levels (one for each major section of the Mass) and has it migrate through the entire four-part texture. In the Kyrie it is located in the traditional tenor at its original pitch. In the Gloria, as can be seen in Ex. 12-9c, it is transposed up an octave to become the superius. In the Credo it is back in the tenor, but a fifth lower than before, so that it ends on C, the final of the Mass. In the Sanctus it is transposed an octave higher than the Credo pitch and is found in the altus. Finally, in the Agnus Dei, it is pitched an octave below its original pitch and placed in the bassus, so that Obrecht's Mass ends with a direct nod at Ockeghem's.


Et in
-bus bo - - - nae vo-lun - ta - -
-lun - ta - - tis, vo - lun - ta - - -
-tis, in ter - ra pax ho - mi - ni-bus
ter - - - - - ra
- - - - - - - - tis, bo - nae vo-lun - ta - -
- - - - tis, bo - nae vo-lun - ta - - tis,
bo - nae vo-lun-ta-tis, bo - - nae vo -
3

ex. 12-9c Jacobus Obrecht, *Missa Caput*, Gloria, mm. 17-23

Within this highly conscious and deliberate continuity of tradition, however, there is a considerable transformation of style. Obrecht's preference is for a very active rhythmic texture, full of melodic sequences and syncopations, which contrasts markedly with the stateliness of the cantus firmus and emphasizes its emblematic status. A spectacular example are the bristly strettos that go off like sonic sparklers under the long-held final note of the cantus firmus at the end of the gloria (Ex. 12-9d).


A - - men.
- - - - - - - - - - - - - men, a - - - - - - - - - - - men, a - - - - - - - - - - - men.
- - - - - - - - - - - - tris. A - - men, a - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - men, a - - - - - - - - - - - - men.
- tris. A - men, a - men, a - men, a - - - - men, a - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - men.

ex. 12-9d Jacobus Obrecht, *Missa Caput*, Gloria, mm. 213-end

There is nothing like this in any earlier polyphonic sacred music, although Ockeghem, too, enjoyed jacking up the level of rhythmic activity as the final close loomed (often dubbed his “drive to the cadence”). Without any real justification Obrecht’s rhythmic athleticism is often cited as evidence of “secularization” and tied in with the overriding myth of the musical “Renaissance.” It is perhaps more simply, and more plausibly, viewed as another instance of virtuosity both in the making and in the performing of an exceedingly elite musical repertory, the highest of the high.

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L'homme armé

Antoine Busnoys

THE MAN AT ARMS

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

The noblest and most copious dynasty of all was the long line of Masses based on a cantus firmus derived not from a church chant but from a secular (folk? popular?) song called *L'Homme Armé* ("The Man at Arms"). More than forty such Masses survive in whole or part, by authors of practically every Western European nationality (Flemish, French, Italian, Spanish, Scottish, German). The earliest was composed some time after 1454, and the latest, a colossal affair for three choirs plus organ, is somewhat doubtfully attributed to the Roman composer Giacomo Carissimi (1605-74). Practically every composer mentioned by Tinctoris, including Tinctoris himself, wrote at least one *Missa L'Homme Armé,* as did their pupils and their pupils' pupils. The principle of emulation, thus applied on such a massive scale, produced the very summit of fifteenth-century musical art and artifice.

The later composers in the line, Italians who were both temporally and geographically remote from the origins of the tradition, probably thought of it as a "purely musical" tradition, and a rather academic one at that, involving nothing more than a test-piece to establish professional credentials. The circumstances attending the earliest *L'Homme Armé* Masses—circumstances probably well known to the composers of the "Tinctoris" generations—suggest that there was originally a lot more to it. These circumstances point to the court of Burgundy, and in particular to a knightly order founded there, as the site and source of this most famous of all emulatory traditions in music.

In 1453, Constantinople (now Istanbul in Turkey), the largest and most splendid city in all of Europe, the capital of the latter-day Roman (Byzantine) Empire and the seat of Greek Christendom, fell after a two-month siege before the gigantic cannons of the Ottoman Sultan, Muhammad II ("The Conqueror"). Muhammad made it the capital of his empire, which it remained until 1918, and it has been a Turkish and a Muslim city ever since its conquest. The European response to this stunning event was one of horror and professed resolve, but little action. (Indeed, the armies of Constantine XI, the last Byzantine emperor, were defeated largely because no European power sent aid.) In immediate—if ultimately futile—reaction to the calamity of Constantinople, Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy vowed to go on a Crusade against the Turks. On 17 February 1454 he convened at Lille in northern France a great meeting of his own knightly retinue, known as the Order of the Golden Fleece. At this meeting, known as the Banquet of the Oath of the Pheasant, the Knights of the Order were sworn to the defense of Constantinople. Descriptions of the proceedings by court chroniclers recount the lavish musical performances that enlivened the banquet. At the climax, right before the oath itself was sworn, a giant led in an elephant on whose back was a miniature castle, from which a woman dressed in mourning sang a lament for the fallen city—perhaps one of four such Constantinopolitan laments that Guillaume Du Fay is known to have written, of which one survives.

This gives us some idea of the manner in which ceremonial music was "consumed" by the court of Burgundy, and the sorts of occasions that the great musicians of the day were expected to dignify. A great deal of sacred music has been circumstantially associated with the Order of the Golden Fleece, including many of the early *L'Homme Armé* Masses, which date from the period when the Order had become at least nominally a crusading order and when Philip the Good's famously belligerent son and eventual successor Charles the Bold had become active in it. Charles is already known to us as the patron of Antoine Bus-noys, who had entered his service shortly before Charles's accession to the ducal throne in 1467.

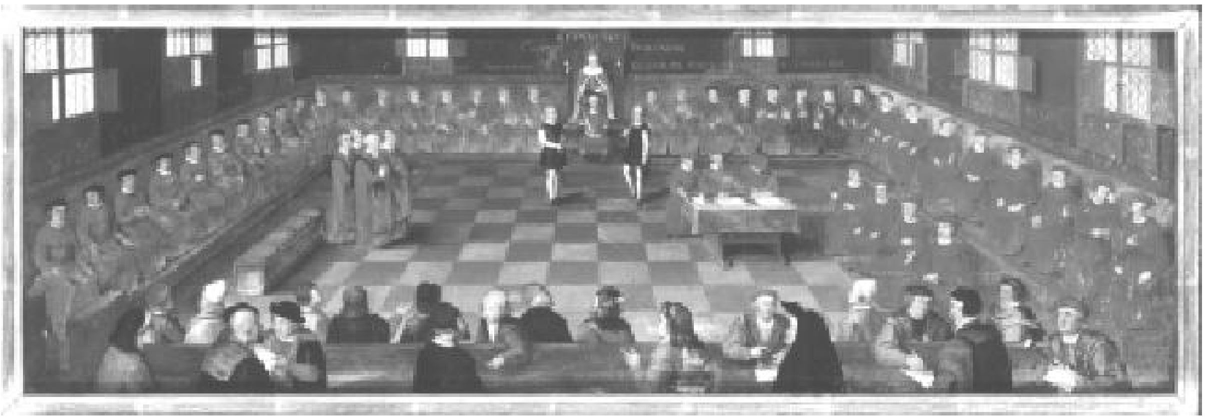


fig. 12-7 Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy, presiding over his Grand Council in 1474 (oil painting at the palace of Versailles, France).

The song *L'Homme Armé* was a special favorite of Charles, who identified himself with the titular "Man at Arms" (probably Christ himself if the connection with Crusades was there from the beginning).[4] The song may even have been written for Charles. In any case, we know the song as a song, text and all, thanks to the chance survival of a manuscript containing a cycle of six anonymous *L'Homme Armé* Masses that bears a dedication to Charles and carries the original song up front like a blazon or motto (Fig. 12-8; Ex. 12-10). The song playfully incorporates a horn call—presented variously in three-note and four-note versions, dropping a fifth after an initial series of repeated notes or tattoo—that was possibly drawn from Burgundian town and castle life. A payment record from 1364 survives, detailing the purchase by Philip the Bold, the first Duke of Burgundy, of "a brass trumpet for the castle turret at Grignon, to be blown when the watchman sees men-at-arms."[5] A hundred years later that trumpet was still sounding in Burgundy, if the famous song is any indication.

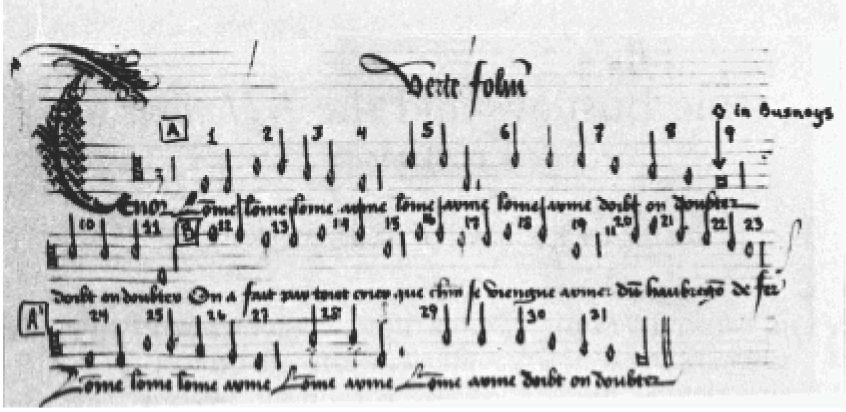
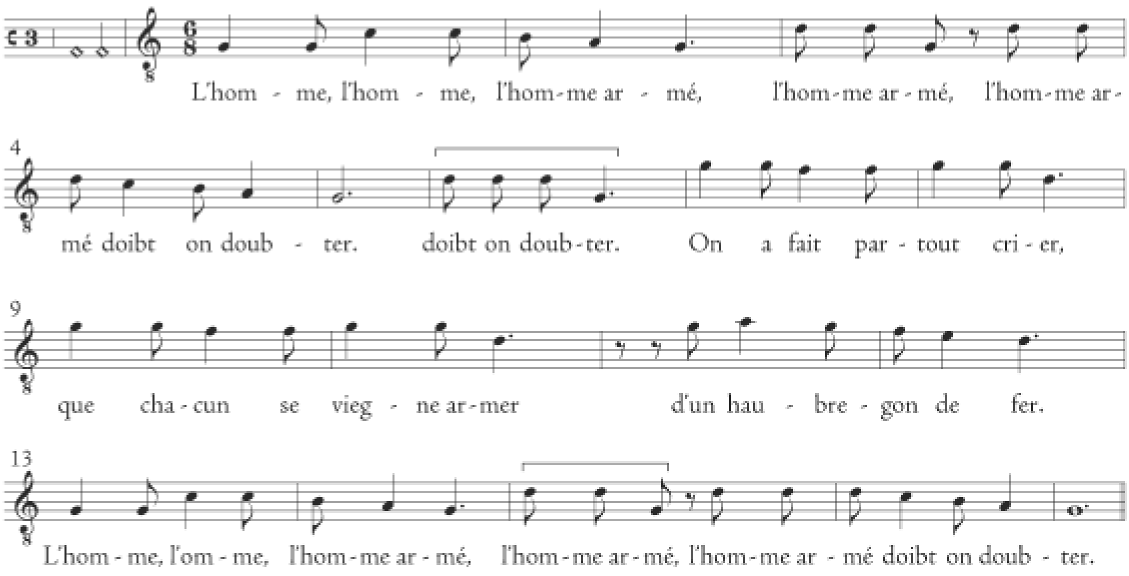

Verte folium
in Busnoys
A
B
A'
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23
24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31
Tenor Lomme lomme lomme arme lomme arme lomme arme doibt on doubter
doibt on doubter On a fait par tout crier que chun se viengne armer dun haubregon de fer
Lomme lomme lomme arme lomme arme lomme arme doibt on doubter

fig. 12-8 *L'Homme Armé* tune as it is given in its single complete and texted source (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS VI E.40, fol. 58v).


L'hom - me, l'hom - me, l'hom-me ar - mé, l'hom-me ar - mé, l'hom-me ar-
4
mé doibt on doub - ter. doibt on doub-ter. On a fait par - tout cri - er,
9
que cha-cun se vieg - ne ar-mer d'un hau - bre - gon de fer.
13
L'hom - me, l'om - me, l'hom-me ar - mé, l'hom-me ar-mé, l'hom-me ar - mé doibt on doub - ter.

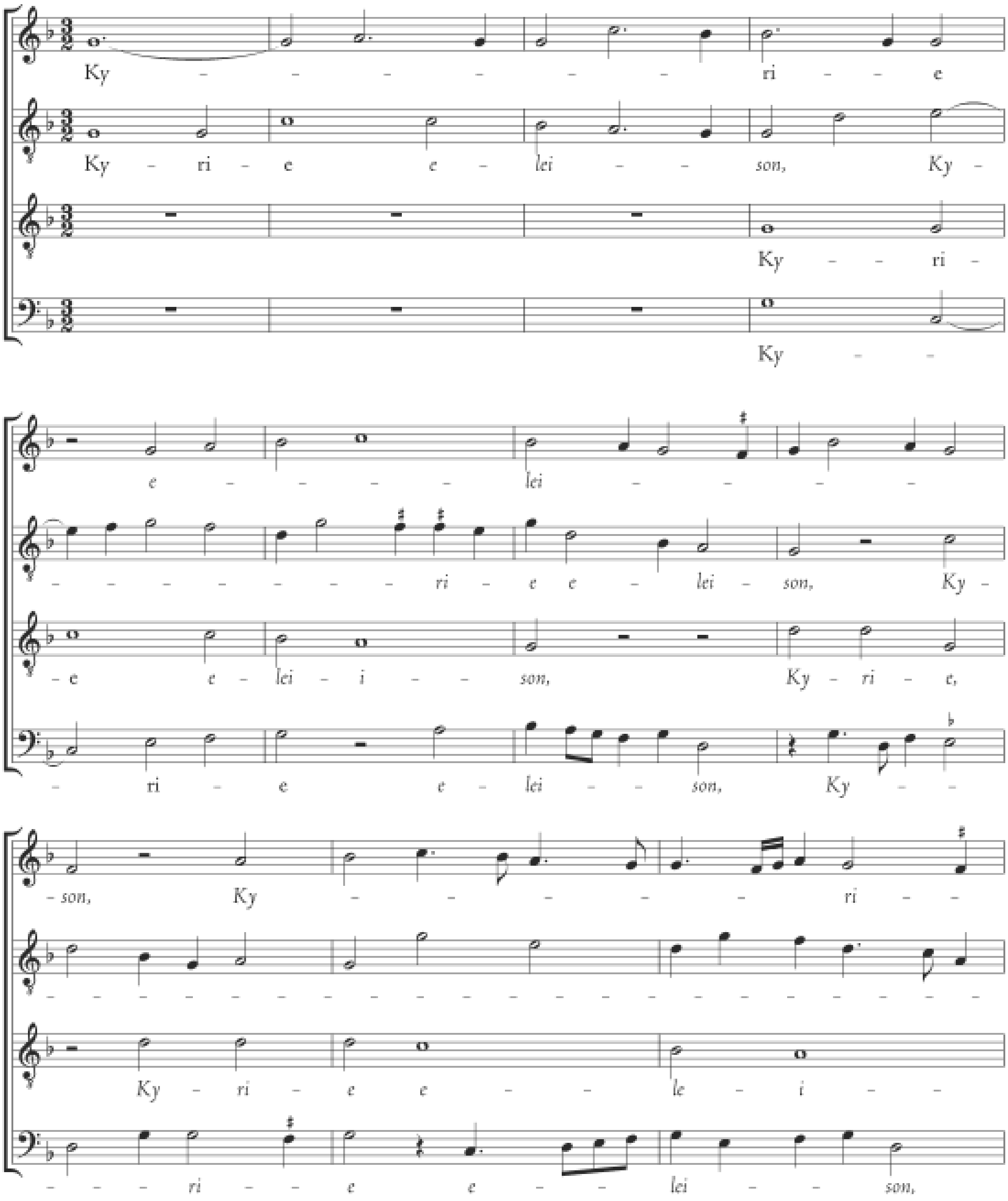
ex. 12-10 Transcription of *L'Homme Armé*

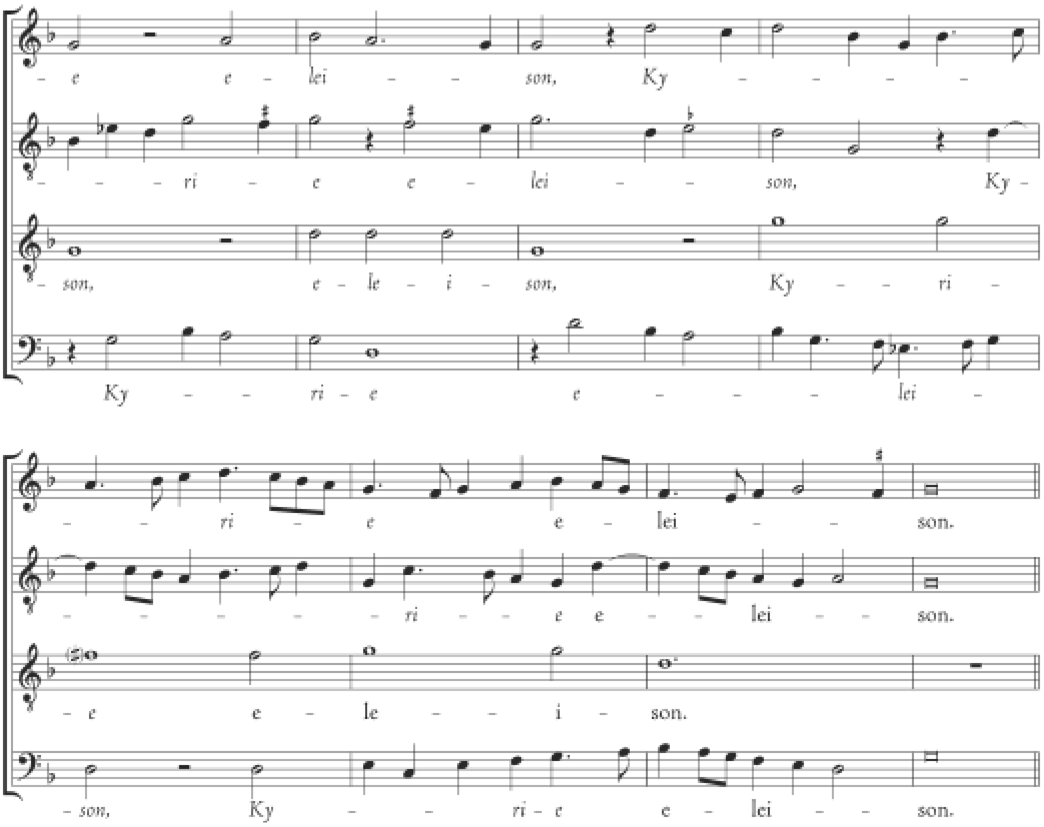
The cycle of six Masses based on the tune as shown in Fig. 12-8 exactly fits the service requirements of the Sainte Chapelle at Dijon, the official chapel of the Order, where every week six polyphonic Masses and a Requiem were sung.[6] The Masses (and the song as well) have a durational structure that is built on the prime number 31: the song is 31 *tempora* (breve-length measures) long and the subsections of the Mass are likely to be 31 or 62 (31 x 2) or 93 (31 x 3) measures long. Thirty-one was the prescribed number of men-at-arms in the Order and hence symbolized it. One of the Masses sounds the cantus firmus in canon between two tenors: its rubrics make elaborate veiled references to the titular "Man at Arms" and to another armed man "fashioned out of his very entrails"—as the second voice of a canon is fashioned out of the first, or as Charles the Bold had been fashioned out of the flesh of his father, the founder of the Order. Thus the circumstantial ("external") evidence associating the song *L'Homme Armé* and the Mass tradition based on it with the Order of the Golden Fleece in its late crusading (or at least blustering) phase under Charles the Bold seems to have ample "internal" corroboration.

So if Charles the Bold was the instigator of the *L'Homme Armé* tradition, special interest and authority attach to the *L'Homme Armé* Mass by Charles's own court composer. And indeed, Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme Armé* seems to have been regarded as a special "classic"—by contemporary composers (who emulated it with particular zeal and fidelity), by contemporary theorists (who cited it more often than any other then-current Mass composition), and by scribes for other potentates (including Pope Sixtus, one of whose Sistine Chapel choirbooks is its earliest surviving source). This account will follow suit, for the Mass's historical significance is matched by its exemplary style and form.

The word "exemplary" is used here in its strictest meaning (a meaning related to the strict meaning of the world "classic" as well): Busnoys's Mass exemplifies the style and form of the fifteenth-century cantus firmus Mass at its most characteristic, most regular, and most fully developed, and may be taken as a type-work for the "high" style as Tinctoris understood it. One of its most telling features is the technique—the multiple techniques, actually—by which the Mass is unified in many musical dimensions, for that musical unification, as we know, served as a metaphor for the unity of the service and the congregation and was fundamentally bound up with the concept of "highness" as devotional exaltation.

The most obvious way in which the Mass is unified, of course, is in the use of the cantus firmus. Each of its five constituent sections sends the *L'Homme Armé* melody through the tenor part, in augmented note values, in a cursus that joins the various subsections in an overarching continuity. The opening Kyrie (Ex. 12-11) may fairly represent all its fellows, the more so because all five sections begin identically, with a headmotive consisting of a duo for the superius and altus, three tempora in length, in which the lower part anticipates the cantus firmus tune, adding yet another level of unity. The first three measures of the Kyrie, as shown in Ex. 12-11, could (but for the words) as easily have been the first three measures of the Gloria, the Credo, the Sanctus, or the Agnus Dei.


Ky - - - - - - - ri - - - e
Ky - ri - e e - lei - - son, Ky -
Ky - - - ri -
Ky - -
e - - - - - lei - - - - - -
- - - - - - - - ri - e e - lei - son, Ky -
- e e - lei - i - - son, Ky - ri - e,
- ri - e e - lei - - son, Ky - -
- son, Ky - - - - - - ri - -
Ky - ri - e e - - le - i - -
- - - ri - - e e - - lei - - son,



ex. 12-11 Antoine Busnoys, *Missa L'Homme Armé*, first Kyrie, mm. 1-19

It may appear odd, from the breakdown in Table 12-1, that Busnoys never divides the cantus firmus up among the Mass subsections according to its own very clearly articulated three-part (ABA) form, even though two sections of the Ordinary (the Kyrie and the Agnus Dei) are themselves tripartite in textual structure. But that is because the composer had his own musical plan in mind, one that overrode the structure of the original tune and became standard for fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Mass Ordinary settings. Table 12-1 sums up the apportionment of the cantus firmus in each section and subsection of the Mass. The treatment varies a bit according to the nature and the length of the various texts, but in all sections of the Mass, the cantus firmus is dramatically deployed in conjunction with the other voices to *create* a sense of climax, much in the tradition of the isorhythmic motet.

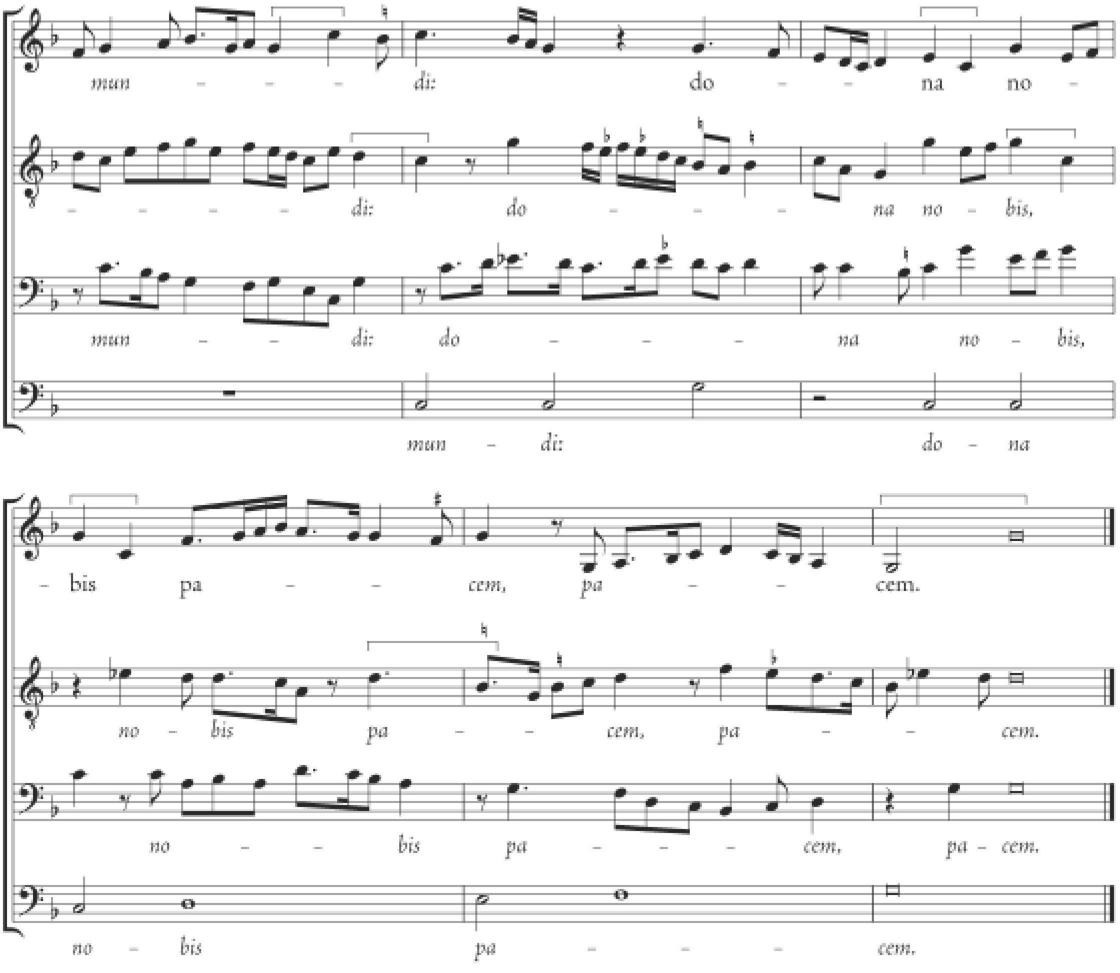
TABLE 12-1 Deployment of the Cantus Firmus in Busnoys, *Missa L'Homme Armé*

MASS SECTION	PORTION OF CANTUS FIRMUS USED
Kyrie	mm. 1-15
Christe	*tenor tacet*
Kyrie II	mm. 16-end
Et in terra	mm. 1-18
Qui tollis	mm. 18-end
Tu solus altissimus	complete

MASS SECTION	PORTION OF CANTUS FIRMUS USED
Patrem	mm. 1-15
Et incarnatus est	mm. 16-end
Confiteor	mm. 1-5, 12-27
Sanctus	mm. 1-19
Pleni sunt coeli	*tenor tacet*
Osanna	mm. 20-end
Benedictus	*tenor tacet*
(Osanna)	*ut supra*
Agnus I	mm. 1-15
Agnus II	*tenor tacet*
Agnus III	mm. 16-end

In the Kyrie and Agnus Dei, the single cursus of the cantus firmus is split right down the middle and alternates with a subsection in which “the tenor is silent” (*tenor tacet*) to quote the rubric in the choirbook from which such tenorless middle sections as the Christe eleison or the Agnus Dei II get their generic name. That alternation supplies the requisite “A-B-A-ness” to delineate the textual form. The sense of climax is achieved in every movement past the Kyrie by accompanying the cantus firmus, on its resumption, with voices notated in diminution. Speeding along against an unchanged tactus in the tenor, they reach a really *dizzy* pitch of virtuosity.

Following a custom already observed in the *Caput* Masses, Busnoys provides a cap to the entire Ordinary setting in the concluding Agnus Dei by manipulating the cantus firmus with a special “canon” or transformation rule. (“Gimmick” might actually be the best translation, flippant though it may seem.) The tenor appears to carry the tune in its usual form, but a jesting puzzle-rubric—*Ubi thesis assint ceptra, ibi arsis et e contra* (“Where [the armed man’s] scepter is raised, there go lower and vice versa”)—directs the singers to exchange roles with the basses, who sing the cantus firmus not only down an octave but also with all the intervals inverted. Ex. 12-12 shows the end of the Mass.


mun - - - di: do - - na no -
- - - - di: do - - - na no - bis,
mun - - di: do - - - na no - bis,
mun - di: do - na
- bis pa - - cem, pa - - cem.
no - bis pa - - cem, pa - - cem.
no - - bis pa - - - cem, pa - cem.
no - bis pa - - - cem.

ex. 12-12 Antoine Busnoys, *Missa L'Homme Armé*, last Agnus Dei, mm. 14-22

In the lengthy Gloria and Credo, the cantus firmus gets a double cursus that in its *accelerated* repetition behaves more like the tenor of an isorhythmic motet than ever. The speed-up here is accomplished in two stages: first the accompanying voices go into diminution against the second half of the tenor tune, and then the tenor itself goes into diminution to join them. In the "Tu solus altissimus," the climactic subsection of the Gloria (Ex. 12-13), the whole cantus firmus is sung more or less exactly as shown in Ex. 12-10 (*ut jacet*, "as it stands," to use the contemporary jargon for "at the notated tempo"). All that differs is the amount of resting between phrases.

Notes:

(4) See Craig Wright, *The Maze and the Warrior: Symbols in Architecture, Theology, and Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), Chap. 7, "Sounds and Symbols of an Armed Man."

(5) Nigel Wilkins, *Music in the Time of Chaucer* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer), p. 128.

(6) See William F. Prizer, "Music and Ceremonial in the Low Countries: Philip the Fair and the Order of the Golden Fleece," *Early Music History* V (1985): 113–53.

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Antoine Busnoys

“PERVADING IMITATION”

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
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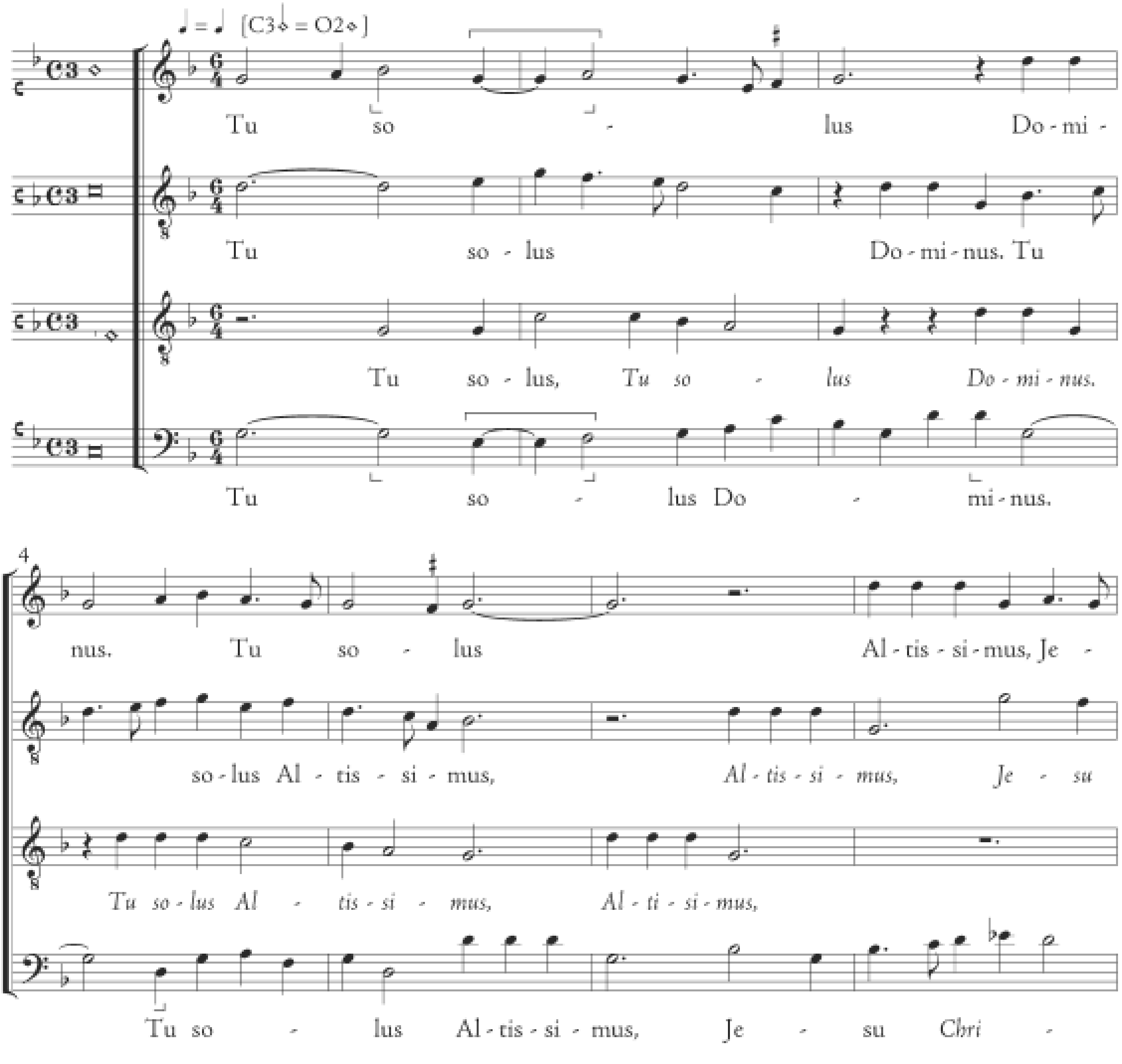
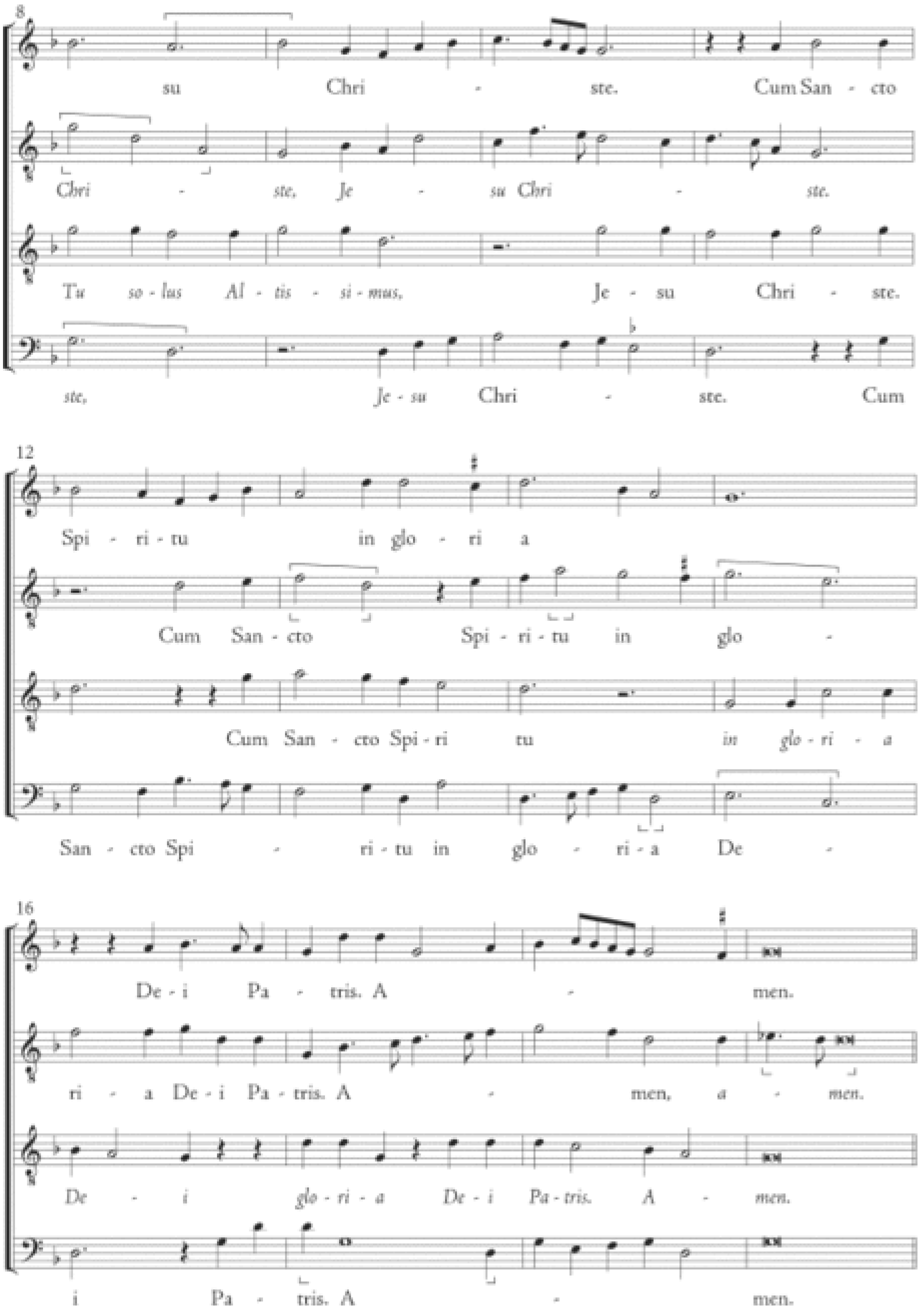
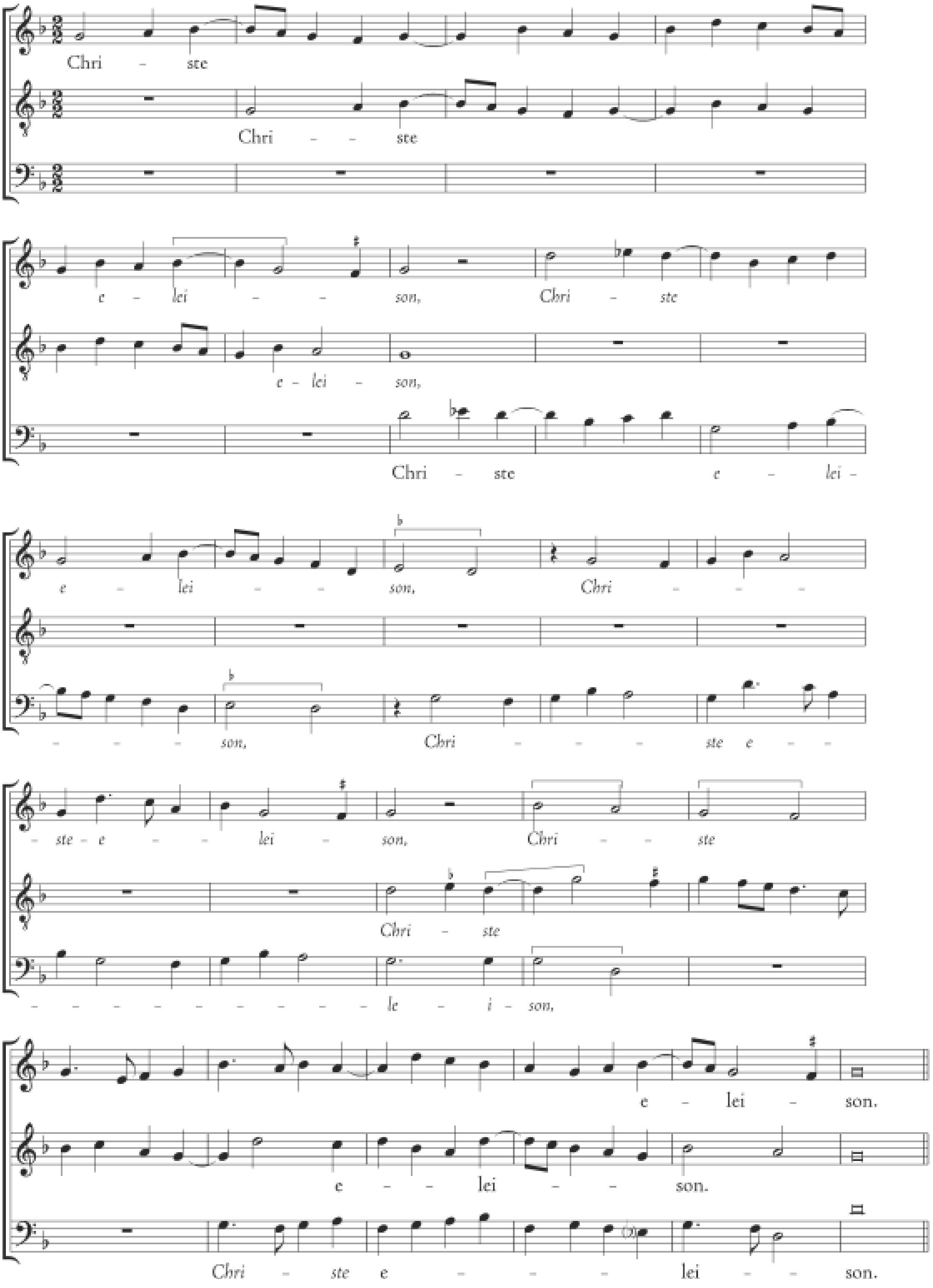

[C3◇ = O2◇]
Tu so - lus Do - mi - nus. Tu so - lus Al - tis - si - mus, Je -
Tu so - lus Do - mi - nus. Tu so - lus Al - tis - si - mus, Al - tis - si - mus, Je - su
Tu so - lus, Tu so - lus Do - mi - nus. Tu so - lus Al - tis - si - mus, Al - ti - si - mus,
Tu so - lus Do - mi - nus. Tu so - lus Al - tis - si - mus, Je - su Chri -
4


8
su Chri - ste. Cum San - cto
Chri - ste, Je - su Chri - ste.
Tu so - lus Al - tis - si - mus, Je - su Chri - ste.
ste, Je - su Chri - ste. Cum
12
Spi - ri - tu in glo - ri a
Cum San - cto Spi - ri - tu in glo -
Cum San - cto Spi - ri tu in glo - ri - a
San - cto Spi - ri - tu in glo - ri - a De -
16
De - i Pa - tris. A - men.
ri - a De - i Pa - tris. A - men, a - men.
De - i glo - ri - a De - i Pa - tris. A - men.
i Pa - tris. A - men.

ex. 12-13 Antoine Busnoys, *Missa L’Homme Armé*, Gloria, “Tu solus altissimus”

With its vivaciously lilting, hemiola-infested rhythms and its fanciful little patches of voice-exchange on the “horn call” motif, Busnoys’s “Tu solus” (Ex. 12-13) really crowns the Gloria. Not only its inherent qualities but also its placement testify to Busnoys’s “art of shapeliness” and justify the high regard in which his work was held, as well as the dynastic influence it exerted on his contemporaries and juniors. And yet if we are to take a properly “historical” view of this Mass, it is on the relatively inconspicuous *tenor tacet* sections that we must train our lens. They represent a new principle of composing—exceptional in Busnoys’s time, but standard practice a hundred years later and for centuries thereafter.

In the absence of a prefabricated tenor to guide his fashioning hand, the composer proceeds instead in short spurts of *chace* or *caccia*-like writing. The superius, at the beginning of the Christe eleison (Ex. 12-14), guides the altus strictly for the duration of the first phrase. But the imitation remains strict only as far as the cadence, when it gives way to a conventional close. Then the bassus, entering, guides the superius strictly as far as the next cadence. Finally, all three voices come together for the third phrase: the altus, rejoining the texture, imitates the “headmotive” of the preceding duo, still functioning as a (would-be) guide. But the other voices pile in for a”free” discant, significantly the shortest of the sections because it is the one least guided. It culminates in another conventional close, this one borrowed from the chanson style: the altus plays the part of the tenor, and the bassus that of the “octave-leaping” contratenor. The Agnus Dei II follows the same format, but less strictly. Its duos begin with brief voice exchanges, then proceed in free discant. The final section begins with a duo for the outer pair that proceeds in a sequential fashion reminiscent of Obrecht as we have come to know him (but Busnoys was the earlier composer and provided the model for Obrecht, who was possibly his pupil).

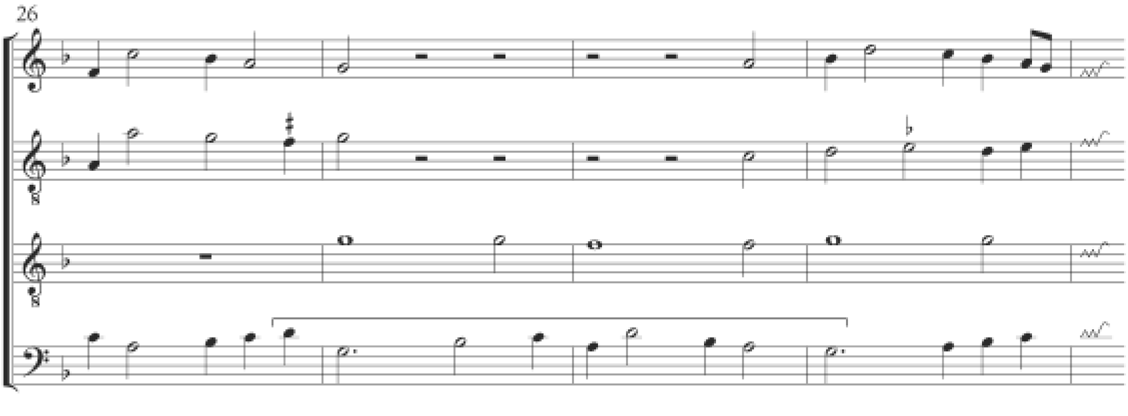

Chri - ste
Chri - ste
e - lei - son,
Chri - ste
e - lei - son,
Chri - ste e - lei -
e - lei - son,
Chri
son,
Chri - ste e -
ste - e - lei - son,
Chri - ste
Chri - ste
le - i - son,
e - lei - son.
e - lei - son.
Chri - ste e - lei - son.

ex. 12-14 Antoine Busnoys, *Missa L’Homme Armé,* Christe

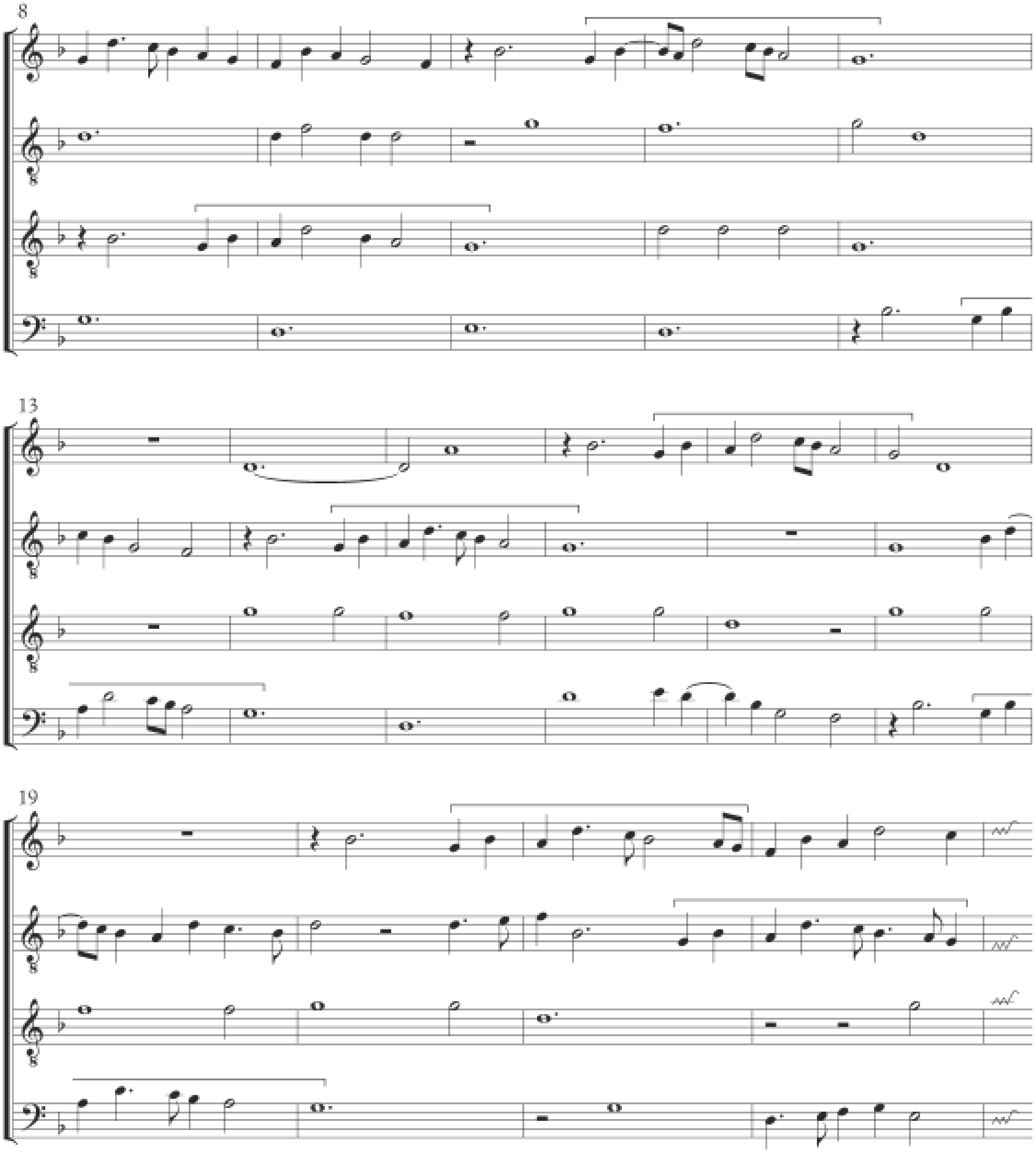
These modest three-part compositions, to which we may add the "Pleni sunt coeli" and the "Benedictus" subsections of the Sanctus, were epoch-makers. Out of earlier techniques of canon and voice-exchange the composer has worked out a manner of writing that replaces the cantus firmus (whether held out in the tenor or paraphrased in the superius) with a series of "points of imitation," as they have become known after centuries of standardization. Each point corresponds to a discrete portion of the text, the parsing of the words thus acquiring a far more direct role in the shaping of the music than in the sections of the Mass that are built over the cantus firmus—and each point comes to a full cadential close before proceeding to the next. Beginning with the generation of Obrecht, every composer of Masses and motets practiced the "pervading imitation" style when not using a cantus firmus. They all learned it, directly or indirectly, from Busnoys.

In the case of some composers, notably Obrecht, the learning-and-modeling process was exceptionally direct, testifying to the force of Busnoys's unsurpassed authority. Obrecht studied Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme Armé* with the same assiduousness he applied to the study of Ockeghem's *Caput* Mass and the anonymous English Mass before it. Obrecht's *Missa L'Homme Armé* appropriates Busnoys's tenor note for note; and there is another Mass, attributed by some specialists to Obrecht as well, that appropriates only the rhythms of Busnoys's tenor, not the familiar tune. (In this way the borrowing becomes not only more hidden but also more specifically an homage to Busnoys.) In such a case the lines of dynastic composerly fealty seem even stronger and more long-lasting than the lines of dynastic political fealty that spawned the original tradition of emulation.

There is a *Missa L'Homme Armé* by Faugues that quotes the headmotive of Busnoys's Mass in its Sanctus, just the way Obrecht had quoted the headmotive of the English *Caput* Mass in his Gloria. (At the same time, of course, Faugues made sure to surpass his model by casting the cantus firmus as a canon for two voices throughout his Mass.) Finally, there is a striking moment in Busnoys's Sanctus where the superius and altus suddenly drop out, leaving the tenor exposed over an energetic motive in the bassus (Ex. 12-15a). That motive was taken over by a whole slew of followers in their *L'Homme Armé* Masses, most impressively of all, in the true emulatory spirit, by Philippe Basiron, a pupil of Faugues, in his Agnus Dei (Ex. 12-15b).



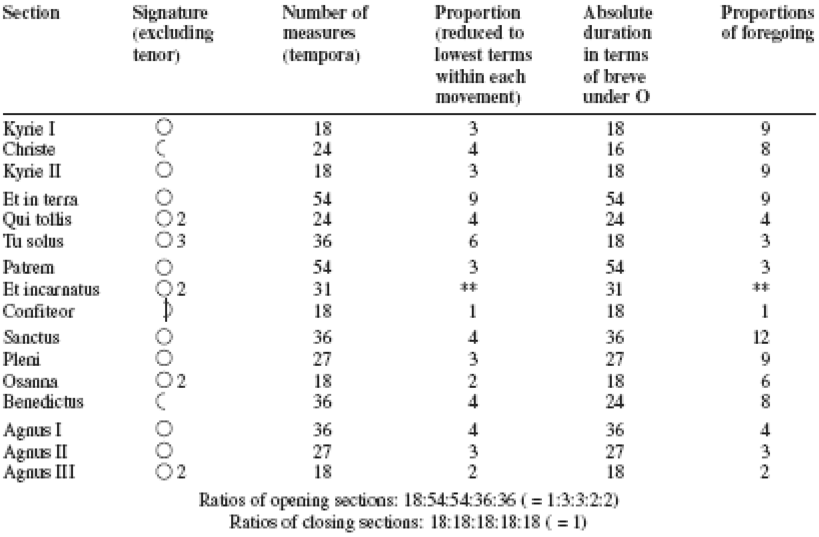
ex. 12-15a Antoine Busnoys, *Missa L'Homme Armé*, Sanctus, mm. 26-29



ex. 12-15b Philippe Basiron, *Missa L'Homme Armé*, Agnus I, mm. 8-23

Among the reasons why Busnoys's *Missa L'Homme Armé* became the archetype of its genre was one that lay beneath the surface, in the realm of ideal, esoteric, even occult structure. Like the ordering principles governing the isorhythmic motets surveyed in chapter 8, it is unavailable to detection by the listening ear but can be easily grasped and relished by the rational mind. This aspect of the Mass, in other words, belonged to the level not of "music" as we understand the term, but of *Musica*, as understood in the enduring tradition of Boethius, first described in chapter 3.

When the durations of every subsection of the Mass are measured against the initial *tempus* or counting unit established in the first Kyrie, a breathtaking array of "Pythagorean" proportions is *revealed* (Fig. 12-9). It resembles the one illustrated in Ex. 12-1a, from Busnoys's motet *In hydraulis;* but it is more hidden, farther-reaching, and far more complete. To pick one example: as shown in Fig. 12-9, the four written subsections of the Sanctus contain 36, 27, 18, and 24 tempora respectively. The ratio 36:27:18:24 reduces (when divided by three) to 12:9:6:8—exactly the proportions of the anvil-weights in the old story of Pythagoras and the blacksmith's shop, an array that yields all the Pythagorean consonances (see Ex. 1-9): the octave (12:6 = 2:1), the fifth (9:6 = 3:2), the fourth (8:6 = 4:3), and even the "tone" or major second, the difference between the fourth and the fifth (9:8).



Section	Signature (excluding tenor)	Number of measures (tempora)	Proportion (reduced to lowest terms within each movement)	Absolute duration in terms of breve under O	Proportions of foregoing
Kyrie I	○	18	3	18	9
Christe	C	24	4	16	8
Kyrie II	○	18	3	18	9
Et in terra	○	54	9	54	9
Qui tollis	○2	24	4	24	4
Tu solus	○3	36	6	18	3
Patrem	○	54	3	54	3
Et incarnatus	○2	31	**	31	**
Confiteor	Ↄ⃒	18	1	18	1
Sanctus	○	36	4	36	12
Pleni	○	27	3	27	9
Osanna	○2	18	2	18	6
Benedictus	C	36	4	24	8
Agnus I	○	36	4	36	4
Agnus II	○	27	3	27	3
Agnus III	○2	18	2	18	2

Ratios of opening sections: 18:54:54:36:36 (= 1:3:3:2:2)
Ratios of closing sections: 18:18:18:18:18 (= 1)

fig. 12-9 Durational proportions in Antoine Busnoys’s *Missa L’Homme Armé*.

The concluding Agnus Dei has three subsections in the durational proportion 36:27:18, which when factored by nine reduces to 4:3:2, an array that precisely and economically sums up the perfect consonances, just like the final octave/fifth/fourth harmony of this or any fifteenth-century Mass or motet. The subsections of the Kyrie have lengths can be represented as the ratio 18:16:18, reducing by a factor of two to 9:8:9, expressing the tone. Also striking is the fact that the opening sections of each of the five “movements” in the Mass collectively make an array that reduces to 1:3:3:2:2, expressing the most basic consonances, the octave and the fifth; while the concluding sections of each “movement” have identical durations (18 tempora), thus collectively expressing absolute unity.

Right smack in the middle of things, a prime number occurs in the durational plan that seems to skew it. But that number is 31, symbolizing the Order of the Golden Fleece. So far from skewing the plan, the existence of 31 as a durational unit provides further evidence that Busnoys attached symbolic significance to durations and planned them out in advance, just as a composer of ceremonial motets might formerly have done.

It is worth reiterating that this impressive numerological edifice cannot be heard in performance, nor can it have been meant to be heard. It is not even possible to sing the Mass with the ideal tempo proportions that would realize the ground plan accurately, for that would put the sections in diminution beyond the likely abilities of even the most agile singers. And that is precisely the point. *Musica* (as opposed to music) was not for the ear but for the mind. A shape that expressed unity on the level of Musica as well as on that of music was unified at a level transcending the human, hence serving the mediating purposes of sacred music ideally, in every sense of the word.

Citation (MLA): Richard Taruskin. "Chapter 12 Emblems and Dynasties." *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press. New York, USA. n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2011. <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-div1-012011.xml>.
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Mass

Mass: The cyclic mass in the later 15th century

AN ESTHETIC PARADOX (OR, THE PARADOX OF "ESTHETICS")

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

And this raises a final cluster of fascinating, somewhat troubling questions. What is the relationship between the esthetics of modern music-listening and the esthetics of fifteenth- or sixteenth-century service music that is so often transplanted now from its natural habitat to the secular concert stage or to the even more casual venues where recordings are savored? What survives the translation process? What is lost in it? What, for that matter, may be gained?

These questions apply with particular urgency to cyclic Mass Ordinaries—large and impressively complex compositions in multiple parts. Their status as the paramount genre of their day prompts comparison with genres that enjoyed comparable standing in other historical periods. As Manfred Bukofzer, the most eminent historian of the genre, once put it, the cyclic Mass Ordinary in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries "held as dominating and prominent a place in the hierarchy of musical values as the symphony did in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."[7]

The comparison between the cyclic Mass Ordinary and the symphony seems especially compelling because both genres are composites of smaller constituent units that are conceived and presented in a certain fixed, conventional order. But a moment's reflection will confirm that the constituent sections of the cyclic Mass Ordinary actually have very little in common with symphonic movements, and that the nature of the two genres as wholes, however unified, is really just as dissimilar and incommensurable as is the nature of their component parts.

The manuscript choirbooks containing cyclic Mass Ordinaries can mislead us. Unlike the scores that preserve and transmit classical symphonies or more recent compositions, they are service books that store music as economically as possible for active use. Each voice part, as we know, is separately inscribed for the individual singers' benefit, rather than space-wastingly aligned for a reader's perusal. The "movements," moreover, are entered in direct sequence, like those of a symphony, even though they were never performed in direct sequence. But that, of course, is how they are generally performed in concert and recordings today, as if Masses were in fact choral symphonies.

Modern transcriptions of cyclic Masses, like those on which we have been relying for most of our examples, "score" the works in accordance with modern practice and make them look more like symphonies than ever. So it is easy to forget (or ignore, or minimize) the fact that the "movements" of a cyclic Mass Ordinary, the first pair excepted, were spread out in performance over the whole length of the service, spaced as much as fifteen or twenty minutes apart, with *a great deal* of liturgical activity, including other music, intervening.

And that, over and above any urge to unify the works "esthetically," is why the "movements" of cyclic Masses were deliberately made to resemble each other as much as possible. As we have seen, they all begin exactly alike, with a "headmotive"; they all feature the same foundation melody, often presented in identical or near-identical form in the tenor; and—how completely unlike the movements of a symphony!—follow similar or identical standardized formal schemes.

All of this furthered the liturgical or spiritual purpose of the music in its original setting, adorning and integrating a festal rite. But take away all the intervening liturgical activity, and the uplifting symbolic recurrences of familiar music can seem merely redundant. When cyclic Masses are performed as choral symphonies, the music—“as music,” as “esthetically” experienced—often palls. The ideal structure that makes such a strong appeal to our minds (our “organs of contemplation,” as idealist philosophers have sometimes dubbed them) can actually tire the ear when presented without admixture in actual sound. Experiencing the music “as music,” though we may think of it (or been instructed to think of it) as the “highest” way of appreciating music, is not inevitably or invariably the best way to experience it. And it can have little to do with what originally made it “high.”

Notes:

(7) Bukofzer, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music*, p. 217.

Citation (MLA): Richard Taruskin. "Chapter 12 Emblems and Dynasties." *The Oxford History of Western Music*. Oxford University Press. New York, USA. n.d. Web. 27 Jan. 2011. <http://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume1/actrade-9780195384819-div1-012012.xml>.
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Borrowing: Renaissance mass cycles

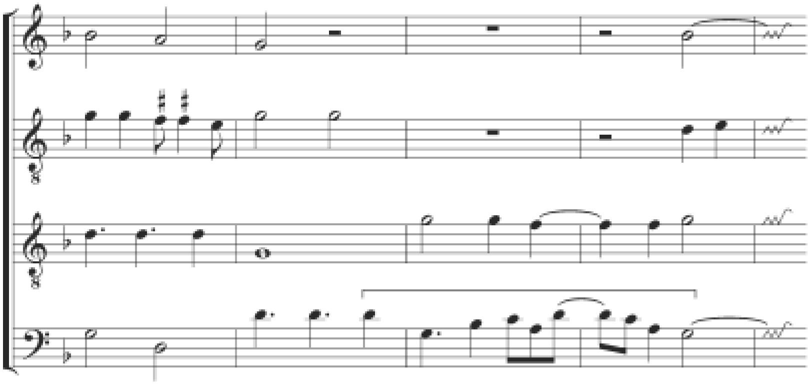
Guillaume Du Fay

L'homme armé

OLD AND YOUNG ALIKE PAY TRIBUTE

Chapter: CHAPTER 12 Emblems and Dynasties
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

To return, in conclusion, to strictly historical and "dynastic" matters, it is absorbing to ponder the intricate relationships of homage that obtained among composers of cyclic Masses. Among the *L'Homme Armé* Masses that reproduce the moment from Busnoys's Sanctus depicted in Ex. 12-15a is one by Du Fay, the oldest and most distinguished composer to have joined the game. The corresponding passage in his Mass occurs near the end of the Credo (Ex. 12-16), and it is especially close to Busnoys's allowing for the speedy diminished note-values that one usually finds near the climaxes of large cyclic Mass sections.



ex. 12-16 Guillaume Du Fay, *Missa L'Homme Armé*, Credo, "Et exspecto"

The question, of course, is who was emulating whom? The discussion up to now would seem to favor Busnoys, and yet it might also seem commonsensical to assume that the younger composer imitated the older rather than the other way around—especially if the older composer were a composer of such unparalleled standing as the venerable Du Fay, by the 1460s definitely an aged man by contemporary standards. Common sense can seem especially persuasive in cases such as this, when there is little or no hard evidence against which to weigh it. (The earliest surviving source for both Masses is the same Sistine Chapel choirbook, which postdates the older composer's death.)

And yet in this particular case some other factors might also carry weight. One is the nature of the emulatory chain. As Ex. 12-16 already suggests with its very energetic syncopations (even including some interpolations into the cantus firmus), Du Fay's Mass is an especially—even an ostentatiously—elaborate composition. It is a true masterpiece, a demonstration of a great master's skills—and a great master's license, too; for Du Fay subjects the cantus-firmus tune to a great deal of embellishment almost amounting to paraphrase. The Mass also contains the single most complicated passage in all of fifteenth-century choral polyphony: a montage of four different mensurations, one for each voice, at the point in the Credo where the text, referring to God the Father, says "by [Him] all things are made" (*per quem omnia facta sunt*). The last three Latin words can also mean "all things are done," and that is what Du Fay has his chorus do, all at the same time. Once again we see that what may seem to us like nothing more than a pun ("the lowest form of wit") can be a serious symbol indeed, and the pretext for exalted creative play.

In any case, it contradicts the whole idea of emulation to imagine such a work as Du Fay's *Missa L'Homme Armé* at the beginning of the line; with such a starting point, where could it possibly go? Potential corroboration for the assumption that Du Fay came relatively late in the emulation chain is found in the inventory of the composer's property, drawn up after his death in 1474.[8] It lists six manuscripts of music, which the composer had willed to Charles the Bold, for transfer after his death. If the *Missa L'Homme Armé* were among the items contained therein (and Charles, after all, may have been the Armed Man himself), that would make it a late work indeed, as the style of the music already suggests.

In all likelihood, then, the *Missa L'Homme Armé* was the second-latest of Du Fay's cantus-firmus Masses. The cyclic Mass was a genre developed in the period of Du Fay's maturity, and one to which he, consequently, contributed little. Only four such Masses of his survive. Two of the others are based on plainsongs; one of them incorporates the music of a motet that Du Fay wrote for his own funeral, so it is probably the last of the four. The remaining Mass, the earliest, is the most famous. It embodies an intricate structure, very similar in its layout to a gigantic isorhythmic motet, based on a cantus firmus derived from the tenor of one of Du Fay's own chansons: *Se la face ay pale* ("If my face is pale, love's to blame …").

It has been suggested that this elegant love-song Mass was written for an aristocratic wedding, possibly during Du Fay's period in service at the court of Savoy in the 1450s.[9] That would put the Mass on *Se la face ay pale* in the same general category as the *L'Homme Armé* Masses: sacred music in honor of secular authority. Alternatively, and more in keeping with motet practice, Du Fay's love-song Mass may have been intended, like Leonel's Mass on *Alma redemptoris mater*, for a Marian votive service, the cantus firmus now symbolizing the worshiper's love for the worshiped.

Either conjecture, if corroborated, would provide an explanation for the novel practice, of which Du Fay was a pioneer, of basing sacred music on secular tenors. Far from a blasphemy, it seems to have worked the other way, as a means of consecrating the secular. And thus, even if, as seems likely, Du Fay may have been a relatively late contributor to the *L'Homme Armé* tradition, he was among the founders of the larger tradition that made the *L'Homme Armé* cycles possible. Thus his dynastic authority lay behind that of Busnoys even as the authority of Busnoys's "classic" *L'Homme Armé* Mass may have called forth Du Fay's spectacular riposte in its turn. That is how artistic dynasties, as distinct from political ones, tend to work: they are elaborate cultural exchanges, not straightforward biological successions.

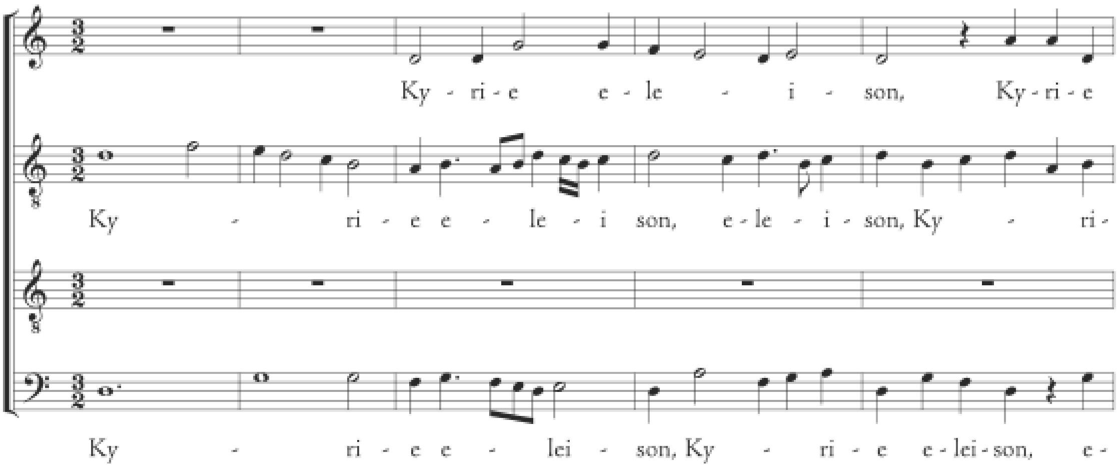
For one last, particularly revealing dynastic commentary, let us have a quick look at a later stage of the *L'Homme Armé* tradition. The composer who headed the next generation after Obrecht, and who was as commanding a presence among the musicians of his time as Obrecht had been—or Busnoys and Ockeghem before Obrecht, or Du Fay before Busnoys and Ockeghem, or Dunstable before Du Fay—was Josquin des Prez, to whom a whole chapter will shortly be devoted. It was Josquin's special good fortune to have been the protagonist of one of the great historical turning points for European music, when the printing revolution finally hit, and utterly transformed, its literate wing.

The very first printed volume of music devoted to the works of a single composer was a book of Masses by Josquin, issued by the Venetian printer Ottaviano Petrucci in 1502. Of the five Masses it contained, two of them—the first and the last, the alpha and omega—were based on *L'Homme Armé*. There could be no greater testimony to Josquin's stature than his laying claim in this way to the venerable tradition, and no *greater* testimony to the potency of that tradition than the way it was spotlighted by Petrucci in opening and closing this auspicious volume.

The opening work in the volume was called Josquin's *Missa L'Homme Armé super voces musicales*. The *voces musicales*, as we may remember from chapter 3, were the six solmization syllables of the Guidonian hexachord: *Ut-re-mi-fa-sol-la*. The special unifying *tour deforce* of Josquin's Mass was to begin it with the cantus firmus pitched on C (the "natural" *ut*) for the Kyrie, and have it ascend step-by-step throughout the

Mass so that in the final Agnus Dei (scored for a climactically enlarged five-part chorus) it was pitched on A (the natural *la)*, the highest note of the hexachord, and transferred by way of zenith to the superius voice. No question, then, that Josquin was still engaging in the process of emulation—the process that continually asked, “Can you top this?”

Yet even as he attempted to top all his predecessors in his manipulation of the age-old cantus firmus, he paid them signal tribute in his headmotive (Ex. 12-17). If you do not immediately recognize this theme—the opening music, so to speak, in Petrucci’s volume of the greatest Masses by the greatest composer of the day—go back to the beginning of this chapter and look again at its first musical example. Josquin’s headmotive is modeled on the phrase with which Busnoys had set the name of Ockeghem in *In hydraulis* (Ex. 12-1b), and Ockeghem had returned the compliment in *Ut heremita solus* (Ex. 12-1c).


Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son, Ky - ri - e
Ky - ri - e e - le - i son, e - le - i - son, Ky - ri -
Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, Ky - ri - e e - lei - son, e -

ex. 12-17 Josquin des Prez, *Missa L’Homme Armé super voces musicales*, Kyrie

Josquin, who wrote a lament on Ockeghem’s death in which he referred to the older composer as his “bon père,” his good (musical) father, was very possibly Ockeghem’s pupil. Surely he knew Busnoys’s *Missa L’Homme Armé* (for no musical *literatus* of his generation did not), and its special place in the *L’Homme Armé* tradition. How better to assert his place in the dynasty of “high style” composers than by making this most conspicuous reference to their most directly relevant work? And how better inaugurate and legitimate the “future” of music as a literate tradition—the phase of printed music, which has lasted until our own time and is only lately showing any sign of waning—than by making showy obeisance to the glories of the immediate past? Josquin’s headmotive was thus a triple emblem: the emblematic unifier of his Mass, an emblem of heirship, and an emblem of the continuing vitality of the dynastic tradition.

Notes:

(8) Craig Wright, “Dufay at Cambrai: Discoveries and Revisions,” *JAMS* XXVIII (1975): 217.

(9) Alejandro Planchart, “Fifteenth-Century Masses: Notes on Performance and Chronology,” *Studi musicali* X (1981): 17.

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CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low

The Fifteenth-Century Motet and Chanson; Early Instrumental Music; Music Printing

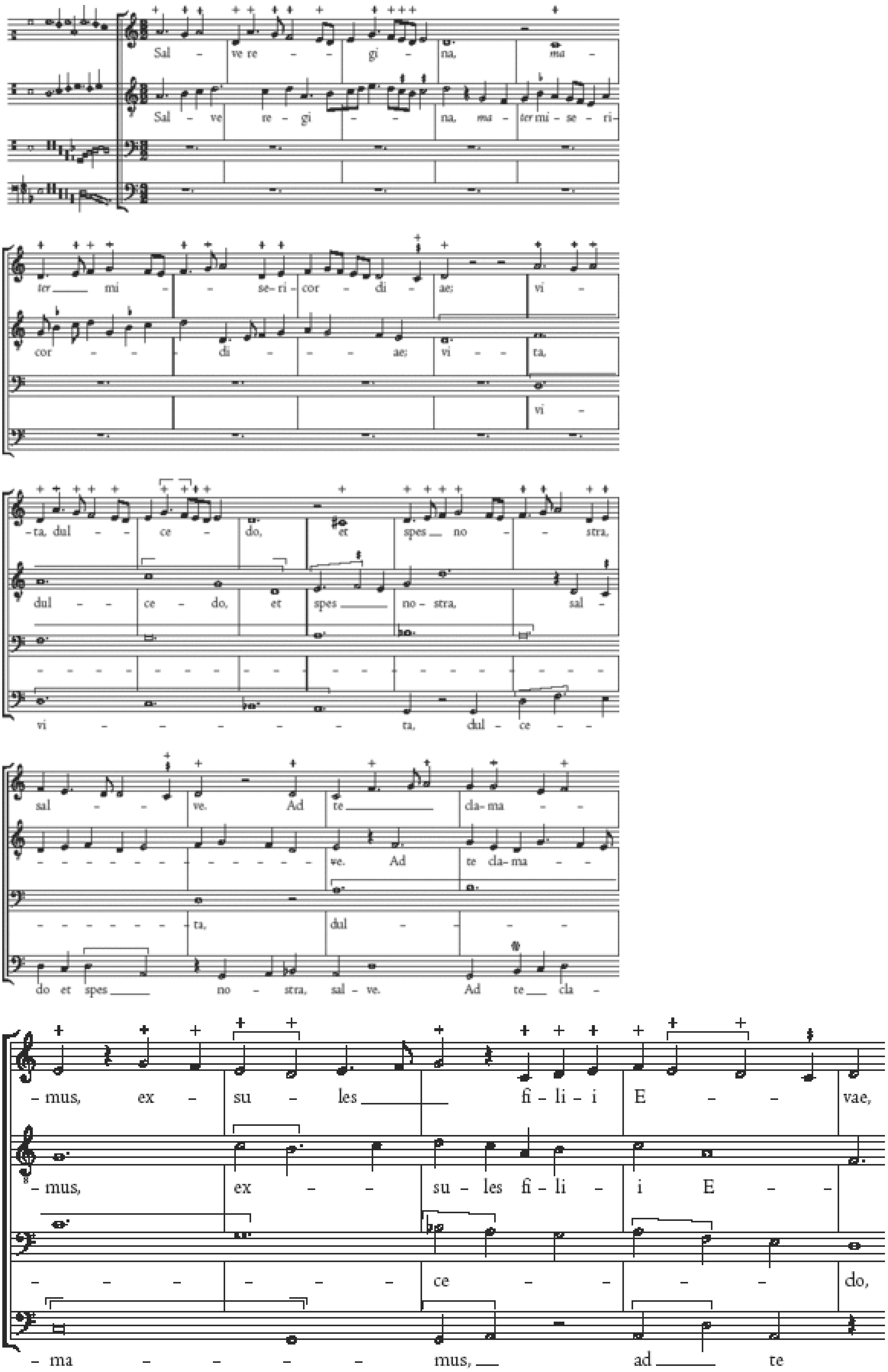
Chapter: CHAPTER 13 Middle and Low
Source: MUSIC FROM THE EARLIEST NOTATIONS TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Author(s): Richard Taruskin

HAILING MARY

Over the course of the fifteenth century, the cyclic Mass Ordinary, a new genre, displaced the motet from its position at the high end of the musical style spectrum. That is one of the reasons why the motet, of all preexisting literate genres, underwent the most radical transformation during that time. From an isorhythmic, tenor-dominated, polytextual construction, it became a Latin "cantilena," a sacred song that primarily served devotional rather than ceremonial purposes. Connection with plainchant was retained but modified. Paraphrase—the technique pioneered in fauxbourdon settings, whereby an old chant was melodically refurbished and turned into a new "cantus"—began to dominate the motet just as the cantus-firmus technique was being appropriated by the Mass. Textual and expressive factors began to weigh more heavily than before both in the structure and in the detail-work of the newly renovated motet. The aim was lowered, so to speak, from the altogether transcendent to somewhere nearer the human plane. The result was the perfect embodiment of Tinctoris's *stylus mediocris*, the "middle style."

It became all the more fitting, then, that the middle style should continue to address the "middle being," the nexus and mediatrix between the transcendent and the human, especially as votive appeals to the Virgin Mary continued to burgeon in the liturgy. Accordingly, the latter fifteenth century witnessed the zenith of musical "Mariolatry." Its chief expressive outlet became the polyphonic arrangement of the Marian antiphons. For composers of the "Tinctoris generations," that was the basic motet category.

A wonderful introduction to the "classic" fifteenth-century Marian motet is a *Salve Regina* setting by Philippe Basiron (d. 1491), mentioned in chapter 12 as the composer of one of the numerous satellite Masses that surrounded Busnoys's enormously influential *Missa L'Homme Armé*. The original melody, signaled by the little crosses ("+") in Ex. 13-1a, has been familiar to us since the third chapter of this book (see Ex. 3-12b). As pointed out then, it resembles a troubadour canso—or, in terms more contemporary with the polyphonic setting, a ballade—in its repeated opening phrase. That repeated opening phrase is in fact identically paraphrased in Basiron's superius up to its cadence on both of its appearances in the motet, pointing up the composer's awareness of the melody's resemblance to a secular love song, and his wish to preserve that resonant resemblance in his cantilena setting.

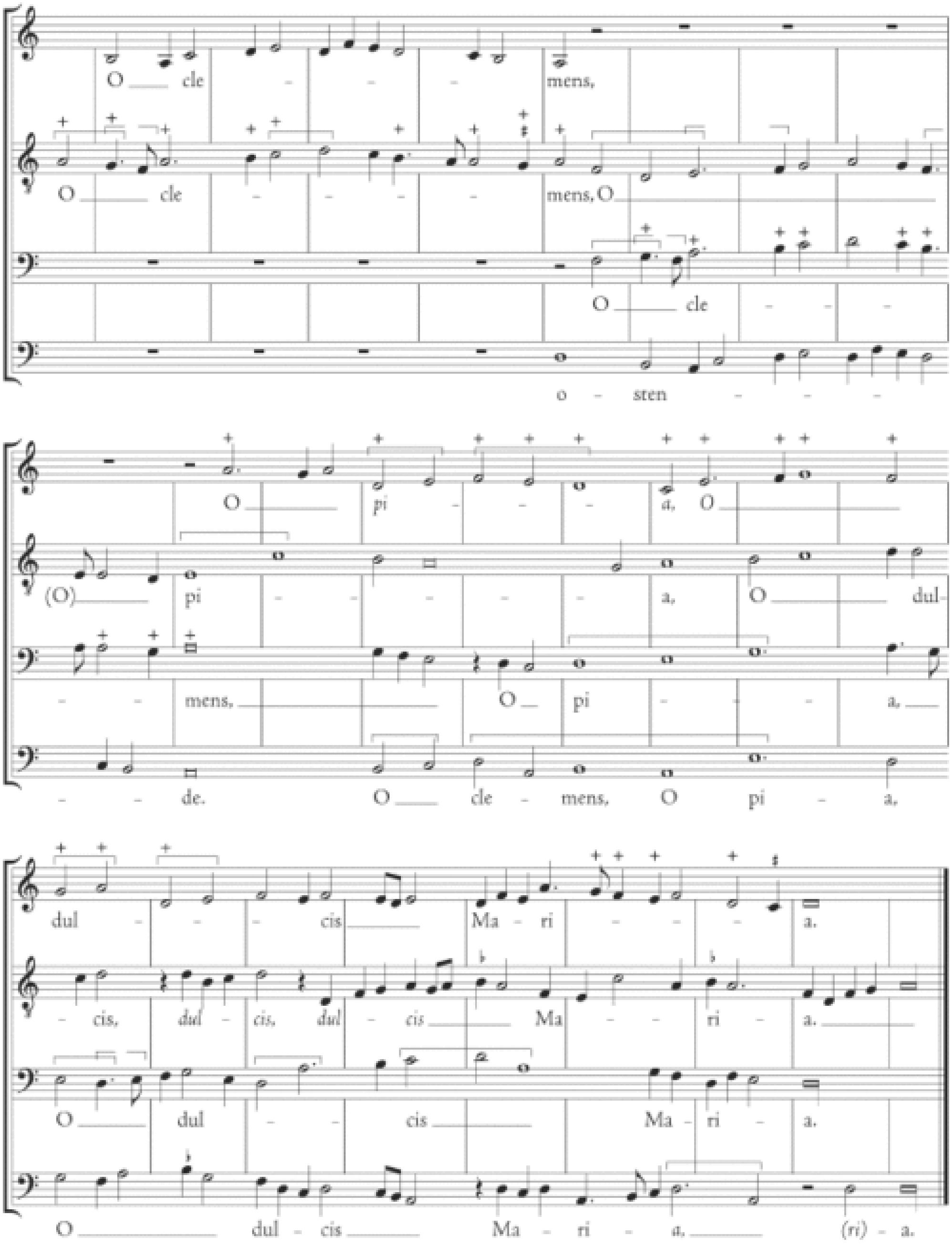

Sal – ve re – – gi – na, ma –
Sal – ve re – gi – – na, ma – ter mi – se – ri –
ter mi – – se – ri – cor – di – ae: vi –
cor – – – di – – – ae: vi – – ta,
vi –
– ta, dul – – ce – do, et spes no – – stra,
dul – – ce – do, et spes no – stra, sal –
vi – – – – – ta, dul – ce – –
sal – – ve. Ad te cla – ma – –
ve. Ad te cla – ma – –
ta, dul – – –
do et spes no – stra, sal – ve. Ad te cla –
– mus, ex – su – les fi – li – i E – – vae,
– mus, ex – – su – les fi – li – i E – –
ce – – – – do,
– ma – – – – – mus, ad te

ex. 13-1a **Philippe Basiron, *Salve Regina*, mm. 1–25**

Basiron builds other generic resonances into his setting as well. The opening line of the chant paraphrase is accompanied by the altus only, creating the kind of duo one often finds in Mass Ordinary settings—or, more to the point, in the older isorhythmic motet—during the *introitus* that preceded and heralded the entrance of the all-important tenor. The repetition of the opening superius phrase takes place over that entrance—and sure enough, the tenor behaves on entering just like a cantus firmus voice, in note-values outstanding for their slowness vis-à-vis the note-values of the introitus. The tenor seems to identify itself as—indeed, to impersonate—the bearer of the holy relic, the preexisting chant, when all the while the chant-bearing voice is the superius. The long-note tenor "melody" has never been identified, and in all likelihood will never be. It is a decoy.

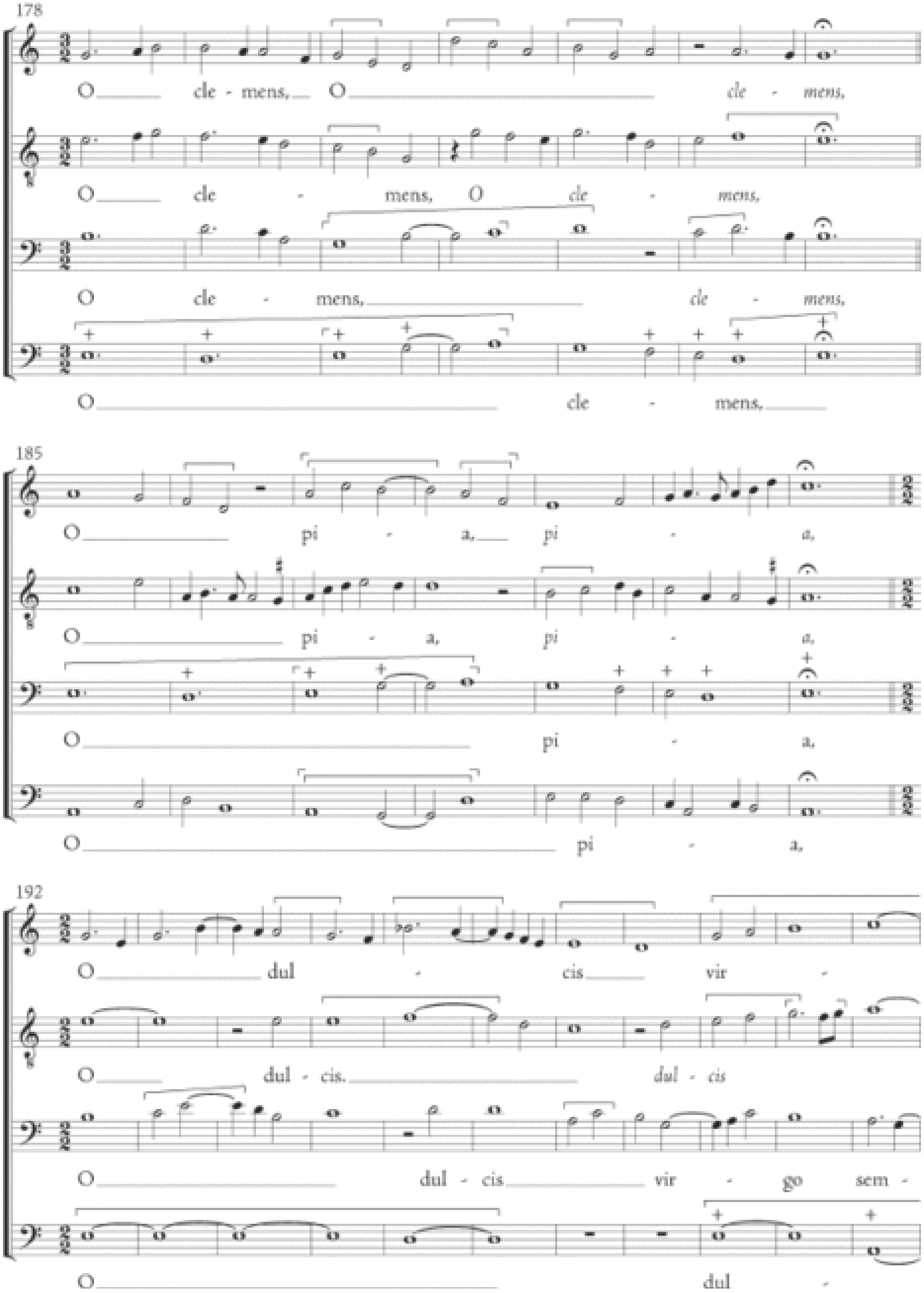
What we have, in short, is a deliberate play on styles and genres by a supremely self-conscious composer-*literatus*: a paraphrase motet disguised as a cantus-firmus motet. The disguise is light and not seriously intended to deceive, of course: by the time the superius has descended its fifth between *sal*- and -*ve* in the first measure everyone in Basiron's envisaged audience would have surely recognized the most famous melody in all the liturgy. It is just a playful disguise, meant to amuse in an edifying sort of way. The deliberate playfulness—what we might call the "thematization" of genre—has a serious point. Incorporating elements of "low" (the superius in "pseudovernacular" style) and "high" (the tenor in "pseudoplainchant" style), the motet pitches itself, or balances itself, right in the middle, showing the composer's awareness of the rhetorical categories available to him, and his ability to exploit them meaningfully.

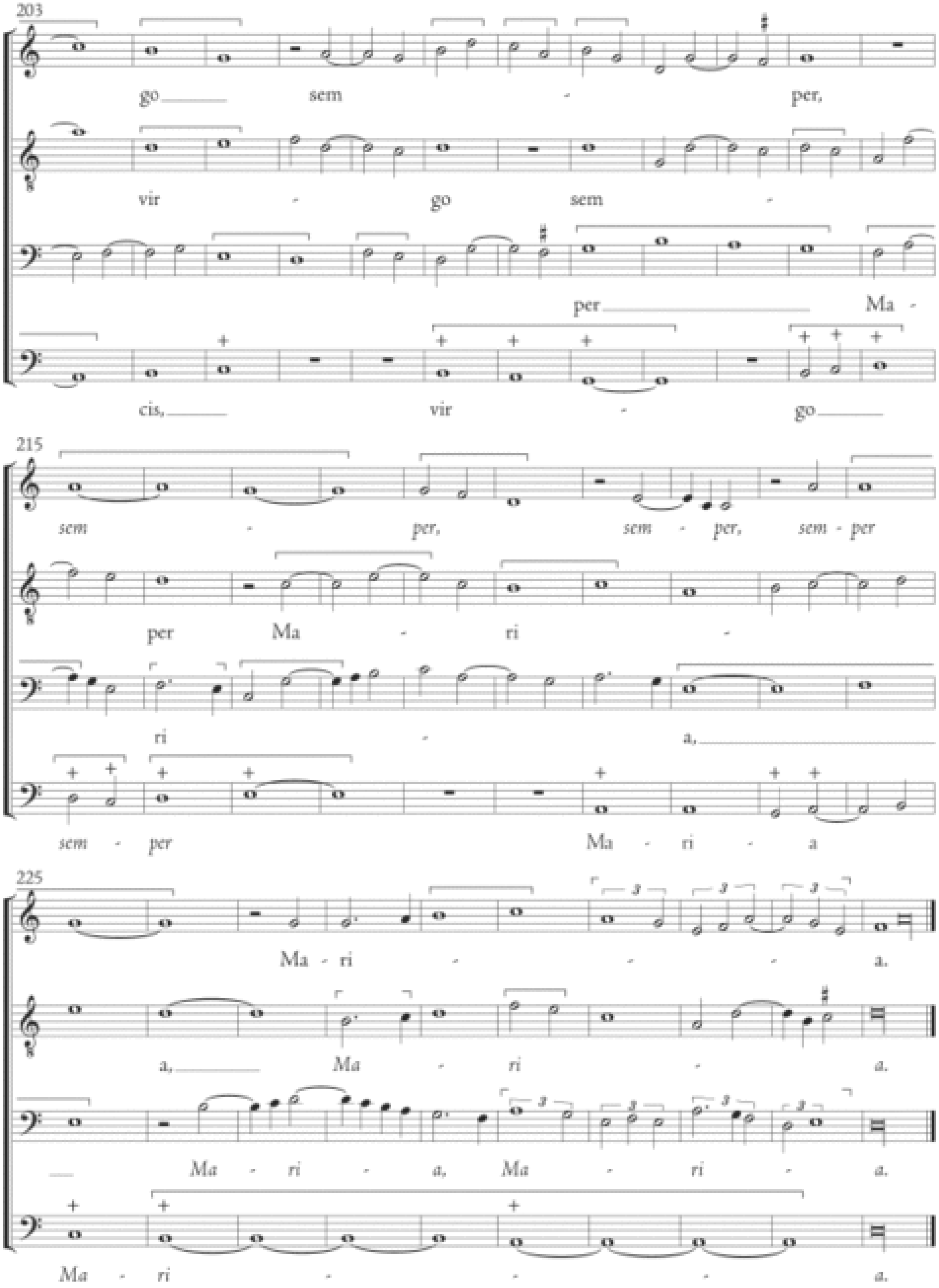
The *secunda pars* ("part two") of Basiron's *Salve Regina* shows a budding concern for choral "scoring." The cantus firmus migrates into the second and even the third voice from the top, and there is a great deal of interplay among various duos and trios drawn from the full four-part texture, with full four-part "tuttis," as we might call them, assuming in such a context a rhetorical, emphatic role. Particularly calculated for oratorical effect is the concluding triple acclamation to the Virgin—*O clemens, O pia, O dulcis* ("O thou gentle, O thou holy, O thou sweet")—in a progression from two to four voices, with the three-voice passage in the middle cast as a slightly modified fauxbourdon (note the altus and tenor in parallel motion at the fourth), the musical emblem of gentle sweetness (Ex. 13-1b).


O cle mens,
O cle mens, O
O cle
o sten
O pi a, O
(O) pi a, O dul
mens, O pi a,
de. O cle mens, O pi a,
dul cis Ma ri a.
cis, dul cis, dul cis Ma ri a.
O dul cis Ma ri a.
O dul cis Ma ri a, (ri) a.

ex. 13-1b Philippe Basiron, *Salve Regina*, mm. 98-end

For a remarkable contrast within a similar general approach, and certainly with no loss of expressivity, compare Ockeghem's grander setting of the same triple acclamation at the end of his *Salve Regina* (Ex. 13-2). The cantus firmus is now in the bassus (transposed down a fourth), paraphrased decoratively like Basiron's superius but nevertheless "held out" in tenor fashion. The rhetorical progression of intensity is achieved here not by augmenting the vocal complement, the way Basiron had done, but by an expanding melismatic luxuriance. The idea of "sweetness" is conveyed in harmonic terms, by means of melting cadences (or, to be grammatically precise, "half-cadences") to full triads with the third in the highest voice. Also noteworthy, for its bearing on the "prehistory" of tonally functional harmony, is the placement of the successive cadence chords—E minor, A-minor, D-minor—on a circle of fifths to the final. But notice that the sweet imperfect consonance over the final at the very end is treated as unstable; the piece cannot end until it has been "cleared" by the superius motion from F (third) to A (fifth).


178
O cle - mens, O cle - mens,
O cle - mens, O cle - mens,
O cle - mens, cle - mens,
O cle - mens,
185
O pi - a, pi - a,
O pi - a, pi - a,
O pi - a,
O pi - a,
192
O dul - cis vir -
O dul - cis. dul - cis
O dul - cis vir - go sem -
O dul -


203
go — sem - per,
vir - go sem -
per — Ma -
cis, — vir - go —
215
sem - per, sem - per, sem - per
per Ma - ri -
ri - a,
sem - per Ma - ri - a
225
Ma - ri - - - a.
a, — Ma - ri - a.
— Ma - ri - a, Ma - ri - a.
Ma - ri - - - - a.

ex. 13-2 Johannes Ockeghem, *Salve Regina*, "O clemens, O pia, O dulcis"

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