Chapter 2: Secular and Cathedral Music in the High Middle Ages

I. Introduction – Chapter 1 dealt primarily with sacred music, influenced by the fact that initially only sacred music was available for observation. Chapter 2 turns to secular music.

II. Troubadours and Trouvères

A. Troubadours

1. The first European vernacular poet whose work survives was William IX (7th count of Poitiers and 9th duke of Aquitaine).
   a. The tradition of these poets is known as the troubadour.
   b. The troubadour tradition was a “top down” as those of the highest social ranks were the main participants. Their poetry celebrated feudal ideals.
   c. Different types of troubadour verse dealt with various aspects of the feudal system, including songs of alliance, knightly decorum, exploits, challenges, and death.
   2. Courtly love lay at the heart of the troubadour tradition.
      a. The canso was a song about love.
      b. Courtly love songs celebrated the same high ideals as other types of songs.
      c. The lady about whom a poet wrote usually outranked him, making her theoretically unattainable.
      d. Courtly love was generally more about veneration than physical love.
      e. The poetic style matches the lofty ideals of courtly love, as demonstrated in Can vei la lauzeta mover.

B. Performance and Oral Culture

1. We do not know the rhythm of troubadour songs, but most likely the loftier style of the troubadour songs approximated that of contemporary chant.
   2. Some troubadour songs matched a lower-class style; these were not based on chant style.
      a. Pastorela is one such genre.
      b. L’autrier jost’ una sebissa by Marcabru is an example.
      c. Marcabru was at the court of William IX.
   3. Joglars were low-class professional entertainers; today we would consider them minstrels. Some minstrels were able to move up the social ladder and became troubadours.
   4. Troubadour songs were written down in books called chansonniers at about the time the tradition died out.
   5. Some women wrote courtly songs, including the Comtessa de Dia.

C. Music for Elites: Trobar Clus

1. Musical debates constitute another genre of troubadour poetry: the tenso.
   a. The meaning was understood only by those who knew how to “read” such poetry. This poetry is trobar clus—“closed” poetry.
   b. Many troubadours used both types of poetry.
   2. Trouvères imitated the Provençal lyrics in the thirteenth century.
   3. Subtle differences mark the trouvère repertory as distinct from that of the troubadours.
a. Narrative genres form more of the repertory for the trouvères.

b. One of these is the *lai*, whose narrative stanzas reflect northern tendencies (as seen in the *romances* and *chansons de geste*).

4. New genres that resemble elements of folk music also were popular in thirteenth-century France.

III. Formalized Song

A. Adam de la Halle and the *Formes Fixes*

1. Arras and Paris
   a. In the mid-thirteenth-century, French music and literary activities shifted from the castle (e.g., Richard I) to the town.
   b. Musicians organized along the lines of the crafts guilds in both places.
   c. Arras had a Brotherhood of Minstrels and Townspeople which fostered musico-poetic interests.
   d. Moniot d’Arras, a member of this group, wrote the most famous pastourelle: *Ce fut en mai*.
   e. Jehan Bretel, also a member of the Brotherhood, was a master of the trouvère’s equivalent to the tenso, the *jeu-parti*.
   f. Bretel often “debated” Adam de la Halle, the most famous of this group today.

B. Adam de la Halle was educated at university in Paris, and his music reflects this training.

   1. He is the only trouvère known to have written polyphony.
   2. A chansonnier survives that includes only his works—a testament to his reputation.
   3. Adam wrote a difficult type of music—polyphony—in a relatively folksy genre, the *rondel* (*rondeau*). The form includes a refrain that returns throughout: AB a A ab AB. See Ex. 2-3.
   4. Another of these fixed forms (*formes fixes*) is the *ballade*, which resembles the *rondeau* without the refrains (capital letters in the model): aab.
   5. Yet another example of a fixed form is the *virelai*, which repeats one of the melody of a non-repeating strain: A bba A.

C. Geographical Diffusion

1. Troubadour and trouvère influence extended to several European countries.
2. In Germany, the trouvère influence can be seen in the songs of the *Minnesingers*. “Minne” translates to “courtly love,” and “singer” is the same. They sang *Minnelieder*. The most famous of these was Walther von der Vogelweide.

D. A Note on Instruments

1. Illustrations in manuscripts such as those that contain *cantigas* include detailed pictures of music making at court.
   a. Because most Medieval songs are monophonic does not mean that instruments were not used to accompany them.
b. Evidence suggests that certain instruments were used to accompany specific types of pieces, depending on genre and social connotations. The more lofty the genre, the more likely it was performed by solo voice (alone).

2. The most elaborate dance form was the *estampie*, which resembled the *lai* or *sequence* with its pairs of strains (and open and closed cadences).
   a. The earliest surviving *estampies* date from the mid-fourteenth-century and are found in the *Manuscrit du roi*.

3. Most Medieval instrumental music seems to have occurred in a solo context—ensembles are very rarely encountered.

IV. Polyphony
   A. Polyphony in Aquitanian Monastic Centers
      1. An important type of organum developed at St. Martial, found in nine twelfth-century manuscripts.
         a. The notation in these sources indicates pitch, but not rhythm, suggesting that music was composed orally (not by writing it down).
         b. Rhythm is necessary for polyphony.
         c. In St. Martial organum, one voice moves slightly, while the upper voice decorates it freely.
      2. Another important source of early twelfth-century polyphony is the *Codex Calixtinus*.
         a. The music therein was for a cathedral, not a monastery.
         b. The example shows early approaches to dissonance and consonance resolution, what we know as the rules for counterpoint.

   B. The Cathedral-University Complex
      1. The most technically elaborate polyphony developed in Paris, which was the intellectual capital of Europe at this time.
      2. The growth of the city of Paris brought about a shift from monasteries to cathedrals as centers of learning. If Paris was the intellectual capital, its cathedral—*Notre Dame de Paris*—was the center of learning.
      3. The cathedral represents Gothic style.
      4. In Notre Dame organum:
         a. The texture includes three- and four-voice settings. Four voices is an amazing compositional feat at this time and is reserved for a few special occasions.
         b. Notre Dame organum exploits both note-against-note styles and florid organum. In the latter, the tenor sometimes lasts a minute or more, producing an effect that sounds like a drone.
         c. The rhythm of Notre Dame organum is notated, as well as the pitch.
         d. The copyists attempted to provide polyphonic music for the entire calendar or feast days.

   C. Piecing the Evidence Together
      1. The music manuscripts from Notre Dame do not name the composers.
      2. The writer is known as Anonym[o]us IV wrote a treatise that describes music at Notre Dame (*De mensuris et discantu*).
a. Anon. IV tells us that the best maker of organum (organista) is Leoninus magister (Master Leonin). Leonin made a “great book” of organum: Magnus liber organi.

b. Anon. IV also reports that Perotinus magnus (the great Perotin) was the best composer or discant (discantor)—even better than Leonin.

c. Perotin inserted clausulae into Leonin’s works.

D. Measured Music

1. Notre Dame polyphony had essentially two note values: nota longa and nota brevis.
2. Rhythmic organization followed classical poetry, following meters such as iambic and trochaic.
3. Anthology 1-18 (Viderunt omnes) illustrates two-part Notre Dame organum.

E. Organum with Another Voice

1. With the addition of more voices, rhythms had to be notated in strict modal rhythm.
2. Triplum and quadruplum parts often moved at the same pace as the duplum.
3. Dissonance is treated with special care.
4. Perotin’s Viderunt omnes uses hocket, or hoquetus.
5. Johannes de Garlandia explains the six poetic/music meters (often called the rhythmic modes).

F. Conductus and Notre Dame

1. Conductus was another type of polyphony found in the Notre Dame school.
   a. It is not based on pre-existing chant.
   b. The texture is homorhythmic with a syllabically set text.

G. The Motet: Music for an Intellectual and Political Elite

1. Grocheio wrote the Ars musicae, a main source about music in Paris ca. 1300.
2. Grocheio describes a new genre that will become very important: the motet.
   a. Motets had a texted duplum, which is what the word “mot” (French for “word”) implies.
   b. Early motets relate to and are connected with clausula.
   c. Different parts had different texts, which we describe as “polytextual.”

H. “Franconian” Notation

1. Early motets demanded a more precise manner of notating rhythm.
2. Mensural notation specifies rhythm by specific shapes.
3. In the Ars cantus mensurabilis, Franco of Cologne describes mensural notation.
4. The motet was a hybrid of the court tradition of the trouvères (in that it was a courtly literary text) and the ecclesiastical tradition of Notre Dame polyphony (in that it is related to clausula and contains chant).
I. A New Trobar Clus?
   1. Motets became increasingly elaborate throughout the thirteenth century.
   2. Composers delighted in textual play—seemingly simple texts that include hidden meanings.
      a. This type of music was not for everyone but rather for the new elite who aspired to connect themselves to an older, established aristocracy.

J. The “Petronian” Motet
   1. One of the later sections of the Montpellier Codex includes more complex notation than seen in previous parts.
   2. The theorist Petrus de Cruce used even faster note values.
   3. With these changes, the connection to poetic meters is severed and the rhythmic modes fall out of use.