

## Medieval Terms

**Ars antiqua:** ("The old art") A term used to describe the musical style period of France from 1150 to 1300 (Perotin, etc.).

**Ars cantus mensurabilis:** This treatise written in c1260 by Franco of Cologne introduced the first notation system of long and short notes and rests (long and breve)--known as Franconian notation or mensural notation.

**Ars nova:** ("The new art") A term used to identify the experimental musical style period of France from approximately 1300-1375 (DeVitry, Machaut, etc.).

**Ars subtilior:** ("The subtle art") A term used to describe the highly expressive musical style period of France in the late 1300s/early 1400s (Baude Cordier, etc.).

**Church Modes:** The term for the system of eight "octave species" (dorian, phrygian, lydian, mixolydian, hypodorian, hypophrygian, hypolydian, hypomixolydian) formulated originally for the purpose of organizing the repertory of Gregorian chant.

**Formes fixes:** ("Fixed forms") The three French poetic forms that were the primary song forms of the Ars Nova [see "The Structure of the Formes Fixes and the Ballata"], see also the entries for ballade, virelai, rondeau in "Medieval Genres", below].

**Isorhythm:** ("The same rhythm") A compositional device usually applied to the Tenor of a polyphonic work, featuring a repeated "talea" (rhythmic pattern) and "color" (melodic pattern). Used by DeVitry, Machaut and other French Ars Nova composers.

**Melisma:** Many notes sung on a single syllable of text to put emphasis on that word.

**Monophonic:** A musical texture with one melody played or sung at a time with no harmony.

**Musica enchiriadis:** This writing, dating from c900, is the earliest known treatise to describe polyphonic music.

**Musica ficta:** ("False music") In polyphonic music c900-1500, in order to avoid forbidden dissonant intervals (such as tritones), performers added accidentals (sharps, flats, or naturals) that are not specified in the written notation, and were often beyond the medieval musical gamut.

**Musica mundana:** Boethius' term for the mathematical harmonic relationship of heavenly bodies ("Music of the Spheres").

**Polyphony:** A musical texture with two or more simultaneously sounding lines of independent melody. The development of polyphony around the year 1000 is perhaps the most significant occurrence in Western music history.

**Rhythmic Modes:** A way of organizing rhythm in early Medieval polyphony by using one of six poetic patterns based on combinations of long and short values.

**Solmization:** The practice of applying the set of syllables ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la to patterns of whole and half steps in melodies.

**Stimmtausch:** A repetition of a musical section with the voice parts exchanged.

**Treatise:** In music, this is a formal written document that studies some aspect of music theory and/or performance practice.

**Trecento:** A term used to describe the musical style period of Italy in the 1300s (Landini).

## Medieval Genres

**Ballade:** One of the late-Medieval French strophic "formes fixes" (fixed forms) that is usually in a form that could be diagrammed as AaB.

**Ballata:** An Italian poetic song-form made famous by Landini and others during the Trecento, with a form that could be diagrammed ABbaA.

**Cantiga:** A Portuguese narrative monophonic song that can be secular or sacred (such as songs about miracles or praising the Virgin Mary).

**Chanson:** A French song; in the late Middle Ages they were usually based on one of the three poetic "fixed forms" (ballade, virelai, rondeau--see "Formes fixes", in "Medieval Terms", above).

**Chant:** (also called "Gregorian Chant", "plainsong", or "plainchant") Sacred Catholic Latin sacred liturgical melodies that are sung monophonically with an unmetred rhythm.

**Conductus:** A type of sacred but non-liturgical vocal composition for one or more voices, which all sang rhythmically together in note-against-note "discant" style.

**Estampie:** A "stomping" Medieval instrumental dance that is usually monophonic.

**Lai:** A lyrical narrative sung poem from the 1200s/1300s that usually deals with tales of adventure and romance.

**Madrigal:** In the late Middle Ages, this term refers to a briefly-popular type of composition for two voices in the Trecento Italian style of the 1300s. (The term relates to a very different and much more important genre in the Renaissance and early Baroque periods.)

**Mass:** The approximately 25 prayers that lead to and follow the taking of communion. There are two types of mass prayers: The "Ordinary" (5 everyday prayers--Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei) and The "Proper" (20 prayers that are appropriate only for a certain day, such as Easter or Christmas, according to the liturgical calendar of saints and holy days). A "musical Mass" often refers to a musical setting of just the Mass Ordinary.

**Motet:** In the Middle Ages, this term describes polyphonic compositions for two or three voice parts, often with each part having an independent text (sometimes in different languages combining sacred and secular words).

**Organum:** This term was applied to the earliest-known notated examples of plainchant set in polyphonic texture--long-held chant notes in the lowest voice, with faster moving metrical rhythms in the upper voice(s). [Perotin]

**Pastourelle:** A lyric French poem that is sung, dealing with the romance of a shepherdess.

**Rondeau:** One of the late-Medieval French strophic "formes fixes" (fixed forms) that is usually in a form that could be diagrammed as ABaAabAB.

**Rota:** A type of vocal "round" popular in England in the 1200s and 1300s.

**Sequence:** In the Middle Ages, this term describes a type of long liturgical hymns based on a series of 2-line stanzas (x aa, bb, cc, dd, ee... y).

**Troubadour Canso:** The earliest-known types of monophonic song set to a vernacular (non-Latin) text. [Love songs written by travelling minstrels (troubadours) such as Bernard de Ventadorn].

**Virelai:** One of the late-Medieval French strophic "formes fixes" (fixed forms) that is usually in a form that could be diagrammed as ABbaA.

## Medieval Composers and Theorists (in chronological order)

### *Early Influences*

**Pythagoras** (c580-500BC): The ancient Greek philosopher and mathematician who is credited with determining the mathematics behind tuning systems, intervallic ratios, etc.

**Boethius** (c480-525): The heritage of Greek music theory was passed on to the Middle Ages primarily through the writing of this sixth-century Roman diplomat.

### **Early- and Mid-Medieval Composers and Theorists**

**Notker Balbulus** (c800): A 9th-century monk who wrote an important early collection of "sequences" (long liturgical hymns with a series of 2-line stanzas: x aa, bb, cc, dd, ee... y).

**Guido d'Arezzo** (c1000): This eleventh-century monk was among the first to discuss polyphony and devise a system of six-note patterns for teaching others to sight read. Also known for devising the "Guidonian Hand" as a reference for solfege syllables.

**Hildegard of Bingen** (1098-1179): A German nun, religious thinker, philosopher, visionary and composer who wrote many liturgical songs.

**Magister Albertus** (died 1177): A French composer of the 12th century, who worked at Notre Dame in Paris and composed the first known piece of European music for three voices.

**Bernard de Ventadorn** (c1130-c1200): A prominent roving minstrel/composer (troubadour) in France during the mid-to-late 1100s. *Non es meravelha s'eu chan* [troubadour canso] c1190

**Perotin** (flourished c1200): A leading figure in the Notre Dame School of early polyphony. Known for his 2-, 3-, and 4-voice organum. *Sedeunt principes* [organum quadruplum] c1200

**Adam de la Halle** (c1237-1288): A French travelling minstrel/composer (trouvere), known for his *Jeu de Robin et Marion*--the earliest surviving French play with music.

**Anonymous IV** (late 1200s): The name given to an unknown writer of an important Medieval treatise (c1280) which is the main source for understanding the music of the "Notre Dame School" of the Ars Antiqua (Leonin and Perotin).

**Franco of Cologne** (late 1200s): This theorist/composer who flourished c1260-1280 codified a system of notation that assigned duration values to individual neumes (long and breve) and rests. [This is called Franconian notation or mensural notation].

### **Late-Medieval Composers and Theorists**

**Philippe de Vitry** (1291-1361): A famous French composer and theorist during the Ars Nova, known for his innovative and complex rhythmic notation. *Garrit Gallus—In Nova Fert* [isorhythmic motet] c1319

**Guillaume de Machaut** (1300-1377): The most important French composer of the Middle Ages, he wrote in the complex Ars Nova style and composed chansons, motets, and the first complete setting of the Mass Ordinary (the *Messe de Notre Dame* [c1350]), which was the first to include a Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei).

**Francesco Landini** (1325-1397): This blind organist and composer was the leading figure in the Italian Trecento style--known especially for his ballatas. *Non avr  ma' piet * [ballata] (c1389)

**Baude Cordier** (c1380-c1439): This French composer's works are among the prime examples of the intricate and highly-expressive Ars Subtilior style of the late 1300s-early 1400s. One of his most famous love songs, *Belle, Bonne, Sage* (c1420), is written in the shape of a heart, and features new experiments with notation, rhythm and melody.

### **Transition to the Renaissance**

**John Dunstable** (c1390-c1453): This early 15th-century English composer began the transition to the Renaissance with a triadic sound that came to be known on the continent as the "Contenance Angloise" (the English sound). It has a very different sound than the French Ars Nova or Italian Trecento. *Quam pulchra es* [motet] c1430

Ancient Greek...Roman	Medieval	1000	1200	1300	1400	Transition to Renaissance
	<p><b>monophonic</b></p> <p><b>Chant</b> (8 church modes) see diagram</p>	<p><b>POLYPHONY BEGINS</b></p> <p><b>solmization</b> (=ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la)</p> <p><b>rhythmic modes</b> see diagram</p>	<p><b>musica ficta</b></p>	<p><b>formes fixes</b></p> <p>"fixed" poetic form structures used in French "ars nova" songs: -Ballade [AaB] -Virelai [ABbaA]-for score example click here -Rondeau [ABaAabAB]</p> <p><b>isorhythm</b> (repeating structure in melody and rhythm) -in this example, from the "Agnus Dei" movement of Machaut's <i>Messe de Notre Dame</i>, he uses isorhythm in all 4 voices for mm. 31-46)</p>	<p>1420</p> <p>early Renaissance "tridactic" style already in England</p>	
England				<p><b>"Ars Antiqua"</b></p> <p><b>PEROTIN</b> <i>Sederunt principes</i> Organum</p>	<p><b>"Ars Nova"</b></p> <p>rise in complexity in melody, rhythm, harmony</p> <p><b>DE VITRY</b> <i>Gameli Gallus</i> Motet (isorhythmic)</p> <p><b>MACHAUT</b> <i>Messe de Notre Dame</i> Mass (isorhythmic) Polyphonic Mass</p>	<p><b>DUNSTABLE</b> <i>Quam Pulchra Es</i></p>
France		<p><b>VENTADORN</b> <i>Non es meravelha s'eu chan</i> Troubadour Canso (love song)</p>		<p><b>"Ars Nova"</b></p> <p>rise in complexity in melody, rhythm, harmony</p> <p><b>DE VITRY</b> <i>Gameli Gallus</i> Motet (isorhythmic)</p> <p><b>MACHAUT</b> <i>Messe de Notre Dame</i> Mass (isorhythmic) Polyphonic Mass</p>	<p><b>"Ars Subtilior"</b> (even more complex style of notation, rhythm, harmony)</p> <p><b>BAUDE CORDIER</b> <i>Belle Bonne, Sage</i> Chanson [Love Song] Rondeau [ABaAabAB]</p>	
Italy				<p><b>"Trecento"</b></p> <p><b>LANDINI</b> <i>Non avra ma pietà</i> -Ballata (ABbaA)</p>		
THEORISTS & TREATISES Pythagoras	Boethius	<p><b>Musica Enchiriadis</b></p> <p><b>Guido</b> <b>D'Arezzo</b> "Guidonian hand" for sight-singing)</p>		<p><b>Anonymous IV</b></p> <p><b>Franco de Cologne</b> <b>Ars cantus mensurabilis</b> "Franconian notation")</p>		