MUSIC OF THE
MIDDLE
AGES II

F. ALBERTO GALLO

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THE MIDDLE AGES II

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TRANSLATED BY KAREN EALES

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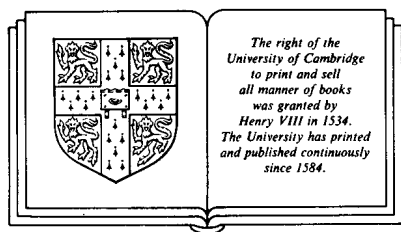
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Music of the Middle Ages II

Abbreviations

CS   E. de Coussemaker, *Scriptorum de musica medii aevi nova series* (Paris, 1864–76, reprint 1963)

CSM   Corpus scriptorum de musica (America Institute of Musicology 1950–   )

GS   M. Gerbert, *Scriptores ecclesiastici de musica sacra* (St Blaisen, 1784, reprint 1963)

IMM   Institute of Mediaeval Music

PMFC   *Polyphonic Music of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. L. Schrade, F. Ll. Harrison, K. von Fischer (Monaco 1956–   )

Publisher's note

Foreword

This book recounts the history of mensural polyphony from its thirteenth-century Parisian origins to its diffusion throughout Europe in the fifteenth century.

Since mensural polyphony was usually composed to literary texts, one of the guiding themes of this account is the relationship between music and literature. However, the purpose is not to identify specific correspondences or dependences between literary texts and musical settings (an operation which would certainly be valid for later historical periods but foreign to the medieval sensibility) but rather to point out, in the abstract, analogies between technical procedures in literature and in music. Since mensural polyphony was normally written in order to be performed in a specific social context, another principle of this history is the relationship between music and society. However, the purpose is not to point out, in the abstract, correspondences or dependences between musical structures and social structures (an operation which would perhaps be valid for later historical periods but foreign to the medieval sensibility), but rather to identify specific links between individual compositions and their commissioning or their reception.

The book is arranged in four parts, each of which embraces a given chronological and geographical span: the Parisian thirteenth century, the French fourteenth century, the Lombard–Tuscan fourteenth century, and the Venetian–Burgundian fifteenth century. Each part is arranged in six chapters, each of which develops a particular subject. The readings at the end of the book are grouped around six recurring themes that run through the whole period of the book; in order to document the various ways in which these themes recur, each is supported by four different pieces of evidence for the four periods embraced by the parts of the book.

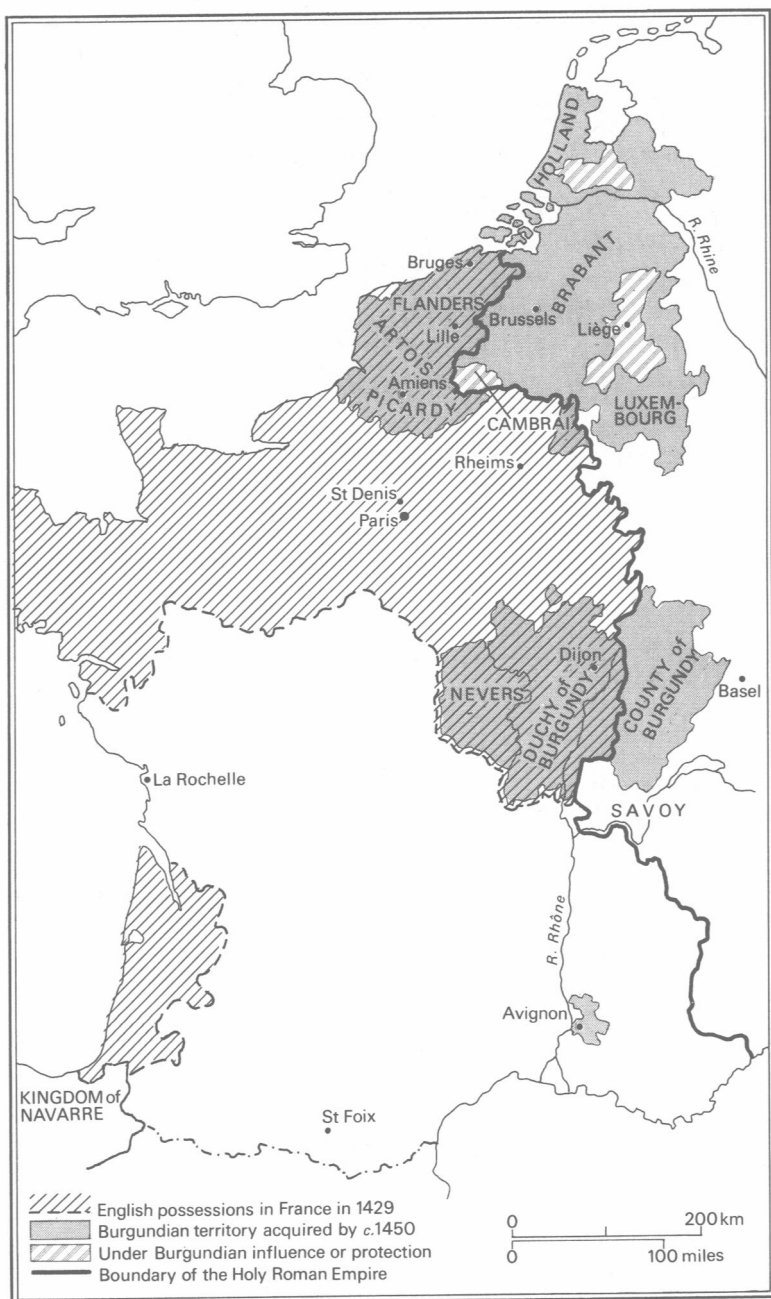The author has deliberately avoided listing all the available items of evidence: instead he has attempted to arrange in a logical order selected evidence that will suggest a coherent reconstruction of the past. The bibliography presents the basic materials needed to amplify the information given in the text and to lay the foundations for other possible lines of investigation: sources and modern editions of both

music and texts, bibliographies and comprehensive studies on the musicians and their background. The notes refer to the materials drawn upon for the history: passages from the theorists of the time and modern specialist studies. If the author's own works seem to be cited too frequently, he asks the reader's pardon.

Trento

REP. of
Feltre VENICE
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FLORENCE Siena
REP. of Perugia
SIENA
Orvieto
PAPAL
STATES
Rome

KINGDOM

Naples
Amalfi
of NAPLES

Palermo
KINGDOM of
SICILY

········ Venetian territory
──── Boundary of the Holy Roman Empire
0 _____ 300 km
0 _____ 200 miles

Map 1   Italy c. 1450

xiii

Map 2 France and the Burgundian lands c. 1450

Contents

Contents

Illustrations

I

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

1. Music and grammar

In the second half of the ninth century, the so-called 'Carolingian Renaissance' began to exert an influence on music. As a result, treatises were written in which classical theories of music were revived with reference to contemporary practice. These are often preserved in manuscripts which also contain treatises on the structure of language. The most significant document of this sort is the anonymous *Musica enchiriadis* (from the Greek for 'music manual', perhaps in imitation of the name *Scholica enchiriadis* attributed to Consulto Fortunaziano's manual on rhetoric), which opens with these words:

Just as the letters of the alphabet are the basic and indivisible parts of the spoken word, from which are composed syllables, which in turn make up the verbs and nouns from which is formed the completed speech, so the notes are the first elements of song; from the way in which they are combined arise intervals, and from the combination of these, musical systems.[1]

The analogy between linguistic and musical structures probably began with the Pythagoreans; later expressed in some of Plato's dialogues, it was then developed by Aristoxenus and Adrastus, two followers of Aristotle, and reached the Latin world through Calcidius' commentary on the translation of Plato's *Timaeus*.

The anonymous author of the treatise also picks up another of Aristoxenus' observations, and points out that there are analogies between the way musical systems function and the way linguistic systems function, for in music as in language only certain fixed combinations of the basic elements are acceptable:

Not all notes blend equally harmoniously, and if joined at random they do not produce an effect of harmony when sung. As the letters of the alphabet if joined haphazardly do not combine to produce words or syllables, so in music there are only certain intervals which can create harmony: harmony is in fact the sweet sound of different notes interlinked.[2]

But whereas for ancient theoreticians the combination of sounds was that produced by successive notes which made up a melody, the medieval theoretician also considered the intervals which were created between the parallel notes of two melodic lines sung simultaneously at different pitches. The author in fact describes various forms of a musical practice in which the melodies of the liturgical repertory were accompanied note for note by one or more different melodies, thus building up a new, richer musical structure. Whatever the origin of this 'polyphony', it seems here to be associated with a high level of erudition. It is significant that the process was called by the Greek name of *diaphonia* as well as by the term *organum* which later prevailed, and the way in which it was defined is even more significant. It was stressed that the simultaneous performance of various melodic lines produced at different times sounds which were either consonant or dissonant, so that the result was not a 'uniformi canore' but rather a combination of contrasting elements which merged into a 'concentu concorditer dissono'.[3] This phrase reflected the idea common to both classical and Christian cultures of a universal order in which individual contrasts merge; polyphony is thus the audible image of 'World Harmony'.

The monk Guido developed two themes from the widely read *Musica enchiriadis* in his own treatise, the *Micrologus* (c. 1025). These were the treatment of *diaphonia* and the reference to a linguistic model, though as far as the latter was concerned he concentrated on the parallels between the structuring of verbal material in poetry and that of musical material in composition. Just as literary metre can be divided into *pedes*, made up of two or more syllables (iambs, dactyls etc.) and *versus*, made up of two or more *pedes* (dimeters, trimeters etc.), in music one can identify *neumae*, groups of two or more notes, and *distinctiones*, sequences of two or more *neumae*.[4] By introducing this analogy Guido was suggesting that the structures of poetry could serve as a model for the organization of musical forms. Like the poet, the musician should construct his work from units which are uniform in size and number. Guido's references to literary metre were made in the context of a tradition stretching back to classical antiquity, in the works of Aristoxenus and Aristides Quintilianus and according to which metre was itself considered part of the discipline of music. In the Latin world a classification formulated by Isidore of Seville and subsequently frequently repeated by medieval writers, involved a division of music into three categories: *harmonica*, *rhythmica*, and *metrica*, the last being 'the one which knows the measure of the different metres'.[5] It therefore comes as no surprise to find in the

so-called Louvain *organum* treatise, which deals with polyphonic practice, a section devoted to the definition of the twenty-eight feet of classical metre,[6] while an anonymous late twelfth-century commentary on Guido's *Micrologus*, appropriately called the *Metrologus*, contains a whole series of references to metre.[7]

Since Guido's work circulated throughout Europe and influenced all subsequent treatise writers, the theme of correspondences between language and music remained current for a long time in musical culture. It reappears in Aribo's treatise *De musica* (c. 1070), in which the author analyses the melody of an antiphon for Pentecost and points out the almost perfect regularity of its construction. It is made up of three *distinctiones* of thirteen, thirteen and eleven *neumae* respectively. The author quotes Cicero (although he is in fact quoting the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*) and considers this arrangement of musical material similar to the rhetorical figura of *compar numerus syllabarum*, the organization of speech into sentences made up of the same number of syllables.[8] A great deal of emphasis is placed on this idea when it reappears in John Cotton's *De musica* (c. 1100), which also contains a chapter on *diaphonia*. The author, armed with specialist literary knowledge and quoting the Latin grammarians Donatus and Priscian, systematically transfers concepts and terms from literary to musical theory. In analysing liturgical melodies he in fact adopts a division into *principium*, *medium* and *finis*,[9] following the rhetorical distinction into beginning, body of speech, and conclusion. (The anonymous so-called St Martial treatise later applied this same principle to the composing of polyphony: 'One must know three things if one is to write an *organum*: how to begin, how to proceed, and how to conclude.')[10] As for the regular structuring of musical compositions, Cotton compares the beginning of Chapter 3 of St Luke's gospel and the melody of an antiphon for the feast of St Peter in Chains, reducing both the verbal sequence and the musical line to their smallest elements, which he calls *commata*, to groups of *commata* called *cola*, and complete units called *periodus*.[11]

Between the late twelfth and the early thirteenth centuries the musicians active in the church of Notre-Dame in Paris began to produce polyphonic works of a hitherto unprecedented scale and complexity: it is presumably these which are referred to in the decrees of Odo of Sully, Bishop of Paris (1196–1218) as pieces performed 'in triplo vel quadruplo', i.e. in three or four parts.[12] It became necessary to introduce something entirely new into the theory and practice of music: a system which would make it possible to control the simultaneous flow of different voices by precisely measuring the

3

relative length of the individual notes. According to Lambert the 'musica harmonica' was then not only 'localis' (concerned with the space or the pitch of the notes), but also 'temporalis' (concerned with the time or the duration of the notes.)[13] The long tradition of a connection between the disciplines of language and music decisively influenced both the practice and the theory of this new aspect of composition. Brought up in a culture accustomed to correlations between literary and musical constructions, musicians found it natural to turn to metre as something which offered models easily applicable by analogy to their own sphere of activity. The section on metre in Alexander de Villa Dei's *Doctrinale*, a treatise on grammar written at the end of the twelfth century, provides all the necessary elements.[14] First of all the author refers to the six main 'modes' used in the organization of rhythm, which correspond to the six feet of classical metre: 'Ancient poems made use of a great variety of feet; all we need is a distinction into six modes: dactyl, spondee, trochee, anapaest, iamb, tribrach . . .' This is followed by a description of each of the six feet, showing how they are made up of different combinations of long and short syllables: 'the dactyl is made up of one long and two shorts . . .' Finally he deals with the difference in duration between a long and a short: 'the short syllable is uttered in one beat, while the long lasts twice that length of time . . .' It was on this basis that musical theoreticians evolved a system of musical values which, under the name of *musica mensurabilis*, soon became to music what metre was to language. According to the St Emmeram Anonymous 'mensural music is called after the measure of the notes, just as in grammar metre is called after the measure of the syllables; and in grammar two measures are valid, the long and the short . . .'[15] Indeed two fundamental values were established and named in music as in metre: one greater, the other smaller, known respectively as *longa* and *brevis*. In music they followed one another according to six fixed combinations called 'modi'. This is how they were described in a treatise attributed to Johannes de Garlandia: 'A mode, properly speaking, is something which has to do with the six classical modes. Of these, the first consists of long short, long short etc.; the second of short long, short long; the third of long short short, long short short etc; the fourth of two shorts and a long etc.; the fifth of all longs, the sixth of all shorts.'[16] These combinations corresponded precisely to the main feet of classical metre, as Walter Odington specifically pointed out,[17] and as can be seen in Fig. 1.

In compositions, the musical feet were used in sequences (called *ordines*: the terminology is once more derived from rhetoric) of two,

4

MENSURAL MUSIC			METRE	
musical terms	symbol	shared terms	symbol	metrical terms
first mode		long short		trochee
second mode		short long		iambus
third mode		long short short		dactyl
fourth mode		short short long		anapaest
fifth mode		long long, long long long		spondee, molossus
sixth mode		short short, short short short		pyrrhic, tribrach

Fig. 1