Concise History of Western Music
5th edition

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Chapter

4

French and Italian Music in the Fourteenth Century

Prelude

■Fourteenth century experienced terror and turmoil

- Hundred Years' War (1337–1453) between France and England

  ▪ disrupted agriculture, manufacturing, and trade

- prolonged economic decline

- 1348–50 Great Plague (Black Death) wiped out third of population

- circumstances combined to spark peasant and urban rebellions

Prelude (cont'd)

- Church in crisis; supremacy of pope questioned
  - election of French pope
    - 1309–1377 popes resided at Avignon
    - under control of French king
  - 1378–1417 Papal Schism: rival claimants to papal throne
  - corrupt life of clergy
  - sharp criticism, rise of heretical movements

Prelude (cont'd)

- **Science and secularism**
  - science separated from religion
  - philosophers distinguish between divine revelation and human reason
    - spurred advances in science and technology
    - increasing interest in the individual; growing secular movement
- **The arts**
  - growth of literacy; works in vernacular
    - Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1307)
    - Boccacio's *Decameron* (1353)
    - Chaucer'a *Canterbury Tales* (1387–1400)

Prelude (cont'd)

- The arts (cont'd)
  - Giotto (ca. 1266–1337), Florentine painter
    - more naturalistic representation
    - symmetry of composition, sense of depth
  - sacred compositions continued to flourish
  - cultivation of secular song
- Ars Nova *(New Art or New Method; early 1320s),* treatise
  - attributed to Philippe de Vitry (1291–1361)
    - French musician, poet, and bishop of Meaux

Prelude (cont'd)

- Ars Nova *(New Art or New Method; early 1320s),* treatise (cont'd)
  - Ars Nova denotes French musical style, first half of fourteenth century
    - innovations in rhythm and its notation; carried to extremes
  - Jacques de Liège
    - objected to "imperfect" duple division and use of syncopation
    - defended "perfect" triple division

Prelude (cont'd)

- Ars Nova *(New Art or New Method; early 1320s),* treatise (cont'd)
  - important new genre: polyphonic art song
    - motet topics became more political
    - structurally more complex
    - use of isorhythm
  - Guillaume de Machaut and Francesco Landini
    - important composers of polyphonic songs

The Ars Nova in France

- ***Roman de Fauvel**, narrative poem*
  - satirizes political corruption, secular and ecclesiastical
    - Fauvel symbolizes world turned upside down
    - his name is acrostic for sins he personifies
      - Flattery, Avarice, Villainy, Variètè ("Fickleness), Envy, and Låcheté ("Baseness")
  - 1317 illuminated manuscript
    - 169 pieces of music interpolated within the poem
    - most are monophonic; Latin chants to secular songs
    - thirty-four motets, included first examples of Ars Nova style
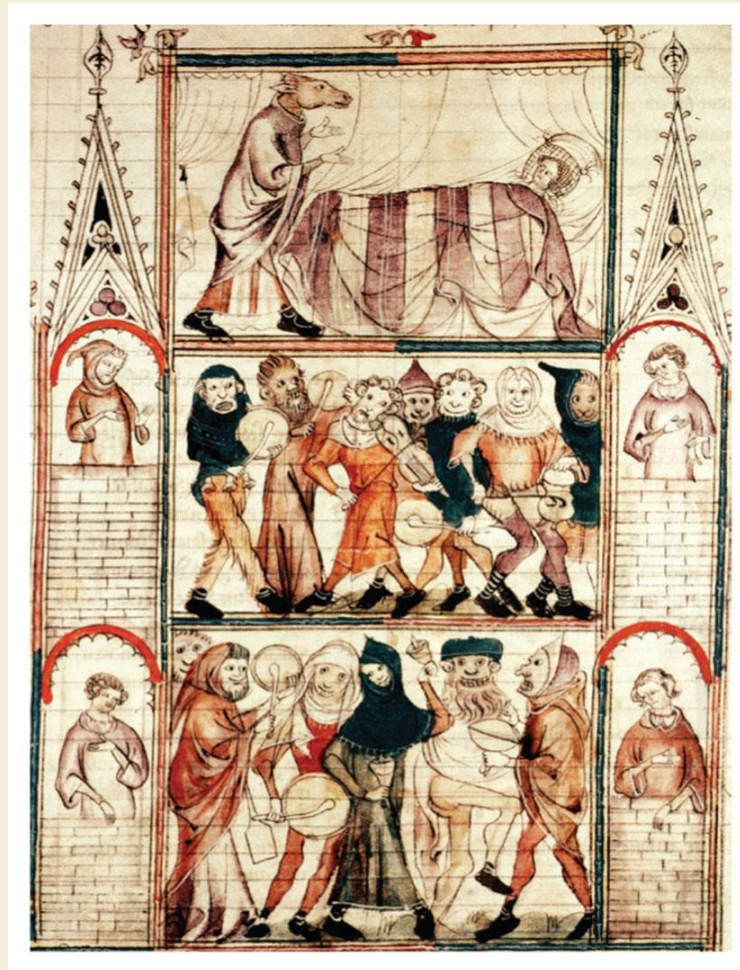
The Ars Nova in France (cont'd)

- Isorhythmic motets
  - Philippe de Vitry's motets, earliest examples of isorhythm ("equal rhythm")
  - tenors laid out in segments of identical rhythm
    - may recur up to ten times in one piece
    - extends Notre Dame clausulae practice
    - fourteenth century longer, more complex rhythmic patterns
    - tenor moves slowly, foundational structure
  - recurring elements in most tenors
    - talea: repeating rhythmic unit
    - color: recurring segment of melody

Ex04-01

The Ars Nova in France (cont'd)

- Isorhythmic motets (cont'd)
  - from *Roman de Fauvel* (NAWM 25)
    - tenor, three statements of the color
    - color divided into three equal parts, fits three statements of talea
  - isorhythm occasionally applied to other genres
    - movement from Machaut's Mass (NAWM 26a)
  - isorhythmic designs: singers grasp shape, commit to memory

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377)

- Leading composer and poet of French Ars Nova
  - born to middle-class family, northeastern France
  - educated as cleric in Reims, took Holy orders
  - 1323: service of John of Luxembourg, king of Bohemia
    - described travels and military campaigns in his poetry
  - 1340–1377 resided in Reims, canon of the cathedral
  - strong support from royal patrons

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)

- Leading composer and poet of French Ars Nova (cont'd)
  - compiled his complete works
    - illuminated manuscripts
    - self-awareness as creator
  - major works include: *Messe de Nostre*, *Hoquetus David*, twenty-three motets, forty-two ballades, twenty-two rondeaux, three-three virelais

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)
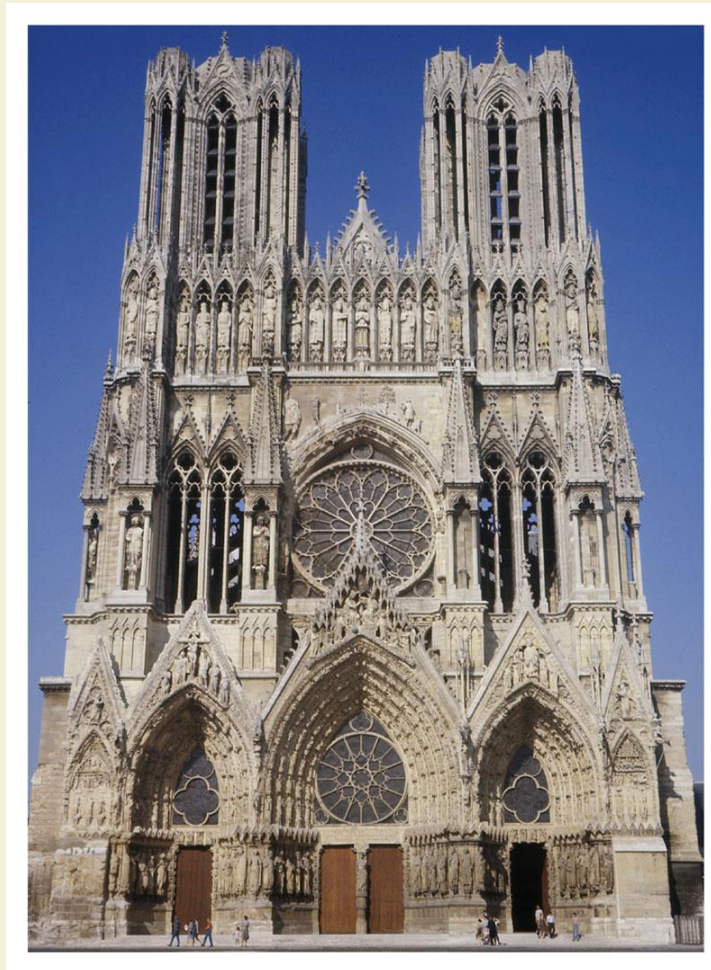
- **Motets**
  - twenty-three motets (ninteenth isorhythmic) from early in his career
  - longer and more rhythmically complex
  - clever use of hocket in upper voices
    - hocket (French *hoquet*, "hiccup")
    - two voices alternate in rapid succession
- **Mass: *Messe de Nostre Dame* (Mass of Our Lady), early 1360s**
  - polyphonic setting of Mass Ordinary

F04-03

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)

- Mass: *Messe de Nostre Dame* (Mass of Our Lady), early 1360s (cont'd)
  - conceived as one composition
  - performed in Reim into fifteenth century
- movements linked together by style and approach
  - recurring motives and cadence tones
- isorhythmic movements: Kyrie, Sanctus, Angus Dei and Ite, missa est
  - each use different cantus firmus
- discant movements: Gloria and Credo

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)

- Mass: *Messe de Nostre Dame* (Mass of Our Lady), early 1360s (cont'd)
  - syllabic, largely homorhythmic
  - both movements end with elaborate isorhythmic "Amens"
  - Kyrie (NAWM 26a), 4-part isorhythmic movement
    - tenor: cantus firms melody of Kyrie chant
      - divided into taleae of different lengths
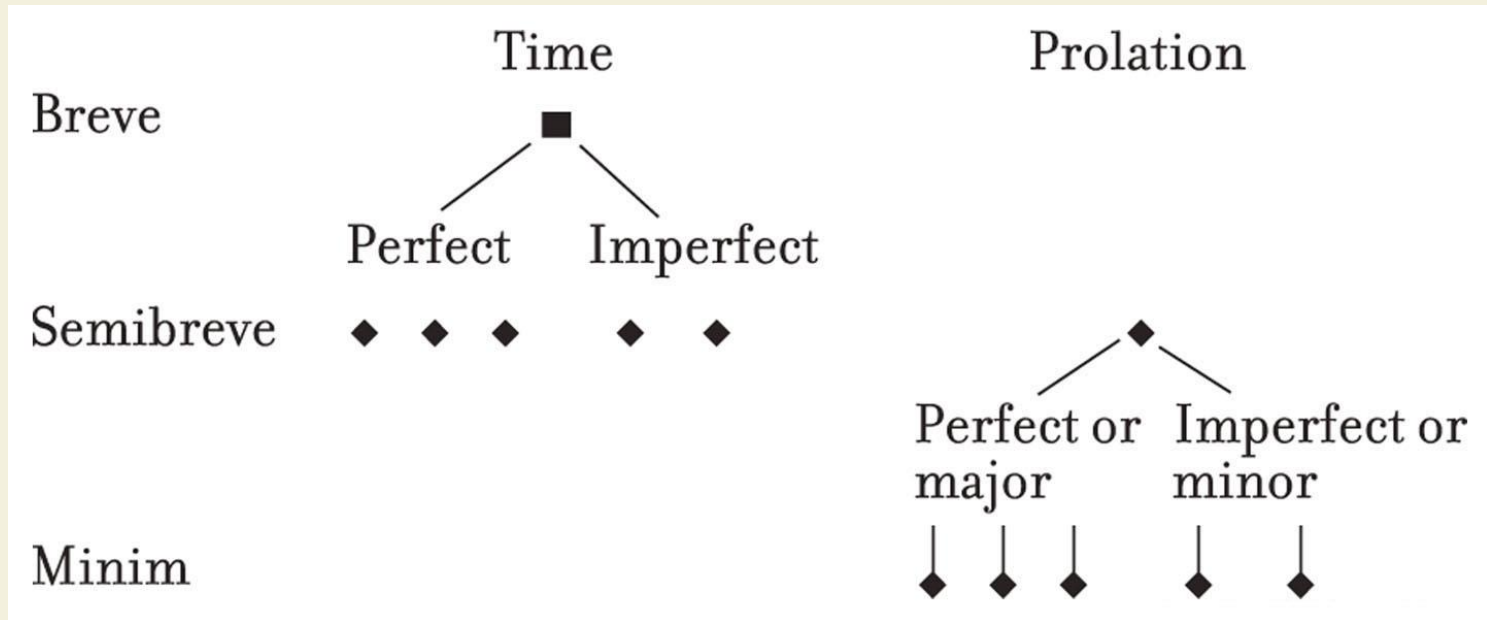   - contratenor, second, supporting voice coordinated with tenor

Ex04-02

F04-04

F04-05

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	REFRAIN	STANZA			REFRAIN
Sections of poetry:	1	2	3	4	1
Sections of music:	A	b	b	a	A

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	STANZA			REFRAIN
Lines of poetry:	1 2	3 4	5 6 7	8
Sections of music:	a	a	b	C

UNF04-03

	REFRAIN			HALF REFRAIN				REFRAIN		
Lines of poetry:	1 2 3	4 5	6(1) 7(2)	8 9 10	11(1) 12(2) 13(3)
Sections of music:	A B	a	A	a b	A B
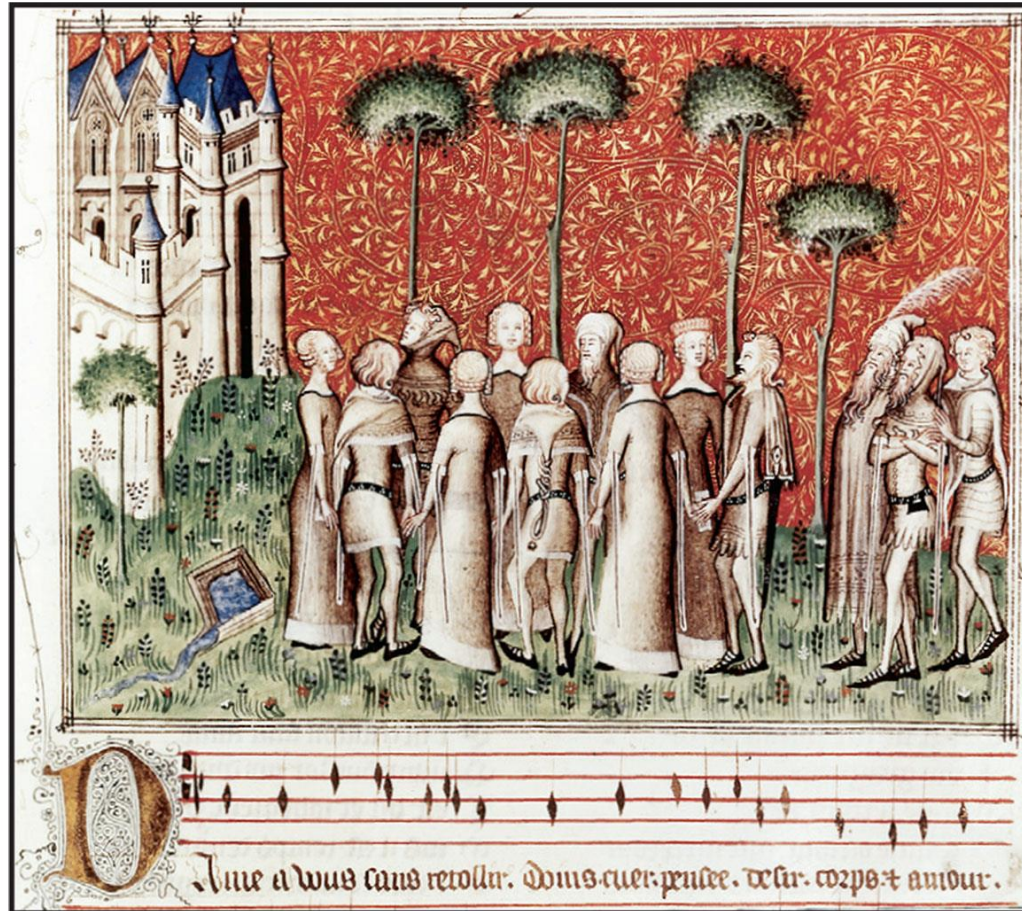
Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)

- Mass: *Messe de Nostre Dame* (Mass of Our Lady), early 1360s (cont'd)
  - also is isorhythmic
  - same range as tenor, has its own talea
  - forms harmonic foundation with tenor
  - opening Christe: contrast of rhythmic rest and activity
    - upper two voices move more rapidly, syncopated
    - partly isorhythmic
    - rhythmic activity: repeating figuration, unifying motives
- Love songs
  - continued trouvère tradition

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)

- ■ Love songs (cont'd)
  - • songs performed as entertainment in courts
  - • wrote monophonic pieces in standard poetic forms (*formes fixes* "fixed forms")
    - ▪ *formes fixes* derived from genres associated with dancing
  - • *Douce dame jolie* (Sweet lovely lady, NAWM 27), monophonic virelai
    - ▪ innovative rhythm, supple syncopations

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)

- **Polyphonic songs, chansons**
  - treble-dominated style
    - cantus or treble carried the text
    - cantus supported by slower-moving untexted tenor
    - one or two untexted voices may be added
  - *Rose, liz, printemps, verdure* (Rose, lily, springtime, foliage, NAWM 28), 4-voice rondeau
    - rondeau, "fixed form"
    - long melismas, up to four measures
    - varied rhythms; not isorhythmic

Guillaume de Machaut (ca. 1300–1377) (cont'd)

- Polyphonic songs, chansons (cont'd)
  - ballades
    - Machaut wrote more than forty ballades
    - most serious of the *formes fixes*
    - philosophical or historical themes; celebrate event or person

Italian Trecento Music (from "mille trecento," Italian for 1300)

- **Fourteenth-century Italy, collection of city-states**
  - each cultivated its own cultural traditions
  - music accompanied every aspect of social life
    - most music never written down
    - church polyphony mostly improvised, few notated works survive
    - Italian trovatore followed troubadour tradition
  - secular polyphonic songs
    - composed and sung as refined entertainment for wealthy patrons

- Fourteenth-century Italy, collection of city-states (cont'd)
  - Florence important cultural center fouteenth to sixteenth centuries
    - home to Dante and Boccacio, and most famous Trecento musician, Landini
  - Squarcialupi Codex: source for Italian Trecento polyphony
    - named for Antonio Squarcialupi (1416–1480), Florentine organist, owned but did not compile
    - 354 pieces, mostly two or three voices, twelve composers

Italian Trecento Music (from "mille trecento," Italian for 1300) (cont'd)

- Fourteenth-century Italy, collection of city-states (cont'd)
  - secular forms: madrigal, caccia, and ballata
- Fourteenth-century madrigal
  - idyllic, pastoral, satirical, or love poems
  - usually set for two or three voices
  - *Non al suo amante* by Jacopo da Bologna (NAWM 30)
    - poem by Italian lyric poet Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374)

Italian Trecento Music (from "mille trecento," Italian for 1300) (cont'd)

- **Fourteenth-century madrigal (cont'd)**
    - characteristic rhythmic variety and fluidity
    - differs from French chanson
        - two voices relatively equal, occasionally echo one another
        - long melismas on last accented syllable of each line
        - more florid in upper voice, without syncopations
- **Ballata**
    - became popular later than madrigal
    - influence of treble-dominated French chanson
    - "ballata" (from *ballare*, "to dance"), originally meant "a song to accompany dancing"

Italian Trecento Music (from "mille trecento," Italian for 1300) (cont'd)

- **Ballata (cont'd)**
  - two to three polyphonic voices, date from after 1365
    - form resembles single stanza of French virelai
- **Francesco Landini (ca. 1325–1397)**
  - foremost Italian musician of the Trecento, leading composer of ballate
    - blinded by smallpox during childhood, turned to music
    - master of many instruments
    - organist at the monastery of Santa Trinità in 1361–65

F04-09

Madrigal

	Stanza	Stanza	Ritornello
Sections of music:	a	a	b
Lines of poetry:	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8

Ballata

	Ripresa	Stanza (2 piedi)		Volta	Ripresa
Sections of music:	A	b	b	a	A
Lines of poetry:	1 2 3	4 5	6 7	8 9 10	1 2 3

Ex04-03

F04-10

Italian Trecento Music (from "mille trecento," Italian for 1300) (cont'd)

- Francesco Landini (ca. 1325–1397) (cont'd)
  - chaplain at church of San Lorenzo
  - wrote no sacred music
  - major works: 140 ballate, 12 madrigals, 1 caccia, 1 virelai
- *Non avrà ma'pietà* (She will never have mercy, NAWM 32)
  - later style, 3-voice ballata
  - treble-dominated

Italian Trecento Music (from "mille trecento," Italian for 1300) (cont'd)

- **Francesco Landini (ca. 1325–1397) (cont'd)**
  - solo voice with two untexted accompanying parts
  - concern for text declamation: melismatic passages never interrupt middle of a verse
- Landini's style:
  - sweetness of harmonies, contain 3rds and 6ths
  - graceful vocal melodies, mostly stepwise
  - Landini cadence
    - progression of M6th to the octave
    - ornamented by lower neighbor leaping up a 3rd in top voice

- **Caccia**

  - parallels French chace
    - popular-style melody set in strict canon, lively descriptive words

  - caccia and cacce mean "hunt"
    - pursuit of one voice after another
    - sometimes applies to subject matter of text (NAWM 31)

  - caccia has free untexted tenor in slower motion below
    - unlike French and Spanish counterparts

Italian Trecento Music (from "mille trecento," Italian for 1300) (cont'd)
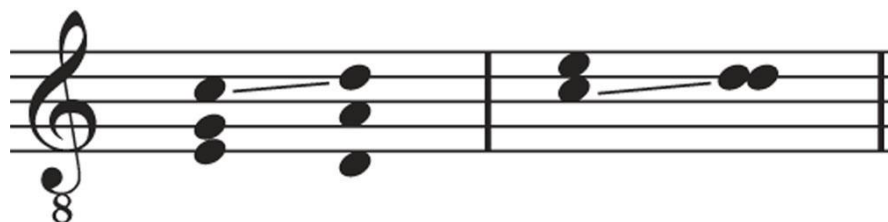
- **French influence**

  - late 1300s, increased contact between Italian and northern composers

  - Italian national characteristics lost

  - contemporary French style absorbed

  - especially noticeable after papal court moved from Avignon

  - Italians wrote songs to French texts in French genres, often in French notation
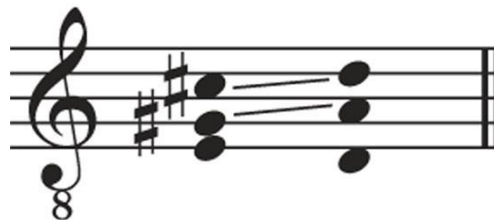
Ex04-04

The Ars Subtilior

- Later fourteenth-century polyphonic songs
  - Ars Subtilior ("the subtle art")
    - phrase derived from Philippus de Caserta (fl. 1370s) treatise
  - papal court at Avignon main patron of secular music
  - chivalric and ecclesiastical society allowed composers to flourish
    - polyphonic songs: *formes fixes*, ballades, rondeaux, and virelais
    - mostly love songs
    - fascination with technical possibilities, new extremes

The Ars Subtilior (cont'd)

- Later fourteenth-century polyphonic songs (cont'd)
    - music more refined and complex
  - elevated style matched in manuscripts
    - fanciful decorations, intermingled red and black notes
    - ingenious notation
    - occasional caprices; love song written in shape of heart, canon in shape of circle
  - intended for professional performers, cultivated listeners

The Ars Subtilior (cont'd)

- **Rhythmic complexity**
  - new notational signs and practices
    - voices in contrasting meters and conflicting groupings
    - beats subdivided in many different ways
    - phrases broken by rests, suspended through chains of syncopations
    - harmonies blurred through rhythmic disjunctions
  - *En remirant vo douce pourtraiture* (While I gazed at your sweet portrait, NAWM 29), ballade by Caserata

F04-13

English Polyphony

- English polyphony, abundant in fourteenth century
  - particularly sacred genres
  - distinctive sound and other qualities
  - impact on Continental developments in the fifteenth century

Postlude

- Fourteenth century presents variety of new forms and practices
  - Ars Nova: sophisticated system for rhythmic notation
  - isorhythm: structural device to control and organize
  - emphasis on structure and rhythmic play
- Polyphonic composition in France
  - polyphonic Mass Ordinary movement and cycle
  - isorhythmic motet
 - secular love songs in poetic fixed forms

Postlude (cont'd)

- New genres emerged in Italy
  - Mass, motet, and refrain song
  - Italian style:
    - smoothness of melody
    - clarity of declamation
    - prominent harmonic 3rds and 6ths
- Two composers dominated scene
  - Machaut in France
  - Landini in Italy
  - by 1400, French and Italian styles merge

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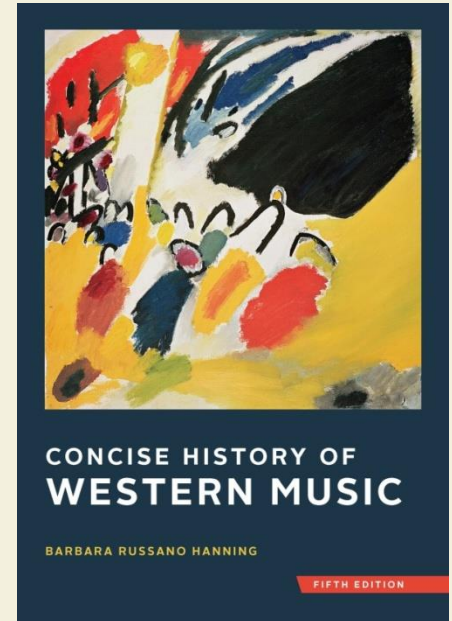
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for Chapter 4

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